

Why did the central powers lose ww1?



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On November 11th 1918 Germany signed an armistice to finally end the four year conflict of World War One. At the end of 1917 Germany was in a good position. Although the United States had entered the war, that had yet to have any impact on the western front. Russia, having just gone through a communist revolution, had lost the war and was willing to make peace at any price. By 1918 Germany had begun to break through allied lines and even came within striking distance of Paris but by the end of November in the same year Germany was looking for a stop to the fighting. Why was this? A few reasons could be that the Schlieffen Plan had failed resulting in Germany fighting a war on two fronts for most of the war, the British naval blockade on Germany and the entry of the United States into the fray.

The Schlieffen Plan was Germany's main offensive strategy during the outbreak of World War 1. The plan involved utilizing 91% of Germany's armed forces (also known as Kaiserreichsheer) to attack France. Fearing that the French forts on the border would slow down a German advance, Chief of Staff Alfred von Schlieffen suggested an attack through Belgium into the northern part of France for a quicker invasion. The rest of the German Army would then be set up in a defensive position on the eastern front in order to stop an improbable Russian advance. There are quite a few reasons why the Schlieffen Plan had failed though. Firstly, the Germans had underestimated the capabilities of the Belgian Army. While the Belgians had only 43,000 men, they had put up a strong fight that was even unanticipated by the Germans. Some tactics even flooding their own land or destroying their own infrastructure in order to slow down the German advance. Secondly, the lack of communications between the German armies along with a failure to

resupply efficiently weakened the troops. . This helped the Allies by giving the British more time to reinforce the French lines and when Germany finally had broken through Belgium into France, they were intercepted at the River Marne in France by the allied troops. Attempts to reinforce the German united battling the Allies also left a gap between them and the German 2nd force, allowing Allies to move up and split apart the two German forces. Fritz Fischer referred to the Schlieffen Plan as a “ brash stroke so common to bombastic Wilhelmine Imperial Germany.” (Fischer, 1979) But not all historians agreed on that the Schieffen plan was a complete failure. An American officer in the Army, creator of combat modeling software and military theorist Trevor N. Dupuy argued that the Schlieffen Plan was “ secret the of institutionalizing military excellence.” (Dupuy, 1970)

The United States joined the First World War on the 6th of April 1917; three years after the war had begun. This was due to the then American political view that being an isolationist country was the best way that American would grow and as a result took the view that the European conflict did not require any American intervention. In 1915 German U-boats were ordered to attack any ship that was headed towards Britain due to suspicions of ammunition being smuggled through passenger liners and Q-ships, these were merchant ships that had disguised heavy guns. The Q-ships were also one of the reasons that German submarines stopped warning the target that they were about to attack. This was brought to the attention of the American people when the Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk by U-20 on the 7th of May 1915. The Zimmerman note was probably one of the more direct reasons that the Americans decided to join the war. The content of this note is that if Mexico

attacked America for the land they had claimed before, then Germany would support them with arms and supplies. This was a very big threat to America and as a result they thought it would be in their best interests to join the war. By 1917, both sides of the conflict were exhausted and demoralized. The United States were able to support the Allied front with a million fresh soldiers, this greatly improved Allied morale and demoralize the Germans and her allies further. In addition to this, more supplies were also being brought in by the United States and helped relive some of the burdens born by the allies.

The British Blockade was one of the key factors in the defeat of Germany and her allies. Drafted by Winston Churchill, the then Secretary of the Royal Navy, it was intended to take Germany out by starving her out of the war. When the blockade was put into effect towards the end of 1914, Germany's imports had fallen by 55% of pre-war import levels. One of the more prominent imports that were cut off were nitrates, these were used to create explosives and fertilizer. The resulting shortage of the latter led to extreme shortages in foods and by 1916 many civilians were consuming ersatz products such as "war bread" (also known as Kriegsbrot) and powdered milk. These food shortages also caused riots and social unrest, not only in Germany but also for most of the Central powers as well in places like Vienna or Budapest. While the German government did make attempts to counter the effects of the British Blockade, they only limited success. The Hindenburg Programme is one such example. It was designed to increase productivity and provide cheap mass meals to the population but that average daily diet of 1, 000 calories provided was not enough to maintain a good standard of

health even for babies. This resulted in many malnutrition related disorders such as scurvy, dysentery and tuberculosis and by 1918 an estimated 434,000 people were dead due to malnutrition.

In March, 1918 the Central Powers were sure to win the war. They had already beaten Russia and France and Britain were getting weak, they were losing the will to fight. For the first time German units were larger than the British and French combined. However eight months later, the Central Powers lost due to a failure in tactics, a new enemy entering towards the end of the war and being starved into submission by their enemies.

The assumption of this topic is that when the Central Powers had lost World War 1 that the war had in fact ended. It could be said that World War 1 never ended. It may have taken a break but it had never truly ended until 1945, the year that signified the end of World War 2. Complications from the “end” of World War 1 would prove to be the advent of World War 2. World War One ended when Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles. This proved to be a humiliating defeat for the Germans. The size of Germany had been drastically reduced while those of France and Italy (a former German ally) grew. Germany was also forced to admit that they were to blame for the war and was made to compensate for damages. The military was also reduced to a minimal size but there were soldiers who would not stop fighting. They would eventually join an establishment of mercenaries called the “Freikorps”. The German commanders and generals also never had to admit to defeat. They merely told that if the German People had not been “stabbed in the back” (most likely referring to the newly formed Weimar Republic for accepting the terms) This theory became hugely popular with <https://assignbuster.com/why-did-the-central-powers-lose-ww1/>

the German population that did not want to admit to defeat and generals that had signed the treaty were referred to as “ November Criminals”.

Adolph Hitler was obsessed with this idea and blamed the Marxists and Jews for this major blow to the people. Germany was seething with revenge and hate, just waiting for the right moment to strike back. In their minds, they were waiting for a chance to resume this conflict and get the justice that they deserved.