

POWERS ASKED TO GIVE PEACE TERMS

President Sends Note to All Belligerents That Basis of Discussion Be Found.

MEDIATION NOT OFFERED

Action, Taken Without Notice, Comes as Surprise to Diplomats and Is Said to Propose Only That Soundings Be Taken.

(Continued From First Page.)

since the German allies brought forth their proposals to dispel the generally prevalent belief that such an action on the part of President Wilson would be unacceptable to the entente powers.

British Embassy officials declared they were utterly taken by surprise; were wholly unable to explain it, and were emphatic in their statement that no exchanges whatever had passed through the Embassy here as a preliminary.

The wish and hope of the German powers that President Wilson would intercede in some way has long been known and has been conveyed in different ways to the White House. The attitude of the entente allies as expressed by their statesmen, and certainly until recently in official advices to the American Government, has been that a peace offer by the United States would be considered almost the next thing to unfriendly.

President Admits Embarrassment.

All that, however, was before the German allies of their own accord brought forward their proposals for discussions of peace. President Wilson specifically says in the notes he is somewhat embarrassed in making the suggestion at this particular time, "because it may now seem to have been prompted by a desire to play a part in connection with the recent overtures of the central powers."

To the central powers the President says his action was in no way "suggested" by the Teutonic proposals, while to the entente allies he says his note is "in no way associated with them." To both sets of belligerents he says "he would have delayed offering it until those overtures had been answered but for the fact that it also concerns the question of peace and may thus be considered in connection with other proposals which have the same end in view."

German Embassy Hopeful.

Diplomatists consider it incredible that the President would bring forward such a proposal at such a time unless he had reason to believe it would receive respectful consideration at the hands of all the belligerents and, above all, would not prejudice the position of the United States as a possible mediator.

The German Embassy view, consistently hopeful that proposals of the central allies would lead to a discussion of peace, was expressed in this authorized statement by Count von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador: "Now," said he, "I am perfectly convinced that there will be a conference."

Roosevelt's Action Paralleled.

The nearest parallel in world history for President Wilson's action was President Roosevelt's move in 1905 to end the war between Russia and Japan. But in that case the President had been assured his proposal would not be disagreeable to either of the belligerents, and, curiously enough, it was through Emperor William of Germany that the preliminary soundings crystallized into the suggestion that President Roosevelt take the steps.

Before that time President Roosevelt had conferred with Count Cassini, the Russian Ambassador here, and with Mr. Takahira, the Japanese Minister. In the Russian capital the American Ambassador, George von L. Meyer, had conversations with Count Lamsdorff, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs. In Tokio, American Minister Griscom had conversations with Count Komura, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs. The outcome of all these preliminaries was that President Roosevelt was assured that he would not be humiliated by a rejection of his action.

President's Justification Seen.

Those in official circles who would discuss the notes thought it worthy of attention that President Wilson, after saying his action had long been in mind, added:

"The President can only beg that his suggestion be considered entirely on its own merits and as if it had been made in other circumstances."

The President looks forward in the notes to the part the neutrals shall take in assuring the future peace of the world. He expresses justification in "suggesting an immediate opportunity for a comparison of views as to the terms which must precede those ultimate arrangements for the peace of the world which all desire and in which the neu-

tral nations, as well as those at war, are ready to play their full responsible part."

Definite Statement Sought.

The objects which the belligerents have in mind, the President pointed out, are virtually the same as stated in general terms to their people and to the world, but yet the concrete objects of the war "have never been definitely stated."

"Never yet," he says, "have the authoritative statesmen of either side avowed the precise objects which would, if attained, satisfy them and their people that the war had been fought out. The world has been left to conjecture what definite results, what actual exchange of guarantees, what political or territorial changes or readjustments, what stage of military success even would bring the war to an end."

"It may be," continues the note, "that peace is nearer than we know; that the terms which the belligerents on the one side and the other would deem it necessary to insist upon are not so irreconcilable as some have feared; that an interchange of views would clear the way at least for conference and make the permanent concord of the nations a hope of the immediate future—a concert of nations immediately practicable."

Note Long in Preparation.

There are indications that President Wilson began preparation of his note some time ago—probably even before the German proposals came out—and that of the offer of the central powers and the succeeding developments made a more favorable opportunity for its presentation.

The fact that the President asks first only a clarification of terms is taken as indicating that he is not expecting an immediate conclusion. In a war involving so many conflicting interests, not only between the two belligerent groups, but even between nations of the same group, it is realized that much time may be needed even to bring about the mere preliminaries of a conference. It is desired, therefore, to clear away as many of those preliminaries as possible, so that when a solution is near, either by victory or exhaustion, not a day of needless slaughter may be necessary.

Note Put on Cables Tuesday.

Just when the note was finished has not been disclosed, but it is known that it went to the cables yesterday. On Monday the higher officials of the State Department were taken into the President's confidence and the text was sent to the public printer to make copies for the diplomatic corps. The fact that the note was completed not later than Monday, and its dispatch Tuesday, indicate that it was sent regardless of anything that Lloyd George might say.

Officials expect the note to be received with general favor in Germany, but many believe the real test will come with its arrival in the entente countries, where many influential persons have feared and sought to prevent any American intervention until the military situation changed. From the fact, however, that Lloyd George's reply to the central powers was milder than generally had been expected, and still left the way open for further negotiations, it is believed that the allies will meet the present note in at least a friendly spirit.

Germany Willing to Agree.

While German officials thoroughly understand that President Wilson made it clear that he was not in any sense offering mediation to the warring governments, it was declared that, should the negotiations reach that stage, Germany, being anxious

to have the peace of Europe restored, willingly would agree to such procedure. Neither does it make any difference to Germany, it was said, whether the conference is composed of representatives of all the belligerents or just the coalitions.

So far as Germany is concerned, the view held here is that she would be perfectly willing that a committee of three, formed of a representative of the central powers, a representative of the entente and a representative of the United States should hold preliminary discussions. The main idea of Germany and her allies is to get each set of belligerents into direct personal communication with the other. The method is considered of secondary importance.

The view prevails in German quarters that all the belligerents will make some definite statement in reply to the United States. The very phraseology of the American communication, it is felt, calls for replies far more definite than mere acknowledgements of receipt.

Count von Bernstorff may discuss the situation with Secretary Lansing some time tomorrow.

Texts Begin Identically.

The notes to the belligerents are prefaced with this instruction by Secretary Lansing to the American Ambassadors presenting them:

"The President directs me to send you the following communication to be presented immediately to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the government to which you are accredited."

The texts of the notes themselves then begin identically, as follows:

"The President of the United States has instructed me to suggest to the (here is inserted a designation of the government addressed) a course of action with regard to the present war which he hopes that the government will take under consideration as suggested in the most friendly spirit and as coming not only from a friend, but also as coming from the representative of a neutral nation whose interests have been most seriously affected by the war and whose concern for its early conclusion arises out of a manifest necessity to determine how best to safeguard those interests if the war is to continue."

Embarrassment Is Experienced.

At this point the texts vary. In the notes to the Central Powers this paragraph follows next:

"The suggestion which I am instructed to make the President has long had it in mind to offer. He is somewhat embarrassed to offer it at this particular time, because it may now seem to have been prompted by a desire to play a part in connection with the recent overtures of the central powers. It has, in fact, been in no way suggested by them in its origin and the President would have delayed offering it until those overtures had been independently answered but for the fact that it also concerns the question of peace and may best be considered in connection with other proposals which have the same end in view. The President can only beg that his suggestion be considered entirely on its merits, and as if it had been made in other circumstances."

In the note to the entente allies the following paragraph takes the place of the one just quoted:

"The suggestion which I am instructed to make, the President has long had it in mind to offer. He is somewhat embarrassed to offer it at this particular time, because it may now seem to have been prompted by the recent overtures of the central powers. It is, in fact, in no way associated with them in its origin and

the President would have delayed offering it until those overtures had been answered, but for the fact that it also concerns the question of peace and may best be considered in connection with other proposals which have the same end in view. The President can only beg that his suggestion be considered entirely on its own merits and as if it had been made in other circumstances."

Avowal of Views Suggested.

Then all notes proceed identically as follows:

"The President suggests that an early occasion be sought to call out from all the nations now at war such an avowal of their respective views as to the terms upon which the war might be concluded and the arrangements which would be deemed satisfactory as a guaranty against its renewal or the kindling of any similar conflict in the future as would make it possible frankly to compare them. He is indifferent as to the means taken to accomplish this. He would be happy himself to serve, or even to take the initiative in its accomplishment in any way that might prove acceptable, but he has no desire to determine the method or the instrumentality. One way will be as acceptable to him as another if only the great object he has in mind be attained."

"He takes the liberty of calling attention to the fact that the objects which the statesmen of the belligerents on both sides have in mind in this war are virtually the same, as stated in general terms to their own people and to the world. Each side desires to make the rights and privileges of weak peoples and small states as secure against aggression or denial in the future as the rights and privileges of the great and powerful states now at war. Each wishes to be made secure in the future, along with all other nations and peoples, against the recurrence of wars like this and against aggression of selfish interference of any kind. Each would be jealous of the formation of any more rival leagues to preserve an uncertain balance of power amidst multiplying suspicions, but each is ready to consider the formation of a league of nations to insure peace and justice throughout the world. Before that final step can be taken, however, each deems it necessary first to settle the issues of the present war upon terms which will certainly safeguard the independence, the territorial integrity and the political and commercial freedom of the nations involved."

United States Vitaly Concerned.

"In the measures to be taken to secure the future peace of the world the people and Government of the United States are as vitally and as directly interested as the governments now at war. Their interest, moreover, in the means to be adopted to relieve the smaller and weaker peoples of the world of the peril of wrong and violence is as quick and ardent as that of any other people or government. They stand ready, and even eager, to co-operate in the accomplishment of these ends, when the war is over, with every influence and resource at their command. But the war must first be concluded. The terms upon which it is to be concluded they are not at liberty to suggest, but the President does feel that it is his right and his duty to point out their intimate interests in its conclusions, lest it should presently be too late to accomplish the greater things which lie beyond its conclusion; lest the situation of neutral nations, now exceedingly hard to endure, be rendered altogether intolerable, and lest, more than all, an

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