

Austria's Official Communication Proposing Peace Discussion

An Amsterdam cable, carried by the Associated Press under date of September 15, follows: In extending an invitation to all the belligerent governments to enter into non-binding discussions at some neutral meeting place the Austrian-Hungarian government stated that the object of the conference would be to secure an exchange of views which would show "whether those prerequisites exist which would make the speedy inauguration of peace negotiations appear promising."

The Austrian proposal, which is announced in an official communication telegraphed here from Vienna, suggests that there be no interruption of the war, and that the "discussions would go only so far as considered by the participants to offer prospects of success."

The proposal calls for all the belligerents to send delegates for a "confidential and unbinding discussion on the basic principles for the conclusion of peace, in a place in a neutral country and at a near date, that would yet have to be agreed upon."

The proposal says the conference would be one of "delegates who would be charged to make known to one another the conception of their governments regarding those principles and to receive analogous communications as well as to request and give frank and candid explanations on all those points which need to be precisely defined."

The government announces that a note embodying its suggestions had been addressed to the various belligerent powers and that the Holy See had been apprised of the proposal in a special note.

The governments of the neutral states also had been made acquainted with the proposal.

The text of the official communication reads: "An objective and conscientious examination of the situation of all the belligerent states now leaves no doubt that all people, on whatever side they may be fighting, long for a speedy end to the bloody struggles. Despite this natural and comprehensible desire for peace, it has not so far been possible to create those preliminary conditions calculated to bring the peace efforts nearer to realization and bridge the gap which at present still separates the belligerents from one another.

More effective means must therefore be considered whereby the responsible factors of all the countries can be offered an opportunity to investigate the present misunderstandings. In accord with other allies, the first step, taken in December 1916 for the bringing about of peace, did not lead to the end hoped for.

"The grounds for this lay assuredly in the situation at that time. In order to maintain in their people the war spirit, which was steadily declining, the allied means suppressed even any discussion of the peace idea. And so it came about that the ground for a peace understanding was not properly prepared. The natural transition from the wildest war agitation to a condition of conciliation was lacking.

"It would, however, be wrong to believe that the peace step we then took was entirely without results. Its fruits consist of something which is not to be overlooked — that the peace question has not since vanished from the order of the day. The discussions which have been carried on before the tribunal of public opinion have disclosed proof of the not slight differences which today still separate the warring powers in their conception of peace conditions. Nevertheless an atmosphere has been created which no longer excludes the discussion of peace problems.

TO REACH UNDERSTANDING

"Without optimism it at least assuredly may be deduced from the utterances of republic statesman that the desire to reach an understanding and not to decide the war exclusively by force of arms is also gradually beginning to penetrate into allied states, save for some exceptions in the case of blinded war agitators, which are certainly not to be estimated lightly.

"The Austro-Hungarian Government is aware that after the deep-reaching convulsions which have been caused in the life of the peoples by the devastating effects of the world war it will not be possible to re-establish order in the tot-

UNITED STATES REJECTS PEACE CONFERENCE PROPOSAL

A Washington dispatch, dated September 18, follows: The United States, as was fully expected, has unconditionally rejected Germany's peace feeler. In doing so the government has spoken for all the co-belligerents. Almost immediately after receiving the Austrian government's note from the minister from Sweden, Mr. Ekengren, Secretary Lansing tonight issued this formal statement:

"I am authorized by the President to state that the following will be the reply of this government to the Austro-Hungarian note proposing an unofficial conference of belligerents.

"The government of the United States feels that there is only one reply which it can make to the suggestion of the imperial Austro-Hungarian government. It has repeatedly and with entire candor stated the terms upon which the United States would consider peace and can and will entertain no proposal for a conference upon a matter concerning which it has made its position and purpose so plain."

The terms, referred to in the reply dictated today to the Austrian note, were clearly set out in President Wilson's Fourth of July speech, at Mount Vernon, as follows:

"1—The destruction of every arbitrary power anywhere that can separately, secretly and of its single choice disturb the peace of the world; or, if it cannot be presently destroyed, at least its reduction to virtual impotence.

"2—The settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement or of political relationship, upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned and not upon the basis of the material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery.

"3—The consent of all nations to be governed in their conduct toward each other by the same principles of honor and of respect for the common law of civilized society that govern the individual citizens of all modern states in their relations with one another; to the end that all promises and covenants may be sacredly observed, no private plots or conspiracy hatched, no selfish injuries wrought with impunity and a mutual trust established upon the handsome foundation of a mutual respect for right.

"4—The establishment of an organization of peace which shall make it certain that the combined power of free nations will check every invasion and serve to make peace and justice the more secure by affording a definite tribunal of opinion to which all must submit and by which every international readjustment that cannot be amicably agreed upon by the people directly concerned shall be sanctioned."

tering world at a single stroke. The path that leads to the restoration of peaceful relations between the peoples is cut by hatred and embitterment. It is too irksome and wearisome, yet it is our duty to tread this path — the path of negotiations — and if there are still such factors as desire to overcome the opponents by military means and to force the will to victory upon him, there can, nevertheless, no longer be doubt that this aim, even assuming that it is attainable, would first necessitate a further sanguinary and protracted struggle.

"But even a later victorious peace will no longer be able to make good the consequences of such a policy — consequences which will be fatal to all the states and peoples of Europe. The only peace which could righteously adjust the still divergent conceptions of the opponents would be a peace desired by all the peoples, with this consciousness, and in its unswerving exigencies, a discussion between the enemy powers.

"Earnest peace of the population of all the states who are jointly suffering through the war — the indisputable rapprochement in individual controversial questions — as well as the more conciliatory atmosphere that is general, seems to give a certain guarantee that a fresh step in the interests of peace, which also takes account of past experiences in his domain, might at the present moment offer the possibility of success.

PRACTICABLE TO AUSTRIA

"The Austro-Hungarian government has therefore resolved to point out to all the belligerents, friend and foe, a path considered practicable by it and to propose to them jointly to examine in a free exchange of views whether those prerequisites is which would make the speedy inauguration of peace negotiations appear promising. To this end the Austro-Hungarian government has today invited the governments of all the belligerent states to a conference and unbinding discussion at a neutral meeting place, and has addressed to them a note drawn up in this sense.

"This step has been brought to the attention of the Holy See in a special note, and an appeal hereby made to the pope's interest in peace. Furthermore, the governments of the neutral states have been acquainted with the step taken. The constant close accord which exists between the four allied powers warrants the assumption that the allies of Austria-Hungary to whom the proposal is being sent in the same manner, share the views developed in the note."

The official telegram proceeds to say that the note has been drawn up in French and runs as follows:

"The peace offer which the powers of the quadruple alliance addressed to their opponents on December 12, 1916, and the conciliatory basic ideas of which they have never given up, signifies, despite the rejection which it experienced, an important stage in the history of this war. In contrast to the first two and a half war years, the question of peace has from that moment been the center of European eye, of world discussion, and dominates it in ever-increasing measure.

NO TANGIBLE RESULT

"We have in turn again and again expressed ourselves on the question of peace, its prerequisites and conditions. The lines of development of this discussion, however, has not been uniform and steady. The basic standpoint changed under the influence of the military and political situations, at any rate, it has not led to a tangible general result that could be utilized.

"It is true that, independent of all these oscillations, it can be stated that the distance between the conceptions of the two sides, has, on the whole, grown somewhat less; that despite the indisputable conditions thereto unabridged differences, a partial turning from any of the most extreme concrete war aims is visible and a certain agreement upon relative general basic principles of a world peace manifests itself. In both camps, there is undoubtedly observable in wide classes of the population, a growth of the will to peace and understanding. Moreover, a comparison of the peace proposal of the powers of the quadruple alliance on the part of their opponents with the later utterances of republic statesmen of the latter, as well as of the non-responsible but, in a political respect, no wise unimportant personages, confirms this impression.

"While for example, the reply of the allies to President Wilson made demands which amounted to the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, to a diminution and a deep internal transformation of the German empire, and the destruction of Turkish European ownership, those demands, the realization of which was based on the supposition of an overwhelming victory, were later modified in many declarations from allied diplomats or in part were dropped.

REFORM NOT INTENDED

"Thus, in a declaration made in the British house of commons a year ago, Secretary Balfour expressly recognized that Austria-Hungary must

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