Congressman Vollmer On The President's Note.

[illegible] Illinois Staats-Zeitung, Chicago, Ill. Dear Sir:—The request by [illegible] is to the note of our [illegible] on the Lusitania incident.

[illegible] language of the note is, of course, diplomatic, modest and [illegible]. Its tone is temperate and [illegible] and showing it terms of [illegible] to which the German government [illegible] as a matter of statesmanship, [illegible] regard this tragic sinking of [illegible] passenger steamship, as I have been [illegible] forced to regard many of [illegible] when they say frankly, as [illegible] as a humanitarian express[illegible].

[illegible] the attitude of the administration toward Germany. And German interests as they survey to Japanese or state people would hardly be sympathetic are in the president of our chief magistrate and his secretary of state. Is there another reason? It was spoken through by Congressmen Modern (Mr. Clark and Mr. Underwood at the time of the Panama Canal Toll Bill) [illegible] that the administration was under British influence and forced by such influence to adopt what these two gentlemen at that time on the floor of the House denominated as "an un-American attitude."

I voted with the administration on that measure, on purely economic grounds, but at the time I raised myself the question as to what truth there was in these charges of pro-British influence made against the administration by Speaker Clark and majority leader Underwood and what the President meant in his message in reference to that matter when he said there were "considerations of the utmost delicacy in our international relations which compelled him to ask" that action of us and that he would not know "how to deal with other and even graver problems" unless we granted it to him "in ungrudging measure".

Did shrewd English diplomacy at that time, contemplating the coming of this war, invegle our state department into an "understanding" that they would protect the Monroe Doctrine in Mexico or hold in check their allies, the Japs, with whom we were having serious difficulties on account of the school and land laws of California? And if so, what was the consideration, the quid pro quo?

If the administration had not opposed with all the power and influence at its command the resolution introduced by me, being H. J. 277, to prohibit the export of arms and munitions, it would have unquestionably passed the House. In advocating that measure, I had to meet the malicious falsehood that I was seeking to embroil this country in the war for the benefit of Germany. In answer to that charge, I showed plainly before the Foreign Affairs Committee and later on the floor of the House and in numerous public meetings that to adopt that measure was the sanest way to keep out of this war.

[illegible] predicted in last December that, [illegible] the United States used such [illegible] embargo, or the threat of such an embargo, England would, according to her custom in every previous war, [illegible] her superior power on the sea to violate our rights under international law to trade with both belligerents and neutrals. The administration prevented the adoption of my resolution and thus deprived itself in the contingency predicted by myself and which later occurred.

Germany plainly warned this country in the celebrated Von Tirpitz interview as to what her answer would be if America complacently submitted to this violation of her undoubted rights and thus assisted in the English attempt to starve out Germany.

The submarine, of which Germany has undoubtedly a kind as much superior to the submarines of other powers as the 42 centimeter gun surpasses in power the artillery of any other nation, is Germany's only effective method of meeting the openly avowed policy of Great Britain to starve out one hundred million noncombatants in Germany and Austria.

No mere words, no matter how beautiful and classical, no diplomatic notes, no matter how skillfully worded and perfumed and candied in sentiment, will cause her to drop that weapon and submit to the consequences at the hands of Great Britain and her allies. That is a case where the supreme law of nations governs; the law of necessity and self-preservation, which over-rides all international law.

But let us consider the question from the standpoint of international law as it has been accepted prior to the coming of the submarine. Germany had declared on February 4th, 1915, to go into effect February 18th, 1915, a zone of danger surrounding the British isles and officially warned all neutrals to keep their subjects and their ships out of that territory for their own good. If it is replied that this war zone has no binding legal force upon our government or its citizens, the answer is that our government tacitly consented to the establishment of a war zone by Great Britain in the North Sea prior to the declaration of the war zone in question by Germany, so that we are now estopped from raising this contention.

International law has always recognized the right of a belligerent ship of war capturing a belligerent merchantman to sink that ship if it is laden with arms and munitions, providing that conditions made it impossible to take the ship as prize into a friendly port. The Lusitania was loaded with contraband of war of a character and it was manifestly impossible for the submarine to take into port.

Now the President insists that visit and search must first be exercised and an opportunity given to the crew and passengers to leave the ship in safety. The necessity of visit and search does not apply to the Lusitania case, because the only purpose of visit and search is to establish the presence of contraband and that was established before the ship left New York harbor, when the list of articles which it contained became public and was known to the whole civilized world.

Nothing to the passengers had been given when the war zone was declared by Germany and later by paid advertisement inserted in American newspapers by the German Embassy and by numerous clergymen and others sent to the passengers warning that ship and it is safe to say that each one of them knew that the voyage could bespeak that ship if they were able to reach it. Think they had notice that, further notice was not necessary. Those passengers willfully and recklessly preferred to accept the consequences of the offense of that ship and of the nation so heavily that its speed was such that a submarine could never hit it and that in any event, by reason of its size-right, compartments, it was practically unsinkable. Possibly this statement would have been borne out by the event if the explosive had not been on board, which caused additional explosions and probably sunk the ship.

In any event, the loss of the lives of American citizens, passengers on that ship, is chargeable in the first place to their own recklessness, secondly, to the officials of that government, and thirdly, to the British government in failing to effectively convoy or otherwise protect it. I cannot altogether excuse our own government from responsibility in part for the loss of these lives, for it should have warned American citizens against entrusting themselves to belligerent vessels loaded with contraband and destined for a zone declared dangerous by one of the belligerents. When Mexicans were killing American citizens and destroying their property the administration considered it a sufficient answer to say that these Americans had been warned not to go there.

It is no answer to say—in the Lusitania case—that American citizens had the right to sail those waters and that they were under no obligation to heed the German warning. I may warn you not to walk down the other side of the street, where under ordinary circumstances you have a perfect right to walk, and you are under no obligation to heed my warning; but suppose the circumstances are that on the other side of the street is a man who is trying to "get me" with a gun and I am trying to "get" him with a gun and, if you fail to heed my warning and insist on walking over there and he uses you as a shield from behind which he fires at me, am I responsible if you get hurt?

Again, as Captain Hobson has very logically pointed out, the immunity from attack to which merchant ships are entitled under international law is due to their character as noncombatants, but they lose that character when, as in the case of the Lusitania, they are regular auxiliaries to the British fleet, when (in spite of the certificate of the collector of the port of New York) they are armed, as was the Lusitania, and when the captain is, as he was, an officer of the British navy and when the British admiralty had directed him as such officer to resist submarines and attempt to ram them.

It strikes my mind as simply absurd to hold that, merely because Americans foolishly and recklessly took passage on ships of that kind bearing arms and munitions destined for one of the belligerents, the other belligerent must quietly permit such ship to go on with its freight to reach the military forces of its opponent to be used to kill and maim the captor's own subjects.

The foreign policy of this administration, which has been weak and vacillating to a degree in the case of Mexico and in the case of Japan, but has repeatedly adopted a tone threatening if not hostile to Germany, is inexplicable to me, unless there is some secret understanding between this country and England of which the American people have never been advised, but which has been freely alleged on the floor of the English parliament.

Even the despised, much criticised and frequently denounced "hyphenated" citizens of German birth or ancestry have some rights as American citizens and among them is the right to know whether or not their country has been thus involved to the betrayal of American interests and we demand a categorical answer as to whether or not there is such a secret understanding or agreement.

Another right which we claim is to have a voice in the decision as to our national policy. We have read American history and we know how easy it is for an executive official, even a mean subordinate, to embroil this country in the horrors of war. Above all considerations, we want to keep this country out of the war and we do not propose to have the British diplomacy hurry a suppliant Washington administration to that terrible consequence. This "group", which has been so much attacked and so much under suspicion, will stand behind this government in case of war, no matter though our reason and our absolute knowledge tells us that it is an unjust war.

Our history in this country is a sufficient guaranty of our loyalty, which will withstand every test, even that—which God forbid!—of an unjust war with Germany; but at the present stage of the proceedings, in the face of a well organized and wide-spread attempt to inflame popular passion, we regard it as our patriotic duty to raise our voices in protest against the present course of the administration, which leads directly to the precipice.

"Our country right or wrong!
If right, to be kept right!
If wrong, to be set right."

Sincerely,

HENRY VOLLMER,
Davenport, Ia.

Großbritanniens jährlicher Verbrauch an Farbstoffen übersteigt $10,000,000. Vor dem Kriege deckte Deutschland 80 Prozent dieses Bedarfs.

Kriegsbild aus Deutschland

Von Wilhelm Kuhnert.

Berlin, den 16. Mai 1915.

Große Begebenheiten von Macht, Tod und Verderben werfen in ruhige Gelehrten-Leben oft so plötzlich ein Streiflicht, daß man sie kaum glaubt. Ich hoffe, daß mein lieber Jugend-Freund Oberst Roosevelt gewiß gegenüber Ihnen, jetzt in viele Hinsicht bei Ihnen, solche Ereignisse und sie Ihnen berichtet haben, schwerwiegende Gründe von Erörterung und Mitwirkung sein mußte. Wer hat je erlebt heute, und in Italien in Deutschland, nicht hier, und in Englischen in den Italienischen Kolonien entschlossen Deutschen gewaltige Ereignisse, was die Lage der Kinder Mitt bei Kriegsbeginn bei, sei in jeder angebrachter Hinsicht der politischen Begleiterscheinungen heute Krieg. Nicht in die Amerikaner, sondern die von ihren Zeitungen mit brutaler Tendenz [illegible]. Ihr Zorn wird sich gewiß nur gegen den richten, welcher den Schuß abfeuerte.

Daß man sich in Deutschland sehr schweren Herzens zu dieser Maßregel entschließen hat, ergibt sich schon aus der Tatsache, daß man die Lusitania monatelang gewähren ließ. Dieses Schiff brachte ungeheure Mengen von Kriegsmunition schon seit Anfang Dezember nach England. Dabei fuhr dieser bewaffnete britische Hilfskreuzer stets als Passagierschiff. Oben beförderte er über tausend Reisende, während der ganze Unterraum mit Sprengstoffen gefüllt war. Ein Passagierschiff darf nicht einmal Baumwolle befrachten wegen der Selbstentzündungsgefahr, obschon diese Gefahr bei modernen Schiffen ganz bedeutungslos geworden ist. Laut Abschnitt 8 des Passenger Act vom 2. August 1882 verbieten die Ver. Staaten den Transport von Kriegsmaterial auf Passagierschiffen. Aber die New Yorker Hafenbehörde hat dieses Gesetz beständig übertreten. Das Schiff hatte seit Dezember stets die Hölle an Bord, trotzdem durfte es rücksichtslos Passagiere in durchaus gesetzwidriger Weise befördern. Nach dem amtlichen Bericht des deutschen Unterseebootführers wurde nur ein Torpedo abgefeuert, welcher die Lusitania im Vorderschiff, Gegend der Kommandobrücke, traf. Dieser Torpedo hätte das Schiff bei geschlossenen Schotten nicht nach 20 Minuten versenken können. Aber die Munitionsladung wurde getroffen und dann explodierte diese Hölle! Die Lusitania hätte sich wahrscheinlich noch stundenlang über Wasser halten können, jedenfalls noch lange genug, um sämtliche Passagiere zu retten, wenn das amerikanische Gesetz von den Hafenbehörden beobachtet worden wäre, wenn das Schiff keine Sprengstoffe geladen hätte.

5400 Kisten Hölle waren an Bord. Angenommen, der ganze Inhalt einer einzigen Kiste dieser Ladung hätte auch nur einen einzigen deutschen Soldaten getötet oder schwer verletzt, so hätte diese Ladung 5400 deutsche Opfer gefordert. Deutschland ist in seinen Warnungen so weit gegangen, daß der Erfolg seines Unternehmens dadurch fast hoffnungslos wurde. Jeder Seemann wußte, daß ein Unterseeboot an jener Stelle der irischen Küste schon seit mehreren Tagen tätig war, an welcher die Lusitania zu einer bestimmten Stunde getroffen werden mußte, wenn sie ihren Kurs nicht änderte. Weshalb tat sie das nicht? Weshalb fuhr sie nicht die nördliche Route um Irland? Weshalb segelte sie nicht 20 oder 30 Meilen südlicher als gewöhnlich, wenn sie doch nun einmal südlich fahren wollte? So lief sie trotz aller Warnungen direkt vor den Rachen des Seeungeheuers. Weshalb schickte ihr die britische Regierung nicht eines ihrer 250 Torpedoboote zur Sicherung? Trotz aller Warnungen geschah absolut nichts, um das Leben der Passagiere zu schützen. Und das wäre doch so außerordentlich leicht gewesen.

Deutschland kämpft um seine Existenz, um Leben oder Tod. Der erste Seelord der Briten, Herr Fisher, hatte die Losung ausgegeben:

„Mäßigung in der Art der Kriegsführung ist Dummheit. Schlag zuerst zu, triff hart und triff, wo du kannst!" Nach dieser Regel sind die Briten stets verfahren. Verweilen in neutralen Gewässern hat die deutschen Schiffe nie geschützt. Siehe Kaiser Wilhelm der Große, siehe Dresden u. s. w. England benutzt seine vorteilhafte geographische Lage, um ein Volk von 68 Millionen durch Sperrung der Zufuhren dem Hungertode zu überliefern. Dagegen wehrt sich Deutschland durch den Unterseeboot-Krieg. Im selben Augenblicke, in welchem England jene Sperre aufhebt, wird auch das deutsche U-Boot aus britischen Gewässern verschwinden.

So schrecklich die Folgen jener Katastrophe auch sind, sie sind gering im Vergleiche mit Maßregeln, welche Briten und auch Amerikaner in ihren Kriegen gegen Nichtkämpfer angewendet haben. Ein Denkmal in Transvaal meldet uns, daß Kitchener an [illegible] 20.000 Bauernhäuser und Kirchen im Burenkriege angezündet hat. In Burgerfrieg hatte Wood bei Manila Gleichen, bei [illegible] Gemetzelt mit Blut [illegible], [illegible] Hunderte von Gefangenen [illegible] hatten. Ich bin [illegible] Wilhelm Wood [illegible] an Kriegsmittel [illegible]. Für jeden [illegible] Gewehr [illegible] Kriegsmittel [illegible] 1000 Dollar Gänge in Georgia und Carolina. Das Gewehr nannte sich [illegible] Kriegsmittel. Bei Gefecht und auch die „[illegible]" Weiber und Kinder [illegible] Gefangenen [illegible] Gefangenen [illegible] Gefangenen