

The Versailles Treaty: Military Clauses (June 28, 1919)

Abstract

Although the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were considered too harsh and unjust by both German politicians and the public, the Reichstag was forced to agree to the treaty after a long and controversial debate, in the face of the threat of an Allied invasion and the continued blockade of sea transport. This excerpt from the Treaty of Versailles contains the articles that determined the strength and structure of the German military after the war. These included the abolition of compulsory military service and the limitation of the army to 100,000 soldiers. An Inter-Allied Military Control Commission (IMKK) was to monitor compliance with the disarmament provisions. The severe restrictions were interpreted by conservative and right-wing nationalist spokesmen in particular as an attempt by the Entente powers to keep Germany permanently defenseless, so that it would be at the mercy of France's expansionist ambitions in particular. However, the Reichswehr violated these provisions from the outset by collecting and hiding existing weapons and supporting the so-called "black Reichswehr," an illegal paramilitary organization, with weapons, money and military training.

Source

CHAPTER I.

EFFECTIVES AND CADRES OF THE GERMAN ARMY.

Article 159.

The German military forces shall be demobilized and reduced as prescribed hereinafter.

Article 160.

1. By a date which must not be later than March 31, 1920, the German Army must not comprise more than seven divisions of infantry and three divisions of cavalry.

After that date the total number of effectives in the Army of the States constituting Germany must not exceed one hundred thousand men, including officers and establishments of depots. The Army shall be devoted exclusively to the maintenance of order within the territory and to the control of the frontiers.

The total effective strength of officers, including the personnel of staffs, whatever their composition, must not exceed four thousand.

2. Divisions and Army Corps headquarters staffs shall be organised in accordance with Table No. I annexed to this Section.

The number and strengths of the units of infantry, artillery, engineers, technical services and troops laid down in the aforesaid Table constitute maxima which must not be exceeded.

The following units may each have their own depot:

An Infantry regiment;

A Cavalry regiment;

A regiment of Field Artillery;

A battalion of Pioneers.

3. The divisions must not be grouped under more than two army corps headquarters staffs.

The maintenance or formation of forces differently grouped or of other organisations

for the command of troops or for preparation for war is forbidden.

The Great German General Staff and all similar organisations shall be dissolved and may not be reconstituted in any form.

The officers, or persons in the position of officers, in the Ministries of War in the different States in Germany and in the Administrations attached to them, must not exceed three hundred in number and are included in the maximum strength of four thousand laid down in the third sub-paragraph of paragraph (1) of this Article.

Article 161.

Army administrative services consisting of civilian personnel not included in the number of effectives prescribed by the present Treaty will have such personnel reduced in each class to one-tenth of that laid down in the Budget of 1913.

Article 162.

The number of employees or officials of the German States, such as customs officers, forest guards and coastguards, shall not exceed that of the employees or officials functioning in these capacities in 1913.

The number of gendarmes and employees or officials of the local or municipal police may only be increased to an extent corresponding to the increase of population since 1913 in the districts or municipalities in which they are employed.

These employees and officials may not be assembled for military training.

Article 163.

The reduction of the strength of the German military forces as provided for in Article 160 may be effected gradually in the following manner:

Within three months from the coming into force of the present Treaty the total number of effectives must be reduced to 200,000 and the number of units must not exceed twice the number of those laid down in Article 160.

At the expiration of this period, and at the end of each subsequent period of three months, a Conference of military experts of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers will fix the reductions to be made in the ensuing three months, so that by March 31, 1920, at the latest the total number of German effectives does not exceed the maximum number of 100,000 men laid down in Article 160. In these successive reductions the same ratio between the number of officers and of men, and between the various kinds of units, shall be maintained as is laid down in that Article.

Source: The Treaty of Peace with Germany, June 28, 1919, *International Law Documents*. Naval War College, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920, pp. 18–21.

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