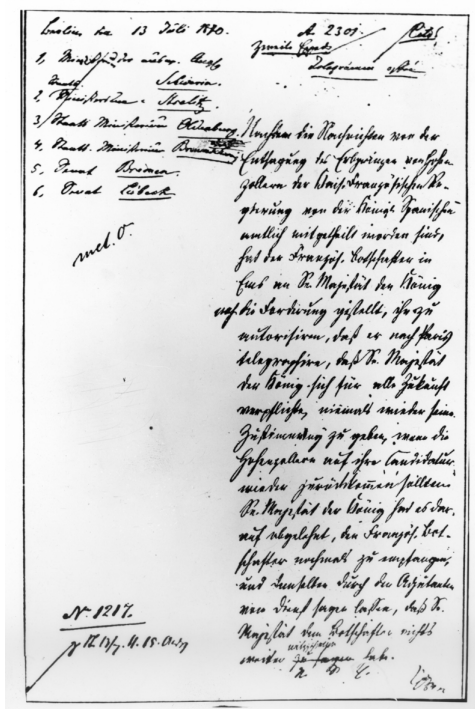


Ems Dispatch, Bismarck's Edited Version (Page 1) (July 13, 1870)

Abstract

Bismarck's abridgment of the original Ems Dispatch provided the French with a *casus belli* that led to war with Prussia and the other German states in 1870–71. The extent of Bismarck's editing can be seen in this facsimile of the abbreviated version meant for Prussian envoys in Germany's other federal states and, more importantly, for public consumption. The revised text reads: "After the reports of the renunciation by the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had been officially transmitted by the Royal Government of Spain to the Imperial Government of France, the French Ambassador [Benedetti] presented to His Majesty the King [Wilhelm I] at Ems the demand to authorize him to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King would obligate himself for all future time never again to give his approval to the candidacy of the Hohenzollerns should it be renewed. His Majesty the King thereupon refused to receive the French envoy again and informed him through an adjutant that His Majesty has nothing further to say to the Ambassador." As Bismarck expected, this much shorter version convinced Prussia's allies and the German public that the French had presented Wilhelm I with a demeaning and unacceptable ultimatum. Conversely—as Bismarck also intended—the French interpreted the edited telegram as evidence that Wilhelm had rudely rejected a sincere French effort to resolve a diplomatic crisis. The honor of both sides was offended, but France more willingly played the part of the aggrieved victim by declaring war on Prussia a few days later. The military showdown between the German states and their "archenemy" [*Erbfeind*] across the Rhine was finally at hand. Facsimile from the files of the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office.

Source



Source: First page of the “Ems Dispatch” as drafted by Bismarck on July 13, 1870. Facsimile.
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