

THE PEACE THAT LED TO WAR

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, the guns fell silent on the Western Front bringing to an end World War I.



PICTURE 1: Cenotaph ceremony

This is commemorated as **Armistice Day** or **Remembrance Sunday** every year on the Sunday nearest to 11 November at the Cenotaph in London where there is a march past of former combatants and the Queen, the Prime Minister and military leaders lay wreaths of red poppies to remember those who died in war. There is also a minute's silence first suggested by a South African, Percy Fitzpatrick, author of *Jock of the Bushveld*.

World War I is also known as the Great War and the War to End all Wars. This last is particularly ironic because World War II broke out 21 years later - largely triggered by German resentment of the peace treaties which Germany called a Diktat imposed on it after World War I. In Germany there are no commemorations for their dead in 2 World Wars. Under the Nazis, a huge monument was erected in Tannenberg, in East Prussia where in August 1914, German forces led by Field Marshal von Hindenberg

PICTURE 2: Paul von Hindenburg (1874-1934)



defeated Russian armies but the monument was blown up and totally destroyed by retreating German forces in January 1945. And Tannenberg is now in Poland.

PICTURE3 : Map of German forces in 1918



PICTURE 4 : Repeat of 1

Armistice Day or Remembrance Sunday is not a celebration of victory because in 1918 Germany had not been defeated and no Allied forces had yet reached German soil. Instead Germany was still occupying large areas of France and Belgium, so the armies were able to march back to their bases in Germany to the accompaniment of military bands, to be greeted by cheering crowds and banners of welcome. Civilians watching these marching soldiers could not believe they had been defeated, and it was General Erich Ludendorff

PICTURE : Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937)



Who was one of those who fostered the myth of the stab in the back. Communists, pacifists and Jews were all blamed but the Nazis focused on the Jews who were singled out for extermination.

But the German High Command i.e. Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff realised that Germany could not win the war once America had joined the Allies so in October 1918 she appealed to President Woodrow Wilson of the USA for an armistice or truce.

PICTURE 5: Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) President (1913-1921)



USA had joined the Allies in their war against Germany only in April 1917, so Wilson refused the German request so the war continued for another 5 weeks with another ½ million men dead and wounded on both sides.

Germany, when it approached Woodrow Wilson about negotiating a peace, had in mind the precedent of the 1815 negotiations after the defeat of Napoleon. Napoleon's abdication led to the restoration of Louis XVIII so France argued successfully that her new government had not been responsible for the wars, so she should not be treated as a defeated enemy but be allowed to take part in the peace negotiations. Thus France played its part in negotiating the terms of the 1815 Treaty of Vienna, with the result that France ceased to be the main aggressor (which it had been for centuries) and (apart from short-lived wars between individual nations) Europe enjoyed a century of peace until 1914.

Germany wanted peace negotiations on the basis of Wilson's 14 Points which he had outlined in a speech in January 1918 on War Aims and Peace Terms 10 months before the Armistice.. These 14 points were intended as a blueprint for peace negotiations and the failure to implement many of these points not only led to World War II but continued strife to this day particularly in the Middle East

PICTURE 6: Wilson's 14 Points

- 1. Open conventions with no secret treaties.**
- 2. Freedom of navigation upon seas in peace and war.**
- 3. Removal of economic barriers and free trade**
- 4. Reduction of armaments**
- 5. Impartial adjustment of colonial claims**
- 6. Evacuation of Russian territory**
- 7. Belgium to be evacuated and restored**

8. **All French territory to be restored including Alsace-Lorraine (captured by Prussia in 1871)**
9. **Italian frontiers to be re-adjusted on basis of nationality.**
10. **Peoples of Austro-Hungarian Empire to be given opportunity for autonomous development.**
11. **Political and economic independence guaranteed to Balkan states.**
12. **Turkish part of Ottoman Empire to be given sovereignty. Other nationalities to get opportunity for autonomous development.**
13. **Independent Poland to be created.**
14. **League of Nations to be created.**

The French premier, Georges Clemenceau, cynically remarked of these 14 Points, that the good Lord only needed 10.

Ironically, though Woodrow Wilson was the leader of the biggest democracy in the world, Wilson's own position was weakened because the Republicans had gained control of both the Senate and House of Representatives. America was also embarking on a period of isolationism and didn't want to get involved in European problems, so she did not sign the peace treaties or join the League of Nations which fatally weakened it as a means of avoiding war.

Even though Germany had not been defeated, her request for an Armistice and peace negotiations was prompted by the military High Command's realisation that she could no longer win the war because

PICTURE7 : Writing

1. **American intervention meant that Germany was out-numbered and out-gunned as American industry could produce more weapons, etc. And American troops, unlike the Germans were eager to fight.**
2. **Many Germans were exhausted and disillusioned by war so they were surrendering and deserting. There was a breakdown of discipline and mutinies were increasing.**
3. **In Germany there was an acute shortage of food, partly caused by another crop failure (half the potato crop had failed in late 1916) and also by the British blockade which cut off half the imported fertilizers and the 25% of imported food Germany relied on. Without fertilizers the crops were stunted and civilians went hungry so adults lost 20% of their body weight and by the end of the war 100s of 1000s starved to death.**
4. **There were also shortages of metals, coal and leather.**
5. **But the biggest fear was of revolution. Those troops who had served on the Eastern Front when the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917 fraternized with the Russians absorbing the Marxist ideas which had led to the Revolution.**

PICTURE 8: Russians & Germans fraternizing



Germany in 1918 was on the verge of collapse. Revolutionaries seized the Kaiser's Berlin palace and from there a soviet republic was proclaimed. Red flags and street barricades appeared all over the capital. Army discipline broke down. Soldiers ordered to the Front to fight, cut telegraph wires and sabotaged railway cars. Ludendorff and Hindenburg, knowing that the war was lost, cleverly manoeuvred a new civilian government into power, so that the opprobrium of surrender and defeat would fall on it and not on the military

who had been so powerful under Kaiser Wilhelm II. In fact, it was Ludendorff and Hindenburg who virtually ran the government.

PICTURE 9: Wilhelm II (1859-1941) (reigned 1861-1918)



Realising that all was lost, the Kaiser abdicated and went into exile in the Netherlands which had stayed neutral during the war. After the war, the Allies wanted to extradite him and try him as a war criminal, but the Dutch refused to hand him over and he died in exile during World War II.

PICTURE 10: Cartoon of Kaiser and son in Holland



The Imperial government of Germany was replaced by the Weimar Republic, so called because that was the site of the constitutional assembly which created the new democratic government which lasted until 1933. It failed because it was too democratic leading to fragmented political parties with too many elections which did not solve the basic problems which is why today, though Angela Merkel battled to form a coalition government, there was great reluctance to hold another election so soon after the last one. And right from the beginning conservatives and royalists held aloof while radical socialists and communists rebelled against its authority. And they were not the only ones

PICTURE 11: Hitler and Ludendorff

In 1923 Hitler and Ludendorff joined forces in an attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic. Hitler, then an unknown Austrian ex-corporal, was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment where he dictated the first volume of his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*. The organisation that Hitler joined and Ludendorff supported was the German Worker's party, one of many little malcontent movements in Germany at that time. It was later rechristened the National Socialist German Workers' Party, better known as the Nazi party which was anti-Semitic, anti-Communist and anti-parliamentary. Hitler and the Nazis were 10 years later to overthrow the Weimar Republic and undo the peace settlement of 1919.

Despite the fact that the Weimar Republic was not responsible for the war, Germany's hope of negotiating a satisfactory peace was thwarted by the hatred of the Allies, largely caused by Allied propaganda. Cartoons, drawings and posters showed a giant German soldier with children spiked on his bayonet, the Kaiser cavorting with a skeleton and 3 pigs in spiked German helmets laughing over a woman's body. German soldiers were accused of atrocities such as bayoneting Belgian babies, hacking off people's hands, crucifying peasants by nailing them to their front doors. When it was revealed that none of this was true, later true accounts of Nazi atrocities and extermination camps were simply not believed. However, the fact that Germany continued with its unrestrained submarine warfare even as it was suing for an armistice, did increase hatred of Germany.

But World War I broke barriers of what had been considered impossible in war e.g. the use of poison gas, German submarine warfare on neutral ships (which had led America to intervene when her ships were torpedoed), indiscriminate bombing of cities and the Turkish genocide of Armenians.

PICTURE 12: David Lloyd George (1863-1945, Prime Minister 1918-1922)



In addition David Lloyd George had just won the election a month after the Armistice by promising to make Germany pay for the war. The election produced a number of slogans e.g. *Make Germany Pay* and *The junkers will cheat you yet* which were part of a campaign of hate against Germany. However Britain had achieved its main objective with the surrender of the German fleet which was scuttled at Scapa Flow

Negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles began between the Allies. Germany, Austria and Hungary were excluded.

PICTURE13 : Big 4 of the Allies Google photo in Treaty of Versailles



Orland Lloyd George Clemenceau Wilson
Italy Britain France America

The Big 4 of the Allies were the USA, Britain, France and Italy, but in practice it was the Big 3 : President Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George of Britain and Georges Clemenceau of France. And because Italy even though she was on the winning side, did not get what she wanted from the negotiations i.e. the Dalmatian coast and the port of Fiume, 3 years later Italian anger led to the dictatorship of Mussolini, so in World War II Italy sided with Germany.

PICTURE 14: Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929, premier 1906-9 & 1917-20)



Clemenceau having seen France invaded by Germans twice in his lifetime was determined to weaken Germany as much as possible so insisted on

PICTURE15 : Writing

- 1. Demilitarisation of the Rhineland**
- 2. A Mandate over the Saar as compensation for the destruction of French coal mines.**
- 3. As Northern France had been devastated in the war and as France had the heaviest casualties of the Allies, she insisted on reparations.**
- 4. Anglo-American support against any future German aggression.**

But as America did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles, the latter was a dead letter.

John Maynard Keynes, the great British economist, said it was French policy to put the clock back by undoing all that Germany had achieved since its unification in 1870 which France had opposed, so the unification was only achieved by Prussia defeating France. And the German Empire was proclaimed in Versailles - a calculated humiliation of France

Britain also supported the French demand for reparations though in practice she had suffered little damage and had achieved her main objective by the surrender of the German fleet. British policy then diverged from the French position and Britain began to see Germany as a bulwark against Soviet Russia.

In June 1919 the Allies threatened to resume the war if Germany did not sign the Treaty presented to her. The Weimar government wanted certain articles withdrawn. But secret consultations with the German High Command revealed that Germany was no longer able to fight, so faced with the threat of an Allied invasion within 24 hours if Germany did not sign, she did so on 28 June 1919 which was the 5th anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, who had been encouraged and given weapons by Serbia. When Austria declared war on Serbia, Germany followed suit because of its close alliance to Austria.

What Germany objected to in the Treaty of Versailles were

PICTURE 16 : Writing

- 1. She was named as solely responsible for starting the war**
- 2. She alone was blamed for war crimes**
- 3. The union of Germany and Austria was prohibited**

PICTURE 17: Writing

Germany's losses in the Treaty of Versailles

- 1. 65,000km² of territory**
- 2. 7 million people**
- 3. All she had gained from Russia by the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, a particularly harsh treaty imposed on Russia which Lenin signed in order to safeguard the Revolution.**
- 4. Alsace-Lorraine (won by Germany in 1870) to be returned to France**
- 5. German colonies became League of Nations mandates under Allied control :**
 - 5.1 German South West Africa (now Namibia) under South African Mandate**
 - 5.2 German East Africa (now Tanzania) under British Mandate**
 - 5.3 In East Japan got control of German island colonies north of equator**
 - 5.4 South of equator Australia received mandate for German colonies except for**
 - 5.5 German Samoa which went to New Zealand.**
- 6. The Polish Corridor created to give Poland access to the sea with Poland gaining 51,800 km² from Germany**

PICTURE 18 : Map of Polish Corridor



In addition Germany had to demobilize, leaving her with an army of 100,000 men. She was also prohibited from buying arms so throughout the period of the Weimar Republic the German army was forced to train using wooden tanks

PICTURE 19: Training with wooden tanks World War II p 16



The German General Staff was supposed to be dissolved, but in reality it was disestablished and hidden from the Allies. In addition, Germany and the Soviet Union, both pariah nations made secret agreements whereby German soldiers were trained in Russia so the German army supposedly limited to 100,000 had plenty of reserves.

In addition, Germany had to accept responsibility for losses and damages caused by war as a consequence of the aggression of Germany and her Allies, so Germany had to pay reparations fixed at 20 million gold marks in gold, ships, commodities, etc. The money was also meant to pay for the Allied occupation of Germany and buy raw materials and food for Germany.

John Maynard Keynes said that *'the campaign for securing out of Germany the general costs of the war was one of the most serious acts of political unwisdom for which our statesmen have ever been responsible.'*

The German economy was so weak that only a small percentage of reparations was paid in gold. The hyperinflation that followed was partly caused by the reparations - and there are suspicions that the German government may have connived at the hyperinflation so that the sum the Allies got was a worthless fraction of what they demanded.

But the effect of hyperinflation on the German population was catastrophic

PICTURE 20: Inflation p 14 World War II



In 1923 these banknotes worth billions of marks might have been enough to buy a loaf of bread. But German inability to pay reparations led to a Franco-Belgian invasion of the Saar which contained much of the heavy industry of Germany.

A currency reform in 1925 and the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops marked a big improvement in the German economy.

PICTURE21 : Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934. President 1925-34)



The great war hero, much admired and venerated, became President in 1925 Then in October 1929 the New York stock market crashed ushering in the world-wide Great

Depression. By 1930 3 million Germans were out of work; 2 years later the number was 6 million. With Germany unable to pay reparations, the Allies once again sent troops into the Saar to punish her

In September 1930 new elections were called and the moderate-conservative members of the Weimar assembly were replaced by radicals from the political left and right

PICTURE 22 : Writing

- 1. Communists increased their share of the vote from 3,263,000 in 1928 to 4,600,000**
- 2. National Socialists (Nazis) went up from 810,000 to 6,410,000**
- 3. July 1932 election led to 230 Nazi delegates up from 108 in 1928.**

Hindenburg was dying but was determined not let the Communists rule Germany, and though he despised Hitler as a person, he felt that the Nazis were the lesser of 2 evils so

PICTURE 23: Hitler



by 1933 Hitler was in power and on the death of Hindenburg he became President and immediately set about dismantling the Treaty of Versailles - and the Allies did nothing to stop him by enforcing the Treaty

PICTURE 24: Writing

- 1. March 1935 compulsory military conscription introduced in Germany.**
- 2. March 1936 Germany reoccupied the demilitarized Rhineland**
- 3. March 1936 Germany annexed Austria (Anschluss)**

But Germany was not the only defeated country to feel victimised by the post-war treaties. In June 1920 the Kingdom of Hungary, one of the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was forced to sign the Treaty of Trianon which up to the 21st century is still regarded in Hungary as '*the greatest tragedy to have befallen Hungary since the battle of Mohacs 1526*' when Hungary was defeated by the Ottomans and incorporated into their Empire.

PICTURE 25 : Writing

- 1. Hungary became a land-locked state of 93.073 km² - 28% less than its pre-war size.**
- 2. 31% of ethnic Hungarians allocated to other states i.e. Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia have both broken up. Czechoslovakia peacefully into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, whereas Yugoslavia had an ugly and bloody civil war.**
- 3. Austro-Hungarian navy, air force and army disbanded.**

One of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points was that the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire should be given the opportunity for autonomous development, but Britain and France ignored that so not surprisingly Hungary in World War II fought on the side of the Axis forces. Another of Wilson's 14 Points deliberately flouted by Britain and France was the one stating that the Turkish part of the Ottoman Empire should be given sovereignty and all the other nationalities be given the opportunity for autonomous development. In a secret agreement (which itself flouted Wilson's very first point that there should be no secret treaties) the British diplomat, Mark Sykes and his French counterpart, François-Georges Picot, made a secret agreement to divide up the Ottoman Empire between Britain and France.

PICTURE 26: map of British and French mandates in Eastern Mediterranean



After the war, the **Sykes-Picot agreement** was adopted and Britain and France were given mandates to rule the following areas :

Britain : Palestine and Iraq

France : Syria and Lebanon.

No attention was paid to ethnic or religious differences or the wishes of the people themselves, so that the Kurds remain the 14th largest ethnic group with no homeland of their own but live in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Armenia and have proved sources of trouble in many areas and are regarded as terrorists in Turkey. The current wars in Syria and Iraq are a direct result of the Sykes-Picot accord - if only Woodrow Wilson's 14 points had been followed. Iraq was cobbled together by the British out of 3 Ottoman provinces with an unstable population of Shia and Sunni Moslems and Kurds, the 4th biggest ethnic population but without a homeland of their own, The French enlarged Lebanon to include more Muslims leaving only a bare majority of Maronite Christians.

Another major flashpoint in the region is, of course, Israel and Palestine - stemming from the Balfour Declaration in World I., a letter written by Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community on 2 November 1917 for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland.

PICTURE 27: Writing

His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object. It being clearly understood that nothing shall be done to prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

At the time this was written Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire which had not yet been defeated. And Jews were only 3 - 5% of the total population of Palestine. After the war Britain was given the Mandate to administer Palestine and with the Nazis ruling Germany found herself overwhelmed by the inflow of Jews escaping from persecution and the Holocaust. Arabs today are resentful of the fact that their civil rights have not been respected and the illegal Jewish settlements are spreading, leaving them with less territory and making it even more difficult to find peace based on a 2-state solution. Of course, it doesn't help their cause that they are divided into 2 warring groups - Fatah and Hamas. And Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the American Embassy there has sparked more violence and controversy.

When, how and if peace will come to the Middle East is anyone's guess But there is no doubt that the Sikes-Picot Agreement is the root cause of all the conflict. The jihadist group ISIL claimed that one of its aims was to reverse the effects of the Sykes-Picot agreement.

Equally there is no doubt that the peace treaties, especially the Treaty of Versailles led to the birth of Fascism and Nazism which led to World War II.

France in an effort to restrain Germany signed treaties of mutual protection with all the new states in Eastern Europe so over-extended herself. But she was correct in estimating that war would break out in Eastern Europe. It was the Nazi-Soviet Pact to attack Poland and divide it up which triggered off World War II.

What is striking about World War I and the peace treaties that followed is the disparity between purpose and achievement. The Allies did not seek to destroy the Hapsburg Empire or the Ottoman Empire or create new states in Europe and the Arab world or establish a Jewish national home. Their one aim was to destroy German militarism, which they failed to do. The biggest gains from World War I went to the semi-belligerents and non-belligerents. USA became the greatest economic power in the world and Japan won political ascendancy in China as well as new economic and naval power in the Pacific and in World War II was allied to the Axis forces of Germany and Italy.

So the treaties signed after World War I did not lead to peace as the victors had hoped but the following cartoon shows that even at the time not everyone believed that they would.

PICTURE 28: Cartoon



Clemenceau: "Curious! I seem to hear a child weeping"