

consideration—the fear that they no longer had the capacity to impose their will on Germany especially if protracted negotiations opened up. The Allied leaders had gloomy conversations with their military experts about what would happen if Germany refused to sign its treaty. Foch prepared a plan to strike simultaneously into Bavaria and across the Rhine, where the Allies held the bridgeheads, toward Berlin. But he warned that the German resistance might be bitter and Allied losses high.

During those long months, views of the war, ultimately very influential ones, were starting to take root in Germany. The High Command and its supporters argued that Germany's armies could have fought on if only certain unpatriotic elements on the home front—left-wingers, for example, or Jews—had not stabbed them in the back. Although many of those who supported the new republic did not subscribe to the stab-in-the-back myth, they also came to share the view that Germany had not lost the war on the battlefields at all. Rather, the German government, in an attempt to save all combatants from further loss and destruction, had wisely, even nobly, asked for an armistice. And Woodrow Wilson had promised, had he not, that Germany would be treated justly by the Allies.

The German government approached the peace negotiations with some optimism. It expected that the customary negotiations would take place in Paris. During the winter and early spring of 1918-19, the Foreign Ministry prepared detailed studies of every aspect of what it expected to discuss in Paris. When the German delegation was finally summoned to Paris in May 1919, it brought with it crates full of materials. The German delegates were shocked by their reception. On their arrival in Paris, they were put in a third-rate hotel surrounded by barbed wire and guards, so it was said, for their own protection. At a brisk ceremony in the Trianon Palace Hotel near Versailles, Clemenceau handed them the terms and told them that they had two weeks to enter any comments in writing. There were to be no negotiations. The shock among the delegates and back in Germany was profound. The Germans felt betrayed. When they looked at the terms themselves they were horrified.