

Read Doc A first and then look at the question at the bottom of the page

Doc A: Erich Ludendorff on the New German Government, February 1919

Germany's current state can only be attributed to its political leadership. Possessed, as they were, in favor of international and pacifist ideas, they did not realize that power in the hand of a strong government is the only means of securing the liberty and well-being of a people.

The parties and men who now held the reins of government belonged to those who, previously in Peace times, had worked to bring about the internal weakening of Germany. They were the parties and men ever ready for peace with their destructive, unstable mode of thinking, the men who doubted the power of the people of their own nation.

They tried to create a peace based on compromise; within, they sought to introduce the Parliamentary form of government, which would break the power of the Emperor and the princes of the land, so that they might put it into their own hands.

This ambition went hand in hand with the desire of pleasing Wilson. They did not tell themselves that what an enemy wants can only be bad for ourselves.

Government and Reichstag left the army in the lurch, and the political leadership did the same for the military commanders.

When the terrible conditions of Versailles became known in May, 1919, the democratic deputy, Conrad Haussman, who, in the session of October 17, 1918, as Secretary of State, had wanted to continue the struggle said: "Had our army, had our workmen known that peace would have looked that way, the army would not have laid down its arms; it would have held out."

The military command had warned the political leaders against disarmament, because, in its instinctive knowledge of the nature power and mode of thinking of the enemy, it had gauged with correctness what was to come.

The people followed their bad leaders - and "misleaders" - and rushed blindly to their fate. They could and would not, even now, listen to the military leaders, who knew the weaknesses of our enemies, and who had demanded, as the only possible measure for victory, the utmost resolution and exertions of a united people...In a spirit of abject servility they surrendered to the enemy.

Finally the political leadership disarmed the unconquered army and delivered over Germany to the destructive will of the enemy in order that it might carry through the revolution in Germany unhindered. That was the climax in the betrayal of the German people.

Thus was perpetrated the crime against the German nation. No political regime has ever committed anything worse. Not the enemy, but our political leadership broke down the power of our military command, and consequently of the nation - that power which was embodied in the officers' corps and in the army.

How do the following documents verify or refute Doc A?

Doc B
Colonel von Thaer: Excerpts of Diary Notes from October 1, 1918

Terrible and appalling! It is so! Indeed! As we were gathered together, Ludendorff stood up in our presence, his face was pale and filled with deep worry, but his head was still held high. A truly handsome Germanic hero figure...

He said roughly the following: It was his duty to tell us that our military condition was terribly serious. Any day now, our Western Front could be breached. He had had to report this to His Majesty the Kaiser recently.... Together with the General Field Marshal, he [Ludendorff] had answered that the Supreme Army Command and the German Army were at an end; the war could no longer be won, but rather an unavoidable and conclusive defeat awaited. Bulgaria had already been lost. Austria and Turkey, both at the end of their powers, would also soon fall. Our own Army had unfortunately also been heavily contaminated with the poison of Spartacus-socialist ideas, and the troops were, he said, no longer reliable. Since the 8th of August the situation had rapidly gotten worse. As a result, some troops had proven themselves so unreliable that they had had to be quickly pulled from the front. If they were replaced with other troops willing to fight, they would be received with the label "Strike breakers" and challenged not to fight anymore. He said he could not operate with divisions that were no longer reliable.

It was thus foreseeable, he went on to say, that the enemy in the near future, with the help of American troops anxious to fight, would succeed in a great victory, a breakthrough in grand fashion. As a result, the West Army would lose its last hold and retreat in full disbandment across the Rhein and carry the revolution back to Germany.

This catastrophe, he said, must be avoided by all means. For the cited reasons we could no longer allow ourselves to be beaten. Therefore, the Supreme Army Command demanded of His Majesty the Kaiser and of the Chancellor that a proposal for the bringing about of peace be made to President Wilson of America without delay, for bringing about an armistice on the basis of his 14 Points. He said he had never shied away from demanding the utmost from his troops. However, after clearly realizing that the continuation of the war was useless, he was of the opinion that an end needed to be found as quickly as possible in order not to unnecessarily sacrifice the most valiant people who were still loyal and able to fight.

It had been a terrible moment for him and for the Field Marshall to have to report this to the His Majesty the Kaiser and the Chancellor. The latter, Count Hertling, then informed His Majesty the Kaiser in a noble manner that he would then have to resign his office. After so many honorable years, as an old man, he could not and would not close out his life by tendering a petition for ceasefire. The Kaiser had accepted his petition for resignation....

Doc C

Count Detlef von Moltke on Kaiser Wilhelm II's Abdication, 29 October-11 November 1918

On the 2nd of November occurred the abdication of (Austro-Hungarian) Emperor Charles, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian front in Upper Italy.

On the 5th of November in the early morning we arrived in Spa. During the immediately following days we learned of the revolt in Kiel and of the demand of the Social Democrats for the abdication of the Emperor.

Railroad connection with Germany began to be irregular and broken. Soon it ceased altogether. No train crossing the Rhine. Telegraphic and telephonic connection with Berlin became difficult. It appeared to be under some sort of censorial control and confidential messages could no longer be trusted. Finally we had to have recourse to air service. Two airships flew to Berlin, but none returned.

I come now to the 9th of November, that day of greatest misfortune to our Fatherland. In the night or early morning the Chancellor, Prince Max, telegraphed that the Emperor must abdicate, otherwise the Cabinet could no longer remain, that the Social revolution was extending on all sides, and that the Social-Democrats could no longer hold the radicals under control.

It was also reported that the city and town officials in the large cities on the coast and in the western and southern portions of the Empire had assumed independent authority and that the Rhine and the great magazines of munitions and food along and east of this line had been seized by the Revolutionists.

Such was the situation when at 10 a.m. on that fateful day Hindenburg appeared before the Emperor. The matter first considered was whether it were possible to suppress the internal revolt by force of arms. The new Chief of Staff, General Groener, took the ground that there was in his opinion no prospect of success in such a move. The idea was given up because the Emperor was unwilling to shed the blood of his own countrymen in a fratricidal conflict. There was also the danger that the Revolutionists might stop the supplies to the army. They had threatened it and there were supplies for only a few days at the front.

.... It was further reported that Berlin was bathed in blood, that the troops forming the garrison had gone over to the Revolutionists and that only the immediate abdication of the Emperor could save the Fatherland from civil war.

Doc D

The Armistice Agreement of Nov. 10-11, 1918

I. Military Clauses on Western Front

Two - Immediate evacuation of invaded countries: Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, so ordered as to be completed within fourteen days from the signature of the armistice. German troops which have not left the above-mentioned territories within the period fixed will become prisoners of war.

... *Five* - Evacuation by the German armies of the countries on the left bank of the Rhine. The countries on the left bank of the Rhine shall be administered by the local troops of occupation. The occupation of these territories will be carried out by allied and United States garrisons...

II. Disposition Relative to the Eastern Frontiers of Germany

Twelve - All German troops at present in the territories which before belonged to Austria-Hungary, Rumania, Turkey, shall withdraw immediately within the frontiers of Germany as they existed on August First, Nineteen Fourteen.

...*Fifteen* - Renunciation of the treaties of Bucharest and Brest-Litovsk and of the supplementary treaties.

III. Clause Concerning East Africa

Seventeen - Evacuation by all German forces operating in East Africa within a period to be fixed by the Allies.

IV. General Clauses

Nineteen - The following financial conditions are required: Reparation for damage done. While such armistice lasts no public securities shall be removed by the enemy which can serve as a pledge to the Allies for the recovery or reparation for war losses...

V. Naval Conditions

Twenty-two - Surrender to the Allies and United States of all submarines (including submarine cruisers and all mine-laying submarines) now existing, with their complete armament and equipment, in ports which shall be specified by the Allies and United States. Those which cannot take the sea shall be disarmed of the personnel and material and shall remain under the supervision of the Allies and the United States...

Twenty-eight - In evacuating the Belgian coast and ports Germany shall abandon all port and river navigation material, all merchant ships, tugs, lighters, all naval aeronautic apparatus, material and supplies, and all arms, apparatus, and supplies of every kind.

VII. The Limit for Reply

Thirty-five - This armistice to be accepted or refused by Germany within seventy-two hours of notification.

This armistice has been signed the Eleventh of November, Nineteen Eighteen, at 5 o'clock French time.

F. FOCH, R. E. WEMYSS, ERZBERGER, A. OBERNDORFF, WINTERFELDT, VON SALOW.

Doc E:

President Ebert's Address to the Opening Session of the German Assembly, 7 February 1919

Ladies and gentlemen, it was the Imperial Government of Prince Max of Baden which began the armistice which made us defenceless. After the collapse of our allies, and in view of the military and economic situation, there was nothing else for it to do.

The revolution declines the responsibility for the misery into which the evils of the old autocracy, and the arrogance of the military threw the German people. (*Loud applause from the Socialists; protests from the Right.*)

It is also not responsible for our serious shortage of food. The fact that by the hunger blockade we have lost many hundreds of thousands of human lives - that hundreds of thousands of men, women, children, and aged people have fallen victims to it - disposes of the story that we could have managed with our food supplies if the revolution had not come.

Defeat and food shortage have handed us over to the enemy Powers. But not only we, but also our enemies, have been terribly exhausted by the war, and the feeling of exhaustion among our enemies springs from their effort to indemnify themselves at the cost of the German people, and the idea of exploitation is brought into the work of peace. These plans of revenge and oppression called for the sharpest protest. (*Loud applause from all sides.*)

The German people cannot be made the wage slaves of other nations for twenty, forty, or sixty years. (*Loud applause.*)

...In view of the misery of the masses of the peoples; in view of the mass misery on every side, the question of guilt seems almost small. Still, the German people is resolved itself to call to judgment all against whom deliberate guilt or deliberate baseness can be proved. But those ought not to be punished who themselves were victims - victims of the war, victims of our former lack of freedom.

To what end, on their own witness, did our enemies fight? To annihilate Kaiserism. Kaiserism exists no more. It is abolished forever. The very fact of this National Assembly proves it.

According to their solemn proclamation, our enemies fought "for justice, freedom, and a permanent peace," but so far the armistice conditions have been of unprecedented severity and have been pitilessly carried through...The Germans have been driven out of the country and their properties sequestered. The occupied territory on the left of the Rhine has been cut off from the rest of Germany. The attempt is being made monstrously to extend the provision of the armistice agreement ... and to turn it into a general financial enslavement of the German people.

We warn the enemy not to drive us to extremities ... Let them not place before us the dangerous choice between starvation and disgrace. Even a Socialist People's Government, and this one above all others, must hold fast to its principle that it would rather suffer the extremity of want than be dishonoured. (*Loud applause.*)