

1194 (1910)

Confidential: from Netto.
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September 30, 1920

Excerpt from "The Last Days of His Majesty the Kaiser and King at Grand Headquarters."

By Count Detlef Moltke

I come now to the 9th of November, that most unlucky day for our poor Fatherland. In the night or early in the morning the Imperial Chancellor had telegraphed "The Kaiser must abdicate as otherwise the Cabinet can no longer endure. The Revolution is constantly spreading and social democracy can no longer be restrained." It is further announced that 'the workmen and soldier councils in large towns on the coast in the west and south of the Empire had assumed control. The Rhine line and the great magazines of all sorts on and behind it as well as all the important railway junctions were in possession of the revolutionists.' This was the situation when at 10:00 A.M. Field Marshal Hindenburg presented himself before the Kaiser.

The question was first raised whether it was possible through force of arms again to become master of the situation in the interior of the Fatherland. Lieutenant General Groener pronounced an advance against the home territory hopeless. The plan was given up as the Kaiser wished to spare the Fatherland civil war and the heroic army new sufferings and conflicts. Moreover, there was danger that the revolutionists would carry out their threat to let no more hospital trains through. In that case, however, a catastrophe would have been unavoidable for the army since the hospital facilities at the front were adequate for only a few days longer.

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"Laf."

September 30, 1920

Excerpt from "The Last Days of His Majesty the Kaiser and
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By Count Helldorf Holste

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since the hospital facilities at the front were adequate for only
a few days longer.

The Kaiser inclined to the idea after the conclusion of the Armistice, which was, of course, immediately to be expected, of returning home in peaceful fashion at the head of the army. This idea Lieutenant General Groener considered impracticable since the whole revolution had turned directly against the person of the Emperor. He said, "The army will march home quietly and in order under its leaders and commanding generals but not under the orders of your Majesty for it no longer stands behind your Majesty." Although some generals did not share this conception which was open to question this plan also was allowed to drop. I am telling you all this here quietly, my honored hearers. You must, however, put yourselves into the state of mind of the Kaiser, who, as I can swear, had never willed the war and constantly had the best intentions. What must his inner emotion have been when now at the end of the task the question of abdication was raised.

From Berlin the Chancellor and his colleagues repeated the demands for abdication with constantly increasing insistence. The Crown Prince who has arrived from his Headquarters now takes part in the conference. The Under Secretary of State, Baron Von uer Busche, telephones from the office of the Imperial Chancellor "that Liebknecht would be called to the presidency of the Republic if the Kaiser did not at once abdicate." News also comes "Berlin is running with blood, the troops of the garrison have gone over to the other side, only by an immediate abdication of His Majesty can civil war be averted." After several vain efforts to get telephone connection with the Berlin (police) office to get some precise information they finally succeeded in

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reaching the Chief of Staff of the Government. He, Major Von Berge, confirmed the statement "that the majority of the Berlin troops had gone over but the street fighting was considerably less and at any rate there was no talk of Berlin running with blood."

New pressure is exercised from Berlin. His Excellency, Wahnschaffe, even says "it is no longer a matter of hours, it is a matter only of minutes." After the hardest inner struggles the Kaiser at length gives way and determines to renounce the imperial crown, "if civil war can be avoided in no other way but he remains King of Prussia." His Excellency, Wahnschaffe, waiting at the telephone is informed that in about half an hour a decision of the Emperor, which is now to be put on paper, will be transmitted. The decision ran:

(1) His Majesty is ready to abdicate as German Emperor if that is the only way in which further bloodshed can be avoided.

(2) His Majesty remains King of Prussia and will lead the army home in closed order.

I would like here to emphasize the fact that the Kaiser had not abdicated unconditionally and to remark that the abdication of the King of Prussia as German Emperor was a constitutional change which would not be valid until the Bundesrat and the Reichstag concurred in it. Since this concurrence was not secured a serious breach of the constitution here confronted the parliamentary members of the government. The Kaiser now signed this resolution and had it telephoned to Berlin. Then followed the following amazing answer. "Too late. We cannot use it now, ~~and~~ at the command of

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the Imperial Chancellor the Wolff Telegraph Bureau has already published the following telegram: 'His Majesty the Emperor and King has abdicated. The Crown Prince has renounced the succession to the throne; Prince Max Von Baden has been declared Administrator; Representative Ebert has been appointed Imperial Chancellor; War Minister Scheuch has put himself at the disposal of the new government as otherwise the hospital service of the army would be imperiled.' ". This Wolff Telegraph Bureau telegram was already published in Berlin by 12:00 M. The resolution of the Kaiser just mentioned on the other hand was not telephoned until half past one. Or the renunciation of the throne on the part of the Crown Prince nothing at all had been said in the whole proceedings.

My honored hearers, thus this most monstrous lie of German history appeared. Right over the head of our Kaiser, the Imperial Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden and his advisers such as Schiedemann & Company had brought this lie into the world and on this lie founded the present Republic, but "he who lies and calumniates is worse than a thief" runs the old saying.

That was a political stroke and an act of violence without a parallel. The Kaiser received the news with the deepest seriousness and the most complete composure and dignity. He expressly and repeatedly asserted that he nevertheless remained King of Prussia and that he did not leave the army. This position he maintained even when the effort was again made to move him to renounce the royal crown.

In the course of the afternoon messages came that not only at the resting places but also at the front individual bodies of troops had mutinied. Even the garrison at Spa was no longer to be relied

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had melted. Even the Garrison at Spa was no longer to be relied

on. The people had declared that while they would undertake nothing against the Kaiser they would do nothing for him. Nevertheless the Kaiser stood by his determination to remain in Spa. About eight o'clock in the evening when the Kaiser on his way to the dining car passed my section I clearly heard him say to a gentleman who was accompanying him "I have no idea of going away. I stay with the army in Spa." In the dining car, however, which he at first occupied alone he received one of his counselors who must have led him to change his mind, for our departure was fixed for five the next morning.

Standing under the prostrating impression that the first counselor of the crown, the Imperial Chancellor, had given him ^{and that} up, the way to the front as well as the way home was closed to him, the hard tried ruler after agonizing inner conflicts had formed the decision of leaving the country. He wished to form no hindrance to obtaining tolerable conditions of armistice and peace. He wished to spare Germany the otherwise inevitable civil war, further losses ^{and} and misery. His chief thought even in this most difficult hour of his life was to serve the Fatherland faithfully.

I come now to the 10th of November. The night passed quietly but I suppose that hardly one of us slept on account of inward emotion. A little after 4:00 A.M. we gathered in the dining car. The Kaiser entered composed and calm. In his usual friendly way he gives us his hand. During breakfast we learn bit by bit the ignominious terms of the Armistice. At 5:00 A.M. our train started slowly. Immediately before four men of the Storming Battalion mounted guard in the car as a defense for the train had to pass through the district of the mutinous rest stations. After only

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I come now to the 10th of November. The night passed quietly but I suppose that hardly one of us slept on account of inward emotion. A little after 1:00 A.M. we gathered in the dining car. The Kaiser entered composed and calm. In his usual friendly way he gives us his hand. During breakfast we learn bit by bit the preliminary terms of the armistice. At 3:00 A.M. our train started slowly. Immediately before town men of the Storming Battalion mounted guard in the car as a defense for the train had to pass through the district of the numerous vest stations. After only

ten minutes we stopped at the little station, La Reide. In the pitch dark night, the Kaiser leaves the train and enters the motor which had preceded him, and stood ready with dimmed lights. Only a few gentlemen accompanied him on the short journey to the Dutch frontier. The rest of us used the railway further. We passed through Pepinster, Luttich and Visé, badly wrecked since 1914. About 7:00 A.M. the train stops; straight across the rails a fence is drawn; we stand at the Dutch border. As a farewell the last German frontier guards, I think Bavarian Landsturm, called after us some incivilities.

The car is uncoupled, the guardsmen leave it. The conductor of the train, Lieutenant Von Rauchhaupt, thinking with tearful eye of his King took leave of us. The three body guards from the train crew weeping came and went from us. We were deeply moved over this fidelity and attachment. The brave men did not wish to leave their Kaiser and King in his misfortune. Hard as it was for me, I had, on account of their own future and that of their families, to advise them to return to Spa.

About 10:00 A.M. there comes from Holland the locomotive intended for us and in a few minutes we reach the little Dutch frontier town, Eysden. We saw our poor Kaiser walking on the platform. We solemnly announce our presence to our imperial master. The splendid sunny Sunday was an endlessly sad one for us.

The Dutch Government had been informed in the night of the 9th of November through their Consul in Brussels of our Kaiser's decision and the Kaiser had asked the Queen by telegraph for permission to be allowed to enter her country as a private individual. At the frontier the Kaiser was received by the Dutch Detachment

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Commandant, Major Van Dyl. He looks after our privacy also after the arrival of our train for the hate-filled eyes of Belgian deserters who are lounging about a factory close by glare at us. In the course of the morning the German Consul from Maastricht, Baron Grote, who had been at the front as Reserve Officer in the Second Guard Regiment, presents himself to the Emperor as do several Dutch officers and officials.

Major Van Dyl at the command of his Government is obliged to receive from us our word of honor that we will not leave the Dutch territory without permission. He tactfully discharges this painful duty. The Kaiser gives the word of honor for all of us with a grasp of the hand. We are obliged to give up our fire arms but our swords the Queen lets us retain.

At about quarter before twelve in the evening there arrive by motor from Maastricht, the German Ambassador, Dr. Rosen with the Secretary of Legation, Dr. Koester, the Governor of the Dutch province of Limburg, Baron Van Hoevel as well as two members of the Dutch Government, all of whom I have to present individually to His Majesty. We now learn that the Queen has put at the disposal of the Kaiser the Schloss Amerongen belonging to Count Bentinck. Our departure is set for 9:25 the next morning. Our train starts punctually on the 11th of November. Our journey was by way of Maastricht, Roermond, Venlo, Nymwegen and Arnheim to Maaren, the railway station of Amerongen. It was to be a more depressing and disheartening journey than could be imagined. At all the large and small stations, yes, I might say along almost the whole route, stood thousands and yet thousands of people. With groans, whistles, cat calls and stamping with the cry "down with William" was our

Commandant, Major Van Dyk. He looks after our privacy also after the arrival of our train for the date-filled eyes of Belgian deserters who are longing about a factory close by glare at us. In the course of the morning the German General from Maastricht, Baron Grote, who had been at the front as Reserve Officer in the Second Guard Regiment, presents himself to the Emperor as do several Dutch officers and officials.

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Our departure is set for 11:30 the next morning. Our train starts punctually on the 11th of November. Our journey was by way of Maastricht, Roermond, Venlo, Nijmegen and Arnhem to Maastricht, railway station of Amersfoort. It was to be a more depressing and disheartening journey than could be imagined. At all the large and small stations, yes, I might say along almost the whole route, stood thousands and yet thousands of people. With greens, whistles, cat calls and stamping with the cry "down with William" was our

^{unhappy}
poor [^] Kaiser received. They threatened us, they made gestures
of strangling, hanging and the like. They were certainly ^{no} true
Hollanders, ^{but} Walloons, a perverse crowd whom we have come to know
well enough in Belgium and France. For six hours this agonizing
journey lasted which our hard tried Emperor had to pass in the
dining car with ^{his} Dutch escort and ourselves.

About 3:00 P.M. we reached Maaren. Count Bentinck and
several officers received the Emperor. The public was not very
numerously represented but it behaved itself with entire dignity.
Indeed, I saw some handkerchiefs wave so there were still some
sympathetic hearts after all. I would like to mention only one
discreditable exception. It was the wife of the English Ambassa-
dor who had come in a motor from The Hague to be able to have
her ~~have~~ her hateful joy in the headlong downfall of our Kaiser,
but even that did not satisfy her. She hastened on in her motor
to Amerongen and placed herself at the castle entrance to see the
Kaiser drive in. It nauseated us when we saw this person.

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Kaiser drive in. It happened us when we saw this person.