

We opened this book by looking at two simplified versions of German history. Does the evidence here on Germany during the war prove that Germany was dominated by aggressive elements or that there was another, far less aggressive side to Germany?

TALKING POINT

- 1 List the reasons why the new democratic government was created in October 1918.
- 2 Explain which of these reasons you think was the most important.

ACTIVITY

The guilty consciences of those laden with guilt later invented the 'stab in the back'. The collapse was not the result of revolution; it was the other way about; without the collapse, the revolution that broke out six weeks later would probably not have occurred.

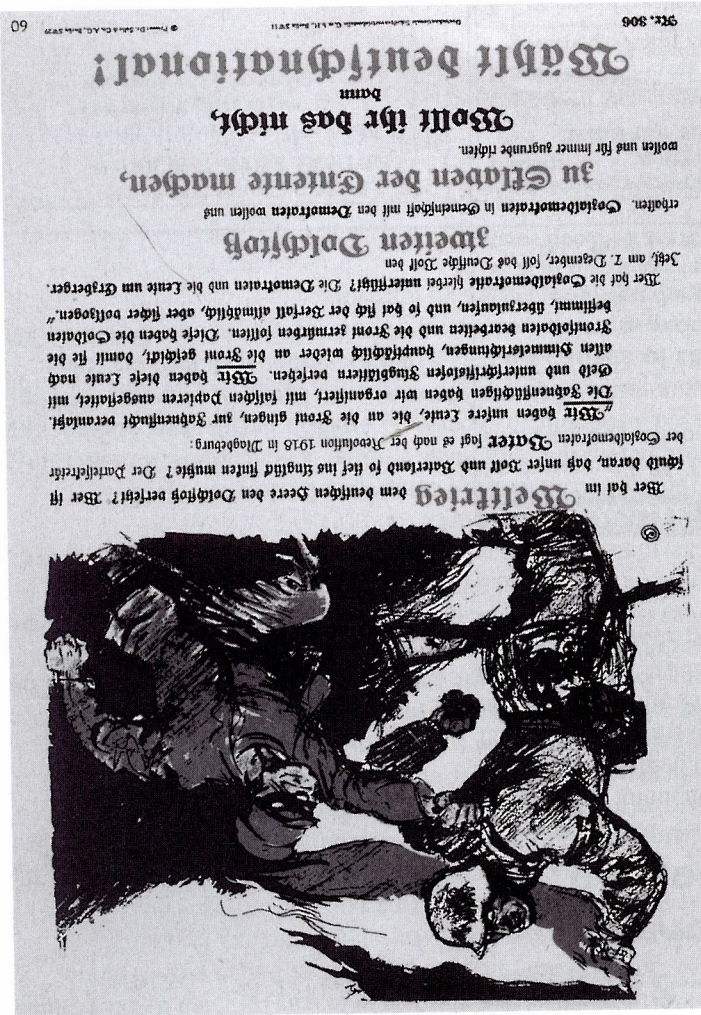
**SOURCE 1.9** Philipp Scheidemann, Socialist leader and Chancellor February–July 1919, in his *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, 1929

We have lost the war. This fact is not a consequence of the revolution. Ladies and Gentlemen, it was the Imperial Government of Prince Max of Baden which made arrangements for the armistice which disarmed us. After the collapse of our allies and in view of the military and economic situation there was nothing else it could do. The revolution refused to accept the responsibility for the misery into which the German people were plunged by the mistaken policy of the old regime and the irresponsible over-confidence of the militarists [generals].

**SOURCE 1.8** President Ebert's address to the Weimar CONSTITUENT Assembly, February 1919

Our troops are exhausted and their numbers have dwindled terribly... Quantities of machine guns... and artillery have been lost... There is also a lack of ammunition... The morale of the troops has suffered seriously... They surrender in hordes whenever the enemy attacks. Whatever happens we must obtain peace, before the enemy breaks through into Germany; if he does, woe on us.

**SOURCE 1.7** Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, Commander of the German army in Flanders, in a report to Chancellor Prince Max of Baden, 18 October 1918



**SOURCE 1.4** A conservative DNPV election poster from 1924, using the story of 'the stab in the back'

The war was now lost... After the way in which our troops on the Western Front had been used up, we had to count on being beaten back again and again. Our situation could only get worse, never better.

**SOURCE 1.6** Erich Ludendorff, Ludendorff's Own Story, 1919

Whole bodies of our men had surrendered to single soldiers or small patrols. Retreating troops, meeting a fresh division going bravely into action, shouted at them things like 'blacklegs' and 'You're prolonging the war; the officers in many places lost their influence and allowed themselves to be swept along with the rest.

**SOURCE 1.5** General Ludendorff's evidence to a post-war Reichstag committee

Our repeated requests [to the government] for strict discipline and strict laws were never met. Thus our operations were bound to fail and the collapse had to come: the revolution was only the last straw. An English general rightly said, 'The German army was stabbed in the back.' No blame is to be attached to the sound core of the army. Its performances call like that of the officer corps for equal admiration. It is perfectly plain on whom the blame rests.

**SOURCE 1.3** Hindenburg's evidence in a report to a government commission investigating the defeat, November 1919. On his way to the commission he was greeted as a hero by vast crowds. He refused to reply to questions but instead read a prepared statement that included this section

WAS THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC DOOMED FROM ITS VERY BEGINNINGS?