

The Germans

Document #1 *Germany's role in World War I*

This war has been hard on Germany and her allies. We have lost close to two millions sons and fathers. The government of Kaiser Wilhelm spent thirty seven billion dollars fighting this war. Our soldiers fought bravely and died for their nation but now is the time for peace, for an honorable peace. We regret the loss of life on all sides and now we the representatives of the new German government come to this peace conference seeking honorable peace terms to settle the disputes that began this war so many years ago.

Document #3 The German defense of Unrestricted Submarine Warfare **Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg**.
April 1917

Germany never had the slightest intention of attacking the United States of America, and does not have such intention now. It never desired war against the United States of America and does not desire it today. How did these things develop? More than once we told the United States that we made unrestricted use of the submarine weapon, expecting that England could be made to observe, in her policy of blockade, the laws of humanity and of international agreements. This blockade policy, this I expressly recall, has been called illegal and indefensible by President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing. England, together with her allies, arrogantly rejected the peace offers made by us and our allies and proclaimed her war aims, which aim at our annihilation and that of our allies. Then we took unrestricted submarine warfare into our hands; then we had to for our defense.

Document #2 German explanation for the start of hostilities in 1914.

Anyone could have prevented World War I. Had the Serbians not assassinated Ferdinand, had the Austrians not issued the ill-fated ultimatum, had the Russians not blustered to the defense of the Serbian war criminals. Yes we had a role to play in the outbreak of the war. Germany came to the assistance of our cousins in Austria after they were menaced by the Russian bear. If coming to the aid of a friend is a crime, then France is equally culpable in the outbreak of the war, after all it was the French who came to the aid of their ally the Russians. Yes the war could have been prevented if only one nation changed its course of action, but in the end we were all culpable, we were all responsible for the outbreak of the greatest catastrophe in human kind.

Document #4 *German territorial demands:*

We come to Versailles in the expectation of receiving a peace proposal based on agreed principles. We are firmly resolved to do everything in our power with a view of fulfilling the grave obligations which we had undertaken. We hope for the peace of justice which had been promised to us. The new state of Germany understands that territorial concessions must be given, we ask to retain the portions of our borderlands where a German majority resides. West Prussia, Upper Silesia, the Rhineland, these are areas of German majority and should remain German. We seek to resolve the issues that started this war.

Document #6 What the Great Powers thought about the French:

France: Germany is responsible for World War I and must be held accountable.

Great Britain: Germany must be held responsible for the War and we must make sure that she can never threaten world peace again.

The United States: Peace without victory and the establishment of a League of Nations to adjudicate future disputes are the most important routes this conference needs to take the establishment of a lasting peace.

