

Magadh Mahila College

Patna University, Patna

HISTORY

B.A. – I

PAPER – IV

RISE OF MODERN WEST

Unit – 11

**Topic: - Criticism of the Treaty of
Versailles**

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Criticism of the Treaty of Versailles

The hope that the Treaty of Versailles would be based on equality, Justice and fair play was belied. The aim of "making the world safe for democracy" was not realized, because the treaty-makers humiliated and insulted Germany, a country, populated by proud, honourable and very intelligent people. They were sooner or later bound to revolt against the derogatory clauses of the treaty. Hence the Treaty of Versailles was not expected to maintain peace for long in spite of the reduction in armaments, demilitarized zones and heavy reparation. A resurrected Germany would demand peace with honour. The Treaty of Versailles was supposed to usher in an era of peace, but from the very beginning it had obnoxious germs of future warfare.

Demerits

(1) The Treaty was unduly harsh to a Republican Germany. Having overthrown the Imperialist Government, she deserved milder terms. The attitude of the allies, particularly of France, was rather vindictive as was shown by her demand of the Rhine frontier and heavy reparation.

(2) Germany could bear the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, but she could never reconcile herself to her eastern frontier. German national self-respect could never tolerate the separation of East Prussia from the mainland of Germany by the Polish 'corridor'. It was an outrage on her national honour and she was bound to upset this provision of the Treaty in the long run.

(3) To hand over a few million Germans of Sudetenland to Czechoslovakia was unjust and unfair and had the seeds of future strife in it.

(4) She was subjected to great humiliation by the reduction of her armaments and the restrictions on her General Staff.

(5) The imposition of reparations was contrary to the terms of the armistice and the heavy amount that Germany was expected to pay would have completely ruined her. The exorbitant demands of the allies in this respect naturally roused bitter

indignation in Germany and finally forced her to repudiate her financial obligations.

(6) The allies disarmed Germany and her allies, but failed to agree upon a scheme of general disarmament. Hence after a full, the race for armaments went on.

(7) Austria by her reduction in size and population became a poor State economically and no provision was made for her economic development, She was forbidden to unite with Germany.

(8) Russia had played an important part in the early stages of the war. Therefore an understanding should have been reached with Bolshevik Russia.

(9) The ambitions of Italy and Yugoslavia in the Adriatic Zone and of Greece in Turkey did not augur well for peace.

Merits.

(1) The establishment of national states in Central and South-Eastern Europe on the principle of 'self-determination' was a grand achievement and fulfilled the aspirations of the subject races of the Emperor and the Porte.

(2) The holding of plebiscites in disputed areas was a welcome device to adjust frontiers according to the wishes of the people.

(3) The introduction of the Mandatory System was a great improvement on the past practice of out-right annexation by the victors. It caused less heart burning among the vanquished states and ensured the development of colonies in the interests of the people themselves.

(4) Minorities in states like Czechoslovakia and Poland were guaranteed protection by special treaties.

(5) The establishment of the League of Nations, to settle international disputes, might ensure peace in the future provided the small and great Powers worked in a spirit of cooperation and amity.

The Peace of Versailles marked the end of an era of international rivalry and hostility, like the Vienna Settlement of 1815. Would the peace promised by it last longer than the one established after the downfall of Napoleon? Only the future could answer the question! The contemporary verdict on the Treaty might be summed up in the following words: "The statement had not been equal to the grandeur of events. They had made a peace which was no peace?"

Suggested Readings:-

1. Meenakshi Phukan : Rise of Modern West
2. G. Clark : Early Modern Europe
3. Raghubir Dayal : Modern European History
4. Jain and Mathur : World History (1500 – 1950)
5. G.M. Trevelyan : Social History of England
6. Parthsarathi Gupta (ed.) : आधुनिक पश्चिम का उदय
7. लाल बहादुर वर्मा : आधुनिक यूरोप का इतिहास
