

Kaiser Wilhelm II Abdicates the Throne

November 1918

Facing internal protest and losing the war, Kaiser Wilhelm II was eventually forced to abdicate the throne in November 1918. The Kaiser was strongly opposed to abdication, but after learning that he could not lead the army to battle because his safety could not be guaranteed among German forces, he went into exile in Holland (1st document). A few days later, Wilhelm's son the Crown Prince resigned and went into exile (2nd document). Finally, on November 28, the Kaiser formally resigned (3rd document).

Letter from Kaiser Wilhelm II to Crown Prince Wilhelm **9 November 1918**

My Dear Boy:

After the Court Chamberlain had informed me that he could no longer guarantee my safety at Main Headquarters, and that the troops also were no longer trustworthy, I resolved after a severe mental struggle to leave the army, which has collapsed, and go to Holland.

I advise you to stick to your post until the conclusion of the armistice.

In Berlin two Governments, under the leadership of Ebert and Liebknecht, are fighting against each other.

I hope to see you again in happier times.

Your faithful and deeply affected father,
WILHELM

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

Crown Prince Wilhelm to Paul von Hindenburg on the German Revolution **16 November 1918**

Highly Honoured Field Marshal:

In these most grievous days of our life, both for my father and for myself, I too must say goodbye to your Excellency.

With deep emotion I have been obliged to decide to make use of the authority granted me by your Excellency to lay down my post as chief commander and to take up my residence in the first instance in a neutral country.

I have only been able to force myself to this step after hard internal struggles, although it is repugnant to my whole nature not to be able to lead my brave troops home.

I desire, however, once again briefly to explain my attitude.

Contrary to many unjust opinions, which have always tried to represent me as a war instigator and a reactionary, I have from the beginning adopted the standpoint that this war was for us a war of defence.

Again and again during 1916, 1917, and 1918 I made both oral and written representations to the persons concerned that Germany must endeavour by every means in her power to terminate the war and be glad at maintaining herself against the entire world on the basis of the status quo.

In many conversations with General Ludendorff I for a long time pleaded for a wise peace by understanding, and expressed the view that the most favourable opportunity for attaining this end was reached when we occupied strong, powerful positions before and also during the spring offensive.

As regards internal politics, I am the last person to oppose the liberal development of our Constitution. Only a few days ago I set forth this view in writing to Prince Max of Baden. Nevertheless, when the weight of events hurled my father from his throne, I was not only not heard, but was simply passed over as Crown Prince and as heir to the throne. No renunciation was either demanded from or made by me.

Notwithstanding these facts my standpoint was to persevere at my post, and my ideal was, by holding my army group together, to avoid further causes of damage and disintegration for our Fatherland.

The attitude of the present Government, however, was authoritative as to my remaining further at my military post. I had been informed by it that the Government did not count upon further military employment for me.

Your Excellency will kindly also note that copies of this letter have been sent to the Minister of the royal house, the Prussian Ministry, the Vice-Presidents of the lower house, the President of the upper house, the Chairman of the Military Cabinet, and some friends of mine among the military leaders.

FREDERICK WILHELM

Source: http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/abdication_crownprince2.htm

Kaiser Wilhelm II's Abdication Proclamation

I herewith renounce for all time claims to the throne of Prussia and to the German Imperial throne connected therewith.

At the same time I release all officials of the German Empire and of Prussia, as well as all officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the navy and of the Prussian army, as well as the troops of the federated states of Germany, from the oath of fidelity which they tendered to me as their Emperor, King and Commander-in-Chief.

I expect of them that until the re-establishment of order in the German Empire they shall render assistance to those in actual power in Germany, in protecting the German people from the threatening dangers of anarchy, famine, and foreign rule.

Proclaimed under our own hand and with the imperial seal attached.

Amerongen, 28 November, 1918

Signed

WILLIAM

Source: <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/abdication.htm>