

Negotiations during the Battle of Sedan on September 1, 1870 (Painting, 1894)

Abstract

The victory of German forces over the French at the Battle of Sedan (September 1–2, 1870) effectively decided the outcome of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. French casualties on September 1 included approximately 3,000 dead, 14,000 wounded, and 21,000 captured. German losses were estimated at approximately 2,300 killed, 6,000 wounded, and 700 captured or missing in action. This 1894 painting depicts the discussion of capitulation terms in a villa in Donchéry (a small town commanding a bridge over the River Meuse below Sedan) between 6pm and 9pm on September 1, 1870. It shows the Prussian victor, Helmuth von Moltke (standing, right, beside Bismarck) and the French General Emmanuel Félix de Wimpffen (1811–1884), sitting at the left. Seated to Moltke's right is Prussian Quartermaster-General von Podbielski. Among the officers standing behind Moltke is Count von Nostitz, who is taking notes. In the shadows behind de Wimpffen are French General Henri Pierre Castelnau and other Frenchmen, including a cuirassier, Captain d'Orcey, who allegedly had "observant eyes and a retentive memory." According to historical accounts, when de Wimpffen attempted to surrender only the fortress of Sedan, the French artillery, and those soldiers already taken prisoner, Moltke insisted on his original terms: "The entire army, with arms and baggage." De Wimpffen replied that these terms were "very hard" and that "We merit better treatment." But Moltke "coldly persisted in his demand," remembered Bismarck. The attentive d'Orcet put it more strongly: "Von Moltke was pitiless." French Emperor Napoleon III (1808–1873) surrendered himself and the rest of his troops (about 83,000 men) the next morning.

Source



Source: "Die Capitulation von Sedan. Graf Moltke und General Wimpffen in der Nacht vom 1. zum 2.

September 1870” [“The Capitulation of Sedan. Count Moltke and General Wimpffen on the night of September 1 to 2, 1870”]. Painting, print (1895). From left: Capt. d’Orcey, General Faure, General Castelnau, General Wimpffen (seated), General Podbielski (seated), Count Moltke, Hpt. von Winterfeldt, Rittm. Count Nostitz, Prince Bismarck (with hand on chair), Major Krause, Col. Bronsart von Schellendorf, Major du Claer, Major Blume, Col. Verdy du Vernois.

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Recommended Citation: Negotiations during the Battle of Sedan on September 1, 1870 (Painting, 1894), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/forging-an-empire-bismarckian-germany-1866-1890/ghdi:image-1393>> [July 04, 2025].