

## German Troops Returning from the Western Front across the Belgian-Dutch Border (November 1918)

### Abstract

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After the armistice was signed, German troops had to vacate the territories they held in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg within fifteen days. The same went for those parts of Alsace-Lorraine that Germany was ceding to France. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of soldiers headed home in the following weeks and months. By the time the peace treaty was signed, a total of some eight million German soldiers had to be demobilized. Civil and military authorities as well as the worker councils tried to offer returning soldiers a worthy reception. Many streets and buildings were decorated with flags for the soldiers' arrival. In a speech on December 10, 1918, President Ebert greeted those returning from the war as heroes. Despite this reception and public expressions of gratitude for their sacrifices, an opinion spread, especially among former officers, that Germany's troops were encountering hostility and ingratitude in the homeland. Many experienced the return after defeat as humiliating. More than military authority was threatened in their view. In right-wing conservative circles, such criticisms became a breeding ground for political recriminations as well as explanations for the German defeat such as the so-called Stab-in-the-Back Legend.

### Source

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Source: Return march of German medical troops, November 1918, photographer: Alfred Groß. BA, collection of repro negatives, Bild 146-1988-109-07, available online on Wikimedia Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_146-1988-109-07%2C\\_R%C3%BCckmarsch\\_deutscher\\_Sanit%C3%A4ts-Truppen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABundesarchiv_Bild_146-1988-109-07%2C_R%C3%BCckmarsch_deutscher_Sanit%C3%A4ts-Truppen.jpg)

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