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HOW THE ARMISTICE WAS MADE. I

BY MERMEIX

[This article, in the second installment of which militarists and pacifists seem oddly to change rôles, has attracted much attention in Great Britain and Europe.]

ON October 3, 1918, Wilhelm II had discovered,— or rather, there had been discovered for him,— a new Chancellor, in the person of Prince Max of Baden. This head of an old feudal dynasty was called to organize the first cabinet responsible to Parliament which ever met in Berlin; the first which ever contained a Socialist member;—for Scheidemann was Minister without portfolio;—and the cabinet fated to witness an oncoming revolution which would overthrow every royal house in Germany.

Max of Baden, according to Ludendorff, wished to wait a week before applying officially for an armistice. He wanted time 'to work out a detailed programme of Germany's war aims, which would show the world clearly our complete agreement with President Wilson, and our sincere readiness to make great national sacrifices to realize his ideals.'

Since, however, Foch was drawing the noose tighter about the German army with every day that passed, Ludendorff, fearing each night that he would be awakened in the morning by news of some great disaster, would brook no such postponement. Yielding to the pressure of the perturbed Commander-in-chief, Max of Baden, a decadent aristocrat who had neither the talent nor force of character to head a government in such a crisis, acted at

once in a matter for which he desired longer preparation.

During the night between the 5th and 6th of October, less than forty-eight hours after he took office, he dispatched this note to President Wilson, through the good offices of the Swiss government.

'The German government invites the President of the United States of America to take steps to bring about peace, to notify all the belligerent governments, and to request them to send plenipotentiaries to begin negotiations.

'The German government takes as a basis for these negotiations the programme laid down in the President's message to Congress of January 8, 1918, and in his subsequent public statements, particularly his speech of September 27, 1918.

'In order to prevent the further effusion of blood, the German government requests an immediate and general armistice, on land, on sea, and in the air.

Max of Baden.'

President Wilson's programme, to which the Prince Chancellor of the expiring Empire appealed, was the celebrated Fourteen Points announced by Wilson in his speech to Congress on January 8, and the Five Supplementary Points formulated in a speech in New York on September 27, 1918.

The Fourteen Points, or conditions laid down by the President of the United States, were in substance: 1, Abolition of secret diplomacy; 2, Freedom of the seas; 3, Suppression so far as possible of artificial economic barriers; 4, Reduction of armaments; 5, Administration of colonies in the interest of the native population; 6, Evacuation of Russian territory; 7, Evacuation and restoration of Belgium; 8, Evacuation and restoration of French territory, and the righting of the wrong done France in 1871 by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine; 9, Readjustment of the Italian frontiers; 10, Autonomy of the nations of Austria-Hungary; 11, Evacuation of Serbia, Roumania, and Montenegro, with the guaranteed independence of those countries, and access to the sea for Serbia; 12, Liberation of the nations subject to the Turks, and freedom of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus; 13, An independent Poland; 14, The organization of a League of Nations guaranteeing the independence of all governments.

The Five Supplementary Points all related to the League of Nations and demanded: 1, Equal justice for enemies as well as friends; 2, Repudiation of all selfish nationalist aims; 3, The prohibition of separate alliances among members of the League; 4, Prohibition of economic boycotts except as penalties imposed by the League; 5, The obligation to inform the League of the terms of all treaties between particular powers.

This generous and humane programme gave Germany, without the President thus intending, an excellent opening for debate and evasion. While discussing the lofty theses which the President had thus laid down, Germany thought its misdeeds might, perhaps, escape attention.

Wilson's high moral and social prin-

ciples afforded the aggressor in the war a better opportunity to extricate himself than he would have if confronted by his victims with a definite demand to indemnify them for their injuries. Furthermore, Germany would gain great positive advantages from some of these points. Freedom of the seas might create discord between America and Great Britain; so the authors of an unrestricted submarine warfare suddenly became ardent partisans of inviolate ocean commerce. The proposal to prohibit artificial economic barriers among nations was very tempting to Germany, which had preserved intact all its manufacturing equipment, while that of France was destroyed. So Germany, hitherto consistently a high tariff power, suddenly began to favor free trade. Last of all, Wilson's evangel of forgiveness, of treating enemies like friends, went straight to Germany's heart. Was not this magnanimity part of his own personal character? Could that be doubted? He came with his hands filled with indulgences with which he was impatient to absolve the Germans for what had been done in Belgium and France. These would be much less expensive than reparation.

When Ludendorff, hard pressed at the front, urged the government to appeal to Wilson, and when Max of Baden besought the good offices of the author of the Fourteen Points, they were merely hunting for a diplomatic refuge, under cover of a League of Nations, which might protect them from merited penalties, and perhaps enable them, in concert with Wilson, to steal a march upon designing England, which in its perversity refused to grant them freedom of the seas.

The gentlemen at Berlin had read Wilson thoroughly so far as they went; but they had not read him to the end. On September 19, 1918, at a reception to the diplomatic corps, he said:

'We must have an absolute victory without equivocation. Even if our enemies were to come to me to-morrow saying that they accepted the Fourteen Points which I have formulated as a basis of peace, we should still be faced by the fact that we could not trust the word of those enemies. We must have something more than their mere promise; something they cannot violate.'

Furthermore, in his speech on September 27, which Ludendorff and Max of Baden and their advisors discarded, with the exception of its evangelical dicta, Wilson had said something else, namely:

'We are all agreed that there can be no peace obtained by any kind of a bargain, or compromise with the governments of the Central Empires, because we have dealt with them already and have seen them deal with other governments that were parties to this struggle, at Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest. They have convinced us that they are without honor and do not intend justice. They observe no covenants, accept no principle but force and their own interests. We cannot "come to terms" with them. They have made it impossible. The German people must by this time be fully aware that we cannot accept the word of those who forced the war upon us. We do not think the same thoughts or speak the same language of agreement.'

Max of Baden, even without the gift of second-sight, might have, by merely reading this passage, drafted his own answer to the request he made of Wilson. That reply, signed by Lansing, was received from Switzerland, forty-eight hours later, and read:

'SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge, on behalf of the President, your note of October 6, enclosing the communication from the German Government to the President; and I am instructed by the President to request you to make the following communication to the Imperial German Chancellor:

"Before making reply to the request of the Imperial German Government, and in order that that reply shall be as candid and straightforward as the momentous interests involved require, the President of the United States deems it necessary to assure himself of the exact meaning of the note of the Imperial Chancellor. Does the Imperial Chancellor mean that the Imperial German Government accepts the terms laid down by the President in his address to the Congress of the United States on January last and in subsequent addresses, and that its object in entering into discussions would be only to agree upon the practical details of their application?

"The President feels bound to say with regard to the suggestion of an armistice, that he would not feel at liberty to propose a cessation of arms to the governments with which the government of the United States is associated against the Central Powers, so long as the armies of those powers are upon their soil. The good faith of any discussion would manifestly depend upon the consent of the Central Powers immediately to withdraw their forces everywhere from invaded territory. The President also feels that he is justified in asking whether the Imperial Chancellor is speaking merely for the constituted authorities of the empire who have so far conducted the war. He deems the answer to these questions vital, from every point of view. Accept, sir, the renewed assurances of my high consideration."

The dialogue commenced by the exchanging of these two notes continued until November 5. On October 12, Dr. Solf, the Foreign Minister, replied that his government accepted Wilson's conditions; that he assumed that the Entente governments also accepted them; that the German government was now a government of the German people; that this government agreed to evacuate the territories it held, and requested Wilson to appoint a mixed commission to take charge of the evacuation. On October 14, Wilson replied to the effect that the terms of the armistice and the conditions of evacuation were matters for the military chiefs to settle; that under all circumstances the armistice must assure the maintenance of the military advantages obtained by the Entente armies; that no dealings with Germany were possible until that country renounced its barbaric methods of warfare; finally, that before negotiations began, the associated governments wished to know with whom they were dealing. They wished to know whether they were still negotiating with the arbitrary Prussian government, which it was one of their first war aims to render powerless, or to destroy.

This brought them to the Hohenzollern question. On October 20, Solf, after admitting that the German armies had committed the atrocities denounced by Wilson, asserted that the government of Germany had been radically reformed; that the Chancellor was now responsible solely to Parliament; that the offer of peace submitted to the Allies therefore came from the German people.

On October 23, Lansing wrote that the President consented to discuss with the governments associated with the United States the question of an armistice; but he repeated, that such an armistice must assure the military

superiority of the Entente, and that no arrangement would be agreed to which did not make it impossible for Germany to resume hostilities.

On October 27, Solf wrote that Germany was awaiting the armistice terms.

Finally, on November 5, 1918, Lansing officially informed the Swiss Minister at Washington, who was acting as intermediary between the United States and Germany, that Marshall Foch had been authorized by the Allies to communicate the terms of an armistice to Germany.

This fourth and last note of Wilson's quoted a memorandum which the Entente Powers had handed him, defining and qualifying their endorsement of his Points. These Powers stated that they reserved complete liberty of action regarding freedom of the seas, which was open to many interpretations; they declared that they understood by the restoration of evacuated territories, compensation for all injury done to the civilian population of the Allied nations by the Germans. By accepting this second reservation, which Wilson fully approved — (he did not approve the first) — Germany agreed to pay not only for the physical property it destroyed, but also the cost of pensions to the families of our soldiers who fell in battle, to our wounded soldiers, and to all similar victims of the war.

While they were soliciting Wilson to mediate between themselves and his associates, the men in control at Berlin and at the German army headquarters were still catching at straws in their hope of making a last successful resistance. Ludendorff discloses this. On October 17, at a Council of War which he attended, together with Max of Baden, von Payer, Scheidemann, Solf, Goerber, the new Minister of War, and Hausmann, a general rising of the

nation was discussed. But Scheidemann, while agreeing that they might still mobilize hundreds of thousands of men, pointed out the danger of this step, saying: 'Such recruits would not raise the morale of the army. Our working-men would say to themselves: "Better a terrible end than terror without end."' The new Minister of War offered in default of these hundreds of thousands of new combatants, a modest sixty thousand men, which were still in barracks in the interior. Ludendorff replied with surprising optimism: 'I welcome these reinforcements. I regard the future with confidence.'

Then, as though the reinforcements were already in his hands, this man, who for weeks had been pleading for an armistice and a speedy peace, set about opposing the conditions which Wilson made in his second note of October 14; conditions which were intended to guarantee — let us bear in mind — the absolute maintenance of the present military superiority of the Entente on the field of battle. Ludendorff said, addressing the Council of War:

'... I have always been of the opinion that we should start negotiations for an armistice, if they are possible. But we should accept no conditions which will not permit us to evacuate the enemy's country in good order. To obtain these conditions we must delay two or three months. We must not accept any terms which render a resumption of hostilities impossible. Now that is precisely what the enemy demands. We must recognize that, after this note. The terms are intended to put us *hors de combat*. Before we go farther, the enemy ought to lay down his precise peace conditions. We do not want to break off utterly with Wilson. We ought to say to him rather: "Tell us exactly what you ask us to do. But if

your demands are incompatible with our national honor, then the answer will be, No!"'

This rally by an army commander, who had been under such pressure for three months, brought him many compliments, and may have inspired Max of Baden to adopt the challenging attitude which he displayed in the Reichstag on October 22.

'Those who loyally propose to submit to a peace of justice do not thereby agree to submit without resistance to a peace of violence. A government which had so lost its sense of honor as to accept the latter would merit only the contempt and repudiation of a valiant and industrious nation.'

Vain words! Ludendorff says:

'... Part of the promised reinforcements refused to go to the front,' adding, gloomily: 'If the people had risen *en masse*, our situation might have been better. A great nation cannot be crushed if it has the will power to resist. The Frenchmen in 1870 and 1871, and the Boers in their fight against England, made a far better showing!'

Ludendorff did not make this admission, that the German people lacked that sacred fire which stakes everything on honor and thereby assures a nation's future, until later, when he wrote his memoirs, in Sweden, during the winter of 1918-19. On October 24, 1918, believing that Max of Baden had asserted an honest resolve in his speech of October 22, which we just quoted, and misled, as he says, by the tone of an official statement in the Berlin press of the government's attitude toward Wilson's third note; Ludendorff and Hindenburg issued this order to the army:

'Wilson says in his reply that he will recommend to his Allies to open negotiations for an armistice; but only for an armistice which makes Germany powerless from a military standpoint; and which prevents the possibility of our appealing again to arms. . . . Wilson's reply is, therefore, a demand for unconditional surrender. Soldiers, we cannot accept that. Soldiers, such a reply is to us merely a command to continue our resistance to the utmost limit of our strength. When our enemies realize that by no sacrifices will they be able to break our front, they will be ready to conclude a peace which assures Germany the future which the welfare of the masses of its people demands.'

However, this order calling for the resistance to the last was not issued to the armies on the 25th of October, because Hindenburg and Ludendorff left that day for Berlin. Ludendorff says he did not want to publish it until after the conference called to consider Wilson's third note. But his subordinates had telegraphed or telephoned the text to all army commanders, so that the latter might issue it to their troops without delay, when so ordered. Meantime, a soldier's council had been formed at Kovno. One of its members belonged to the telephone corps. He at once communicated this pronouncement of the commander-in-chief to the Independent Socialists.

A violent storm was raised in the Reichstag against the 'man who wants to prolong the war.' That accusation

was directed against Ludendorff alone. Hindenburg, although he also had signed the order, was still so popular on account of his victory over the Russians in 1914 and 1915, that he was not included in the condemnation heaped upon his subordinate. According to the rumor of the lobbies, Ludendorff alone was the man responsible. He was charged with trying to exalt the authority of army headquarters above the authority of the Chancellor and of Parliament. Thereupon, he was disavowed by the Cabinet and abandoned by Wilhelm II. On October 26, he and Hindenburg were summoned to an audience with the Kaiser. 'Addressing me alone, His Majesty mentioned the general order of the evening of October 24. I begged him, very humbly, to relieve me of my command. He granted my request.'

So the man who after his defeat on August 8 was the first to demand peace, left the stage of public affairs the last man who still dreamed of Germany's fighting on. The afternoon of October 27, the day when Ludendorff was relieved of duty, Solf telegraphed to Wilson: 'The German government awaits the terms of an armistice, which is to be the first step toward a peace such as the President has outlined in his proclamations.'

The same day, the terms under which Foch consented to cease his pursuit of the retreating foe were submitted to Clemenceau. Ludendorff's disgrace saved him the humiliation of personally receiving the conditions of surrender.

AMERICA ENMESHED

BY ADMIRAL VON TIRPITZ

[It is hardly necessary to remind our readers that the publication of an article in the *LIVING AGE* does not imply our editorial endorsement. Admiral von Tirpitz was one of the most skilful press propagandists in Germany before the war, and he is still an influential 'opinion-maker' in that country. What he writes must be reckoned with to that extent, and deserves the attention of Americans who wish to follow the principal currents of European thought.]

AMERICA has become England's most powerful rival, as a result of the World War, and accommodates its policies to that fact. Americans who fancy that rivalry will not impair the friendship of the two nations and have faith that 'blood is thicker than water,' should remember that this famous sentence was first spoken by an American, and not by an Englishman. Conflicts of interests will multiply and America's memory will revert rather to the days when England armed the *Alabama*. As the manufacturing industries of the United States expand, the demand for an independent merchant marine will grow stronger, because the two are inseparably connected. Germany's merchant marine grew rapidly, before the war, in response to that very condition. Practical minded Americans will never be deluded into fancying that the existence and prosperity of their commerce and manufacturing can be left to the mercy of English good will. The crop of greenhorns will not be as thrifty in their country as it was among us German half-cousins of the Anglo-Saxons. The brotherhood of nations is a grand ideal, toward which we ought to strive. But up to to-day, Divine Providence has made inter-

national competition the mainspring of progress and civilization. At least that is the lesson of several thousand years of human history. Men with the gift of seeing things as they are, hardly fancy that this situation will change completely within a single generation.

Granting these facts, the United States, whether it wishes it or not, will be obliged to protect its commerce by real defenses. It may depend entirely upon its own resources for the latter, or it may seek them in friendship with other nations. Since Germany has been crushed, the United States is thrown more than ever on itself. So far as England is concerned, rivalry with the United States may be limited for an indefinite time to come to commercial competition. But irresistible historical forces are pushing America into unavoidable military and political, as well as economic, conflict with Japan.

France, which still remains an important factor in world policy, although one of second rank, has become so completely dependent on England, that it will never be a political plus for the United States. In Washington's day, France was truly such a plus, because it stood on its own feet