Chapter 8
1918: The Year of Decision

Allied Fears in January 1918

Allenby's victories were all very well, but at the end of 1917 the prospects for the Allies still looked grim. On the credit side, the submarine war had been won, and American supplies could cross the Atlantic almost uninterrupted. But the Allies needed not only supplies but, yet more urgently, men, and these the Americans were slow to provide. When the United States had entered the war in April, their army consisted of 6,000 officers and 100,000 men. General John J. Pershing received orders to take the First US Division to France, but even that unit existed only on paper. Plans were made to expand the army to twenty-four divisions, about a million men, by the summer of 1918, but it seemed doubtful whether the Allies could survive so long. If they could, their worries would be over. By 1919 their superiority in both men and materiel would be enormous, and Allied staff officers began to plan a great offensive for that year. But meanwhile the nightmare that had haunted them for the past three years had come true. Russia had been knocked out of the war, leaving Ludendorff free to concentrate all his resources against the Western Front.

Russia's defeat also had alarming implications for the British Empire. Turkey no longer had to defend her Caucasian frontiers. She had been driven out of the Arabian peninsula, but that only left her free to expand eastwards and establish a Pan-Turanian

hegemony extending to the frontiers of India – a hegemony stiffened by German military muscle and inspired by a *jihad* that could undermine Britain's already precarious hold on the Indian subcontinent. It is not surprising that the American military representative on the Allied Supreme War Council should have written home in February 1918: 'I doubt if I could make anyone not present at the recent meeting . . . realize the anxiety and fear that pervade the minds of political and military men here'.

German Fears in January 1918

But if the Allies were apprehensive, the Germans were desperate. The Russians were certainly out of the war. At Brest-Litovsk their representative Leon Trotsky had at first refused to accept terms that involved the complete abandonment of their Baltic and Polish lands to German or Austrian control; but he also refused to make peace, hoping that revolution would break out in Berlin and Vienna in time to make it unnecessary. Those revolutions were indeed to come, but not just yet. So the German armies simply advanced unopposed, not only into Finland and western Russia, but deep into the Ukraine as far as the Caucasus and the Crimea. When Lenin finally yielded in March 1918, it was on terms that involved surrendering territory containing about 90 per cent of Russia's coal resources, 50 per cent of her heavy industry, and 30 per cent of her population, as well as a payment of six billion marks in 'reparations'. In May Germany tidied up her eastern conquests by the Treaty of Bucharest, whereby Romania yielded up control of her oil production and grain surpluses and accepted an indefinite military occupation. Whatever happened in the west, the Germans had now acquired a vast, self-sufficient, and apparently impregnable eastern empire.

But it was not so much any threat from the west that now worried the German High Command. Even more alarming were developments within Germany itself.

By 1917, as we have seen, the army had taken control of the German economy. But it still did not control the *Reichstag*, and the *Reichstag* held the purse strings with its power to vote or withhold war credits – the funds without which the war could not be carried on at all. For three years patriotism had held the *Reichstag*, and indeed the whole country, together, except for a small minority of socialist dissidents. But by the winter of 1917 this unity was wearing very thin. It had been precariously preserved during the first half of that year by hope of success in the submarine offensive, but by late summer it was clear that no success was to be expected. The nation had endured four war winters, and the prospect of a fifth seemed unendurable. Scuffles in bread queues were escalating into riots, and riots into major strikes. In August 1917 the crews of naval vessels at Wilhelmshaven, bored as well as hungry, broke out in open mutiny. In January 1918 major and prolonged strikes erupted in Kiel and Berlin, and martial law had to be declared in Hamburg and Brandenburg. The Russian example was proving seriously infectious, and economic hardship gave edge to the swelling demand for peace.

This demand was fuelled not only by hardship but by political ideology. The despotic Czarist Empire that German liberals and socialists had always regarded as their natural enemy had been destroyed, and the new social-democratic regime in Russia seemed their natural allies. The advent of the United States had completed the unity of democratic powers against a Germany whose hegemonial ambitions as well as brutal conduct of the war German liberals and socialists were finding it increasingly hard to defend. At an International Socialist Conference in Stockholm in June 1917 the German delegates were made aware of their isolation and unpopularity. Largely in consequence of that experience, the *Reichstag* passed a Peace Resolution on 19 July by 212 votes to 126, demanding 'a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of peoples without forcible acquisition of territory and without political, economic or financial measures of coercion'. Simultaneously it was voicing demands for major reforms in the

11. The pressure on the civilian population: food queue in Berlin, winter 1917

archaic electoral system of Prussia and, worst of all, for the armed forces themselves to be placed under its own control.

The High Command had relied on the Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, to keep the *Reichstag* in order. Now that he had failed, they compelled the Kaiser to demand his resignation. His successor, a malleable bureaucrat, Georg Michaelis, agreed to accept the Peace Resolution 'as I understand it', so the war credits were passed. But clearly more would be needed to counter the peace propaganda of the left. In September the High Command sponsored the launching of a new 'Fatherland Party' to campaign against constitutional reform and support an annexationist peace. The terms of the latter

were laid down in the Kreuznach Programme of 9 August. In the east, Germany would annex outright all the lands already occupied by her armies – Courland, Lithuania, and the eastern provinces of Poland. In the west she would retain Belgium and Luxembourg and gain the French regions of Longwy and Briey. The object, as Hindenburg and Ludendorff explained to the Kaiser, was 'such a strengthening of the German people, and such an improvement in our frontiers, that our enemies would not dare to let loose another war for a long time to come'. The Fatherland Party was lavishly financed by Rhineland industrialists, but it was no mere front for the ruling classes. Within a year it numbered 1.25 million members – arguably the first genuinely populist right-wing movement of the twentieth century, and a harbinger of more to come.

The nature of the peace would thus determine not only Germany's position in Europe, but what kind of country she was going to be. In the eyes of the High Command and its civilian followers, to yield to the demands of the *Reichstag* for a peace without annexations or indemnities would be effectively to have lost the war – a war no longer simply against Germany's external enemies, but against all the internal forces apparently bent on destroying traditional German values. In Ludendorff's view, the only way in which those forces could be overcome before the Home Front collapsed altogether – and the even more desperate Austrians defected – was by victory on the Western Front, gained by a blow so overwhelming that the Allies would lose heart and be forced to accept the German plans for peace. This would truly be Germany's 'last card'.

The Ludendorff Offensive, March 1918

Ludendorff had begun planning for that victory in November 1917. On paper he now had more than enough troops to smash through the Western Front, as the Allies knew very well. The need to maintain order among the chaotic conditions of her vast new conquests still pinned down the great bulk of German forces in the

east, but he was able to transfer some forty-four divisions to the west, bringing his total there by March 1918 to 199 divisions. Against these the French could field about 100, some of very doubtful quality, and the British fifty-eight, whose strength, as the military authorities later complained, was still further reduced by Lloyd George's policy of keeping their first-line reserves in the United Kingdom so that Haig could not use them for any further offensives. As yet the Americans could provide none at all.

The first blow was struck against the British – first an initial thrust against the southern part of their line east of Amiens, to draw in their reserves from the north, where a second blow would break through, so it was hoped, to the Channel ports. Haig, judging his left wing to be the decisive front, had deliberately weakened his right; so when the Germans attacked there on 21 March 1918, it was with a crushing numerical superiority, some fifty-two divisions against twenty-six. But it was not numbers alone that mattered. The Germans now employed techniques that finally put an end to the deadlock of trench warfare that had immobilized the Western Front for the past three years.

The techniques were not new. A brief but violent artillery bombardment in depth without previous registration, directed as much against communications and command centres as against front-line troops and making plentiful use of gas and smoke, had already been used both by the British at Cambrai and by the Germans themselves at Caporetto. But it had been perfected on the Eastern Front, especially in the assault on Riga, by General Oskar von Hutier and his artillery commander Colonel Georg Bruchmuller, who now led the German attack in the west. The weight of their bombardment was now unprecedented: 6,500 guns fired on a forty- mile front, destroying all communications behind the lines and drenching the front line with gas and high explosive. Then 'storm troops', specialized assault-units carrying their own firepower in the shape of sled-borne light guns, light machine guns, grenades, mortars and flame-throwers, spearheaded the main

infantry attack, destroying enemy strong points wherever possible and masking them when it was not. The infantry units that followed poured into the gaps they had opened, reserves being fed in to exploit success in what a British commentator, Liddell Hart, was later to describe as an 'expanding torrent'. The combination proved devastating against British troops who had barely begun to prepare the deep defences needed to counter it, or indeed to appreciate the need for them. A thick fog on the morning of 21 March assisted the German breakthrough. Within four days they had driven a wedge forty miles deep into the British positions and threatened to break the Allied lines altogether.

The attack was far more successful than Ludendorff himself had expected. It now threatened to separate the British from the French armies. If that happened, the British would have to fall back to the north along their lines of communication to the Channel ports, while the French would withdraw to the south to cover Paris, leaving the way clear for the Germans to advance to the coast – as indeed they did twenty-two years later. All now depended on the French and British armies maintaining contact. So far both Haig and Pétain had resisted the attempts of the Supreme War Council to impose an inter-allied command over their heads, and refused to place any reserves at the council's disposal to enable it to influence the course of operations. Mutual cooperation, they argued, would solve any problems that might arise. But it did not. When Haig appealed for help, Pétain refused to provide it, for fear of uncovering Paris. Haig swallowed his pride and appealed to his political superiors. An inter-allied conference met at Doullens, near Amiens, on 26 March. There the resolute stand taken by Foch, now the French Chief of Staff, impressed Haig sufficiently for him to accept Foch's authority to 'coordinate' the Allied armies – an authority extended a week later to 'the direction of operations'. For the rest of the war the Allies were to fight under a single overall command.

Meanwhile the German advance was slowing to a halt. Their

communications were overextended; artillery could not keep up with the pace of the infantry advance, and progress was made more difficult by the wastelands of the Somme battlefields over which the infantry now had to advance. Captured Allied dumps certainly provided supplies in enormous quantities, but it was only too tempting for the exhausted and hungry German troops to pause and enjoy them. Ludendorff broke off the operation on 5 April and switched to the attack in the north, as Haig had been expecting. This was launched on 9 April, after the usual Bruchmuller bombardment, in the Lys valley south of the Ypres salient. Within a few days the Germans had recaptured all the ground west of Ypres that the British had taken three months and 400,000 casualties to conquer the previous autumn. British troops were now so thinly stretched that the usually inarticulate Haig thought it necessary to issue a dramatic Order of the Day: 'With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one must fight on till the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.' This went down well with the press, though its reception by the troops themselves was more ribald. But fight on they did. The line held, and on 30 April Ludendorff broke off the attack. Since 21 March he had already lost some 350,000 men, the Allies only slightly fewer; but it was the Allies who had the longer purse, and, with American troops pouring into France at a rate of 300,000 a month, the purse was now virtually bottomless.

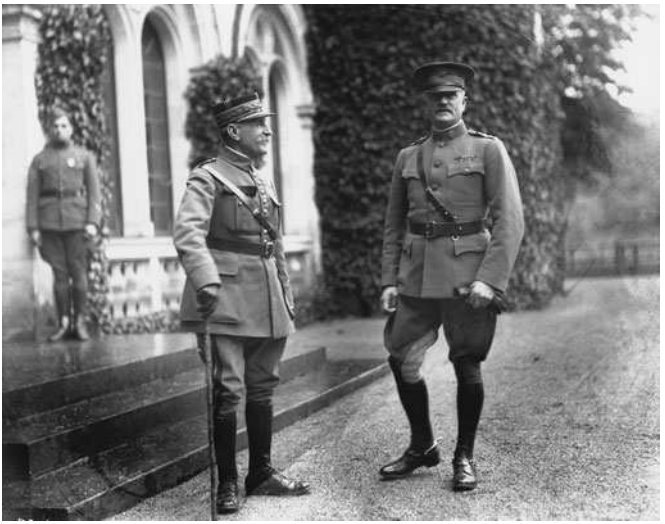
Ludendorff now turned on the French. The sector he chose for his attack was the Aisne, where Nivelle had launched his disastrous offensive a year earlier. On 27 May the Germans used their now familiar techniques – Bruchmuller's guns fired two million shells in four and a half hours – to crush the French Sixteenth Army, whose commanders still disdained defence in depth in favour of defending every inch of their territory. They took 50,000 prisoners and penetrated thirty miles to seize Soissons. Their long-range artillery began to bombard Paris itself, where the government once more prepared, as they had in September 1914, to move to Bordeaux. But

in the course of their attack the Germans themselves lost another 130,000 men; and, most important of all, some of them had been killed by Americans.

The Americans Enter the Line

Ludendorff has been criticized as much by his own countrymen as by his enemies for his failure to designate any major objective for his offensive and stick to it. But, even if he had captured the Channel ports, the war would still have gone on, as it did in 1940. Even if he had taken Paris, the Americans and the British would have continued to fight. Ludendorff's object, not unlike that of Falkenhayn two years earlier, was not so much to destroy the Allied armies as to destroy the will of the Allied governments to persevere with the war and compel them to accept a compromise peace. He might have succeeded with the French. In another year it might even have been possible with the British. But it was out of the question with the United States.

By the beginning of 1918 there were already a million American troops in France, although they were not yet organized in fighting formations. From the beginning Pershing insisted that they should operate as a distinct army. He had been allotted his own front on the far right of the Allied line, in the as yet inactive theatre of Lorraine. But, although the United States could mobilize men with astonishing speed – conscription was introduced in May 1917 – it took longer to tool up her industries to provide heavy weapons. Until the end of the war her army was dependent on her European allies for tanks, aircraft, and – most important of all – artillery guns and ammunition. This being so, and given the American lack of combat experience, it seemed logical to the French and British that these raw American units should, at least initially, be amalgamated with their own more experienced forces to learn their trade. This Pershing, under President Wilson's direction, understandably refused. He did, however, allow US divisions once they were formed to serve under French command. The First Division was blooded at



12. Marshal Foch and General Pershing: the New World to the rescue of the old

Cantigny on 28 May – a notable date in American military history – and two more were available to help seal the French line at Château-Thierry when the German attack penetrated thus far at the beginning of June. The gallantry of inexperience made their losses heavy – over 10,000 killed or wounded – but they learned fast; and the very presence of these tall, cheerful, well-fed boys from the Middle West with their boundless optimism convinced their weary allies that the war could not now be lost. More important, it convinced their yet more weary adversaries that it could not now be won.

Ludendorff planned a final blow against the British in the north, but after a month of indecision he decided first to launch one more violent and, he hoped, final blow against the French – a *Friedenssturm* he termed it for the benefit of his exhausted troops, a blow for peace. The blow was struck on 16 July at Reims, on the

eastern edge of the salient that the Germans had now driven as far south as the Marne. But this time the French were ready for it. German deserters – their very number an indicator of German demoralization – had given warning of the attack, and the French were able to pre-empt the German bombardment with a barrage of their own. They had also at last learned the lesson of flexible defence. They allowed the Germans to bombard and occupy a front line that was empty except for barbed wire, mines, and a few machine-gun posts, before decimating them with a counter-barrage and fire from the flanks. Two days later the fiery General Mangin launched a counter-attack against the western flank of the salient with an army that now included American divisions. By 5 August a combined French, American, and British force had reconquered the entire salient and taken 30,000 prisoners. Ludendorff cancelled his orders for a final attack he was planning in the north. He had finally shot his bolt.

The Allied Counter-Attack, July 1918

It was now the Allies' turn to take the offensive, and on 26 July Foch gave orders for a general advance on all fronts. Foch was no great strategist, but he embodied the Napoleonic maxim that in war moral forces are to physical as three to one. His infectious enthusiasm had done much to check the German advance at the Battle of the Marne in 1914. Since then his determination to attack under all circumstances had often been disastrous, but now the Allied armies had the numbers and, more important, the skills to make it effective. Pershing now had forty-two US divisions at his disposal, each twice the size of its European counterpart, and was able to regroup them in a single army – later divided into two – on the right of the Allied line. By attacking northwards through the Argonne forest, he threatened the main lateral railway line, from Metz to Antwerp, that fed the German armies. On the left of the line the British were to launch a converging attack, while French armies, reinvigorated by two fighting generals Mangin and Gouraud, kept up the pressure in the centre. Since it would take some time for the

Americans to redeploy and the French to recover from the great battles of June and July, it fell to the British to launch the first blow, to the east of Amiens, on 8 August.

Considering the half a million or so losses that it had suffered since the beginning of the year, the British army had made a remarkable recovery, and of no one was this more true than Haig himself. Haig's offensive spirit, like that of Foch, had more often than not had disastrous consequences, but now, like that of Foch, its time had come. His frequent prophesies of the imminence of German collapse were at last coming true, and, unlike the majority of his colleagues who were planning a campaign for 1919, he believed that the war could be won by the end of the year. He cheerfully accepted Foch's direction from above, and, guided by his renovated staff, listened and gave effect to the new tactical concepts being developed from below. His Australian and Canadian units had proved themselves the most formidable fighters on the Western Front, and, after much trial and error, the British army had learned how to use its tanks. A successful small-scale action at Hamel on 4 July had proved a model of infantry–tank cooperation, and the same methods were now put to use on a very much larger scale. Combined with the infantry–artillery liaison techniques that the British had now mastered, and yet another innovation, the use of low-flying attack aircraft, these provided a winning combination unimaginable – and impracticable – two years earlier. Together with the French army on their right flank, the British penetrated seven miles on the first day of their attack and took 30,000 prisoners. It was the first outright and irreversible defeat that the Germans had suffered in four years of fighting, and Ludendorff himself was gloomily to describe it as 'the Black Day' of the German army.

The Germans now began a fighting retreat to the Hindenburg line established at the beginning of 1917. Their morale was still far from broken: by the time they reached the Hindenburg line early in September they had inflicted on the British a further 190,000 and on the French 100,000 losses, and the British Cabinet was again

becoming anxious. None the less on 3 September Foch gave orders for a new offensive all along the line: *tout le monde à la bataille!* Pershing insisted on first blooding his new army by a limited offensive to pinch out a salient at St Mihiel in the quiet Lorraine sector, a two-day battle that was completed by 14 September, and then turned north to join in the general offensive on 26 September. The following day British and French forces assaulted the main Hindenburg line, firing a barrage of nearly a million shells in twenty-four hours. This finally broke Ludendorff's spirit. On 29 September he informed the Kaiser that there was now no prospect of winning the war. If catastrophe was to be averted, an armistice must be concluded as quickly as possible.

The Collapse of the Central Powers

Since the beginning of August the German army had lost a further 228,000 men, half of them through desertion. Their General Staff considered fewer than fifty divisions fit for combat. Base troops, infected by increasingly gloomy news from home and vulnerable to communist propaganda, trembled on the verge of strikes, if not mutiny. But even worse was the condition of Austria-Hungary, whose emperor's desperate overtures to the French for peace terms had been cynically publicized by Clemenceau in April 1918. Their army – hungry, ragged, increasingly disintegrating into its separate ethnic elements – had been pushed into a final offensive on the Italian front on 15 June, only to be repulsed with the loss of 143,000 men, 25,000 of them prisoners. After that, the troops began to desert *en masse*. Those that remained were sick and starving, as were the populations of Vienna and other cities of the Monarchy. On 16 September the Emperor publicly appealed to President Wilson for peace terms, and tried to pre-empt ethnic disintegration by declaring the Habsburg Empire to be a federal state. When on 24 October the Italian army, powerfully reinforced by French and British divisions, at last took the offensive, the Austrian forces disintegrated after forty-eight hours, and the Allied advance could hardly keep up with the speed of their retreat. The Italians just had

time to launch a last independent attack at Vittorio Veneto and reap another huge harvest of prisoners before an armistice negotiated two days earlier came into effect on 4 November.

Meanwhile the long-dormant Macedonian Front had been galvanized by the appearance of a dynamic new commander, General Franchet d'Esperey. On 15 September French and Serbian mountain troops successfully attacked hitherto impregnable Bulgarian positions. Greek and British forces joined in, and the Bulgarians, deprived of German and Austrian support, capitulated on 30 September – the first of the Central Powers to do so. The Turks followed a month later on 30 October, thus freeing themselves to continue their campaign in the Caucasus until 1919.

In Germany, six weeks were to pass before Ludendorff's decision to ask for an armistice had any result. In his eyes an armistice meant just that – a suspension of operations in the field to make possible a regrouping of his forces and negotiations leading to an agreed peace. It should be made clear, he insisted, 'that there is an unyielding determination to continue the war if the enemy will grant us no peace or only a dishonourable one.' He at last accepted that Germany would have to surrender Belgium and even Alsace-Lorraine, but he still hoped that the Allies would allow her to retain her conquests in the east as a bulwark against 'Bolshevism'. Further, he recognized that the Allies had virtually pledged themselves not to deal with the existing regime in Berlin, so a new one had to be installed that would bear the responsibility – and the odium – of negotiating peace terms. So on 3 October the Kaiser appointed as Chancellor Prince Max of Baden, a sensible moderate whom the former American Ambassador in Berlin had described as 'one of the few high Germans who seems to be able to think like a human being', and ordered him to approach President Wilson with a request for an immediate armistice. When Max demurred, the Kaiser brusquely informed him that 'the High Command thinks it necessary, and you have not been brought here

to create difficulties for the High Command'. Obediently the following day Max invited President Wilson, the most approachable – or the least unapproachable – of Germany's enemies, to take steps for the restoration of peace 'on the basis of the moderate programme he had set forth on 8 January ' – the Fourteen Points (see Appendix I).

But the Wilson of October was no longer the Wilson of January. Then he could still see himself, and be seen, as a figure above the battle. He had consulted no one over the Fourteen Points – certainly not the co-belligerents he still did not regard as 'allies'. (Since there was no formal alliance, the United States referred to its co-belligerents simply as 'associated powers'.) But since their promulgation the Germans had shown their own idea of peace terms with the imposition on the Russians of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. More important, the United States had for the previous eight months been involved in a shooting war in France in which a large number of American boys had been killed. Then on 12 October a U-boat sank a passenger ship, the *Leinster*, with a loss of several hundred British and American lives. The American people were now gripped by a war psychosis even more ferocious than that of their weary European partners. In an exchange of notes with Berlin, Wilson made it clear that he was no longer a benevolent *deus ex machina*, but the leader of a victorious and implacable alliance. He declared that 'the only armistice he would feel justified in submitting for consideration would be one which should leave the United States and the powers associated with her [*sic*] in a position to enforce any arrangements that may be entered into and make a renewal of hostilities on the part of Germany impossible'. Further, he demanded as a condition for negotiation that Germany should transform herself into a constitutional state, thus ensuring 'the destruction of every arbitrary power anywhere that can separately, secretly and of its single choice disturb the peace of the world; or if it cannot be presently destroyed, at least its reduction to virtual impotency'.

When Ludendorff learned of these conditions, he tried to break off negotiations, but his own generals would not let him. 'The morale of the troops has suffered seriously,' reported one of his army commanders, Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, 'and their power of resistance diminishes daily. They surrender in hordes whenever the enemy attacks, and thousands of plunderers infest the districts round the bases . . . Whatever happens we must make peace, before the enemy break through into Germany.' The government in Berlin had a yet more immediate fear – that of revolution breaking out in Germany itself. Max of Baden did his best to pre-empt this by cramming through in three weeks all the constitutional reforms that the Kaiser and the army had resisted for the previous half century. By the end of October the *Reichstag* found itself a sovereign body, elected on universal suffrage by secret ballot, with all government ministers responsible to it, including the Minister for War. Wilhelm II, the All Highest War Lord, found himself reduced to the status of a constitutional monarch as impotent as his cousin in England. Thus emboldened, Max now demanded the dismissal of Ludendorff, to which the Kaiser agreed with ill-concealed satisfaction. Hindenburg remained as an irreplaceable figurehead, but Ludendorff's place was taken by the equally plebeian General Wilhelm Groener, who as head of the *Oberstekriegsamt* was very familiar with the social and economic problems of the home front.

But it was all too late. The German people had suffered increasing and lately almost intolerable hardships in the belief that their armies had been, and continued to be, everywhere victorious. With the revelation that they were on the brink of collapse, all confidence in the regime disappeared. On 29 October naval crews mutinied rather than take out their ships in a 'Death-Ride' planned by their admirals to save the honour of the navy. Within a week the mutiny had spread to revolution in every big city in Germany. Workers and Soldiers' Councils seized power on the model of the Russian Soviets. Bavaria declared herself an independent republic. The rear echelons of the army mutinied and seized the crossings over the

Rhine. There was wild talk at army headquarters about marching the army home and 'restoring order', but Groener knew very well that the instrument would break in his hands. He realized that revolution was inevitable unless three conditions were fulfilled. The Kaiser must abdicate; the army must support the majority party in the *Reichstag*, the Social Democrats, the only people capable of riding the political storm; and peace must be made at once, at whatever cost.

So on 9 November Groener informed the Kaiser that he no longer commanded the confidence of the army and packed him off to exile in Holland. In Berlin the leaders of the Social Democrats, Philipp Scheidemann and Friedrich Ebert, proclaimed the Republic and received assurance of army support against any incipient revolution; and a delegation was cobbled together to meet the Allied war leaders in a railway carriage in the forest near Compiègne to ask for their terms.

These terms, so far as land operations were concerned, were dictated largely by the French. The British, themselves anxious to end hostilities as quickly as possible, would have made them milder. Pershing, with two barely blooded armies straining at the leash and public opinion at home baying for 'unconditional surrender', would have granted none at all. All Belgian and French territory was to be evacuated within fourteen days; the Allies were to occupy all German territory on the Left Bank of the Rhine and a ten-kilometre belt on the Right Bank, together with bridgeheads at Mainz, Coblenz, and Cologne. All the territory conquered in Eastern Europe since 1914 was to be surrendered; massive quantities of war materiel was to be handed over, including most of the fleet and all submarines; and the Allied blockade would continue until the final signature of peace. The German delegates protested that the result would be anarchy and famine from which only the Bolshevists would profit, but Foch as leader of the Allied delegation was implacable. The Germans had no alternative but to sign what with some reason they expected to be their own death

warrants. In the case of one delegate, Mathias Erzberger, it was. He was hunted down by right-wing extremists and assassinated two years later.

So on 11 November at 11 a.m., the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the guns on the Western Front at last fell silent, leaving both sides to mourn their dead.