

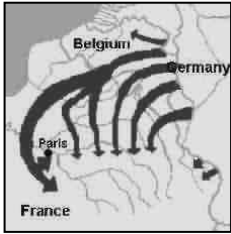
# GERMANY DOES DESERVE THE BLAME FOR WORLD WAR I

## (Documents A-F)

### A- German Attitude toward War

On July 2 1914 (26 days before the war actually began), the German Army is quoted as saying that they wanted Austria to attack Serbia as quickly as possible because “the time was right for a general war since Germany was more prepared for war than either Russia or France”. On July 3, it was reported that the German General Staff “would be pleased if war were to come about now”.

After meeting with Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Germany, the German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II informed him that his state could “count on Germany’s full support”, even if “grave European complications” ensued, and that Austria-Hungary “ought to march at once” against Serbia.



### Germany’s disregard of Great Britain’s Warnings

The German “Schlieffen Plan” required that Germany pass through (and take over) Belgium in order to swing back around and take Paris, the capital of France. It was a well-known fact that Belgium’s neutrality had been guaranteed by Great Britain as far back as 1839.

Instead, it is said that Bethmann Hollweg (the German Chancellor) referred to the treaty between Britain and Belgium as a “scrap of paper”. The German decision to pass through Belgium is what led to the Ultimatum (“do or else”) by Great Britain. Germany ignored the ultimatum and on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1914, Great Britain “declared that a state of war exists

between Great Britain and Germany”.

### B- Wars of Bismarck

Europe had enjoyed decades of peace after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Upon Otto Von Bismarck’s rise in 1866, this era of peace would soon end:

#### **War #1:**

Bismarck Declares War on Denmark -Prussia and Austria then seized the provinces of Schleswig and Holstein from Denmark.

#### **War #2:**

Then, in 1866 Bismarck invented an excuse to attack his ally Austria. The Austro-Prussian War lasted just seven weeks and ended in a decisive Prussian victory.

#### **War #3:**

In France, the Prussian victory over Austria angered Napoleon III (Nephew of Napoleon I). A growing rivalry between the two nations led to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870

Bismarck tricked the French into declaring war on Prussia by rewriting and then releasing to the press a telegram (message called the “Ems Telegram”) that made it seem that the Prussian King William I had insulted the Frenchman



### These Wars are significant because:

- Bismarck’s seizure of Alsace-Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian War would lead to hatred of the Germans by the French. It was Bismarck who is to blame for the revenge the French would seek later on.
- Bismarck’s unification of Germany would lead to a cycle of competition among other powers in Europe to match Germany’s power
- These “unprovoked” wars ended an era of peace and cooperation in Europe. It can be said that the buildup to World War I began with Bismarck’s aggression in Europe 50 years earlier.



### C- Germany led the arms buildup

Militarism is the competition and buildup of weapons (an arms race) among nations. The armies of both France and Germany had more than doubled between 1870 and 1914 and there was fierce competition between Britain and Germany for mastery of the seas. The British had introduced the ‘Dreadnought’, an effective battleship, in 1906. The Germans soon followed suit introducing their own battleships.

While all of Europe can be said to have engaged in a military buildup, Germany and Austria-Hungary clearly placed more emphasis on military spending- See charts below. Why would nations devote so much money and effort to their military if they never planned on waging war?

	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1914
Great Britain	\$3.54	\$3.46	\$3.84	\$12.60	\$7.29	\$8.23
France	2.92	4.02	4.66	5.21	6.47	7.07
Russia	1.28	1.50	1.26	1.44	2.32	3.44
Germany	1.28	2.16	2.80	4.06	4.06	8.19
Austria-Hungary	1.08	1.70	1.50	1.46	1.68	3.10
Italy	1.38	1.74	2.52	2.34	3.36	3.16

Country	Spending Increase	Military Size
Britain	117%	430000
France	92%	970000
Russia	19%	1500000
Germany	158%	760000
Austria-Hungary	160%	480000

## D- The Schlieffen Plan

### **Background**

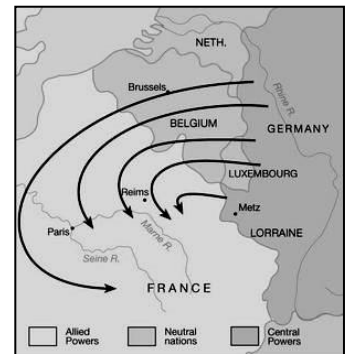
In 1905, the German Count Alfred Von Schlieffen also drew up a plan of action that involved attacking France through Belgium. The plan was created in case if Russia were to declare war on Austria-Hungary (Germany's Ally), that would mean that Germany would also be at war with Russia. Since Russia was in an Alliance with France, France would also be at war with Germany. Germany would be faced with a war in the east and west of their nation. The Schlieffen Plan had the goal of creating a "knockout blow" to France before Russia ( in the East) could mobilize their forces. This way, they wouldn't have to fight on two fronts.

To understand how this blames Germany for the start of World War I, one must realize that the Schlieffen Plan was a plan of attack, not defense.

The Schlieffen Plan demonstrates Germany's blame for the war in several ways:

- The plan goes back to as early as 1905 and demonstrates the German intention of war and their aggressive nature.
- It required that Germany pass through Belgium, a "neutral" nation and involve them in the war
- It was a plan of attack, not defense

The map shows how the plan was to work.



## E- Germany's lead role in the war

There is much criticism that Austria-Hungary, not Germany should be blamed for World War I. After all, it was Austria-Hungary who initiated the fighting against Serbia after the Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. In reality, Austria-Hungary suffered problems from early on and merely helped Germany wage the war against the Allied nations. After attacking Serbia, its forces soon had to be withdrawn to protect its eastern frontier against Russia's invasion, while German units were engaged in fighting on the Western Front. This resulted in a greater than expected loss of men in the invasion of Serbia. Furthermore it became evident that the Austrian high command had had no plans for a larger war and that the army and navy were also ill-equipped to handle such a conflict.



From 1916, the Austro-Hungarian war effort became more and more subordinated to the direction of German planners. By 1917, Austria-Hungary withdrew from all conquered territories and soon after, their Empire completely collapsed. Even without the support of Austria-Hungary, Germany kept fighting. By the end of the war Germany would have lost over a third more soldiers than Austria-Hungary. This is a clear reflection of Germany's, not Austria-Hungary's aggression and blame for World War I.

## F- Unrestricted Submarine Warfare

When the German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg announced Germany's intention to use unrestricted submarine warfare. On February 18th, 1915, Germany announced that it would start a commerce war against those nations trading with Britain. Amongst others, America.

Why did Germany resort to such a tactic that was likely to provoke such a response from America? By 1917, the war was not going well for Germany on the Western Front. Unrestricted submarine warfare was a result of desperation and the belief that the ferocity of such a tactic might just keep America out of the war if the results were spectacular and shocking enough.

This did not happen and relations between America and Germany became very strained when British intelligence intercepted a message from Germany to Mexico whereby Germany offered her support to Mexico if America entered the war against Germany because of unrestricted submarine warfare. By March 21st, seven American merchant ships had been sunk by the Germans. Wilson summoned Congress and on April 6th 1917, America entered the war.



# GERMANY DOES NOT DESERVE THE BLAME FOR WORLD WAR I

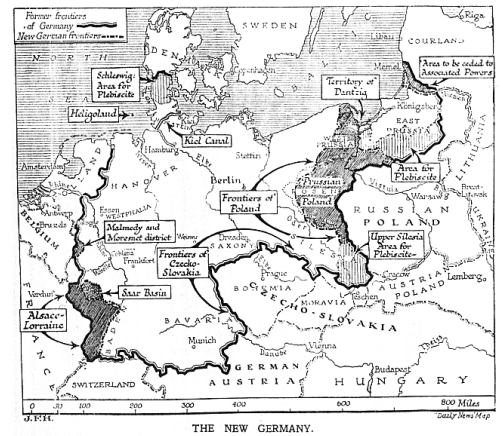
## (Documents G-I)

### G- France only wanted Revenge on Germany 1

Considerable evidence supports the idea that that France only wanted revenge on Germany for prior historical conflicts. France in the 1860's enjoyed a period of economic prosperity under their leader Napoleon III. Upon Bismarck's "doctoring" of the Ems Telegram, Napoleon III declared war on Germany, just as Bismarck had hoped. Napoleon III was crushed by Bismarck's forces and was forced to accept exile in Great Britain after his defeat. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 led to Bismarck's control over the French territory of Alsace-Lorraine (see map). This ended the period of prosperity for France, and the French, although angry with Napoleons poor decisions, clearly blamed Bismarck and the Germans. Many Frenchmen looked to the day when they could take revenge on Germany...

The map shows the territory of Alsace-Lorraine. Upon Germany's surrender in World War I, France quickly took back the territory lost to Bismarck decades earlier. Germany lost 13.5 % of its territory under the terms of the treaty. Close to seven million German citizens were placed under control of a foreign nation.

It is also interesting to note that Germany was forced to sign (their defeat in) the Treaty of Versailles in the same "Hall of Mirrors" (in the Versailles Palace) that Bismarck made the French sign their defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. *Revenge?*



### H- France Only wanted Revenge on Germany 2

The German army crossed the Belgian border on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1914. Britain and France declared war on Germany on August 4<sup>th</sup>. The Germans pushed through Belgium and entered France. The British and French armies marched to stop the German advance. The Battle of Marne 4<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> September stopped the Germans from marching on Paris. To avoid losing the territory already gained in France, the Germans began digging trenches. The British and French, unable to break through the line of trenches; began to dig their own trenches. Almost the entire war would be spent fighting from these trenches. Unfortunately for the French, this meant that most of the fighting took place within the borders of their country, fighting AGAINST THE GERMANS. This led to even more hatred for the Germans.

*Does this mean that Germany should be entirely blamed for the war?*

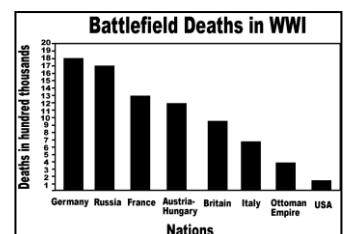
*The corresponding chart shows the Battlefield deaths of World War I. France suffered the most deaths after only Germany and Russia. Most of Russia's deaths were caused by poor preparation and starvation, while France suffered battlefield deaths fighting against Germans.*

*Does this mean that Germany should be entirely blamed for the war?*

*As a result of the instances described above, the following quote was said at the treaty of Versailles by the leader of France:*

*"There are only two races—the human race and the German race. The Germans must be made to realize the enormity (terrible nature) of their crime. They must be hit in their pride and property."*  
**-Premier Georges Clemenceau of France**

### THE WESTERN FRONT



***Were the French being "impartial" when considering who should be blamed for World War I?***

### I- Germany had no intention of involving the British or Conquering Belgium

Germany's invasion of France through Belgium (the Schlieffen plan) is often made to appear as if Germany wanted to involve Great Britain in the war. Germany's reference to the treaty between Great Britain and Belgium was referred to as a "scrap of paper" by the German chancellor Bethmann Hollweg. According to many historians, Germany never believed that Great Britain would go to war over this treaty. Germany desperately wanted to protect itself from a French invasion, and needed to pass through Belgium in order to do this. The Germans made their peaceful intentions to the Belgians very clear in a message sent before crossing over the Belgian border:

*Germany to Belgium  
Delivered by the German Ambassador at Brussels von Below Saleske, to M. Davignon, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs  
2 August 1914  
Very Confidential*

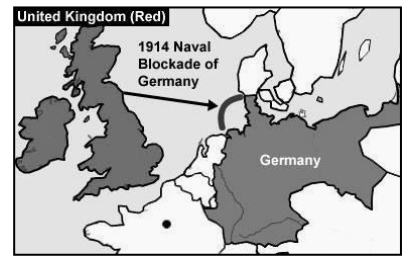
*One: Germany has in view no act of hostility against Belgium. At the conclusion of peace, Germany will guarantee the possessions and independence of the Belgian Kingdom in full.*

*Two: Germany undertakes, under the above-mentioned condition, to evacuate Belgian territory on the conclusion of peace.*

*Three: If Belgium adopts a friendly attitude, Germany is prepared, in cooperation with the Belgian authorities, to purchase all necessaries for her troops against a cash payment, and to pay an indemnity for any damage that may have been caused by German troops.*

## **J- The British interfered with food shipments to Europe** **(As a response to German Unrestricted Submarine Warfare- Doc 6)**

It is often pointed out that Germany waged a reckless policy of submarine warfare in the coastal waters off Europe. It is argued that this German policy disregarded civilian life and led to food shortages and starvation in Europe during the war. It was Britain who first started to violate international law on the sea in August 1914 when they started to interfere with neutral food



shipments to Europe- The 1914 Naval Blockade of Germany. Shortly after they declared the whole sea from Scotland to Iceland as "war zone" and covered it with explosive floating mines. They then ordered all ships going to the Baltic, Scandinavia, or the Low Countries to go through the English Channel, where they were stopped, searched and much of their cargo seized, even if the cargo consisted of non-contraband goods. It was as a response to this that Germany declared the English Channel as a War Zone and initiated their unrestricted submarine warfare policy. For certain reasons the United States however recognized the war zone declared by Great Britain, but not the German War Zone.

**In late 1914 the Allies took the unusual step of deeming food to be “contraband”; shipments of food headed to German ports were therefore subject to naval attack. The blockade halted German trade and imports, forcing the nation to rely on its domestic production of food.**

## **K- The Franco-Russian alliance**

The Franco-Russian alliance was drafted August 17, 1892. The secret treaty between France and Russia said that if one of the countries of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) attacked France or Russia, its ally would attack the aggressor in question, and that if a Triple Alliance country mobilized its army, France and Russia would mobilize.



This treaty formed a crucial step towards the First World War. As opposed to treaties and alliances that were meant to solve conflicts of interest between the countries party to the treaty, the Franco-Russian alliance was an alliance directed specifically against another country, Germany. This alliance put Germany in a difficult situation. The worst strategic situation for a nation is to be attacked on multiple sides. A possible attack by France in the West and Russia in the East meant that Germany had to divide it's forces to defend itself on two fronts. This Alliance directly led to the creation of the German “Schlieffen Plan”: an attack upon France at the first signs of a confrontation of Russia (before France would attack them).



## **L- Germany was forced to take the FULL BLAME for the war**

By the end of 1918, all nations were hoping for an end to the ongoing war. Germany agreed to take the blame for the war and sign a cease -fire (armistice) in order for it to be over. They had no idea that they would be forced to agree to the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles which would be drafted over six months later. The treaty was made in 1919, but German government did not participate in creating it. In fact, Germany had the choice between signing it or face the occupation of Germany by Allied troops.

### **Treaty of Versailles**

- Germany must accept the entire blame for the war.
- Germany must return all territories they took from France.
- Germany must give areas of Eastern Germany to Poland (even though 40% of the people who lived there were German)
- Germany must give up all of their overseas territory and possessions to the Allies
- Germany cannot have a military larger than 100,000 soldiers
- Germany must pay \$33 Billion dollars in damages to the Allies
- A League of Nations is created to settle international disputes peacefully

The war had begun in the Balkans, Although numerous nations took part in World War I, only Germany would have to bear the brunt of blame for the war.

### **Nations who took part in WWI**

*Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Brazil, British Empire, Bulgaria, China, France and Colonies, Greece, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Montenegro, Ottoman Empire, Portugal, Romania, Russia, United States of America, Other countries such as Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, San Marino, and Siam were also involved in the Great War.*

## **Long Term Effect of the Treaty**

A big problem for Germany was to pay back a giant amount of money for the all of the damage done to the Allied countries, mostly France, during World War I. This made Germany one of the poorest countries in Europe for almost 20 years, and caused political fighting in Germany. The treaty failed to keep peace in the end, and was a reason for Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler to win the support of the poorer Germans to get rid of the "chains of Versailles", leading to World War II.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Band \_\_\_\_\_

## Debate Preparation Homework Assignment

A few classes from now, you will debate the topic ***“Does Germany deserve the blame for World War I?”*** More than the Industrial revolution debate, this debate requires an accurate and clear understanding of SPECIFIC historical events to be successful (*in other words you won’t be able to “wing it”*). This worksheet will help familiarize you with the issues surrounding this debate. Follow the instructions carefully to receive credit. **THIS ASSIGNMENT COUNTS AS TWO HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS AND IS DUE MONDAY JANUARY 6<sup>th</sup> for E and H Bands and TUESDAY January 7<sup>th</sup> for G Band.**

### TASK 1- UNDERSTAND AND ANALYZE THE DOCUMENTS

For each document you must read and understand it in order to explain it in your own words. Then, you should explain whether you find it to be CONVINCING EVIDENCE to support or refute German blame in World War I. Identify documents A-F below and document G-L on the back.

#### GERMANY DOES DESERVE THE BLAME FOR WORLD WAR I

Document	Explain the main points of the document	Explain WHY you find this to be convincing or unconvincing evidence
<b>A- German Attitude toward War</b>		
<b>B- Wars of Bismarck</b>		
<b>C- Germany led the arms buildup</b>		
<b>D- The Schlieffen Plan</b>		
<b>E- Germany’s lead role in the war</b>		
<b>F- Unrestricted Submarine Warfare</b>		



