Reasons Germans Joined the Military during World War I
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In the essay "Europe 1914," Sir Michael Howard notes that "In the popular mind, as in the military mind, wars were not seen as terrible evils to be deterred but as necessary struggles to be fought and won." Howard's statement sums up a fatalistic anticipation that had become increasingly widespread in Europe before World War I. Close examination of the mood in Germany before the war yields several other reasons Germans joined the military, as well.

Desire to be a soldier
The German Army of pre-World War I was made up of highly trained professionals. Those who were well born or socially ambitious shared a feudal value system, believing that military might is the basis of power. Many considered military service and war as a test of manhood and of national fitness for survival. Members of the military were respected and popular. They worked hard and took their jobs seriously. Military music was an intrinsic part of popular culture at that time.

Willingness to do their duty
Those who welcomed war with enthusiasm may have been a minority concentrated in the big cities, but those who opposed it were probably an even smaller minority. The vast majority of Germans were willing to do what their government expected of them. Nationalist-oriented public education taught that military service, however un-welcome and tedious, bred a sense of cohesion and national identity and was every citizen's duty. It was considered a high honor to do what the government asked.

Escape to adventure or from hardship
For the city-bred population, the war and military service came as an escape from humdrum into a world of adventure and comradeship. Among the peasants of Germany there was little enthusiasm, but rather gloomy acceptance of yet another unavoidable hardship in lives that were and always had been hard. They believed that hardship would fall as much on those who were left behind as on those who went away. At least the military promised clothing and food.

The country was being threatened
After a 1911 crisis over conflicting interests in Morocco, France began to mobilize an army in anticipation of war with Germany and aligned herself with Russia. Germany saw this move as a threat, prompting the need for its own mobilization. Most of the German military leadership believed that war would be short. This led to the assumption that the best chance for victory lay in immediately taking the offensive. Many Germans joined the military because they felt that their country was being threatened.

References
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