

## Good Question!

# Why Is World War One Ending Just Now?

By *MAX FISHER* | September 29, 2010 11:12am



Readers of the U.K. Telegraph were likely surprised to open their paper today and find the headline, "[First World War Officially Ends](#)." Most of us learned in school that WWI ended either with the 1918 armistice agreement or the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. But the Telegraph points out that, technically, the war will not come to a formal conclusion until this Sunday, when Germany makes its final reparation payment. After surrendering, Germany was forced to sign a "war guilt" clause in the peace treaty that included a pledge to pay billions of Reichsmarks in reparations. Why is this just now happening and what does it mean?

- **Why Germany Never Paid** The Telegraph's [Allan Hall explains](#), "The initial sum agreed upon for war damages in 1919 was 226 billion Reichsmarks, a sum later reduced to 132 billion, £22 billion at the time. The bill would have been settled much earlier had Adolf Hitler not reneged on reparations during his reign. ... When the Wall Street Crash came in 1929, the Weimar Republic spiralled into debt. Four years later, Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany."
- **Actually, Germany Is Paying Early** Time's [Josh Sanburn explains](#), "With the Third Reich refusing to pay the reparations throughout the 1930s and '40s, some historians thought it might take a full century for Germany to fulfill its financial requirements under the treaty. But the German economy is on a remarkable upswing even amidst the global financial downturn. German GDP is forecast to grow at 3.3 percent this year, almost single-handedly driving European economic growth."
- **Versailles Led to Hitler's Rise** Outside the Beltway's [Doug Mataconis notes](#), "Of course, there are those who say that it was Versailles itself and the economic ruin and resentment it helped create in Weimar Germany that led to the rise of Nazism to begin with."
- **Proves Free Markets Could Have Defeated Hitler** Libertarian [Marian Tupy writes](#), "As Keynes rightly predicted, the unreasonably high French demands for financial reparations led to German economic weakness. The end result was hyperinflation, which was one of the principal causes of Hitler's rise to power and the start of the Second World War. In spite of losing two world wars, Germany did eventually become the most powerful nation in Europe — through trade, capitalism and German ingenuity."

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