

HARDING AND GERMANY

BY COUNT BERNSTORFF

From *Die Hilfe*, March 15

(BERLIN EVANGELICAL LITERARY AND POLITICAL WEEKLY)

SINCE President Harding's inauguration, the eyes of the world have been turned toward the United States. The London negotiations show that old Europe is still too much fettered by its war passions to solve its pressing problems. The alpha and omega of public policy today is to put in practice the idea that the whole globe has become an indivisible economic unit. Until this is understood, reconstruction is impossible.

Since Europe remains blind to this vital truth, its salvation must come from without. People ask whether the United States may not be the country called to guide civilization back to health. Therefore, it is all important for us Germans to understand intelligently American political currents and thought processes. Democracy in the United States has hit upon the device of placing almost unlimited authority in the hands of a single man for a limited period, and making his re-election depend on his retaining public confidence. The people thus erect a sort of revocable autocracy, combining the advantages of a monarchy with those of a republic. This system, which has grown up naturally in the course of history, does not agree with the German idea of democracy; and so our people fancy the United States does not have a true democratic government, because the power of the President greatly exceeds that of Congress. We Europeans have grown up in the tradition that all authority

ought to rest in the hands of a parliament elected directly by the people. However, the politics of a nation cannot be run by hard and fast formulas. A country's institutions are the outgrowth of its history. In the United States, Congress is not the only representative of the people. The Americans at the outset entrusted their sovereign authority to several powers, independent of each other. They regard their President as a direct representative of the people. Indeed, so peculiarly is he their representative that when a conflict arises between the President and Congress, the citizens more frequently side with the President, and force Congress to yield to his views.

To say the least, the President is rather an executor of the people's will than a leader of the people. We Germans are apt to overlook this fact, because we do not attach as much importance to public opinion in our country as men do in the United States. The President must always 'keep his ear on the ground', in order to carry out the will of the people. When a President loses touch with public opinion at home, the way Wilson did in Versailles, his power vanishes. Moreover, the President is ordinarily regarded a truer representative of the people than the Senators and the members of the House of Representatives, because he is less controlled by the party machine and similar influences. This explains why the presidents have

for the last twenty years espoused more progressive social policies and more democratic political measures than has Congress.

At the last election the Republicans won a sweeping victory, because the Democrats were handicapped by the discredit into which President Wilson had fallen, and because the Republicans were able to prevent a split in their own ranks. It is true that the radical wing of their party was not entirely pleased with Harding's nomination, but the party presented a solid front at the ballot boxes. It was able to do this because the principal issue was America's foreign policy, particularly the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. If the world settles down during the coming four years to peace and quiet, the next presidential election will be fought between the Conservatives and the Progressives or Radicals; for the conflict between them has merely been postponed by the war and its after effects.

So the election has left domestic questions unsettled, but has settled foreign policy. Until that decision was made, the United States was divided into two camps. One party advocated political isolation, and accepted Washington's teaching as its highest creed; the other party wished to promote commercial and other business alliances with the whole world. This controversy explains in a degree Wilson's policy and its ultimate failure. America's growing network of business interest convinced Wilson that the country's political isolation was no longer practicable. Since public opinion was averse to mixing in the European War, Wilson tried to reconcile business interest and popular sentiment by a "peace without victory". He thought that he might thus secure freedom of the seas and foster foreign trade, and

simultaneously erect a League of Nations to bring about general disarmament and settle controversies by negotiation instead of by force. This conscious departure from America's policy of isolation failed on account of our starting an unrestricted U-boat-campaign. The United States declared war, and thereby sacrificed completely its political isolation. Wilson won the war for the Entente, and might thereby have put his policy into effect and have become the arbiter of the world, if he had been intellectually and morally big enough for the task. To the misfortune of the whole world, he proved wanting. Wilson committed the initial blunder of going personally to Versailles, where he lost touch with public opinion in America and fell under the influence of European statesmen far abler than he: Driven into a corner, he made concession after concession to the imperialists in order to get his League of Nations, which he imagined would remedy all his failures. But even the League, which Wilson brought home as the only fruit of victory, satisfied no one, because the statesmen of the Entente converted it into a tool to carry out the selfish designs of the victors. As a consequence, the dogma of political isolation recovered its former prestige in the United States. The Senate refused to ratify the Treaty, by attaching conditions which Wilson would not accept. The Senate's reservations were a reassertion of America's political isolation. In particular, that body would tolerate no impairment of the sovereignty of the United States, such as the League covenant demanded of its members without giving them compensating advantages. It was too great a violation of America's inherited traditions to assume mandates over remote parts of the earth, and to

promise to enforce peace by remote military expeditions. The Republican party wished to end the war by a simple resolution of Congress, a method endorsed by the country's traditions. The people of America have always shown a dislike of tying themselves up by treaties, as we Germans have learned in our commercial negotiations with them.

Very recently indications have appeared of another reversal of sentiment in the United States, due to the fact that the League of Nations ideal has many sentimental supporters in that country, and to the growing conviction that America's business interests are seriously imperiled by the continued uncertainty in Europe. The country is passing through a serious business crisis. Its sea ports are congested with merchandise which can find no foreign market. It is deluged with raw materials and manufactures for whom no customers can be found, because impoverished Europe can not pay for American goods, and because Europe's cheap money serves as an export premium upon the products of its own industry.

I wish urgently to warn my people against ascribing political changes in the United States to pro-Germanism. The words 'pro-German' and 'anti-German' are badly overworked. Foreign nations and statesmen are not governed by sentimental likes and dislikes, but only by national interests. Our own policy toward America must be based upon an intelligent appraisal of the actual interests involved. Our diplomatic success or failure will depend upon whether we appraise these interests truly or falsely.

What I have said should make it clear that we have practically nothing to expect from political changes in the United States. If we base hopes upon

such changes, we shall meet again with the same disappointment which we had in the case of Wilson. The Americans do not take the slightest interest in our political affairs, but only in our business recovery and in conditions which appeal to their humanitarian sentiment. But the great problems which the London Conference left unanswered are mostly business problems. For this reason, we are entitled to hope that the American people may be moved by their own interests—and not by either friendly or hostile feelings toward ourselves—eventually to take the leadership in measures for reestablishing the world's business prosperity. Nothing is more futile than political prophecy. It is always possible that Mexico or Japan or some other center of interest will absorb America's attention and push Europe completely into the background. Nevertheless, we ought to make it as easy as possible for the Americans to take charge of the world's general restoration. My own opinion is that we can accomplish most in this direction by keeping up a stout heart and resolutely refusing to be dictated to by the Entente. That is most likely to impress upon the public mind of the United States the obvious truth that the business recovery of the world depends upon treating the world's business as a unit. That kind of treatment can be achieved only through negotiations which end in a joint agreement, and not in an attempt of one party to dictate by force to another. We ought never to put our names to a document which engages us to do things we cannot do. On the other hand, we should always manifest our readiness to fulfill the obligations we have already assumed, to the limits of our power. I see no road of escape from the present *impasse*.

ROUMANIA ENTERS THE WAR

From *Le Temps*, March 3

(PARIS SEMI-OFFICIAL CONSERVATIVE DAILY)

[*Adeverul*, a leading Bucharest daily, publishes the following memoranda made by a gentleman present at the Crown Council of August 14, 1916, presided over by King Ferdinand, when Roumania decided to enter the war on the side of the Allies. King Ferdinand of Roumania is of German blood, and a member of a collateral branch of the Hohenzollern family.]

THE Council met at the Cotroceni Palace. Those present were the members of the Bratiano cabinet, the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Michel Pherekyde; the vice-president of the Senate, C. F. Robesco; the former premiers, Peter Carp, Theodore Rosetti, and Titus Majoresco, and the Parliamentary leaders of the political parties, Nicolas Filipesco, Take Jonesco, and Alexander Marghiloman.

The King was visibly affected, and sought first of all to meet the opposition he anticipated from Carp, Majoresco, and Marghiloman. He opened the meeting by stating that he had convened the head men of the country to ask, not their advice—for his decision was made—but their assistance. The situation was such that neutrality was no longer possible. The war was going in favor of the Entente. In any case, since Roumania had to make a choice, it could only ally itself with the Entente against the Central Powers. The King added that he had had to master his personal grief at such a decision. He had conquered his sympathies, and this victory over himself was the best proof possible that he had made his choice for the welfare of Roumania. Knowing how supremely important perfect harmony was in such a crisis, he asked all the men of political influence in the country to stand by him as good Roumanians.

Looking fixedly at Mr. Carp, he said: 'I beg you for your support.'

Bratiano spoke next. Roumania could not remain neutral in a war which was to determine the fate of the world. It must seize the opportunity to attain national unity. Such an opportunity would never present itself again. Italy's refusal to join the Central Powers in the war left Roumania complete liberty of action. Furthermore, both the government, and he personally, had already made engagements which they could not repudiate. The whole nation, and the Roumanian population beyond their borders, were waiting impatiently for the government to speak.

Take Jonesco said that he appreciated fully, how hard it must have been for the King to make such a decision, but he assured him that he would be rewarded for it by the love and loyalty of a united Roumanian people. His party rejoiced at seeing the step taken which it had already urged for two years, and would give the King and government its undivided and unconditional support.

Marghiloman expressed his regret at the government's decision. No one knew what the outcome of the war would be. He was informed that Hindenburg was preparing a great offensive against the Russians, and it would be better to await its results be-