

Mysterious Disappearance of Black Plans for Naval Warfare on Germany Remains Unsolved to the Present Day

The war plan that was lost—"Problem solution, Black," dealing with naval tactics against Germany in Atlantic waters—Did Germans steal our secrets or were they good guessers?—Probable solution of mystery.

By JOSEPHUS DANIELS
Former Secretary of the Navy—1913 to 1921.

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What became of the lost Black plan is still a mystery. Made out by the general board, guarded with the greatest care, handled by the proper authorities, it was carried into effect and then it vanished utterly.

The discovery that one of our secret naval plans was missing came when it was too late to have any effect upon the situation. But that did not prevent the newspapers making the most of the sensation, especially such as, for political reasons, had it in mind for the navy department.

They would never have heard it was missing, nor would we have known it was missing, had we not looked it up for the purpose of proving to certain clamorous critics that we had not gone to war without plans. Long ago it had served its purpose as a plan, and, as we supposed, had been filed away with thousands of other documents for purposes of record. But there we were wrong. The plan had not been filed away, nor could any trace of it be found. To this day it has not been found.

And it was an important plan—at the time it was used. It was a plan of vital importance.

Navy's "Black Plan."

The navy for many years has had a set of plans to cover possible situations which might develop in the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Caribbean sea or other open waters. These plans originated with the general board, of which Admiral Dewey was chairman until his death in January, 1917, and were kept up to date by frequent revision.

The plan dealing with possible hostilities in the Atlantic was known as the "Black plan." In February, 1917, in its revised and up-to-the-minute form, it dealt, of course, with the probability of war with Germany.

On February 4, the day after

at present except that war with Germany is declared.

"Special Situation—The allies do not desire our battleship force at present."

"Required—Naval estimate of the situation."

"First, as to the grand strategy demanded by the situation."

"Second, as to disposition of battleship force."

"Third, as to the method of assisting in maintaining communications with Europe, including scheme for co-operation with allies."

"Fourth, as to the methods of driving submarines from the sea."

"Assume—Mobilization of all naval vessels and possibility of mobilizing merchant vessels as required."

"JOSEPHUS DANIELS."

The board made a careful study of the whole situation, and a week later made a report covering all the matters set forth and sent it to me, with the following note of transmittal:

Problem Is Solved.

"General Board, Navy Department, Washington, Feb. 17, 1917. To Secretary of the Navy: Subject, 'Solution of Problem,' Black."

"Reference (a) Navy Department Confidential Letter of February 10, 1917."

"1. In accordance with reference (a) the general board submits herewith problem and solution based upon the general and special situations described in the Navy department's instructions."

"CHARLES J. BADGER."

Such care was taken to keep this document from anyone except the secretary and the office of naval operations that even the general board retained no duplicate of it. After being submitted to me for approval, it was turned over to the chief of naval operations; all plans that had been approved were in their custody. They were familiar with their provisions and drafted the

necessary orders for carrying them into effect. But plans were so carefully safeguarded that only those directly concerned were allowed to see them.

And yet, in spite of all our precautions, the document containing the general board's "Solution of Problem, Black" was gone!

The most thorough search failed to find any trace of it.

How long had it been missing? No one could answer.

Not Stolen by German Spy.

The newspapers hinted that it had been stolen by some German spy. Such was the obvious suspicion. The suggestion that it might have been stolen by some German spy was given no credence in the department. Nothing is so carefully guarded as war plans, and so far as we know the Germans never got hold of any of ours, although early in the war a number of things occurred which made us wonder how much they did know. For example:

Movements of vessels and orders relating thereto were known only to the few officials in the navy department who issued the orders and to the men on the vessels. Great pains were taken to prevent the Germans from learning about the first destroyers sent over. They sailed under sealed orders, and until he was fifty miles at sea and broke the seal, not even the commander of the flotilla knew its destination.

Yet the day before the division arrived, German submarines, for the first time in months, sowed mines all across the entrance to Queenstown, and the German papers printed the news of our destroyers' arrival before it was published in England or America. The latter is more easily accounted for, as it was several days before we announced that they had reached a British port, but the mine laid led many to believe that the enemy had, in some way, learned they were coming.

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cabled that it was "practically certain that the enemy knew positions of the first rendezvous and accordingly sent a submarine to intercept before junction with destroyers."

Though Sims afterward discounted the idea that the convoys were attacked, he was excited enough about it at the time, for he sent me two cablegrams about it in three days.

Germs "Doped It Out."

But whatever the Germans might have learned about our ship movements on the other side, I am confident that they did not get any information from this side of the Atlantic. The navy had control of all radio, every cable message was scanned and even the destroyer and transport captains did not know their destination until they were well out at sea. My own opinion is that the Germans, who knew of General Pershing's arrival in England, which occurred the day after our first convoys sailed, inferred that troops were being dispatched and merely "doped out" the probable route. The mine laying at Queenstown was, as likely as not, simply a coincidence.

And so I am satisfied in my own mind that the missing plan, the "Problem Solution, Black," will yet be found carefully—too carefully—hidden away in the Navy department. I have never believed it was stolen, or that it in any way fell into German hands.

The explanation of its vanishing, I think, will be found to be quite simple, and will show that it was due to an over anxiety to preserve the plan in absolute secrecy.

As I have said, but one copy was made of it. It was probably given into the care of Capt. Volney Chase, chief assistant to Admiral Benson, and a man to whom matters of the utmost importance were frequently committed. Captain Chase was an exceedingly able and unsparingly devoted officer. It is not unlikely that he put the "Black plan" problem away in some secret drawer or cabinet, confiding in no one as to its whereabouts.

Then, in June, 1917, worn out with

almost ceaseless work, he died—died suddenly. So far as we know, the "Black plan" problem was never seen by any one after the death of Captain Chase. He probably took the secret of its hiding place with him. Certainly, no enemy learned it as long as it was locked in his brain.

One of our latest destroyers is named after him—the "Chase." He merited the honor, and I was glad to pay that tribute to his memory.

(Another article by former Secretary Daniels will be printed tomorrow.)

Omaha Grocery Firm Sued On \$9,200 Sugar Contract

Suit for \$9,200 against the Williams-Murphy Grocery company of Omaha was filed in federal court yesterday by the Thomas J. Henderson company of New Orleans.

Damages of that amount are sought on an alleged breach of contract for sugar, the petition states. The Omaha firm refused acceptance of the shipments after the market had fallen, the petition states.

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Solid Oak Porch Swings . . . \$3.50	Solid Oak Settees to match, Sale price, each . . . \$7.00
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For Club and Street wear. Smart styles in the wanted shades and smart combinations. Grouped special—

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Hosiery Specials In Our Monday's Sale

Women's Fiber and Thread Silk Hose—Hemmed or rib top, regular and extra sizes, with mock seam back, splendid wearing qualities. Sold regularly at \$1.98. Sale price . . . \$1.50

Women's Mercerized Lisle and Cotton Hose—75c values. 39¢

Boys' and Girls' Cotton Hose—Medium weight, black, white and cordovan. Sale price . . . 19¢

Children's Roll Top Socks—All sizes, pair . . . 35¢

Three pairs for . . . \$1.00

Corset News of Interest

Lady Ruth Front Lace Corset, made by R. & G. C. G., pink brocade, medium bust, wide rubber in back, 2 pairs hose supporters, also has shield in front. Extra special value, at—

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Soft Muslin or Batiste Chemise and Tailored Gowns—trimmed with lace and embroidery. At 95¢

Batiste Gowns and Chemise pink or white, trimmed with fine laces and embroidery, built-up shoulders, ribbon shoulder straps. At 1.85

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\$29.50

