

THE HISTORY OF THE ZIMMERMANN NOTE
AND THE EFFECT OF ITS PUBLICATION

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AND THE EFFECT OF ITS PUBLICATION

By

Effie Dawn Buchanan

Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma A. and M. College

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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APPROVED:

T. H. Reynolds
Adviser for Thesis

T. H. Reynolds
Head of Department of History

D. C. McIntosh
Dean of the Graduate School

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E. D. B.

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P R E F A C E

In the study and development of this thesis, the writer searched for material on the following issues: (1) the reasons upon which Germany based her plans to win Mexico and Japan as allies during the World War; (2) the content of the Zimmermann note and the means by which the United States became aware of its existence; (3) and the reaction within England, Japan, Mexico, Germany, and the United States, the countries most likely to be effected by the plans contained in the note.

This whole study was made from newspaper articles, and from secondary and primary sources in the countries where material was available for this purpose. Two of the countries involved in this study, notably Japan and Mexico, refused permission for translations from either their primary or secondary sources. However, the writer was able to secure newspaper translations through a clerical worker in Mexico City, and research worker in the Congressional Library in Washington, D. C. In addition to these sources, access to the other sources listed were obtained from the Municipal Library, Kansas City, Missouri, the State University Library, Norman, Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Library, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

E. D. B.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE NOTE

Chapter I

After two and one-half years of warfare the Central Powers knew their resources were fast failing, and that they could not hold out against the Allies indefinitely. On January 9, 1917, a group of the military leaders was called in to counsel with Hindenburg, field marshal of the German army. If England were to be defeated her ports must be blockaded, or by some other means she must be deprived of food. Almost all the wheat crop of the United States for the year 1916 had already been delivered to English ports, and the Argentine crop was not yet ready for delivery. These German counselors decided that the most effective method, as well as the quickest one, of accomplishing their aim was to resume unrestricted submarine warfare immediately.¹ They knew that since the financial interests of the United States had invested in Allied bonds,² and from the tone of Secretary Lansing's note³ regarding the destruction of American property and lives on neutral ships that if submarine warfare were resumed, the United States would likely enter the war with the Allies. If submarine warfare were resumed it must be resumed at once, before the resources of the United States could be used advantageously by the Allies.

1 Official German Documents Relating to the World War, Oxford, 1919, Vol. I, p. 126.

2 Jess Burton Hendrick, The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page, Garden City, 1922, Vol. II, p. 289.

3 Diplomatic Correspondence with Belligerents relating to Neutral Rights and Duties, Washington, 1915, Vol. I, pp. 61-63.

Since a decision was made that on March 1, 1917, submarine warfare would be resumed, Zimmermann at once began to devise a plan whereby he might prevent the greatest utilization of the resources of the United States by the Allied Powers. It seemed probable that he might make use of the strained diplomatic relations existing between England and Japan, and the United States and Mexico and secure them as allies.

Although the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been renewed as late as 1911, English and Japanese interests often conflicted in the Far East. He knew of the discontent and of the jealousy that England and Japan each exhibited in the exploitation of China.⁴ He knew that whether Germany emerged from the war as the victor or the vanquished, she would need friends, Japan knew Germany's condition and adroitly furnished her with hope. This fact was shown by her denunciation of Great Britain and by her professed admiration of Germany during the war, and her threats to turn to Germany and Russia as powers who would help her dominate the Pacific and allow her to share in the exploitation of Asia. She expressed sympathy for the down trodden people of India, and during the war carried Indian conspirators on her ships. Japan insisted that her share of the war ended at Tsingau, and that she be regarded as a semi-neutral.⁵

American and Japanese friendship was gradually weakened because

4 Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, The Rising Tide of Color, Chicago, 1929, 36-38; Literary Digest, "Why Japan Distrusts England," New York, 1912, Vol. XLV., p. 9.

5 Andrew Melville Pooley, Japan's Foreign Policies, London, 1920, pp. 28, 30-159.

their interests in the Far East conflicted,⁶ and because the United States applied the Monroe Doctrine to all ports on the western continent and thus hindered Japanese expansion. Japan resented the gentlemen's agreement⁷ the anti-alien law of California⁸ and the Lodge resolution.⁹ Zimmermann knew Japan's need for expansion and perhaps thought she might be tempted by opportunities for economic exploitation within Mexico after peace was made.

Germany found Carranza¹⁰ a willing listener to her schemes to promote anti-Wilson propaganda within his borders. Germany not only pretended friendship to Carranza, but she made arrangements to furnish ammunition to his enemy Villa.¹¹ She easily took advantage of the prejudices created by the Vera Cruz incident of 1914¹² and the Pershing

6 Lester B. Shippee and Royal B. Way, William Rufus Day in Samuel Flagg Bemis, The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, New York, 1917, Vol. IX, pp. 38-39.

7 Senate Document No. CXIV, Seventy-first Congress, Second Session, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1930, p. 19; Karl Kiyoshi Kawakami, The Real Japanese Question, New York, 1921, pp. 62-78.

8 Foreign Relations of the United States, 1913, Washington, 1920, pp. 625-653.

9 Congressional Record, Sixty-second Congress, Second Session, Washington, 1912, Vol. XLVIII, Part VI, pp. 5659-66. Kawakami, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

10 Edith O'Shaughnessy, A Diplomat's wife in Mexico, New York, 1916, p. 168; Alvin Percy Martin, Latin America and the war, Baltimore, 1925, pp. 525-530.

11 Hendrick, op. cit. Vol. III, pp. 351-353.

12 Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914, Washington, 1928, pp. 484-485.

Expedition of 1916¹³ and the many other resentments that Mexico held against United States. Germany knew her system of non-exploitation in the past, which was in direct contrast to the United States,¹⁴ would enable her to win the confidence of the natives and give her an opportunity for economic exploitation in the future, even though she should make few territorial gains as a result of the war.

If Japan withdrew from the Entente England would be forced to withdraw troops from the Western battle front to protect her interests in the Far East; and if Mexico joined the central powers, the United States would be forced to turn a part of her attention and troops to the Southern border. Thus the attempt to gain Mexico and Japan as allies would cause Germany no loss, but would give an opportunity for gain for herself and her confederates.

13 Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916, Washington, 1931, p. 486.

14 James Fred Rippey, The United States and Mexico, New York, 1928, pp. 312-319; Commercial Relations of the United States 1912, Washington, 1913-1914, p. 106.

THE ZIMMERMANN NOTE

Chapter II

✓ If the United States were drawn into the war, Germany would need friends in the western hemisphere. No other American republic furnished such opportunity for the development of German friendship as did Mexico. These reasons in addition to those already mentioned made the plot seem desirable. On January 16, 1917, Zimmermann, sent through the German Embassy at Washington a note to be forwarded to Von Eckhardt, the German minister in Mexico, through whose efforts a German-Mexican alliance was to be formed.

In order to be sure that the message reached Mexico, Zimmermann sent the message over three routes. The first was by wireless from Nauen, Germany, to Seville, Long Island. This line was controlled by Americans, who might interfere with the message, so he made use of the sympathy which both the court and populace of Sweden felt for Germany and her cause. He gave the message to the Swedish minister in Berlin, who sent it to Stockholm, Sweden, where it was cabled to Washington by way of Buenos Aires, Argentina. For the third way he used the American diplomatic mail pouch. All were to be sent to Bernstorff in Washington, who was responsible for the message being carried on to Von Eckhardt in Mexico. Zimmermann used these three methods instead of sending a letter by boat as he had planned earlier.¹

President Wilson had ordered Gerard, the American minister in Berlin, to allow Germany to use the American diplomatic pouch for the

1 Official German Documents Relating to the World War, Vol. II, pp. 1337.

transmission of messages to Bernstorff, and Zimmermann availed himself of this opportunity to send the note. At first he had other plans, as is shown by the following quotation.²

Instructions to Minister Von Eckhardt were to be taken by way of Washington by U-boat on the 15th of January. Since the U-boat Deutschland did not start on her outward trip these instructions were attached on January 16, to telegram number 157, and telegraphed to Count Bernstorff by the way of the State Department in Washington.

Germany had no cable communication with the United States, and the wireless, even when available did not provide the secrecy required. All messages sent through the diplomatic pouch of the United States touched England before starting across the Atlantic and, as the English possessed the means of decoding the German Messages, the English officials readily granted the Germans the privilege of using the English cable facilities.

The English obtained the message in four ways. Page, in his letter to Wilson states: "It was bought in Mexico." The wireless message from Mauen to Seville was intercepted and deciphered, as was the one from Stockholm, Sweden, to Buenos Aires. The message sent through the offices of the American department of state was intercepted and decoded. Germany had given to the world her cherished secret that unrestricted submarine warfare was to be resumed on February 1, 1917, and she had given the United States the means of alienating pro-German sentiment within her own borders.

Page, in his telegram to the president and the secretary of state, told them that, "the message was bought in Mexico," and that the English possessed the means of decoding it and all other German messages from

2 Ibid.

the German Intelligence Bureau. He also cautioned them that, although England gave them permission to publish the note itself, they must publish the note only, and not the fact that the English had deciphered the German code. If the Germans knew England possessed the key to their code, the code would be changed and the Entente would lose the means of obtaining vital information. According to Page's suggestion the Zimmermann note was found in the Washington cable office. President Wilson and those closely associated with him did not doubt the genuineness of the note. They knew from previous experience the extent to which German propaganda existed in Mexico³ and in other countries where conditions might prove fruitful in German plots and alliances. This belief in German duplicity is shown in this letter written by Colonel E. M. House to President.⁴

New York, February 27, 1917.

Dear Governor:

I am not surprised to read the dispatch concerning the German proposal to Mexico. I have been satisfied for a long time that they have laid plans to stir up all the trouble they could, in order to occupy our attention in case of hostilities.

I hope you will publish the dispatch tomorrow. It will make a profound impression both on Congress and the country....

Affectionately yours,
E. M. House

Although, as stated previously, the department of state itself did not doubt the genuineness of the note, President Wilson knew that as

3 Hendricks, op. cit., pp. 350-362.
Martin, op. cit., pp. 525-538.

4 Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Boston, 1926, Vol. II, p. 452.

soon as it was published the pro-German sentiment within the United States would proclaim it a hoax planned by the enemies of Germany. He, accordingly, wrote Page, asking that England send the code to Washington in order that the American Intelligence Bureau might decipher Bernstorff's copy, and in exchange offering to send all messages the Americans secured to the British government.⁵ Page answered that it was not advisable to send the key to the German code to America because the code was never used straight and only a few experts in England knew the variations. He wrote that the British Government would gladly decipher all messages that the United States would send to it.⁶ Wilson took advantage of the British offer and, when the time came to publish the note, he was able to assure the American people that it was genuine, that Americans had found the note, and that Americans had deciphered it. The following telegram from Walter H. Page shows an American deciphered the note.⁷

Bell took the cipher text of the German messages contained in your 4494 of yesterday to the Admiralty and there, himself, deciphered it from the German code which is in the Admiralty's possession. Page.

After the severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries and while war was still threatening, Zimmermann asked that the plan be discussed with the president of Mexico. The conclusion of the alliance depended upon the entrance of the United States into the War. He suggested that Carranza, on his own initiative, find out what Japan's

5 Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917, Washington, 1921, Supplement 1, p. 157.

6 Ibid., p. 158.

7 Ibid.

reaction to the alliance would be. If Carranza declined because he feared the action that the United States might take after the war, Eckdard was to offer him an alliance after the war provided Mexico persuaded Japan to become one of the German allies.⁸

The following note was released by the Associated Press on March 1, 1917.⁹

We intend to begin on the 1st of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance of the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of the war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.

(Signed) Zimmermann.

The Associated Press did not indicate its source of information. Throughout the United States expressions of doubt were heard, but Zimmermann, himself, allayed all doubt when he gave this address in the Reichstag a few days later.¹⁰

I have no written communication to Carranza. I have only forwarded instructions to our representative in Mexico through a channel which seemed safe. We are now instituting investigations to find out how these instructions reached the hand of the American Government. I have instructed the minister of Mexico to offer alliance to the country and at

8 Hendrick, op. cit., p. 349.

9 Foreign Relations, 1917, Supplement I, p. 147.

10 Ibid., p. 192.

the same time suggest that Japan should join the alliance. I have distinctly pointed out that in spite of the submarine warfare we hope that America will maintain its neutrality. The American Government considers itself entitled to provoke the whole world against us. Under these circumstances America cannot blame us for seeking alliance after there was a possibility of their declaring war on us.

Both English and American officials were surprised at Zimmermann's acknowledgment of his attempt to secure an alliance with Mexico before the United States had declared war, but Zimmermann probably knew he had played into the hands of the English and Americans when he sent the message in so many forms, especially through the department of state to the German Embassy in Washington.

Germany's problem now was to find out where the United States found her information. All these messages had been sent in code. They thought the information had been obtained after the cipher had been decoded in either the Washington or Mexican Embassy.¹¹ They did not know that the English possessed their key. Their conjectures as to the responsibility for the discovery were now more absurd and no more untruthful than those in the newspapers of the United States at the time. It was reported found among Bernstorff's possessions at Halifax, also that his messenger was found near the Mexican border.¹²

After the war the truth came to light. The discovery was made by the Intelligence Service of the British Admiralty.¹³ Admiral William Hall, later knighted for his work in the service, was responsible for

11 Hendrick, op. cit., pp. 357-360.

12 Seymour, op. cit., p. 462; Hendrick, op. cit., pp. 350, 356.

13 Hendrick, op. cit., pp. 361-362.

deciphering the German code, and through its use decoding the Zimmermann note.¹⁴

14 Seymour, op. cit., p. 454.

THE REACTION TO THE NOTE IN ENGLAND, JAPAN,
MEXICO, GERMANY, AND THE UNITED STATES

Chapter III

English newspapers published expressions indicating that Germany had committed a diplomatic crime. Other statements from English newspapers published in The New York Times showed that the London Post, the Express, the Daily Chronicle, and the Daily News, urged the United States to take action while the note was news to her citizens. An editorial in the Daily News stated: "Gredulity which could contemplate such an intrigue springs from mental infirmity." The editor of the Daily News assumed that Germans within the United States would be as reluctant as Theodore Roosevelt to find themselves the subjects of Japan or Mexico and stated that under the circumstances, "War is inevitable!" The Daily Chronicle stated: "War seems to have been rendered inevitable and the problem is no longer how to evade it, but how to surmount it."¹

In a letter written March 9, 1917, by Ambassador Page to Colonel House, Ambassador Page quoted Viscount Grey of Fallodon:²

I do not see how the United States can sit still while neutral shipping is swept off the sea. If no action is taken, it will be a great blot on history or a failure that must grievously depress the future of America.

England supplied the United States with the first knowledge of the note and with the translation of it. It is interesting to note her reaction. Officially no statement was made. Balfour gave the word of the English government in inference, if not literally, when

1 The New York Times, 1917, March 2, 1917.

2 Seymour, op. cit., p. 459.

he handed the intercepted and decoded note to Page. He thus assured the United States that Great Britain knew the note was genuine.

The editors of the more outspoken newspapers printed what they thought about the matter; but official England and her more prominent citizens, with the exception of Viscount Faldoun, were silent regarding the note. There was a certain subtlety about this silence, as if they allowed the attention of the United States to center upon the note and its sinister implications without detracting by their comments.

The Japanese Embassy when requested to secure someone to translate newspaper articles regarding the note refused. They evaded the issue by stating these newspaper articles were only expression of opinion and could in no way be taken as official statements, although no request had been made for anything other than opinions as expressed in their newspapers in March 1917.

The officials and prominent citizens of Japan denied knowledge of the plot, but did not seem surprised at Germany's attempt to persuade Mexico to become an ally. T. I'yenaga, editor of a news bureau and described as unofficial spokesman of Japan, said the aim of Germany had been to instill in the United States the fear of an attack from Japan the moment the United States adopted a definite policy to defend her homes and her rights. Dr. I'yenaga asserted that German propaganda had been presented to Japan from the beginning of the war. He stated, also, that the German propagandist had two objectives: to terrorize the United States with fear of Japanese aggression, and to weaken the Entente by eliminating one of its members. He denied the charge and protested that there was not the remotest chance of Japan lending herself to any such hostility to the United States on the one hand, or

to any such treachery to her present Allies on the other.³

Dr. Chonoske Yada, Japanese Consul General in New York, said at first he doubted the authenticity of the note. He was sure the proposal did not reach Japan.

The Japanese Ambassador at Rome laughed when he read the telegram from America that announced the German attempts to cause mischief between his country and the United States and remarked that he thought the Teutonic intrigues were as well known in America as in Tokio.⁴

Guthrie, the American Ambassador in Tokio, sent a copy of an interview of the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs by the editor of the Japan Advertiser to President Wilson.⁵

Tokio, March 2. Japan has received no proposition from either Mexico or Germany, directly or indirectly, to join in a possible war against the United States, Viscount Motono, Japanese Foreign Minister, informed the Associated Press. Viscount Motono said he considered such an idea ridiculous. If Mexico received such a proposal, Viscount Motono added, that country showed intelligence in not transmitting it to Japan.

Premier Terauchi asserted it would be sheer madness for Japan to lend an ear to such a thing, and spoke of the persistence with which the Germans exerted themselves to estrange Japan and the United States.⁶

A statement from the Japanese Embassy at Washington quoted the interview of the Minister of Foreign Affairs with the editor of the Japan Advertiser:⁷

3 The New York Times, March 1, 1917.

4 The New York Times, March 2, 1917.

5 The New York Times, March 3, 1917.

6 Foreign Relations, 1917, Supplement 1, pp. 160-161.

7 The New York Times, March 3, 1917.

First, it is absurd to suppose that Japan would under any circumstances desert the Allies and join Germany. In the second place, it is preposterous to imagine that Mexico could induce Japan to follow such a course. This plot shows what mental delusions Germany is laboring under to presume that such a course of conduct could ever be possible.

He denounced the Zimmermann suggestion as a "monstrous story" and "an absolutely impossible proposal" for Japan to entertain.

The Japanese did not seem to be disturbed by the proffer of an alliance from Germany. Since the Japanese government denied receiving the offer, the official reaction cannot be definitely stated, but the statements of her citizens holding influential positions indicate that she would not have considered leaving the Allies, if the note had been received. Her spokesmen declared the plan absurd and censured German diplomacy. She remained one of the Allies until the close of the war.

Translations made from El Universal from March 1 to March 7, 1917, discussing the Zimmermann note, show a decided friendliness toward the Allies. In these discussions the Mexicans stated that they failed to see how Japan could turn to Germany when she had already captured German possessions in Asia. Zimmermann, it was said, made a mistake when he thought Mexico would lend herself to his maneuvers.⁸

Some of the editorials expressed doubt that Zimmermann was responsible for the note.⁹ Some thought it was a plot of the Yankees. La Informacion, a rival of the Hearst papers, suggested that it was a

8 El Universal, Mexico City, March 1-7, 1917.

9 El Demócrata, Mexico City, March 3, 1917.

Hearst concoction,¹⁰ and that this same group of Yankees had planned it in order to persuade the American Senate to enter the war. Despite these doubts, the newspapers discussed the contents of the note as if Zimmermann had written it. La Informacion doubted that the United States would enter the war against Germany because "the United States only enjoyed wars against little nations like Cuba, Santa Domingo, Panama, and not against nations like Germany."¹¹

Louis Quintanilla, the new Mexican minister in France, was quoted in the Temps as follows:¹²

Germany thought Mexico would be able to serve her views. The war has brought into my country a considerable number of Germans who since 1914 have made an admirable campaign in favor of the course. They have founded newspapers and they have distributed considerable sums for propaganda to lead opinion astray. Nevertheless, they have not succeeded, and the sympathies of the Mexican people generally are for the Entente Allies.

Senor Andres Garcia, Inspector of Mexican Consulates, declared that, Mexican sympathy for the Allied nations was stronger than it was believed to be. He stated also, that if there were any Germans or Mexicans with German sympathies trying to influence public opinion in Mexico through official or semi-official positions, they would be discharged as soon as discovered.¹³

10 La Informacion, Mexico City, 1917, March 2, 1917.

11 El Demócrata, March 3, 1917.

12 The New York Times, March 10, 1917.

13 El Universal, March 1, 1917.

Palavicini, at that time a member of the Mexican Congress, recommended neutrality and advised President Carranza to take no measures that would in any way offend the Allies.

Mexico did not seem deeply impressed by the provisions of the note. About one week before the note was released in the United States, Secretary Lansing suggested, since President Wilson intended to publish the note soon, that Mexico give a statement of "disinterestedness" in the proposals of the note. Such a statement would avert intense feeling against Mexican complicity when the note was made public. Fletcher, the American Ambassador in Mexico City, talked with the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, who denied any knowledge of the note or the terms contained therein.¹⁴ Later Fletcher had a conference with Carranza and he, too, denied receiving the note,¹⁵ but Page obtained an intercepted telegram showing that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had talked with Eckhardt on February 20.¹⁶ Fletcher seemed to think that both Carranza and the Minister of Foreign Affairs sympathized with Germany, but he doubted Mexican acceptance of a German alliance. He thought Carranza withheld a definite statement regarding his actions if the alliance should be proposed, in order to induce the American government to accept either his peace proposals, or a peace conference of neutrals.¹⁷

14 Foreign Relations, 1917, Supplement 1, pp. 234-235.

15 Ibid., p. 233.

16 Hendricks, op. cit., p. 251.

17 Foreign Relations, 1917, Supplement I, p. 239.

Carranza and his ministers denied receiving the note, and Carranza refused to disclose his attitude in case Germany should make him an offer. Mexican newspapers thought the plan impractical. They thought racial difference made it undesirable, perhaps impossible, to re-annex the American territories as a part of Mexico. They gave greater assurance of non-participation in the plot than did official Mexico.

Mexico did not accept the terms contained in Zimmermann's offer because, as indicated from editorials, expressions of influential citizens, and by the notes contained in American government records, she did not think the plan feasible.

Although the Japanese and Mexican officials denied receiving the note, Zimmermann, the Secretary of German Foreign Affairs, did not deny sending it, much to the surprise of the English and American officials who were in possession of it. Upon Zimmermann's acknowledgment, the German newspapers at once began discussing the moral aspects of the note.¹⁸

The newspaper articles on the whole approved Zimmermann and his plan to secure aid if the United States did enter the war with the Allies. The semi-official, Kölnische-Zeitung believed the note would cause American people to realize that Germany would not let herself be bullied. That since President Wilson had attempted to incite the neutral powers to sever diplomatic relations with the German government, he ought not to complain when Germany sought Allies to help

18 Ibid., p. 160.

"thwart the steps he aims to undertake" against them.¹⁹ It ridiculed the "level headed legislators" who allowed themselves to be impressed by President Wilson's revelations of the "dark conspiracy" threatening the nation. It asked why had Wilson kept the secret a whole month and answered the question with the statement that no conspiracy existed, only a cautious measure by the Germans for preparation in case of war between Germany and the United States.²⁰ It criticised President Wilson for suppressing the statement that Eckdhardt was to take no steps with the Mexican government until war was declared against Germany by the United States. It was believed in Germany that President Wilson suppressed the clause in question in order to induce Congress to give him power to enter the war with the Entente.²¹

Von Hintze, German Ambassador at Peking said the Mexican telegram rendered Wilson decisive assistance in the realization of his wish to take his stand against the German Government.²² Von Hintze had served in Mexico in 1913. Ballin, director-general of the Hamburg-Amerika passenger traffic, wrote to Von Tirpitz:²³

In my view-- which is shared not only Count Bernstorff, Prince Hatzfeld, and Privy Councillor Albert, but also by everyone else who was on the other side at the outbreak of the war against us---if we had not turned the population of the western and southern states who were wholly friendly to Germany,

19 The Literary Digest, "Elphantine Diplomacy", New York, 1917, Vol. LIV., pp. 695, 696.

20 The New York Times, March 6, 1917.

21 The New York Times, March 8, 1917.

22 The New York Times, March 5, 1917.

23 Alfred Peter Frederick, Von Tirpitz, Memoirs, New York, 1919, Vol. II, p. 197.

against us, by the Mexican telegram and a whole series of other mistakes. What the entry of America into the war means for the Entente, I do not need to explain to you.

Count Von Reventlow, formerly one of the most ardent advocates of unrestricted submarine warfare and general supporter of extreme measures, wrote in the Berlin Deutsche Tageszeitung:²⁴

Those who have been basing hopes for the preservation of peace on divided public opinion in the United States are now forced to deplore the turn things have taken and to doubt the wisdom of the German policy which so far as Mexico is concerned, may be stigmatized as bringing a lighted match in contact with a powder case.

Count Von Reventlow thought the plot would hinder a return to normal relations after the war. He stated, "Mexico is a frontier neighbor of the United States, and the German offer will not be forgotten soon."²⁵

The Reichstag Budget Committee endorsed the action of the foreign office by unanimous vote.²⁶ Hugo Hoose, leader of the Socialist minority, remarked that the offer of an alliance with Mexico had aggravated the situation with the United States. Doctor Alfred Zimmermann spoke in reply to this criticism. He said:²⁷

Without treachery, which brought the German offer to the knowledge of the United States government, the Mexican government would not have learned of it until after the United States had declared war on us.

24 The New York Times, March 6, 1917.

25 The Literary Digest, "Elphantine Diplomacy", Vol. LIV., p. 696.

26 The New York Times, March 7, 1917.

27 The New York Times, March 31, 1917; Foreign Relations, 1917, Supplement I, p. 192.

I have distinctly pointed out that in spite of the submarine warfare we hope that America will maintain its neutrality. The American Government considers itself entitled to provoke the whole world against us. Under these circumstances America cannot blame us for seeking alliance after there was a possibility of their declaring war on us.

On the whole, from expressions found in the newspapers, and remarks by prominent citizens and officials and the Reichstag Budget Committee, Germany defended Zimmermann in his attempt to secure allies for the Fatherland. The contents of the note, they contended, were to be revealed to Mexico only in case the United States entered the war. They felt under these circumstances that they were justified in seeking aid wherever the slightest opportunity appeared.

At first within the United States in the sections dominated by Germans and people of the German descent, doubt was expressed that Germany was responsible for the note. Many thought it pro-ally propaganda to increase hatred for Germany.²⁸ This opinion was expressed in the American Congress, too.²⁹ Herman Metz called the note "bunk".³⁰ George Viereck, editor of Viereck's Weekly, thought the note faked by Great Britain.³¹

Zimmermann's acknowledgment of the note immediately silenced those who doubted, and those newspapers that did not doubt expressed their opinions of the plot. All pronounced the note poor diplomatic

28 The New York Times, March 2, 1917.

29 Congressional Record, Sixty-fifty Congress, Second Session, Washington, 1918, Vol. LIV., p. 4569.

30 The New York Times, March 2, 1917.

31 Ibid.

procedure. Many thought the plot Machiavellian and that no trust could be placed in a nation that pretended friendship on one hand and plotted to take away territory on the other.³²

In a collection of quotations taken from newspapers in widely scattered towns and cities of the United States, one finds a unanimity of opinion. At the time these opinions were printed, President Wilson was urging arming of the Merchant Marines and increasing the expenditures for the army and navy too.³³ Pacifists hindered increases in the army and navy.

The New York Times criticised those "who gave aid and comfort to an enemy that threatened the territorial integrity of the United States." The Chicago Herald urged Congress to give the President "authority to safeguard the nation." The Dallas News suspected the loyalty of those who hampered the efforts of the President. The Indianapolis Star thought President Wilson was at last justified in waiting for a definite occasion of offense by Germany. The Philadelphia Public Ledger said the German government "is making war, now. The challenge must be taken up." The Arkansas Gazette of Little Rock, Arkansas, urged preparedness and asserted the note left the pacifists nothing to stand on.³⁴

The three following selections were made because they came from

32 The New York Times, March 3, 1917.

33 House Document, No. 2111, Sixty-fourth Congress, Second Session, Washington, 1919, Vol. CXIII, p. 180.

34 The New York Times, March 2, 1917.

papers published in sections where Germans had settled and where pro-German sentiment had been strong. From the contents of these quotations one judges the feeling was becoming anti-German. The Milwaukee Journal declared:³⁵

In the Mississippi Valley, which by the plan of invasion Germany proposed to Mexico would be invaded are millions of Americans in whose veins flows German blood. But the German plan made no more reckoning of them than of any other Americans. In Texas, against which Germany hoped to bring all the force of half-civilized Mexico, are many Americans of German blood. But their Father land recked not of this. In California the German government hoped to launch all the force of Japan, a people of another race which the German Kaiser had declared a peril to civilization.

The Milwaukee Journal quoted, this pledge which was sent to President Wilson by German-Americans of Milwaukee:³⁶

We pledge to you our legal support in any action you see fit to take in defense of American rights which may be menaced by any foreign country.

The Omaha World Herald declared:³⁷

There can be no neutrality in the ear of any patriotic American when the issue shifts from Germany against Great Britain to Germany against the United States.

Probably Von Hintze and Ballin were justified in thinking the note lost Germany the sympathy of the German sections of the United States.³⁸

Several newspapers stated the danger was not great because Germany was only bluffing, and she expected to cause worry over the

35 The Literary Digest, "How Germany United the United States," Vol. LIV, PP. 687-688.

36 The New York Times, March 5, 1917.

37 The Literary Digest, "How Germany United the United States," p. 688.

38 Tirpitz, op. cit., p. 69

loss of Japan's help in the East, and as a likely menace in Mexico.

The Nation declared:³⁹

To select poor Carranza and to rely upon him and his diplomats to buy off Japan is literally so absurd as to make one's intelligence stand still as the Germans say.

A. Bullard wrote:⁴⁰

Treachery to any Mexicans who may trust the German's promise is half--the tragic half--the comic half is to scare us out of our skins with the threat of a Japanese attack.

A few other newspapers took the note seriously and claimed the interest of the United States and other American nations were threatened because it challenged the essential principle of the Monroe Doctrine.⁴¹ They feared the Carranza in conjunction with the German military officers within Mexico would seize the oil fields and lease them to Germany. If Germany were beaten she might destroy the oil wells in order to prevent their falling to the hands of her enemies. If Germany were victorious her possession of Mexican territory could be used in the same manner as she proposed to use the territory of Belgium and northern France in the peace negotiations.⁴²

The Los Angeles Tribune stated:⁴³

All differences are extinguished, all racial prejudices are obliterated and the men and women of America unitedly support the President.

39 The Nation, "Germany's Desperation," 1917, Vol. CIV, p. 258.

40 The Outlook, "Germany, Japan, and Mexico," 1917, Vol. CXV, pp. 456.

41 The New Republic, "A Lesson in Diplomacy," New York, 1917, Vol. X, p. 152.

42 The Outlook, "Germany and Carranza," Vol. CXV, pp. 497-498.

43 The Literary Digest, "How Germany United the United States," pp. 667-688.

The Independent treated the note with gentle irony in its peep into the future through "The Kaiser's Pipe Dream." The article pictured the lost provinces in the hands of the Germans, Mexicans, and Japanese and described the pastimes of the citizens.⁴⁴ The New Republic summed the effect of the note within the United States in this manner:⁴⁵

Its publication was received first with amazement and incredulity and then with a consternation which was mitigated only by a semi-humorous sense of the apparently abysmal stupidity of the proposal.

In a letter to President Wilson, Colonel E. M. House wrote that he was not surprised to read the attempted German intrigue with Mexico. He urged immediate publication for the effect the proposal would have upon Congress and the country.⁴⁶

When President Wilson released the Zimmermann note to representatives of the Associated Press, he did not allow them to disclose the fact that he had given permission for its publication. Congress, then in session, wanted the President's confirmation that the note as published by the press was authentic. They, accordingly, passed a resolution asking for Wilson's confirmation of the genuineness of the note.⁴⁷ The President gave them this assurance.⁴⁸ On February 26,

44 The Independent, "The Kaiser's Pipe Dream," New York, 1917, Vol. LXXXIX.

45 The New Republic, "A Lesson in Diplomacy," Vol. X, pp. 151-153.

46 Seymour, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 452.

47 Congressional Record, Vol. LIV, pt. 5, p. 4569.

48 Ibid., p. 4618.

President Wilson asked for authority to arm the Merchant Marine. It was thought, both here and in Germany, that by releasing the note at this time he hoped its psychological effects would bring Congressional permission to arm the Merchant Marine as well as to secure large appropriations for the army and navy. He was doomed to disappointment. A small group of senators, eleven in number, led by Senator Stone of Missouri and Senator La Follette of Wisconsin, kept the bill from being voted upon. The session closed and no vote was taken.⁴⁹ A protest of the action of this minority group of senators swept over the country and Wilson proceeded to arm the Merchant Marines of his own executive authority.⁵⁰

Throughout the United States, newspapers were unanimous in voicing disapproval of Germany's plan as found in the Zimmermann note. Even German-American papers did not defend the Fatherland after Zimmermann admitted authorship of the note. Most of them felt the Zimmermann note was an irreparable insult. Prominent German-American citizens denounced the plan and urged cooperation with Wilson and his policy. President Wilson's hesitancy in publishing the note because it might bring on a crisis that he could not control was not justified in the light of successive events.⁵¹ The note did not bring on a declaration of war, nor direct preparation for war. War was not declared until April 6, 1917, about one month later when Germany's sub-marine

49 The New York Times, March 6, 1917.

50 Seymour, op. cit., p. 438.

51 Ibid., p. 452.

campaign was again under way. President Wilson mentioned the note as one of the aggravations, but not as a cause of war between Germany and the United States in his address declaring war.⁵²

Therefore one may conclude that the Zimmermann note helped to prepare the masses of people of the United States for war, but it did not cause war.

52 Diplomatic Correspondence, Vol. III, p. 364.

CONCLUSION

Germany decided in January, 1917, to renew sub-marine warfare despite the protests of the United States. She felt sure the United States would enter the war if sub-marine warfare were resumed. Zimmermann formed his plot to prevent the United States putting all her resources at the disposal of the Allies by making trouble with Mexico. He planned, also, to cause the English to withdraw a part of their forces in Europe to the Far East to protect their interests from Japan. The plot was discovered by the English and given to the United States before he had time to put it into operation.

On the whole, throughout the countries mentioned, the officials and prominent citizens were not greatly disturbed about the note and its contents. The two exceptions were within Germany and the United States. German officials defended Zimmermann's procedure. President Wilson and his co-workers, according to House, feared a crisis upon publication of the note. These fears were not justified. Congress was interested, of course, but Wilson was unable to secure the passage of a bill permitting arming of the Merchant Marine.

The newspapers of each country took a greater part in discussing the note, than did the other agencies observed for this study. English journalists urged the United States to enter the war immediately. Mexican journalists thought the Zimmermann's plan impractical. United States journalists were more deeply disturbed than those of the other countries, and their treatment of the subject ranged from the radically serious to the semi-comic. The publication of the note did much to turn pro-German sympathy into antagonism, but it did not bring about the war, because war was not declared until April 6, 1917,

more than a month later when the sub-marine warfare was resumed. The United States entered the war because sub-marine warfare was resumed and not because Germany tried to persuade Mexico to invade American territory.

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