The First German Note to President Woodrow Wilson (October 1918)

Abstract

On September 29, 1918, Erich Ludendorff (1865–1937) told the Kaiser and the civilian leadership that the war was lost, and he instructed the civilian government to negotiate an immediate armistice. The German leadership concluded that the most attractive route to an armistice involved the American president, Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), whose Fourteen Points had suggested the possibility of a lenient peace. On October 3, 1918, the first of several German notes were sent to explore the terms of peace in Washington.

Source

Berlin, October 3, 1918

The German government requests that the President of the United States of America take the initiative in bringing about peace, that he inform all the belligerent states of this request, and that he invite them to send plenipotentiaries for purposes of beginning negotiations. The German government accepts as the basis for peace negotiations the program stated by the President of the United States in his speech to Congress of January 8, 1918, and in his subsequent pronouncements, particularly in his speech of September 27.

In order to avoid further bloodshed, the German government requests the immediate conclusion of an armistice on land, at sea, and in the air.

Signed: Max, Prince of Baden

Chancellor

Source: Erste deutsche Note an Wilson – Friedensersuchen, in Erich Ludendorff, ed., *Urkunden der Obersten Herresleitung über ihre Tätigkeit 1916/8*. Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1920, p. 535; reprinted in Wolfdieter Bihl, *Deutsche Quellen zur Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991, p. 475.

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Recommended Citation: The First German Note to President Woodrow Wilson (October 1918), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:document-989> [September 05, 2026].