**Eye Witnesses to Peace 1918-20: Primary Sources from LSE Archives – Teachers Notes**

An education resource focusing on individuals who witnessed the aftermath of the First World War in Britain and Europe and tried to improve the fragile peace through documents from LSE Archives, including the Women’s Library Collection. These notes and presentation cover ‘Peace-making’ and the formation of The League of Nations for the early part of the ‘inter-war years 1918-1939’ topic at GCSE level, with extra content that can be adapted for A Level. A Level and / or Citizenship sections are marked in orange.

Presented within contextual information about the background of the armistice, the Paris Peace Treaty and the formation of the League of Nations, primary sources are presented alongside the story of the person whose archive it belongs to: Beatrice Webb, Eglantyne Jebb, Charles Kingsley Webster, Catherine Marshall and Rachel Crowdy. These five eye witnesses were all involved either in witnessing the painstaking process of agreeing a settlement for the war in the peace conferences, attempting to improve conditions for people after the war or trying to ensure that this was the ‘war to end all wars’ through a lasting peace.

The resource is linked to sections on the League of Nations in the *Giving Peace a Chance: From the League of Nations to Greenham Common* exhibition at LSE Library 4 January – 17 April 2019, which were curated by Professor David Stevenson, LSE International History.

Italics within the text denote extra information to the slide or ideas for questions / activity.

**Armistice [Slide]**

Armistice means a break in armed conflict while both sides negotiate peace. The armistice at the end of World War One on 11 November 1918 was officially a cessation of fighting but became the end of most armed conflict.

**The main events that led to Armistice [Slide]**

By the 3 November 1918 the German allies of Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire, the Astro-Hungarian Empire had all agreed to an armistice. Germany had been in negotiations with America and then the British and French about an armistice since 4 October 1918, however fighting on the western front was continuing as the Allies advanced from the Western Front.

On 3 November German sailors mutinied at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. A maritime blockade had contributed to hunger across Germany (and Austria), in part leading to strikes and riots. In addition, the influenza epidemic killed 100,000s of people; an estimated one million German soldiers became ill with flu in July and August 1918.

*A German delegation led Matthias Erzberger, a Centre Party elected official, arrived at the mobile HQ of Marshall Fochs in a forest near the Western Front on 8 November, the day after a Republic had been declared. The conditions of the armistice for Germany imposed by the allies were harsh, including not ceasing the blockade until a full peace treaty was signed.*

On 9 November Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and leaders of the German military advised Erzberger to try to get concessions but to sign the armistice if necessary. By early morning 11 November 1918, the armistice was signed and came into effect at 11am the same day.

**Peace in Europe? [Slide]**

At 11am on 11 November 1918, war finally ended on the Western Front. War had officially ended on many of the other fronts but in some areas, cessation of the main war had meant a descent into smaller nationalist or civil wars. Robert Gerwarth writes that:

‘As civil wars overlapped with revolutions, counter revolutions and border conflicts between emerging states without clearly defined frontiers or internationally recognised governments, ‘post-war’ Europe between the official ending of the Great War in 1918 and the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923 was the most violent place on the planet.’ (Gerwarth, 2016: 7)

*Can use this passage to ask questions such as ‘why do you think the continued wars are not remembered so much in Britain?’, ‘Why is there a focus on 11 November?’ etc*

**Beatrice Webb (1858 - 1943): Eye Witness [Slide]**

Beatrice Webb was a sociologist, social reformer and a founder of the London School of Economics (LSE). Like many of the social scientists and economists based at LSE, Webb was invited to assist the government with war and post war social planning.

In 1917 she was appointed by Lloyd George to Reconstruction Committee, to consider post-war social problems. In 1918 Beatrice was also a member of Committee on Women in Industry and produced minority report in favour of equal pay.

Beatrice kept a lengthy diary that, due to her connections and work, is a rich source of evidence to historians.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/about-lse/lse-leading-women/biographies/beatrice-webb>

**Beatrice Webb, Diary Entry on 11 November 1918 [Slide]**

Peace! London to-day is a pandemonium of noise and revelry, soldiers, and flappers being most in evidence. Multitudes are making all the row they can, and in spite of depressing fog and steady rain, discords of sound and struggling, rushing beings and vehicles fill the streets. Paris, I imagine, will be more spontaneous and magnificent in its rejoicing. Berlin, also, is reported to be elated, having got rid not only of the war, but also of its oppressors.

The peoples are everywhere rejoicing. Thrones are everywhere crashing and the men of property are everywhere secretly trembling. ‘A biting wind is blowing for the cause of property’, writes an Austrian journalist. How soon will the tide of revolution catch up with the tide of victory? That is a question which is exercising Whitehall and Buckingham Palace and which is causing anxiety even among the more thoughtful democrats. Will it be six months or a year?

[https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:vat325giy/read/single#page/170/mode/2up](https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse%3Avat325giy/read/single#page/170/mode/2up)

*Can use this extract to recap on end of war: mixed elation and grief, the lengthy casualties, references to Paris (France had been partly occupied), in Berlin the Kaiser had resigned. Armistice was after the fall of land empires: Prussian / all German royal families, Austro-Hungary collapsed, Ottoman Empire lost the Middle East front and Russian revolution in 1917. Within Allies, strikes in factories in Britain, earlier mutinies on front line in France and by some of the German army in late 1918. Explain property / capitalism / class enforced status quo etc. . .*

**Source Exercise [Slide]**

Historical comprehension questions, e.g.:

Who is Beatrice Webb referring to as Berlin’s / the German peoples’ ‘oppressors’?

What does she mean by ‘property’?

Why are there concerns about ‘revolution’ and why are ‘men of property trembling’?

From reading this account, what challenges do you think there are in victory?

What ‘side’ do you think Beatrice Webb is on – the ‘men of property’ or revolution?

*Or simplify them to be about the source, primary evidence, Webb based in Britain during war, at heart of production line, a socialist – political bias? etc*

**11 November: Day of Remembrance [Slide]**

In 2018, on the centenary of the armistice, this extract from Beatrice Webb’s diary was read in Westminster Abbey in front of Queen Elizabeth II and His Excellency Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Why do you think this was? How important was it that the Heads of Britain and Germany attended the same commemoration?

*Or An unidentified soldier’s body was retrieved from the Western Front battlefield and laid to rest as the Unknown Warrior in 1920. Before the Armistice Day when this soldier was officially laid to rest in the Abbey, people queued for miles to lay flowers by his wooden coffin. Why do you think much of the service on 11 November 2018 concentrated on the Unknown Warrior?*

*Link to Citizenship / development of national rituals / community, e.g. the 2 minute silence was introduced in 1919.*

**The Blockade on Central Europe [Slide]**

Aftermath in Central Europe: the German delegation at the negotiations for the armistice desperately tried to call off the Allied maritime blockade as part of armistice. The Allies refused until a peace treaty had been signed.

The blockade, territory confusion and war as well as the influenza epidemic meant that there were starving populations in Germany, Austria, Poland and Russia.

Image: The Policy and Work of the Fight the Famine Council (LSE Archives: 7EJB/C/09)

The Fight the Famine Council (FFC) was an apolitical humanitarian attempt to save lives and was an example of internationalism, i.e. it operated across borders and appealed beyond nationalist sentiment.

**Eglantyne Jebb (1876-1926): Eye Witness [Slide]**

Eglantyne studied economics and wrote on social reform, mainly on agriculture and bridging social class divisions, in the 1900s.

During the First World War she supported her sister Dorothy Buxton in printing news of what was going in Germany, particularly highlighting the starvation the blockade was causing at the end of the war.

They both founded the Fight the Famine Council in 1919 with Lord Parmour, Kate Courtney and Marian Ellis.

Jebb later researched and published The Children’s Charter in 1923 for protecting the welfare of children across nations, which was adopted by the League of Nations the following year.

**Starving Children [Slide]**

The FFC distributed food and milk based on nutritional lines due to new understanding in food health and medicine. *This was pioneered by scientists such as Harriette Chick, who was sent to Vienna to investigate rickets and vitamin deficiency. William Beveridge was also sent by the British Government to report back on the true scale of the situation. Beveridge wrote that it was ‘calamitous’ and society was in breakdown in Vienna.* It was not just that there were shortages of food, but that there were shortages of protein and milk, which particularly affected children.

This report illustrates the issues created by the lack of milk cows in Germany. Source Image: 1919 Milk Shortage and Child Mortality in Germany. This report for the FFC illustrates the issues created by the lack of milk cows in Germany: doubled infant mortality, doubled fatal tuberculosis, a lack of medicine and ‘nourishing foods’ and mothers unable to breast feed.

The Save the Children Fund was formed from the FFC due to the amount of starving babies and children. The Fund operated an emotive campaign using photographs of emaciated infants to raise sympathy and money for the dying children of former enemies.

**Paris Peace Conference [Slide]**

January 1919 delegates from 32 countries met in Paris to agree the terms of the end of the First World War. The conference was dominated by David Lloyd George (Britain), Georges Clemenceau (France) and Woodrow Wilson (USA); they were known as the ‘Big Three’. These three leaders representing their countries wanted very different outcomes from the peace negotiations.

* Lloyd George wanted to keep the British Empire intact with British domination of the sea.
* Clemenceau wanted reparations from and revenge on Germany.
* Wilson had published 14 points for a lasting peace that promised to rebuild Europe, independence for colonised peoples and new forms of international cooperation. Wilson, however, did not have political control of the legislative bodies of the USA.

There were enormous amounts of officials and documents involved in this process.

**Charles Kingsley Webster (1886-1961): Eye Witness**

Image: This photograph shows Webster third from the left at the signing of the United Nations Charter, San Francisco, 26 June 1945.

In 1919 Webster was an assistant in the Military Section of the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. Having served in intelligence during the war, as a historian he had recently published The Congress of Vienna on the peace treaty after the Napoleonic Wars. His papers give an insight into the fraught negotiations going on in 1919.

Webster later became a professor at LSE and was integral to the British government’s preparations for the United Nations during the Second World War.

**Woodrow Wilson’s 14 points**

*After the conference stalled in March 1919, Lloyd George persuaded Clemenceau to agree to the League of Nations and not to destroy Germany and persuaded Wilson to agree to a War Guilt Clause for Germany. This is known as the Fontainebleau Memorandum (25 March 1919).* Wilson’s 14 points included:

1. Setting up a League of Nations
2. Disarmament
3. Self-determination for the people of Europe – the right to rule themselves
4. Freedom for colonised peoples
5. Freedom of the seas
6. Free trade

He conceded most of the points to keep the League of Nations, even conceding the War Guilt Clause which he hated as it explicitly blamed Germany for the war. *Both Britain and France wanted to retain their colonies and Britain wanted control of the seas, while France was insistent on the ‘War Guilt Clause’.*

**Response of Germany**

Germany thought that the terms of the peace treaty would be based on Wilson’s ‘fourteen points’ not the harsh terms of the armistice. The victorious allies based the negotiations on the terms of the armistice. The Germans were humiliated, in the midst of political upheaval and economic turmoil, with their people starving. There was also a disconnect between the situation for the army in the frontline and the domestic situation at home.

Image: Translation of the German response to the draft Treaty of Peace (LSE Archives Webster/3/10).

This was the response of the German delegation to the Treaty in May 1919, but they were given no option for negotiation. On 28 June 1919, the delegates met at the Palace of Versailles near Paris. The treaty was signed in the Hall of Mirrors and two German delegates were forced to sign. Questions re. Source.

**The Key Terms of the Treaty of Versailles**

There were 440 terms in the treaty with Germany. These were:

Territorial

* Lands in eastern Germany were given to Poland
* The Alsace-Lorraine region returned to France
* Germany was forbidden to unite with Austria
* The coal mining area of the Saar was given to France for 15 years.

Military

* Germany was not allowed an air force, the navy was restricted to six battleships and no submarines, and only 100,000 men in its army.

Financial

* Pay 132 billion marks in reparations

Punishment

* Accept all responsibility for loss and damage caused by the war
* Not allowed to join the League of Nations

**Treaties with German Allies**

Four other treaties were made with the countries that had been allied with Germany during the war. These were Turkey, Hungary, Austria and Bulgaria.

All the terms were based on those in the Treaty of Versailles: disarmament, a set amount of reparations, lost land and new countries formed out of land they conceded.

This is the end of a letter from Lieutenant Colonel W. L. G. Twiss, to Charles Webster after he had was working at the University of Liverpool. Twiss was negotiating with Austrians in Paris in what would become known as the Treaty of Saint Germaine (10 September 1919).

Image: Letter from Twiss to Webster, 28 August 1919, Paris. LSE Archives Webster/1/3:

Well I must to bed. How is the history progressing? Don’t forget to bring out our success in getting the Huns fed, and having a few reasonable modifications made to the peace treaty.

(Transcript)

**Opinions about the Treaty**

It is good reason that Germans hated the treaty. Opinion about it was even divided in Britain. Lloyd George thought it was too harsh and predicted another war. Historian David Reynolds has argued that ‘It was a messy compromise between the Big Three.’

In 1919, our eye witness, Charles Webster was writing an essay for A History of the Peace Conference of Paris (published 1920-1924), which was edited by the diplomatic historian Harold W. V. Temperley. This is a section from Temperley’s ‘Instruction to authors’; he singles out the treaty as establishing law and internationalism:

* Does Temperley have a point?
* Can you see any issues with writing a historical account of the Treaty so close to 1919?
* As a historian looking at the Treaty today, what would those issues be?

**The League of Nations**

The League of Nations was one of US President’s Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen points to create a ‘world safe for democracy’. Wilson conceded almost every point to get the League established. However, the American Senate blocked the USA from joining the League of Nations.

The League was set up for nations to solve their differences through discussion rather than armed conflict.

Its aims were: to stop war, encourage disarmament and improve living conditions for people globally, through tackling disease and poverty.

The first meeting of the League in January 1920.

**Catherine Marshall (1880-1961): Eye Witness**

Catherine Marshall had been a suffragist, working for the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), based in Keswick in the 1900s. She was a pacifist and left the NUWSS over their support for the war in 1914.

Marshall helped to plan the Women’s International Congress – a peace conference – in Holland in 1915 but was not allowed to attend by the British government. She helped to found the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a pressure group for peace, disarmament and recognising women’s rights.

Image: The cover of A New Peace, *Report of the International Conference of Women at The Hague*, 7-9 December 1922, Catherine Marshall is on the left. LSE Archives: WILPF/5/8.

**Support for the League**

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) met in Zurich May 1919. At this meeting WILPF formally ‘regretted’ the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and condemned the continued blockade of Germany and Austria, as this report shows.

WILPF welcomed the establishment of the League of Nations. The Group set up an office in Geneva, where the League was based, to lobby and support it.

**Structure of the League**

Assembly: all member states could send three delegates to the assembly, though only one vote per member state. met once a year in Geneva. Emergency meetings. Decisions needed to be unanimous. 1920 – 42 members of the League of Nations.

Council – smaller decision-making body Britain, France, Italy and Japan with 4 non-permanent members that rotated every 3 years, later 6 in 1922, then 9 in 1926 and 11 in 1939. Met 4 times a year.

Catherine Marshall asked for the rules of procedure for the first League meeting in 1920. WILPF. She discovered that many of the meetings were ‘closed’ and so WILPF lobbied for greater transparency in the League with some success.

**Wider role of the League**

The League’s main role was to prevent armed conflict between countries and settle disputes through negotiation. However, it had a wider remit to promote disarmament, the raising of living standards and to protect human rights for men, women and children.

The Court of International Justice sat in The Hague with 15 judges from 15 different countries.

International Labour Organisation met once a year with a mandate to improve living and working conditions.

It monitored the administration of ‘mandate’ territories, former territories that had been part of the German or Ottoman Empire.

There were also a number of different League Bureaus to supervise the protection of refugees and other issues.

**Rachel Crowdy (1884-1964): Eye Witness**

Crowdy had trained as a nurse in the 1900s and joined the Voluntary Aid Detachments in 1911 and was in charge of the VADs in France of Belgium, an enormous administrative undertaking. In 1919 she was appointed to head the section on social issues at the League, which she did until 1931.

Crowdy was the only woman to head up a League bureau. She led respected international inquiries and set out measures to stop opium and women and children trafficking (slavery).

**Trafficking of women and children**

Image: Letter is from Rachel Crowdy in response to Alison Neilans**,** LSE Women’s Library Collection, LSE: 3AMS/B/11/.

Alison Neilans was the secretary of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH), a pressure group formed to protect women and children from rape, coercion, prostitution and sexual abuse. AMSH also pointed out the legal and cultural sexual double standards that were applied to women.

Crowdy is responding to Neilans’ concerns that the international legal agreements to stop and monitor examples of trafficking of women and children were not being applied by Britain and France in the Mandate territories in the Middle East.

**League of Nations Union**

In 1918 two internationalist societies formed to create the League of Nations Union and became a leading pressure group. The League and the Union was very popular in Britain and had over 400,000 members at its peak.

The League represented a utopian ideal for how to avoid war and encouraged disarmament. From a contemporary perspective, it is difficult to get a sense of how new this internationalist method of doing things was. The League and the Union directly influenced the formation of the United Nations in the closing stages of World War Two.

**Further Reading and Resources**

‘Making Peace’ in *The Great War 1914-18,* National Archives website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/greatwar/g5/> [accessed 19 December 2018]

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom website: <https://wilpf.org/wilpf/> [accessed 19 December 2018]

‘History of Save the Children’, Save the Children website: <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/our-history> [accessed 19 December 2018]

H M Government / Imperial War Museum (2018), *The Centenary of the Armistice. A National Service of Thanksgiving to mark the Centenary of the Armistice*, Programme available online [accessed 30 November 2018]: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/centenary-of-the-armistice-service-official-commemorative-programme>

David Reynolds (2019), ‘Did the Versailles Peace Trigger Another War?’, *BBC History Magazine*, January 2019, 31 – 36.

Robert Gerwarth (2016), *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917 – 1923*, London: Penguin Random House.

David Stevenson (2011), *With Our Backs to the Wall. Victory and Defeat in 1918*, London: Penguin Allen Lane.