

PRESIDENT DRAFTS ANSWER TO AUSTRIA

New Ancona Note May Leave Loophole Desired as Basis of Concession.

PRIVATE ASSURANCE GIVEN

Charge d'Affaires Intimates That Vienna Is Willing to Give Satisfaction If Demand Is Moderate in Tone.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—President Wilson late today completed the first draft of the new note to Austria-Hungary, reiterating the American demands regarding the sinking of the Italian steamship Ancona. The document was delivered to Secretary Lansing at his home tonight. It probably will be called to Ambassador Field for presentation to the Vienna Foreign Office tomorrow night or Monday, after the Secretary has fully deliberated the ideas of the President.

The first draft was completed after Secretary Lansing had sent the President a memorandum containing all of the State Department's information on the Ancona disaster and after Baron von Schwarzenberg, charge of the Austro-Hungarian Embassy here, had conferred at some length with the Secretary.

It was authoritatively declared tonight that the charge strongly intimated to Mr. Lansing that, should the second note be couched in less vigorous terms and leave the Vienna Foreign Office such an opportunity, the reply might be wholly satisfactory to the United States.

A satisfactory reply would have to contain a disclaimer, assurance of reparation by payment of indemnity for the American killed and injured, and the United States, even if correct, warranted any blame for the disaster being placed upon the commander of the Austrian submarine which destroyed the Ancona.

The official text of the Austrian reply to the American note, given out here today, reveals that Austria denied that the facts in the case as presented by the United States, even if correct, warranted any blame for the disaster being placed upon the commander of the Austrian submarine which destroyed the Ancona.

Extended Discussion Refused. The United States, it was said, will reiterate in the new note that such a position is opposed to all rules of recognized international law. The note undoubtedly will deal at length with this declaration of the Vienna government, and legal arguments and precedents to disprove it will be presented.

The note will convey to Austria-Hungary all the information the Government thinks necessary, according to the opinion expressed by its officials. They declared, however, that it would not enter into extended discussion of details.

The document was represented as being a long one. After giving some of the facts Austria-Hungary desires, it again calls particular attention to the statements issued by the Austro-Hungarian Admiralty, and will, it was said, virtually declare that the principal complaint of the United States is based on admission of fact in the document. In the statement it is admitted that the Ancona was torpedoed by the submarine while some persons still were aboard.

Demands to Be Reiterated. All the points and demands made in the first note will be reiterated and it is believed no room will be left for further arguments or negotiations. The note will not, it was said, limit within which Austria-Hungary must comply with the American demands, but still make it clear that the final word of fact in the document has been spoken, and that Austria-Hungary must decide promptly by its actions whether diplomatic relations between the two countries shall be severed.

While firm in tone, the communication, it is believed, will not be quite as vigorous as the first note. The United States was represented by officials as desiring to continue its present relations with Austria-Hungary if possible. However, this Government will not in any way recede from its demands, nor will it permit any such apparent procrastination as the Vienna Foreign Office exhibited in furnishing a reply to the inquiry for details, made soon after the Ancona went down.

Specifications Are Promised. That the United States will "precisely" specify the actual circumstances upon which it bases its case, as requested in the reply, was believed in official circles to be practically assured. It was said the opinion was that Austria-Hungary was entitled to such specification if she desired it.

Saturday's War Moves

THE WEEK-END finds the war situation in the east and west bearing the outward appearance of comparative quiet. Some observers are ready to predict the operations will virtually remain at a standstill until after the holidays.

Nevertheless there is no lack of food for speculation, particularly on the eastern front, which now virtually stretches across two continents, from North Russia to South Persia. In the extreme north there have been official reports that the promised new German thrust between Riga and Dvinsk has already begun, but neither Berlin nor Petrograd confirm this in the official communications.

Five hundred miles further south the Russians believe they have checked another enemy attempt to resume the offensive in Galicia.

In the Balkan zone the first chapter is closed, but with more than 2,000,000 men of a dozen different nations under arms, it is not likely that the campaign will long maintain a state of quiet. On the Italian front the Balkan front, which has been the scene of the most serious fighting in the Balkans, is now in a state of comparative quiet. The Italian operations through Albania and the Russian concentration in Roumania. Meanwhile in the so-called Middle East, Grand Duke Nicholas' advance to Hamadan brings strong Russian forces to within about 200 miles of Bagdad and it is believed in the entente capitals that his operations will put new life and new importance into the British operations in South Persia after the recent setback.

The situation on the Greek border is surrounded by obscurity. The complications which diplomacy has recently been dealing with are believed to be in a fair way for settlement. The Greek elections today appear not likely to be a serious factor in the situation, as the refusal of the followers of ex-Premier Venizelos to participate will

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