

GERMANY THE NEXT REPUBLIC?

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President Wilson Maintained a Policy of Disinterested Neutrality Toward All the Belligerents in This War Until February, 1915, When the Von Tirpitz Submarine Blockade of England Was Proclaimed

When Carl W. Ackerman Reached the Little Border Town of Bentheim, He Found That Neither the Officers Nor the People Were the "Huns and Barbarians" That They Had Been Pictured—But That Was in 1915

PRESIDENT WILSON'S policy during the first six months of the war was one of impartiality and neutrality. The first diplomatic representative in Washington to question the sincerity of the Executive was Dr. Constantine Dumba, exiled Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, who was sent to the United States because he was not a noble, and, therefore, better able to understand and interpret American ways. He asked me one day whether I thought Wilson was neutral. He said he had been told the President had done so far showed he sympathized with the Entente. While we were talking I recalled what the President's stenographer, Charles L. Swem, said one day when we were going to New York with the President:

I am present at every conference the President holds. I take all his dictation. I think he is the most neutral man in America. I have never heard him express an opinion one way or the other, and if he had I would surely know of it.

I told Doctor Dumba this story, which interested him, and he made no comments.

As I was at the White House nearly every day I had an opportunity to learn what the President would say to callers and friends, although I was seldom privileged to use the information. Even now I do not recall a single statement which ever gave me the impression that the President sided with one group of belligerents.

The President's sincerity and firm desire for neutrality were emphasized in his appeal to "My Countrymen."

"The people of the United States," he said, "are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war. It is natural and inevitable that there should be the utmost variety of sympathy and desire among them with regard to the issues and circumstances of the conflict. Some will wish one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle. It will be easy to excite passion and difficult to allay it. Those responsible for exciting it will assume a heavy responsibility, responsibility for no less a thing than that the people of the United States, whose love of their country and whose loyalty to the Government should unite them as Americans all, bound in honor and affection to think first of her and her interests, may be divided in camps of hostile opinion, hot against each other, involved in the war itself in impulse and opinion, if not in action."

"My thought is of America. I am speaking, I feel sure, the earnest wish and purpose of every thoughtful American that this great country of ours, which is of course the first in our thoughts and in our hearts, should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgment, the dignity of self-control, the efficiency of dispassionate action; a nation that neither sits in judgment upon others nor is disturbed in her own counsels and which keeps herself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world."

Many Americans believed even early in the war that the United States should have protested against the invasion of Belgium. Others thought the Government should prohibit the shipments of war supplies to the belligerents. America was divided by the great issues in Europe, but the great majority of Americans believed with the President that the best service Uncle Sam could render would be to help bring about peace.

Until February, 1915, when the Von Tirpitz submarine blockade of England was proclaimed, only American interests, not American lives, had been drawn into the war. But when the German Admiralty announced that neutral as well as belligerent ships in British waters would be sunk without warning, there was a new and unexpected obstacle to neutrality. The high seas were as much American as British. The oceans were no nation's property and they could not justly be used as battle grounds for ruthless warfare by either belligerent.

Germany, therefore, was the first to challenge American neutrality. Germany was the first to threaten American lives. Germany, which was the first to show contempt for Wilson, forced the President, as well as the people, to alter policies and adapt American neutrality to a new and grave danger.

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Ackerman stepped into Germany March 17, 1915

eighteenth of February "all the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland, as well as the entire English Channel, are hereby declared to be a war area. All ships of the enemy mercantile marine found in these waters will be destroyed, and it will not always be possible to avoid danger to the crews and passengers thereon."

"Neutral shipping is also in danger in the war area, as owing to the secret order issued by the British Admiralty, January 31, 1915, regarding the misuse of neutral flags, and the chances of naval warfare, it can happen that attacks directed against enemy ships may damage neutral vessels."

"The shipping route round the north of the Shetlands in the east of the North Sea and over a distance of thirty miles along the coast of the Netherlands will not be dangerous."

Although the announcement was signed by Admiral von Pohl, chief of the Admiralty staff, the real author of the blockade was Grand Admiral von Tirpitz. In explanation of the announcement the Teutonic-Allied, neutral and hostile Powers were sent a memorandum, which contained the following paragraph:

The German Government announces its intention in good time so that hostile as well as neutral ships can take necessary precautions accordingly. Germany expects that the neutral Powers will show the same consideration for Germany's vital interests as for those of England, and will aid in keeping their citizens and property from this area. This is the more to be expected, as it must be to the interests of the neutral Powers to see this destructive war end as soon as possible.

On February 12 the American Ambassador, James W. Gerard, handed Secretary of State von Jagow a note, in which the United States said:

This Government views these possibilities with such grave concern that it feels it to be its privilege, and indeed its duty in the circumstances, to request the Imperial German Government to consider before action is taken the critical situation in respect of the relations between this country and Germany which might arise were the German naval officers, in carrying out the policy foreshadowed in the Admiralty's proclamation, to destroy any merchant vessel of the United States or cause the death of American citizens.

It is, of course, unnecessary to remind the German Government that the sole right of a belligerent in dealing with neutral

vessels on the high seas is limited to visit and search, unless a blockade is proclaimed and effectively maintained, which the Government of the United States does not understand to be proposed in this case. To declare and exercise the right to attack and destroy any vessel entering a prescribed area of the high seas without first accurately determining its belligerent nationality and the contraband character of its cargo would be an act so unprecedented in naval warfare that this Government is reluctant to believe that the Imperial German Government in this case contemplates it as possible.

I sailed from New York February 13, 1915, on the first American passenger liner to run the Von Tirpitz blockade. On February 20 we passed Queenstown and entered the Irish Sea at night. Although it was moonlight and we could see for miles about us, every light on the ship, except the green and red port and starboard lanterns, was extinguished. As we sailed across the Irish Sea, silently and cautiously as a muskrat swims on a moonlight night, we received a wireless message that a submarine, operating off the mouth of the Mersey River, had sunk an English freighter. The captain was asked by the British Admiralty to stop the engines and await orders.

Within an hour a patrol boat approached and escorted us until the pilot came aboard early the next morning. No one aboard ship slept. Few expected to reach Liverpool alive, but the next afternoon we were safe in one of the numerous snug wharves of that great port.

A few days later I arrived in London. As I walked through Fleet street newsboys were hurrying from the press rooms carrying orange-colored placards with the words in big black type: "Pirates Sink Another Neutral Ship."

Until the middle of March I remained in London, where the wildest rumors were afloat about the dangers off the coast of England, and where every one was excited and expectant over the reports that Germany was starving. I was urged by friends and physicians not to go to Germany because it was universally believed in Great Britain that the war would be over in a very short time. On March 15 I crossed from Tilbury to Rotterdam. At Tilbury I saw pontoon bridges across the Thames, patrol boats and submarine chasers rushing back and forth watching for U-boats, which might attempt to come up the river. I boarded the Batavia IV late at night and left Gravesend at daylight the next morning for Holland. Every one was on deck look-

In the Early Days of the War the Violent Hatred Toward President Wilson and the American People Was Noticeably Absent—But It Was Not Long Before the Munitions Interests and the Navy Got Busy

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America



"The League of Truth" used this method to foster hatred against America in Germany. The document shows the "Declaration of Independence" with the imprint of a red hand over it.

ing for submarines and mines. The channel that day was smooth as a small lake, but the terrible expectation that submarines might sight the Dutch ship made every passenger feel that the submarine war was as real as it was horrible.

On March 17, arriving at the little German border town of Bentheim, I met for the first time the people who were already branded as "Huns and Barbarians" by the British and French. Officers and people, however, were not what they had been pictured to me. Neither was Germany starving. The officials and inspectors were courteous and patient and permitted me to take into Germany not only British newspapers, but placards which pictured the Germans as pirates. Two days later, while walking down Unter den Linden, poor old women, who were already taking the places of newsboys, sold German extras with streaming headlines: "British Ships Sunk, Submarine War Successful." In front of the Lokal Anzeiger building stood a large crowd reading the bulletins about the progress of the Von Tirpitz blockade.

For luncheon that day I had the choice of as many foods as I had had in London. The only thing missing was white bread, for Germany, at the beginning of the war, permitted only Kriegsbrot (war bread) to be baked.

All Berlin streets were crowded and busy. Military automobiles, autotricks, big moving vans, private automobiles, taxicabs and carriages hurried hither and thither. Soldiers and officers, seemingly by the thousands, were parading up and down. Stores were busy. Berlin appeared to be as normal as any other capital. Even the confidence of Germany in victory impressed me so that in one of my first dispatches, I said:

"Germany today is more confident than ever that all efforts of her enemies to crush her must prove in vain. With a threefold offensive, in Flanders, in Galicia and in northwest Russia, being successfully prosecuted, there was a spirit of enthusiasm displayed here in both military and civilian circles that exceeded even the stirring days immediately following the outbreak of the war."

"Flags are flying everywhere today; the imperial standards of Germany and Austria predominate, although there is a goodly showing of the Turkish Crescent. Bands are playing as regiment after regiment passes through the city to entrain for the front. Through Wilhelmstrasse the soldiers moved, their hats and guns decorated with fragrant flowers and with mothers, sisters and girlfriends clinging to and encouraging them."

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

REMARKABLE CHANGE IN MARTIAL ARDOR OF GERMAN PEOPLE SHOWN BY PHOTOGRAPH



BERLIN'S WAR-TIRED POPULACE APATHETIC AS TROOPS PARADE
Three years ago, when these same regiments passed through Brandenburger Thor, there were wild scenes of enthusiasm. Flags were flying, handkerchiefs waving and hats thrown in the air. Those wild scenes are no longer enacted.



TOMMIES STOP IN GREAT FLANDERS DRIVE TO CARE FOR WOUNDED GERMANS
When a man is down, don't kick him, is the sportsmanlike motto of the British forces in France. The photograph shows Irish guards giving immediate aid to the wounded occupants of a trench they have just captured.