

# The Nation

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## The Week

WHEN Senator Williams invited Senator La Follette's attention to the difference between a prize court and a torpedo, he gave the human answer to all the labored arguments about British violation of international law counterbalancing German violation of international law. It is a reply which renders vain all the subtle discussions of priority of date as between British blockade and German blockade. We are now at war with Germany because the German leaders have been unable or unwilling to perceive that the American mind is not cast in the mould of the rigid German logic which holds that, once there is necessity, there is no difference between the necessity which ransacks American mails and the necessity which destroys innocent American lives. And the leaders of Germany, too, in their heart of hearts, are to-day wondering whether the distinction is not valid. They must be calculating the amount of damage the U-boats have done to England and the damage they have done to Germany. They must be wondering where America would be standing to-day if not for the long record from the *Lusitania* to the *Aztec*.

DEBATE on war resolutions is the American precedent. When Madison sent in his war message on June 1, 1812, the House took two days to report a declaration of war and one day more to pass it, whereupon the Senate spent no less than twelve days in discussing it. What the ultimate issue would be was fairly clear, and the country chafed under the suspense. In 1846 the war was well under way, having begun in April, before Congress got around to a declaration in early May; but Polk's war message of the 11th was not followed by Congressional action till the 13th. Even in 1898 McKinley sent his message demanding that "the war in Cuba must stop" on April 11, while the declaration did not come till the 19th. It will not be forgotten that Representative Boutelle argued at length against his party, in favor of a modification of the Cuban resolutions.

TAKING possession of the German ships in our ports does not necessarily involve the question whether our treaty with Prussia of 1828 is still in full force and effect. Even in that treaty there is a clause providing that, in case of war between the two countries, "if anything is necessary to be taken from them [*i. e.*, from alien citizens] for the use of such armed force, the same shall be paid for at a reasonable price." It might be held that the German ships came under this provision. The treaty aimed to prevent destruction or confiscation of enemy property. It could not supersede the right of the Government to requisition any property, alien or other, on payment of what it is worth. We make no doubt that it is the intention of the Administration to see to it that the owners of these ships are, at the end of the war, paid in full. There is the additional question whether enemy ships in our ports at the outbreak of the war should not have received the customary days of grace

in which to put to sea. In the present instance this was rather academic. The ships are disabled and could not have sailed if they had been allowed to. Moreover, even if they had been in condition to proceed, they would not have ventured forth, since their capture by British or French cruisers would have been certain to follow.

THE indifference with which official and officially inspired Germany professes to view our entrance into the war is based on the commonplace that we cannot for a long time affect the military situation. But we have already begun to affect the military situation by affecting the temper of Germany as a whole. We have already begun to play a part in the war when the Berlin *Vorwärts* can cry out for an instant remedy against "the tempest of the world's public opinion based on the belief that Germany is a tyrant and despotic conqueror and its enemies are the harbingers of liberty." We have already begun to affect the world situation when the Liberal press in Germany, when the nation as a whole, with the exception of the Junkers and the Tirpitzites, hails the promise of "a people's kingdom of the Hohenzollerns." Let German editors who speak bitterly of our taking up arms for the undoing of Germany reflect whether, but for our coming in, they would now have occasion to congratulate themselves on the fact that, "clearly and unequivocally, the will of the Kaiser not only to maintain but to strengthen the bonds between ruler and people, comes to expression."

QUITE as a surprise came the message of President Menocal of Cuba recommending that the Congress of the island republic should join the United States in declaring war upon Germany. One cogent reason given was the immense difficulty in maintaining Cuban neutrality. Tied up as Cuba is in such close commercial bonds with this country, it would be almost impossible for her to stand with entire impartiality between the United States and Germany. But President Menocal went further. He wished to associate Cuba with the other democracies that were uniting against Prussian autocracy and Prussian disregard of law and of humanity in the conduct of war at sea. Moreover, the Cuban President argued that Cuban gratitude to the United States, first for freeing the island and then for helping it set up self-government, should be motive enough for joining fortunes in war. This is really the most significant aspect of the whole affair. Actual material aid that Cuba could give us may be negligible, but her attitude of cordial support is to be valued. It is a moral reward to the United States for the generous course we have followed in Cuba. In a small way, it is like the rallying of the Boers to the help of Great Britain—the fruit of a wise political policy. There are few weapons of war in Cuba's hand, but she holds it out to us in a beautiful gesture.

IF there is one American who should be in a position to understand the German Government and to do it justice, it surely is Herbert C. Hoover. He has not been subjected to the malicious English propaganda of which Germany so

bitterly complains. He has not let himself be hoodwinked by Reuter's into exaggerating the facts of German conduct or misinterpreting the spirit of German policy. He has been on the spot and has seen for himself. And his conclusions are now expressed in his dispatch to President Wilson:

We wish to tell you that there is no word in your historic statement that does not find a response in all our hearts. . . . Although we break with great regret our associations with many German individuals . . . there is no hope for democracy or liberalism unless the system which brought the world into this unfathomable misery can be stamped out once for all.

Is it English gold, so notoriously responsible for the false state of public opinion in America, that induced Mr. Hoover to speak out like this?

THE recommendation of the Committee on Labor, of which Mr. Gompers is chairman, to the Council of National Defence, is in effect that it should constitute itself into a final board of arbitration during the war. Strikes and lockouts should be prohibited, and necessary changes of standards made by the Council; State Legislatures are urged not to make any changes in safeguards, health, welfare, and hours of workers without the consent of the Council, and to grant power for the changing of such conditions as are recommended. This is a wise centralization of authority. The presence of representatives of capital will insure due protection of their interests; and the heads of labor organizations should be able to see to it that the improved conditions of labor are not needlessly sacrificed. Secretary Wilson's phrase of some days ago may well be the motto for the work of the Council:

Ours is a democracy. It would not be worth our while going into the conflict if, when we come out of it, we do not still have a democracy.

DIFFERENCES of opinion among leaders of the Russian revolution concerning the settlement after the war are revealed in the statements of Minister of Justice Kerensky and Foreign Minister Milyukov. But there is no difference of opinion regarding the possibility of a separate peace for Russia. For Kerensky and Tchekheidze, as representatives of the extreme radical factions, peace will be in sight when the German people have rid themselves of the Hohenzollerns. For Milyukov the situation presents itself in terms of territorial rearrangements. But though Milyukov's demands for a reorganized Austria-Hungary and the Dardanelles for Russia are far reaching, his terms are really not more exigent than Kerensky's demand for overturning the monarchy in Germany. If either of these demands is to be realized before Petrograd consents to discuss peace, the Allies have no reason to worry over the possible defection of Russia. When the German people has settled its score with its own rulers, Russia will not be the only member of the Allies to regard the war as virtually at an end.

IN the meanwhile the revolutionary forces in Russia are making use of the respite granted them by the impossibility of extended military operations to come to an understanding on matters which might seriously compromise the success of the revolution. On the one hand the Constitutional Democrats, under the leadership of Milyukov and representing moderate opinion, have consented to the distribution of all the land among the peasants. This, with the liberties already decreed in the way of free speech

and assembly and the enormous extension of the trade-union principle, should round out the radical programme. The radical leaders, on the other hand, seem to recognize that the time has come to restrict agitation among the soldiers at the front, with possibly serious consequences in the face of a German attack. It is not in mere excess of revolutionary fervor that the radicals have been so preoccupied with the army. The purpose obviously has been to lose no time in permeating the troops with the revolutionary gospel and so to establish safeguards against a counter-revolution. The difficult problem which the revolutionists have to face is to undermine the ancient discipline in such fashion as to make it difficult for a reactionary commander to lead his army against the Government in emergency, and yet to maintain discipline for holding the line against the Germans.

THE junction of British and Russian forces along the Diala River, on the Perso-Mesopotamian frontier north-east of Bagdad, signalizes what is perhaps the most successful coördinated military operation the Allies have shown since the beginning of the war. When the British delivered the final blow at Kut-el-Amara, the Russians were in the neighborhood of Hamadan and immediately took advantage of the Turkish defeat on the Tigris. The Russian advance from Hamadan to Khanikin covered nearly 250 miles in six weeks, a remarkable rate of progress considering the nature of the country through which the march lay. The territory won from the Turks by this advance and the parallel Russian movement further north in the mountains south of Lake Urumiah represents a gain of more than 25,000 square miles. The present Anglo-Russian alignment along the Diala River recalls something of the precision of the advance of Mackensen and Hindenburg into Russia two years ago. The next step is undoubtedly a move upon Mosul, some 200 miles north of Bagdad. With the Allies established at that point the whole Turkish campaign in Armenia will be affected, and an Allied line will have been established from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf, cutting off a vast Turkish area which must count heavily if it should come to a matching of conquests at a peace conference.

WITH the retirement of Gen. Foch from active service goes the last of the outstanding figures to whom France and the world owe the victory of the Marne and the frustration of German hopes. It will long continue to be debated whether the principal credit for the Marne, after Joffre, should go to Foch, who broke the German centre in the marshes of St. Gond; to Manoury, who threw himself on the German right flank on the Ourcq and forced the dislocation in the enemy line which gave Foch his opportunity; or to Castelnau, who beat off the Kaiser's armies from Nancy and by holding the line of eastern fortifications gave Joffre the necessary breathing spell. The allocation of credit is difficult, because it involves a choice among three factors, each of which was essential to victory. Joffre, Manoury, and Foch are now in retirement, and Castelnau's activities seem to be restricted to military-diplomatic missions such as took him to Petrograd on the eve of the revolution.

IT is natural that the suggestion of a huge gift of money by our Government to France should have appealed to the warm-hearted impulses of the people. The high-minded-