

LITTLE HOPE OF PEACE IN BERLIN

Boats to Play Safe With Neutral Ships, but Germans Not Likely to Modify New-Submarine Policy.

Copenhagen, via London, Feb. 23.—Little hope of expectation prevails in Berlin that war with United States is avoidable or that a modus vivendi reconciling the policies of the two Governments can be found.

The authorities and most of the people now desire to avoid actual hostilities in any way consistent with the general lines of the present submarine policy, but only in such.

Accordingly, instructions were given to the Associated Press that it should be reliably informed, to submarine commanders before they started on their side when neutral vessels, particularly American, were in question, whenever possible.

Enemy merchantmen, when recognized as such, were ordered to be sunk at sight, but neutral merchantmen were to be warned when such action, in their judgment was consistent with the object of the campaign and the safety of their own ships.

Expect Actual War Soon
It was realized, however, after the prompt and resolute stand taken by President Wilson that these orders could only be palliative and only defer, not avoid, an ultimate break, and that if President Wilson stood by his announcement that the destruction of American lives or ships would be regarded as an act of hostility, a casus belli must come sooner or later.

Present Crisis Worst Yet
It is considered that the only possibility of the avoidance of hostilities would result from a modification of its standpoint by one or the other side, and so far as could be judged from the positive declarations of Alfred Zimmermann, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs and other officials, before the Associated Press correspondents' departure from Berlin, there was no probability that Germany would give way this time or abandon the ruthless campaign now started.

German-American relations again and again have passed through crises apparently almost hopeless, but this time the crisis is more serious than the former ones and even the optimist can scarcely see any peaceful progress from the impasse.

Substituted "Zones" for Blockade
From a neutral cable office it is now possible to tell the story of the development of the present crisis, and the most rigid censorship has been applied in Germany.

The observer in Berlin, to the approach of the crisis had been plainly and definitely evident since the rejection of Germany's peace overtures.

Information as to Germany's definite decision to start a sharpened submarine war, and even the form it would take, namely, a blockade of specified regions, though the idea of a "prohibited zone" was later substituted for that of a "blockade" at the request of the Naval authorities, the anticipated possible formal objections under the blockade regulations, was received by the Associated Press almost on the morrow of Ambassador Gerard's speech on German-American good relations, delivered at the banquet of the American Association of Commerce and Trade early in January.

Decided on Kaiser's Birthday
A week later it was stated that a full decision on the situation had not been reached and that the campaign would not be launched until after a further consultation with Germany's Allies and the receipt of certain information from Count von Bernstorff and Count Torgowok of Tarnow, respectively German and Austro-Hungarian Ambassadors to the United States, of their concept of armed merchantmen and their liability to attack as warships.

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Planned it as a Surprise
The censorship, however, shut down tightly on any definite statements or predictions of the approaching crisis, the Associated Press being then informed from usually reliable sources that it was decided for marine and technical reasons to have the decision come as a surprise.

This intimation was conveyed confidentially to the German newspapers. All dispatches going into the subject in detail, however, were either suppressed entirely or references to coming events censored out of them, and the only resource was to use again and again the word "blockade" in discussions of submarine possibilities.

Ambassador Gerard, of course, was also aware of the current gossip, and probably was able to advise the State Department of the possible turn of events, even while the echoes of his banquet speech were still resounding. But he was given no intimation from official sources. Foreign Office officials avoided the subject of conversations with him and even at his interview with Foreign Minister Zimmermann the day before the Chancellor's official announcement in the Reichstag of a ruthless submarine campaign. Herr Zimmermann gave him no definite statement on the morrow's proceedings, although the decisions had been finally reached and the text of the note and the memorandum were ready and even prepared for the use of the German newspapers.

The Ambassador and the American Government therefore were faced with the announcement of a fact accomplished when, on the afternoon of Jan. 31, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, the Imperial Chancellor, promulgated in the Reichstag committee the news that a relentless submarine campaign would begin immediately and read to the committee the text of the memorandum on the prohibited zone and the correspondence of the United States—documents which reached the American Embassy only several hours later.

There was therefore no opportunity or occasion, as in the days of the Sussex trouble, for any negotiations to prevent the crisis or an attempt to avert the coming break between the two countries.

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