GERMANY'S SUBMARINE BLOCKADE OF ENGLAND

WE MAY REMAIN NEUTRAL as regards the war, remarks the Chicago Herald, but "the war won't as regards us." Thus when Germany and England, each more or less dependent on outside food-supplies, enter upon a policy of using their every available means to starve each other out, neutral commerce is the first to suffer. England's great navy, says Mr. Churchill, its official head, has been exercising an unremitting pressure upon its adversary until now "Germany is like a man throttled with a heavy gag." "England wants to starve us," said Admiral von Tirpitz a few days ago, but "we can play the same game. We can bottle her up and torpedo every English or allied ship which nears any harbor in Great Britain, thereby cutting off large food supplies."

The succession of events has been rapid. The German Government decides to take over the food-supply of the country beginning February 1, in order to insure its better distribution and more economic consumption. England, on February 2, declares foodstuffs contraband even when shipped to civilians in Germany. About this time German submarines torpedo five merchant ships of the Allies in the English Channel and the Irish Sea. This is followed by an official declaration from Berlin, on February 4, declaring the English waters a "war zone," and warning neutral shipping. Editors and Washington correspondents admit that nearly every one of these moves presents our Government and our exporters with a new and serious problem.

The action of Germany in making grain a state monopoly and the consequent action of Britain in declaring grain conditional contraband, raise what the Springfield Republican calls "a question of no slight complexity." The Republican does not discount Ambassador von Bernstorff's assurance that no foodstuffs imported from neutral countries would be subject to seizure. But it observes that "while it would be easy enough to see that imported grain did not go to the Army, the practical effect would be to release for the use of the Army an equivalent from the supplies on hand," and "it is not surprising that this highly efficient arrangement should disturb the British Government.

"What, asks the Chicago Herald, does this mean to American commerce in foodstuffs?" And answers: "Prima facie, it means that food shipments to Germany and her allies will be cut off. But there is another side to the matter. Suppose Germany retaliates, as she has a perfect right to do, by also declaring foodstuffs contraband? In that case American food shipments to Great Britain or France would be just as much in jeopardy for the German submarine raiders as the property of the enemy himself. Certainly there are some disagreeable possibilities, if not probabilities, in that direction."

Interest in these probabilities was heightened by the acts of the submarine U-21, perhaps accompanied by others, which torpedoed the British merchantmen Linda Blanche, Ben Cruchan, and Kiloos in the Irish Sea, on January 30, and the Tokomaru and Iura at the English Channel on January 3. In case of the first three ships the crews were given a chance to escape in their boats, as in the previous case of the Dorward. According to French accounts the Tokomaru's crew were left to be picked up by French torpedo-boats. The Iura did not sink, but was towed into port by a French ship. Our press naturally comments on this new proof of the efficiency of the German submarines and their navigators and notes the parallel to Conan Doyle's antebellum story of a successful submarine warfare on England. In consequence, to quote the New York Evening Post's summary on February 1, "Belfast shipping circles are alarmed, and have suspended sailings, and rates of insurance on British vessels, transatlantic as well as coastwise, have been raised." And, says the New York World, "this means trouble for the United States as well as for Great Britain and France."

"It means increased freight-rates and increased insurance. Thus far the practically undisputed sea-power of the Western Allies has enabled them to protect neutral commerce with themselves while almost prohibiting it with Germany and Austria. With hostile submarines operating at the one gateway of British trade which has been regarded as secure, we face the loss of our principal markets and many other complications."

"The need of American shipping will be greater than ever. Instead of our commerce being subject to the rules of contraband enforced by one belligerent only, it will be under the espionage of both of the contending alliances."

And the New York Evening Sun, no friend of the Administration's Shipping Bill, observes that in the event of even a partial crippling of the British merchant marine,

"It might be Britain, least self-supplying of the belligerents, and not Germany, which sought the aid of an American government-owned shipping to bring to it its necessary stores of beef and flour. It might even be Britain which sought to sell to the United States Government a marine handicapped while under the British flag."

On February 4, the German Admiralty announced to the world that—

"The waters around Great Britain and Ireland, including the whole of the English Channel, are declared a war zone from and after February 18, 1915."

"Every enemy merchant ship found in this war zone will be destroyed, even if it is impossible to avert dangers which threaten the crew and passengers."

"Also, neutral ships in the war zone are in danger, as in consequence of the misuse of neutral flags ordered by the British Government on January 31, and in view of the hazards of naval warfare, it can not always be avoided that attacks mean for enemy ships endanger neutral ships."

"Shipping northward, around the Shetland Islands, in the eastern basin of the North Sea, and in a strip of at least thirty nautical miles in breadth along the Dutch coast, is endangered in the same way."

This is Germany's reply, explains the German Chancellor, Von Bethmann-Hollweg, to England's attack "to starve a people numbering 70,000,000." He adds, according to a dispatch which reaches the New York Times by way of London:

"With regard to the complaint that we are injuring neutral interests, neutral Powers have not protested against England's action, and they must take the consequences. We certainly are not going to die of famine."

Germany's move is denounced in the New York Tribune by Frederic R. Cournot, an authority on international law, as "extraordinary and unprecedented" and "without justification." It must be regarded, he says, as "either a mere empty threat or a war against humanity." Germany's warning to neutrals strikes the New York Tribune as "ominous in the extreme."

The New York Times predicts that "no neutral nation on earth" will acquiesce in the establishment of a "paper blockade" on such a scale as that proposed by Germany, and says:

"The German Admiralty certainly can not suppose either that the declaration of a 'war zone,' which in its very nature cannot everywhere and at all times be effectively maintained as a barrier to commerce, will be respected, or that the destruction of a neutral ship within the zone would be passed over as an unavoidable and excusable hazard in naval warfare."

On the other hand, the New York Press thinks that Germany's warning will not be taken very seriously by American shipping, "because, for one thing, we have as yet no overseas shipping worth mentioning to be warned off the coast of France or any other foreign coast. Exporters of American products bound for France in foreign bottoms will not be greatly troubled, because they sell their goods not for delivery on the soil of France or of any other belligerent, but for delivery on shipboard in ports of the United States. Countries that are in imperative need of our products of farm and factory will continue to buy them, taking all the risk, exactly as they have done before, of getting them first safely across the Atlantic and then ashore."
MOBILIZING THE JOBLESS

JUST AS TRULY are the needy unemployed in New York, Chicago, and our other great cities victims of the war, argues the New York World, "as if they dwelt in Brussels or Lodz," and other papers remark that it is about as bad to be hungry and shelterless in a North-American as in a Belgian walled city. In this, the Chicago Tribune, is our national problem, a problem of the mobilizing of an army of 5,000,000 men, but "for building, not destroying." And, "if we had given the same intense and detailed attention to the mobilization and effective employment of this army of peace that Germany or France has to its army of war, there probably would be very few unemployed in the country to-day." Suggestions for a nation-wide mobilization of these forces have been made, notably by President Wilson, and there is much interest in the tentative Federal Employment Bureau which has been formed by the cooperation of the Labor, Agriculture, and Post-office Departments. Mobilization of a rather different nature is talked of by Socialist writers and I. W. W. leaders. But, after all, the unemployed congregate in the cities, and in and by the cities must be accomplished the most effective immediate help. So we find city officials, policemen, charity organizations, churches, newspaper editors, and citizens working in cities all over the land. New York has no monopoly of unemployment troubles or remedies, but she has the biggest job, and what she is doing is typical of what is going on in scores of smaller communities. While one New York social worker agrees with certain business and political authorities that "business conditions all over the country are improving, the fact remains," he adds, "that never in the history of New York City has there been such an army of unemployed, and every day and every hour makes it more difficult for them to make ends meet." It seems impossible to get any conclusive estimate of the number of unemployed in New York. A big life-insurance company has estimated it at 140,000. A church report places it as high as 500,000. Others offer estimates at various intermediate figures. The most important, if not the most spectacular, agency at work is the committee appointed by the Mayor and headed by Elbert H. Gary. This committee has been at work for several months, and tho it has been severely criticized, especially from radical sources, has accomplished something, to judge from a recent statement by City Chamberlain Henry Brueker. He said, as reported in the New York Evening Post:

"We are raising funds, not to do the work of charitable organizations, but to finance, as extensively as may prove necessary and funds may be obtained, a series of workshops where men and women who can not find work elsewhere may come for temporary relief work until they are restored to permanent employment. Rooms have been made available in various parts of the city by the Children's Aid Society, and we are using vacant city buildings in addition. The work is limited to five hours a day at fifteen cents an hour, so that a part of the day may be devoted to searching for permanent employment. The product is not sold, but given away to charitable organizations, European War sufferers, or the hospitals of the city. What we can do in this direction will be limited only by the resources which are available to us.

"We are establishing a loan fund, not merely for temporary relief, but to start a permanent plan for mutual helpfulness through the organization of so-called credit-unions. We shall organize these unions among labor organizations, church and fraternity organizations, neighborhood clubs, and wherever men and women are associated together. In this plan, character is the basis of the loan, and character is supported by the joint responsibility of all the members of the union, twenty-five or more, as the case may be.

We are taking over and organizing through the churches of the city, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant, a good-fellowship movement, or a good-neighbor movement, by which we will bring into personal relationship an individual desiring to be helpful and a man or woman or family needing help.

"We are conducting an educational campaign in the press, through news and advertising, urging employers to assume, so far as they can, their individual shares of the burden of unemployment, by keeping employed the largest number of men possible. We have urged the city of New York to undertake at this time all contemplated improvements, and we have made similar appeals to the State and national governments. We plan to ship men who are willing to go to the country to find work on the farms, as soon as the weather permits the resumption of farm-work. In this we are asking the cooperation of the State and national governments. At the suggestion of the Police Commissioner we are organizing throughout the city neighborhood groups to employ a man to clean the sidewalks and areaways on some joint agreement."

The New York Federation of Churches, the Police Department, the superintendent of the Municipal Lodging House, the officials of the Public Employment Bureau are working in harmony with the Mayor's committee. Among the most picturesque activities in behalf of the unemployed is the "Hotel de Gink." An old down-town building, owned by the city, was handed over to an enterprising individual from the Pacific Coast, whom some reporters spoke of as "the King of the Hoboes." This man, Jeff Davis by name, got together a number of down-and-outs, who repaired the old building, fitted it up as a hotel, and are now running it with considerable success.

Nearly as well advertised was "Bundle Day." On February 4, after the due amount of newspaper advertising and editorial encouragement, a volunteer organization received at a central headquarters thousands of bundles of used clothing for needy sufferers. These activities, and others described below, are summarized from accounts in the New York papers.

There is the National Forward-to-the-Land League, which is searching out vacant land on which unemployed persons can begin truck-farming in the spring. Mr. Nathan Straus is building in City Hall Park a pasteurized-milk depot. The Hotel Knickerbocker is running an up-town "bread-line." Scores of churches are acting either singly, or in groups, to provide employment or relief. All the regular charity organizations are working overtime. Suffragists have established a bread-line and relief-station for women. The New York Exchange for Women's Work is receiving and selling more cookery and needlework than ever before. Immigration Commissioner Howe has opened rooms at Ellis Island for homeless men, and Mrs. Sara J. Atwood, of the North American Civic League, has been looking after the comfort of the hundreds of men who have gathered there. The Board of Aldermen have set aside over $100,000 for contracts on jobs that can be speeded up so as to provide work for the unemployed before the end of the winter.

One evening last month, Colonel Roosevelt brought together an audience which filled the Metropolitan Opera House to hear...