
CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT THE FOURTEEN POINTS

In a speech to Congress in January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson presented a list of proposals, known as the Fourteen Points, that he believed would bring World War I to an end. Further, he believed that if these proposals were put into effect, the causes of future wars would be removed. Most of the warring nations eagerly accepted the Fourteen Points as the basis for negotiations to end the war. However, the final peace terms were much harsher than Wilson's proposals. As you read Wilson's proposals, think about how the Fourteen Points would foster world peace.

I. Open covenants [solemn agreements] of peace, openly arrived at; diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation of the seas alike in peace and war, except as the seas may be closed by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. An absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based on the principle that the interests of the population must have equal weight with the claims of the government.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and the independent determination by Russia of her own political development and national policy.

VII. Belgium must be evacuated and restored to power as a free nation.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine should be righted.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be

effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary should be accorded the freest opportunity of independent development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured independence, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of independent development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence to great and small states alike.

Adapted from Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 6th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958).

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Summarize the intent of (a) Wilson's first five points and (b) points VI through XIII.
2. Do you think President Wilson was a realist or an idealist? Explain, using examples from the speech.
3. Which of the Fourteen Points refer to problems or situations that still concern the world today?

Worksheet 65

The Peace Settlement: Analyzing a Primary Source

During the peace conference at Versailles, Germany sent notes to the Allies asking for a lenient settlement. In June 1919, the Allies drew up a response to the Germans. The following selection is adapted from the Allied message to Count Brockdorff, head of the German delegation at Versailles. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.

In the view of the Allies, the war which began on August 1, 1914, was the greatest crime against humanity that any nation calling itself civilized has ever committed.

Germany's responsibility, however, is not confined to having planned and started the war. It is also responsible for the savage and inhuman manner in which it was conducted.

The conduct of Germany is almost unexampled in human history. The terrible responsibility which lies at its door can be seen in the fact that no less than seven million dead lie buried in Europe.

Justice, therefore, is the only possible basis for the settlement of this terrible war. Justice is what the German delegation asks for and what Germany has been promised. Justice is what Germany shall have. But it must be justice for all. There must be justice for those who have died to free Europe from Prussian despotism. There must be justice for the people who stagger under huge war debts so that liberty might be saved. There must be justice for those millions whose homes and lands, ships and property German savagery has destroyed.

Part I

1. What do you think was the purpose of the Allied message to the German delegation? _____

2. How do the Allies justify a severe peace settlement? _____

3. How do the terms of the Versailles Treaty reflect the ideas expressed in this message? _____

Part II

Place a check next to those statements with which the writers of the message would probably agree.

- ___ 1. The Allies and the Central Powers bear equal blame for starting the war.
- ___ 2. The Allies should avoid making a peace settlement that would inflame German resentment.
- ___ 3. Germany should pay for the cost of the war.
- ___ 4. Germany should be deprived of its colonies.
- ___ 5. The Allies should exclude Germany from the peace settlement negotiations.