

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 casual ball must come sooner than was probably expected.

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 correspondent's 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 egress from the impasse.

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

To the observer in Berlin, 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 morning 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 a certain intimation from Count von Bernstorff and Count Torgler 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.

The final decision on an out-and-out submarine campaign of a so-called ruthless type apparently was taken at the grand Austro-German conference at German headquarters on the German

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Emperor's birthday, though The Associated Press heard the statement that submarines departing several days earlier for stations on the submarine hunting grounds were provided with contingent orders for this eventuality.

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 possibility of a German attack 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 note to 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.

There was no chance this time for discussion with the Chancellor or an interview with the Emperor such as saved the day at the time of the Sussex note.

Nothing could be done except to report to Washington the developments which appeared in the press of the world before the Embassy dispatches had started from Berlin, and await the anticipated explanation.

This came in the shape of a rupture of relations earlier than even Americans had expected and certainly with a promptness which astonished and perhaps even dismayed the German official world, prepared though it was for energetic American action by reason of the definite warnings in the Sussex correspondence.

The announcement of the plan of ruthless submarine was preceded by extended deliberations as to the name which should be given it, the question of its relative efficacy and the thoroughness of the measures against submarine trade to Entente countries entering importantly into the problem.

Whether the new campaign should be launched as a formal blockade or given some other name, the number of available submarines, the extent of the territory to be covered and the efficiency of the individual submarines, all had their bearing upon the selection of the name, since a blockade, if it were declared, would have to come up to the requirements of reasonable effectiveness, if inconvenient neutral projects were to be avoided.

Apparently the decision was against the use of the word "blockade" though the German term "see sperre," literally

ly "sea closure," is susceptible of translation as "blockade" and the Associated Press correspondent, after consultation with German language experts, used this translation in his first dispatches after the announcement of the submarine campaign was made.

The correspondent was informed that following day this translation was not correct. The Admiralty objected to its use and furnished the correspondent with the term "prohibited zone" as the proper English equivalent.

The campaign is now known by this term and the German newspapers lately have been combatting the theory that it is a blockade in the international law sense of the word.

How is Germany facing the existing rupture of relations with the United States and the prospect of an outbreak of actual hostilities?

Navy men have been urging and preaching the unleashing of the submarines for so long, even at the risk of war, that their attitude was a foregone conclusion. The Imperial Chancellor, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Zimmermann, and the leaders of the so-called Chancellor faction face the prospect of an outbreak of hostilities with the United States with keen regret.

They would have been glad to continue the policy of good relations, even at a considerable cost to themselves, but yielded to the necessity of taking a step declared by experts as a short cut to ending the war, to which, otherwise, no end was in sight.

How much of confidence they express or is inwardly felt, cannot, of course, be told, but one Zimmermann, for instance, declared to the Associated Press the day before the news of President Wilson's rupture of relations came, with every outward evidence of conviction, that if the United States would abstain from interference and give Germany a free hand, a few months would see the end of the conflict. Two or three months was his first phrase, which he afterwards extended to "perhaps six months."

Despite the plain terms of President Wilson's earlier communications, officials evidently hoped against hope that the inauguration of an unrestricted submarine campaign might perhaps, after all, not bring about a breach with the United States, for in the days between von Bethmann-Hollweg's announcement and the news of Zimmermann's step in breaking off relations, they were awaiting word from America with interest and anxiety which they made no effort to conceal.

When this word did come, it came as a crash, tumbling down any remaining illusions as to the American Government's attitude and barring the way completely to any negotiations upon the basis of the American reply.

From Sunday evening none of them seemed to "cherish much expectation that the status of a rupture of relations would last long and that a full breach was almost inevitable.

The German people in its vast majority, would have been glad to see peace brought about from the German overtures. Once these failed, and the belief that the Entente intended to fight on a complete victory became fixed, the average German declares for the use of any weapon which may compel peace, even at the risk of bringing in the United States.

The majority would undoubtedly have preferred to avoid a breach with the United States, but they are willing to take that in the bargain in trying the weapon in which they now see the only possible means of bringing the war to a quick end.

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