

Eyewitness Reports of the Armistice *8 November 1918*

On November 8, 1918, the Allied terms for armistice were presented to German negotiators. The following are two eyewitness reports of the negotiations, one French and one British.

The Coming of the First German Emissary as Reported by the French Captain at the Outpost at Chimay

Notice had reached me that an envoy might arrive and that fire had ceased in our sector.

About 3 o'clock in the afternoon a German lieutenant appeared. He was magnificently turned out and magnificently mounted, and had an escort of two men.

I met him about a hundred yards in front of our lines, and he wished me to go back with him to meet the plenipotentiaries. I told him I could not leave my command; and at first he made some demur, the idea of those with him being that a French officer should accompany the plenipotentiaries from the other side of the line.

I assured him there would be no firing in the sector, that the plenipotentiaries could cross the line in safety, and that I would receive them at my post of command.

"This gentleman is an officer," he said to the men with him, "and as an officer I can accept and trust his word."

Five o'clock was the time fixed for the arrival of the delegates, but at that hour no one arrived, the mission, as is known, actually making their appearance considerably later in the evening, when they at once proceeded on their way.

Source: http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/armistice_alliedeyewitness1.htm

British Eyewitness Report of Armistice Negotiations, 8 November 1918

The roads were a mass of mud, motor-cars of all sorts were ranged by the side of the main street, and the German plenipotentiaries were temporarily halted because of a breakdown to a motor lorry in the road in front of them.

There were seven cars in all, two of them belonging to French Headquarters and five being German. The plenipotentiaries must have halted for nearly half an hour, and certain members of the junior staff attached to them got down while the details of a fresh route to be followed were discussed by them with the French officers by whom they were being escorted.

The senior members remained in the cars, invisible in darkness. Those we saw were of the typical officer class, clean-shaven and almost aggressively self-contained. For the most part they were silent, but occasionally they talked in low tones.

On the pavement by the houses there was a continual movement of French soldiers. No guard was round the cars, for any sort of guard was entirely unnecessary.

There was not a single individual among the two or three hundred men present who even moved forward to catch a glimpse of the mission. There was no question as to any one doubting their identity, for the cars bore on their panels the crest of the Black Eagle.

The demeanour of the French soldier was typical of the high standard of courtesy set by Marshal Foch. Both army and nation realized that with Marshal Foch in command the terms of the armistice were in absolutely safe hands, as he had abundantly shown that he had taken to the full such measures as the situation required.

He insisted, however, that every detail of the transaction should be conducted in absolute privacy, and there was not present at the historic meeting a single representative of the French or allied press.

Source: http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/armistice_alliedeyewitness2.htm