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NORWAY'S RELATIONS WITH BELLIGERENT POWERS

IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Part II opens with an account of the foundations of Norwegian foreign policy, as it developed during the nine years between the dissolution of the union with Sweden and the outbreak of the First World War; a period marked by concentration on internal tasks and issues and a consequent lack of concern for international affairs. Also described is the strategic situation of Norway as the constellations of the war were formed at the beginning of August 1914, as well as the immediate steps taken by the Government to avoid involvement.

Abstract

The thesis represents an attempt to relate and analyse the relations between neutral Norway and the major belligerent powers in the war of 1914 - 1918. Part I consists of an introductory survey of the position of neutrality as a legal status at the outbreak of war, illustrating the illusoriness of trying to regulate the position of neutrality without some measure of foresight into the nature of the coming conflict.

The main body of the thesis is chronologically arranged and divided into two parts - Part II and Part III - roughly corresponding to the first and second halves of the war period. The belligerent measures that directly affected Norway, and most other neutral states as well, were the attempts of the two parties to interrupt commercial intercourse with the enemy. On the part of the Central Powers this aim was chiefly pursued through the use of mines and submarines. The Entente, by their ability to control overseas supplies to the neutral nations around the North Sea, sought to obtain the desired effect through agreements with the neutrals, achieved by economic pressure. The development of the measures referred to was rather slow and hesitant, and their effect on the political relations between over overseas supplies they sought to convince or press the

neutrals to co-operate with their methods of economic warfare, the belligerents and Norway did not attain considerable dimensions until after the middle of 1916.

Part II opens with an account of the foundations of Norwegian foreign policy, as it developed during the nine years between the dissolution of the union with Sweden and the outbreak of the First World War; a period marked by concentration on internal tasks and issues and a consequent lack of concern for international affairs. Also described is the strategic situation of Norway as the constellations of the war were formed at the beginning of August 1914, as well as the immediate steps taken by the Government to avoid involvement.

The economic warfare of the belligerents began on a modest scale through German mine-laying and Allied attempts to control neutral trade with Germany through the visit and search of merchant ships. The resulting inconveniences to neutral trade led the Scandinavian countries to attempt a closer co-operation in defence of their common interests.

In February 1915 the Germans attempted to institute a blockade of the British Isles by submarines. It was met with protests from the neutral Governments and its extent was soon reduced both for this reason and because the submarines were insufficient for a blockade of the intended dimensions.

The German declaration however provided a point of departure for more extensive Allied measures to prevent trade with the enemy. By using their command of the seas and their control over overseas supplies they sought to convince or press the

neutrals to co-operate with their methods of economic warfare. Norway, highly vulnerable to pressure both against her imports and her shipping, was thus gradually brought to acquiesce and in particular to allow agreements to be signed between the British Government and private Norwegian business interests.

So far the Entente's economic pressure on Norway was aimed mostly at preventing re-export to Germany of goods received from overseas. Late in 1915, however, the first attempts were made to obtain control of the trade in the country's own products. Germany had by then already shown an increasing interest in the products of the Norwegian fisheries. These functioned mainly on supplies and tackle received from foreign sources under the control of the Entente, and in the summer of 1916 the British by using this control as well as the promise of a purchasing agreement got the Norwegians to consent to a severe reduction in fish exports to Germany.

At about the same time the British Government also obtained Norway's agreement not to export her valuable copper and pyrites except in exchange for equivalent amounts of refined copper, most of which could only be obtained via Britain.

Both these agreements had been arranged with the connivance of the Norwegian Government, and resulted in radical cuts in German imports of goods that were vital to the German war effort. The political conflicts that ensued from the conflicting demands of the belligerent parties form the subject of the more detailed account in Part III of the thesis, covering the period 1916 - 1918.

In the autumn of 1916 Norway's relations with Germany, already severely tested by the reduction in Norwegian exports, were brought to a critical point as a result of the activities of German submarines in the Arctic Sea. Replying to public outcries against the sinking of several Norwegian merchant ships, the Norwegian Government by decree banned submarines from territorial waters, and a German protest was followed by strained relations through the autumn and winter months. At the same time exports of fish and pyrites from Norway to Germany led the British Government to suspect that a deal had been arranged in violation of Norway's obligations to Britain. Failing a satisfactory explanation the British Government stopped coal exports to Norway, and bitter exchanges ensued.

The crisis between Norway and the two main belligerents was only solved in February 1917. With Germany an understanding was reached on the basis of a temporary arrangement of trade relations together with certain changes in the submarine decree. The situation concerning the Anglo-Norwegian dispute had in the meantime been altered by the start of the unrestricted submarine campaign. The coal embargo was lifted after the Norwegian Government had agreed to suspend further pyrites deliveries to Germany.

The traffic across the North Sea was now resumed, but with enormous casualties due to the German submarines. In order to prevent continued losses the Norwegian shipowners with the knowledge of the Norwegian Government arranged with the British

for a transfer of tonnage, mostly on charter basis, to British and Allied service.

The situation in the wake of the submarine campaign, together with other incidents during the spring and early summer of 1917, led to another critical period in German - Norwegian relations. At times the British Government thought a breach was imminent, and appealed for American promises of co-operation if necessary to assist Norway. The crisis, however, passed soon after a coincidental exchange of German envoys at Kristiania.

To Norway, the main significance of America's entry into the war was the possibility that the blockade might be strengthened, so as to endanger Norwegian imports from the United States. The Norwegian Government sent a Mission of prominent negotiators to Washington, but negotiations were complicated on the Allied side by American suspicions that the British intended to press Norway beyond limits considered by Washington as safe, and on the Norwegian side by persistent German pressure against accepting terms that meant too severe restrictions on German imports from Norway. Only after a new Norwegian declaration of neutrality had been issued could a precarious balance be reached, and the trade agreement with the United States was then signed in April of 1918.

The final crisis for Norwegian neutrality came in August 1918, when after long preparations the Allied navies were nearing completion of a mine barrage between Shetland and the

Norwegian coast. To prevent the German submarines from bypassing the barrage the British Government demanded the mining of adjoining Norwegian sea territory, either by the Norwegian or the Allied navies. After circumspect diplomatic preparation the Norwegian Government at the end of September announced that the minefield would be laid by Norwegian naval vessels. Before the mine barrage could be tested, however, the German submarine war was called off.

The conclusion from the study of Norway's foreign relations during the war indicates two main factors to explain why Norway could remain neutral in the First World War but not in the Second. There is first the changing concept of neutrality itself, from the nineteenth century liberal idea of neutrality where the state could uphold the fiction of neutrality while the country was working almost exclusively for the benefit of one belligerent party. With the subsequent involvement of the state with economic and trade matters the earlier distinction between private affairs and affairs of state can no longer be maintained.

Secondly and more fundamentally there is Norway's exposed strategic position. During the First World War both the British Blockade and the German submarine war indicated the importance of the passage between Norway and the British Isles for German communication with the outside world. Germany would need to keep this passage open whereas Britain would seek to prevent this. For both purposes the Norwegian coast would

provide a natural support, and the reason why Norway could remain neutral in the First World War was largely that neither of the two parties was prepared to seize and exploit the opportunities offered by such a strategy.

NORWAY'S RELATIONS

HIGH-TECHNOLOGY POWER IN

THE FIRST WORLD WAR



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of Philosophy in the University of Oxford.

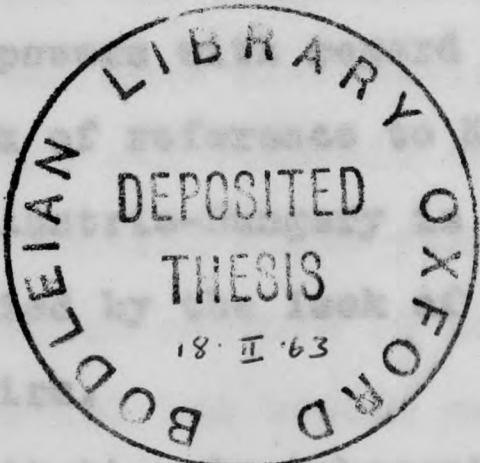
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THESIS

The present work sets out to give an account of the way in which Norway, as a neutral State, sought to promote her national interest in her relations with the major belligerent powers on the one side Great Britain and, for the last year and a half, the United States of America, and of the actions and reactions of these powers towards Norway's policy. The almost complete lack of reference to Norway's relations with France, Russia and Italy, especially the latter, and her own efforts to be justified by her own actions, are a serious defect with Norwegian affairs.



A further limitation is inherent in the mainly political emphasis of the study: although Norway's foreign relations were dominated by these issues, only the political implications of these issues will be considered. It is assumed that neutrality is a legal concept.

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the laws of neutrality before the war, and an occasional discussion of legal matters later on, although their infrequency may be taken as an indication of the diminishing relevance of legal disputes as the conflict developed. The discussion of international Norwegian politics has been kept to a minimum, partly for obvious reasons, partly because the comfortable majority enjoyed by Knudsen's Government limited the importance of the legal aspects of the war.

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PREFACE

The present work sets out to give an account of the way in which Norway, as a neutral State, sought to promote the national interest in her relations with the major belligerent powers in the First World War - namely on one side Germany, on the other side Great Britain and, for the last year and a half, the United States of America, - and of the actions and reactions of these powers with regard to Norway's policy. The almost complete lack of reference to Norway's relations with France, Russia and Austria-Hungary is deliberate, and has shown itself to be justified by the lack of concern of these powers with Norwegian affairs.

A further limitation is inherent in the mainly political emphasis of the study: although Norway's foreign relations were dominated by questions of economics and trade, only the political implications of these issues will be considered. As neutrality is a legal status, there is an opening chapter on the laws of neutrality before the war, and an occasional discussion of legal matters later on, although their infrequency may be taken as an indication of the diminishing relevance of legal disputes as the conflict developed. Reference to internal Norwegian politics has been kept to a minimum, partly for obvious reasons, partly because the comfortable majority enjoyed by Knudsen's Government limited the importance of

whatever opposition there was.

What mainly encouraged the Author to undertake this study, in 1959, was that over thirty years had passed since the appearance of the only previous work of importance on the subject, namely Professor Wilhelm Keilhau's volume on Norge og Verdenskrigen in the Carnegie Endowment series on The Economic and Social History of the World War. Although he carried out the task in a way which the present Author has come increasingly to admire as his own work has progressed, Keilhau's pioneering work was both different and more difficult; different insofar as his main focus of interest was economic and social, and more difficult because he was writing eight years after the end of the war, with only Norwegian sources at his disposal. Since then, a wealth of new material has become accessible, particularly the documents on German and American policies.

One main fear, both of the Author himself and of those whose advice he sought before embarking on the project, was the drawback which the unavailability of official British sources would constitute. Much of this has been dispelled by the timely release of official British histories of the blockade, and by the permission obtained to consult the private papers of Asquith and Lord Milner. Although the release of the Foreign Office documents, a few years from now, will of course contribute a mass of new detail on the subject, the Author still ventures to think that his material has been sufficient to draw the broad outlines of Anglo-Norwegian relations in the war.

Altogether, therefore, the mass of important evidence which has been made available to date has satisfied the Author that the time was appropriate, not so much for a revision of earlier writings on the subject as for a new and more comprehensive study.

- Abt. - Abteilung.
- Adh. - Adhäsion (in AI Archives, denoting supplementary dossiers).
- Bd. - Band.
- DEA - Deutsches Neutralarchiv.
- Geh. - Geheim.
- GHQ - Grosses Hauptquartier.
- F.O. - Foreign Office.
- H.C. Deb. 5s - Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series (preceded by number of volume).
- H.L. Deb. 5s - Ibid., House of Lords.
- Komm. Adm. - Kommanderende Admiral (Commander-in-Chief, Royal Norwegian Navy).
- NAL - Norwegian America Line.
- NHST - Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende (Norwegian Journal of Commerce and Shipping).
- St. forh. - Stovningsforhandlinger (Proceedings of the Norwegian Parliament).
- UD - Utenriksdepartementet (Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs).
- WK - "Weltkrieg" files in the documents of the Inowärtiges Amt.
- WTB - War Trade Board.

ContentsAbbreviations

PART I NEUTRALITY

PART II 1914 - 1918: Auswärtiges Amt.

Abt. - Abteilung.

1. Europe's Peaceful
Adh. - Adhibitum (in AA Archives, denoting supplementary dossiers).
"No Foreign Norway between Britain and Germany"

Bd. - Band.
"The Agr. On the Internal Stage"

DZA - Deutsches Zentralarchiv.

2. Experiments in Economic
Geh. - Geheim.

GHQ - Grosses Hauptquartier.
"Transit Trade and Contraband The Norwegian Scandinavian Co-operation"

F.O. - Foreign Office.

3. The First Submarine
H.C. Deb. 5s - Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series (preceded by number of volume).

4. The British Blockade
H.L. Deb. 5s - of Ibid., House of Lords.

Komm. Adm. - and Kommanderende Admiral (Commander-in-Chief, Retiring by Royal Norwegian Navy).

5. The Branch Agreements
NAL - Norwegian America Line.
"Co-ordinat-

6. The Norwegian - Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende (Norwegian Journal of Commerce and Shipping).
"Blockade Purchases, and Negotiations"

7. Copper and Pyrites
St. forh. - Stortingsforhandlinger (Proceedings of the Norwegian Parliament).
"The Fish-

8. Copper and Pyrites
UD - Utenriksdepartementet (Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs).
"The Copper Agr. Quarrel over Pyrites"

9. Copper and Pyrites
WK - "Weltkrieg" files in the documents of the Auswärtiges Amt.

PART III 1916 - 1918: NEUTRALITY IN MEXICO

WTB - War Trade Board.

The Turning Point: The Business of Diplomacy

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which were then dissolved by the progress of events in subsequent wars.

I. NEUTRALITY

The nineteenth century saw the decisive breakthrough for a coherent legal doctrine of neutrality in our time. According to international law in our time, neutrality characterizes the status of third States which, at the outbreak of war, adopt a position of impartiality as between the belligerents. Thus, defined, neutrality is a function of war, and its adoption by a State is a voluntary political action (occasional neutrality), except when imposed by terms of a prior treaty (permanent or conventional neutrality). As a legal status, neutrality entails certain duties and rights for the neutral State, with correlative rights and duties for belligerent States.

Behind these simple legal terms there lies a complex political reality which, at any given time, can hardly be understood unless viewed as the outcome of a long historical process¹. From its slow beginnings in the Middle Ages and up through the eighteenth century, the development of the status of neutrality was marked by advances alternating with setbacks, on a fluctuating course largely governed by the opportunistic policies of the great belligerent powers. In long periods of peace writers on international law constructed impressive theoretical edifices,

1. For the history of neutrality, cf. Neutrality, its History, Economics and Law, I - IV (New York, 1935 - 1936).

1. de Visschers, Essai de l'histoire du droit international public (3rd. ed., Paris, 1903), p. 185.

which were then demolished by the pressure of events in succeeding wars.

The nineteenth century saw the decisive breakthrough for a coherent legal doctrine of neutrality. For a hundred years following the Napoleonic Wars, relative peace and political stability reigned in Europe. The power balance provided by the European Concert, together with the rise of a neutral great power, the United States, created a good climate for growth of the laws of neutrality. It was also the golden age of economic liberalism, which favoured the expansion of world trade without barriers of state interference.

The most remarkable of the milestones that marked the progress of neutrality in this period was the Declaration of Paris in 1856. It consecrated the old but never universally recognised rules for the protection of neutral trade in war-time; namely the immunity from capture of enemy cargo on neutral ships and of neutral cargo on enemy ships. The Declaration of Paris, while being a work of compromise and the product of a fortunate political conjuncture, "répondait aussi aux idées libérales de l'époque éminemment favorable à la liberté commerciale des neutres en raison de la démarcation que celle-ci comporte entre la guerre, entreprise d'Etat, et le commerce, affaire individuelle"¹. The Declaration was signed by Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia,

1. de Visscher, Theories et Réalités en Droit International Public (3rd. ed., Paris, 1960), p. 185.

Russia, Sardinia, and Turkey, and had by 1914 been adhered to by all nations except the United States and Venezuela¹.

In the decade leading up to the First World War, some notable efforts were made towards a codification of what could be considered as the generally accepted laws of neutrality. A study of these efforts, through the proceedings of the Second Hague Conference of 1907 and the London Naval Conference of 1908-1909, provides valuable insight into the progress - real and apparent - of the status of neutrality in the preceding century.

Arising partly in response to formal "vœux" of the First Hague Conference of 1899 as to problems to be taken into consideration, questions of concern to the neutrals figured extensively in the debates at the Hague in 1907. However, due to the requirement of unanimity among the forty-four nations participating, only certain issues received their solution through formal conventions - with particular reference to Convention V respecting the rights and duties of neutral Powers and persons in case of war on land, and Convention XIII concerning the rights and duties of neutral Powers in naval war.

One of the issues which received thorough consideration was the definition of contraband of war, and it was pointed out that "in the course of recent wars it has been possible to perceive

1. American opposition, as directed against the abolition of privateering, was rather theoretical since in fact no privateers were commissioned by the United States after 1856.

what serious difficulties have been caused by the lack of definite and precise rules"¹ on various aspects of the problem. The focus of interest was the radical proposal of the British delegation simply to abolish the notion of contraband. This proposal, initially endorsed by an Inter-Departmental Committee charged with preparations for the Conference as being "of great advantage both to Great Britain and in the general interests of the world at large"², was included in the instructions to the head of the British delegation, Sir Edward Fry.

However, neither the Inter-Departmental Committee nor the Foreign Office were, quite naturally, over-confident as to the ultimate chances of success of these radical proposals, and suggested therefore the alternative course of a very restrictive list of contraband articles, urging in particular the protection of Britain's imports of food supplies and raw materials for peaceful industries.

In putting before the Conference the principal British proposition, the British delegate eloquently maintained the difficulty of enforcing prohibitions on contraband in modern war, pointing out inter alia the endless lists of articles that would

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1. Ed. J.B. Scott, Reports to the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 (Oxford, 1917); hereinafter cited Scott, Reports; p. 603.
 2. G.P. Gooch and H. Temperley, British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Hereinafter cited British Documents. Vol. VIII, Arbitration, Neutrality and Security (London, 1932), p. 226.

have to be set up, and the size and speed of merchant ships which made control and search rather impossible - or at least very inconvenient to neutrals.

In the voting, twenty-six delegations were in favour of the British proposal, four abstained, while five delegations - France, Germany, Montenegro¹, Russia and the United States - voted against. The only positive result of the debate was a list of absolute contraband, set up by the sub-committee concerned and recommended to the governments for their consideration².

German opposition to the British proposal appears to have been based mainly on the view that any curtailment of belligerent interference with neutral trade, if it left intact such measures as, for example, blockade, would give disproportionate advantage to Great Britain in an eventual war with Germany³. Britain was clearly not prepared to give up the blockade institution. While the issue proper was only briefly discussed in connection with an Italian proposal to specify the requirements for an effective blockade, Great Britain's attitude emanates from the instructions

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1. Montenegro was represented by the Russian delegation at the Conference.
 2. Scott, Reports, p. 607.
 3. Cf. Auswärtiges Amt: Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, Vol. 23, I, p. 259. v. Bülow - Delegation, 14/6/1907. Cf. also Naval Delegation Siegel - Tirpitz, 21/6/1907: "Bezüglich eines etwaigen Antrags auf Abschaffung des Seebeuterechts hat sich der Herr Botschafter [v. Marshall, Chief German Delegate] ebenfalls dahin ausgesprochen, dass die Einschränkung der Blockade eine *conditio sine qua non* für unsere Zustimmung sein würde." (Op.cit., Vol. 23, II, p. 385).

to her delegates concerning the inviolability of enemy private property at sea. This principle was advocated by the United States, and supported inter alia by Norway¹. Although the American proposal excepted carriage of contraband and breach of blockade from this immunity, the British were opposed, since the application of this principle was bound to arouse conflict as to what constituted an effective blockade. Once admitted, therefore, "the principle, if carried to its logical conclusion, must entail the abolition of the right of commercial blockade"².

Another controversial point at the Conference was the right of belligerents to destroy neutral prizes, in exceptional cases. British practice had never conceded this right, and had held that, if the prize for any reason could not be brought into a port of a prize court, it should be released³. These rules had not been recognised by other States, and a Russian proposal, introduced at the Conference, would have had the effect of sanctioning the destruction of a prize, if its preservation might "prejudice the safety of the capturing vessel or the success of its operations"⁴, and if due regard were taken for the persons aboard. The Russian delegation, fully supported by the German delegation, maintained that to relinquish this right completely, as suggested by Grest

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1. Scott, Reports, p. 600.
 2. British Documents, Vol. VIII, p. 246.
 3. Cf. L. Oppenheim, ed. Lauterpacht, International Law, Vol. II, Disputes, War and Neutrality, 7th. ed., p. 863.
 4. Scott, Reports, p. 610.

Britain and the United States, would be unequally disadvantageous to nations having ports only on their home coast¹. In view of the strong division of opinions on the matter, it was not carried beyond the committee stage.

With regard to the questions of neutrality which achieved unanimous agreement and thus could be embodied in formal conventions, a passing mention should be made of a provision in the Fifth Convention, as clearly confirming the nineteenth-century view of State responsibility for acts of its nationals. Article 7 of this Convention states that a "neutral Power is not called upon to prevent the export or transport, on behalf of one or other of the belligerents, of arms, munitions of war, or, in general, of anything which can be of use to an army or a fleet". If the neutral State nevertheless chooses to do so, such measures must, by virtue of Article 9, "be impartially applied by it to both belligerents"².

Turning to the important Thirteenth Convention, concerning neutral rights and duties in naval war, a major point in debate was the problem of belligerent warships in neutral ports and waters. In the words of Louis Renault, presenting the report to the Conference:

"The problem for the neutral State is to reconcile

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1. Russia appears to have had an immediate interest in the issue, since her warships, during the Russo-Japanese War, proceeded to sink a number of neutral ships which were captured, and subsequently refused damage payments for any of the ships except when their capture was declared illegal by its Prize Court. Cf. Oppenheim, Vol. II, pp. 863-4.
 2. For the articles, with explanatory notes, cf. Scott, Reports, pp. 542-3.

its right to give asylum to foreign ships with its duty of abstaining from all participation in hostilities. This reconciliation, which is for the neutral to make in the full exercise of its sovereignty, is not always easy, as is proved by the diversity of rules and of practice." 1

On the part of the belligerent, its duty to abstain from violations of neutrality in neutral waters is absolute. The corresponding neutral duty to prevent such violation, however, has physical limits, and may therefore be said to exist "only to the degree that it can be known and discharged" 2.

With regard to the right of neutrals to exclude warships from their ports and waters, this involves on one hand the sovereignty of the neutral State, and on the other hand its duties of impartiality and abstention. The compromises that resulted established a distinction between "admission into" neutral ports and waters and "mere passage through". The idea of restricting the admission of belligerent warships is clearly accepted by Article 9 of the Convention, whereas Article 10, concerning passage through neutral waters, leaves the issue open by stating only that such passage does not affect the neutrality of the State concerned. In other words, the rule "implies at the same time

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1. Scott, Reports, p. 839.
 2. Ibid., p. 841. Cf. also p. 843: "It was suggested that we forbid making a neutral port a place for concentration or rendezvous. But it is hard to define what this would mean, and it would be almost impossible for neutral States to deal with the intention which brings a belligerent vessel into their waters."

that the belligerents do not contravene neutrality by passing and that the neutral does not fail in his duties by permitting them to pass"¹. The report on the Convention stresses as a general rule that restrictions in these respects should not be altered in war-time, "because even if the change is not dictated by partiality it balks a natural expectation. It is possible, however, that experience may show to the neutral the necessity of new measures calculated to safeguard its neutrality"².

The most ambitious project of the Second Hague Conference was the establishment of an International Court of Appeal in Prize Cases, the blueprint of which is contained in Convention XII. The plan as adopted evolved as a compromise between proposals submitted to the Conference by Great Britain and Germany. On the British side, the plan seems to have originated with Sir Edward Grey, who suggested it to the Russian envoy, Professor Martens, during one of the latter's visits to London in preparation for the Conference³. The idea met with the approval of the British Inter-Departmental Committee⁴, and was outlined accordingly in the

1. Ibid., p. 848.

2. Ibid., p. 868.

3. British Documents, Vol. VIII, p. 211.

4. Ibid., p. 223.

the Conference, with the exception of the Convention on an instructions to the British delegation. When, at the Hague, both the German and British drafts were introduced they were referred to a committee of the German delegate, Dr. Kriege, and the British technical delegate, Eyre Crowe, who worked out a common draft¹.

A crucial question, in view of the incomplete state of international prize law, was what rules of law the Court would apply in its decisions. The solution adopted - the radical character of which leaves nothing to be desired - was that "if no generally recognized rule exists, the Court shall give judgement in accordance with the general principles of justice and equity"². In the words of the Rapporteur, Louis Renault, the Court would thus be "called upon to create the law and to take into account other principles than those to which the national prize court whose judgement is appealed from was required to conform"³.

After the proceedings had come to an end, the acts of

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1. Ibid., Minutes, pp. 282-3. Cf. also Scott, Reports, p. 762.
 2. Convention XII, Art. 7.
 3. Scott, Reports, p. 769. The scope and responsibility thus conferred on the judges of this Court, made its composition important. The eight major Powers were to have a permanent judge each. The remaining seven judge-ships were to be filled by the remaining nations on a complicated, graded rotation system.

the Conference, with the exception of the Convention on an International Prize Court, were left open until 30 June 1908 for signature by the participating nations. Of the acts as relevant in our context, Convention V was signed or subsequently adhered to by all, but two nations - Great Britain and Argentina - had reservations appended to their signatures. Convention XIII received the signatures or adhesions of all the nations except Spain and Cuba, nine of them with reservations, including such powers as Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Turkey, and the United States¹.

The prerequisite of ratification by the contracting parties was of particular importance for the Hague Conventions, on account of the so-called "si omnes" clause which had been inserted. Based on the principle that "a belligerent should not be under a restraint which is not imposed upon the enemy"², this clause states: "The provisions of the present Convention do not apply except between contracting

1. The reservations made by Germany and Great Britain were mostly concerned with the facilities that might be accorded belligerent ships in neutral waters - Germany finding them too restrictive, Great Britain finding them too liberal. (Cf. Scott, Reports, p. 861, inter alia) In addition the British signature took reservation to the clause allowing prizes into neutral waters, pending a decision from the prize court. (Cf. Scott, Reports, p. 864) Both matters have obvious links to the different geographical positions of the Powers.

2. Scott, Reports, p. 219.

3. Ibid., p. 306.

Powers, and then only if all the belligerents are parties to the Convention." Since, at the outbreak of the war, Serbia, Great Britain and Montenegro had not ratified the two acts on neutrality, they remained devoid of any legal effect during the war¹.

Concerning the International Court, however, more substantial impediments soon arose. It was realised already during the Conference by the head of the British delegation, Sir Edward Fry, that "one result of the Conference has been to bring into very definite contrast the views entertained by Great Britain and by certain other Powers on many questions of International Law". He therefore expressed the "hope that by means of a naval Conference or otherwise some of these differences may be arranged before the new International Court of Prizes is called upon to act"².

Accordingly, Sir Edward Grey on 27 February 1908 in a simultaneous communication to Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Rome, Vienna, Madrid, Washington, and Tokyo, proposed the convening of a Conference in London for the autumn of that year. The purpose would be to reach

"an agreement as to what are the generally recognized principles of international law as to those matters wherein the practice of nations has varied, and of then formulating the rules which, in the absence of special treaty provisions applicable to a particular case, the Court should observe in dealing with appeals brought before it for decisions". 3

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1. Ibid., pp. 898 - 911, giving signatures, ratifications, adhesions and reservations to the Conventions as of 1 October 1915.
 2. British Documents, Vol. VIII, p. 296. Sir Edward Fry to Sir Edward Grey, 16/10/1907. With the following marginal comment by Mr. Maycock in the Foreign Office: "A most essential pre-requisite which will assuredly be strongly urged in Parliament."
 3. Ibid., p. 306.

The invitation was issued to the eight Powers as being "the principal naval Powers". When the Netherlands voiced its resentment at not being included in this exclusive circle, claiming inter alia a merchant marine as large as that of Spain, Sir Edward Grey at first gave the curious reply that the Conference was intended "rather for possible belligerents with large Navies than for neutrals with a mercantile marine"¹, but later gave in and issued an invitation².

As a useful preparatory measure, the invitation from the British Government proposed that the participants should exchange memoranda "setting out concisely what they regard as the correct rule of international law" concerning the questions on the programme of the Conference. As against this, Germany strongly suggested that these memoranda ought also to include proposals for what were considered as desirable improvements on the existing rules³. Dissident views on the purpose of the proposed memoranda were also forthcoming from France and Russia. Consequently, the memoranda submitted

1. Ibid., p. 309.

2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 318, Note. The reasons given were in particular the Netherlands' position as host country to two Peace Conferences and a possible future host to the Prize Court. Considerations of the size of merchant fleets could not be taken into account, since Norway had also expressed the hope for an invitation. The sizes of the respective merchant marines in 1914 were in gross tons: Norway, 2,504,000; Netherlands 1,497,000; Spain 899,000. (Figures from Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

3. Ibid., p. 313.

were drafted on different bases; the German document being a draft convention for a settlement of the questions under consideration, the English a survey of existing views and practices, and the others somewhere in between.

The underlying problem - in legal terms one of "de lege lata" versus "de lege ferenda" - had considerable importance from a political viewpoint. The British desire was firstly to see the participating Governments committed to definite statements of what they held to be the law¹. Secondly, the British Government, without being unduly pessimistic, envisaged some difficulties in getting Parliament's approval to the new Court and its jurisdiction, but had reasonable hope that these might be overcome if it could present the rules to be applied as being the generally accepted law, involving only minor departures from existing British practice².

The London Naval Conference adopted as its working basis an "exposé des vues" compiled by the Foreign Office with the assistance of a French legal expert. The introduction to this report contained a restatement of the English view of the aims of the Conference, explicitly worded:

1. Cf. British Documents, Vol. VIII, p. 325, Minute by C.J. B. Hurst.

2. Cf. ibid., p. 319 inter alia.

"La Déclaration proposée doit avoir pour objet d'énoncer, avec le plus de précision possible, les points sur lesquels il y a identité entre les principes suivis et même, s'il y a lieu, entre leur application pratique, ainsi que les points sur lesquels l'expérience acquise et la communauté des conditions modernes du commerce maritime, de la navigation et de la guerre navale permettent aujourd'hui d'exprimer les principes généraux du droit international, qui se sont fait jour peu à peu à travers les errements séparément suivis dans chaque pays. Il ne s'agit donc pas à cet égard pour la Conférence de statuer *d e l e g e f e r e n d a*, comme les Conférences de la Paix ..." 1

The success of the London Naval Conference in achieving agreement on a series of controversial questions was quite remarkable. Concerning contraband of war, lists were drawn up of what constituted absolute contraband, conditional contraband, and "free goods". To the "conditional list", goods could be added by unilateral declaration, while the other two lists were supposed to be definite. A major concession was made by Great Britain and the United States when they agreed to apply the rule of "continuous voyage" only to absolute contraband².

On blockade, an issue of "extreme importance to a country like Great Britain, whose absolute dependence on the possession of sea power for security makes it imperative for her to maintain intact the weapon of offence which the

1. Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers, 1909, Vol. LIV (Cd. 4554 - 5), p. 491.

2. This rule, as established during the American Civil War, applies to the case when articles of contraband, ostensibly bound for a neutral port, have an enemy port as the ultimate destination. It makes such cargo liable to seizure even on the first part of the voyage, although by strict definition only the second part may be considered as carriage of contraband.

possibility of effectually blockading an enemy's coasts places in the hands of a nation having command of the sea"¹, another concession was made by Great Britain. According to British views, the intention of a ship to proceed to a blockaded port made it liable to capture for breach of blockade, and a ship breaking out of a blockaded port might be captured at any time up to the conclusion of its voyage. The Conference, however, substantially adopted the idea of capture "in flagranti", to the effect that blockade runners could only be captured within the range of action of the blockading fleet.

The Conference recognized the right to destroy neutral prizes in exceptional circumstances, but sought to restrict this by allowing destruction only if the prize was liable to condemnation, viz. that contraband constituted more than 50 per cent of its cargo. Regarding the status of neutral convoys, Great Britain gave in to a unanimous Continental practice and accepted their immunity from capture.

However, the problem of the form to be given to the results of the Conference re-emerged. In the end, the British delegation realised that their original idea of two

1. Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers, 1909, Vol. LIV (Cd. 4554 - 5), p. 333. Sir Edward Grey's instructions to the British Delegation.

separate documents - one a declaration of the existing rules of naval war, the second a convention to embody such departures from the existing law as were agreed to at the Conference - would encounter insuperable practical difficulties. The final act was therefore presented as a Declaration of the existing prize law as generally accepted and practised, but the dilemma pervades Lord Desart's carefully worded statement that "as a body, those rules do amount practically to a statement of what is the essence of the law of nations properly applicable to the questions at issue under present-day conditions of maritime commerce and warfare" ¹.

The British Government clearly expected controversy over the Declaration, but had hardly foreseen its extent. The agitation against what was construed as a complete surrender of belligerent rights in maritime warfare was conducted by shipping interests and chambers of commerce, and supported by naval circles. Although the British delegation to the Conference had included the Admiralty's Chief of Naval Intelligence and the Naval Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, the opposition could enlist 122 admirals in retirement on its side. The most active opponent was

1. Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers, 1909, Vol. LIV (Cd. 4554 - 5), p. 410.

T. Gibson Bowles, for whom this was a second stage in his campaign, begun after the Declaration of Paris, to preserve essential British interests. His views were embodied in an article in the Nineteenth Century of May 1909, and were commented on point by point in a Foreign Office memorandum by Eyre Crowe¹.

Without entering into the details of the debate, both in public and later in Parliament, the vantage point of retrospection demonstrates the extent to which it was influenced by unimportant or irrelevant arguments. Illustrative of this is Sir Edward Grey's statement, in the debate in the House of Commons:

"What is the particular weapon which we wish to retain unimpaired, and with which we wish neutrals not to interfere in time of war? It is blockade."²

One of the few to question this view publicly was Bonar Law, who maintained that

"Every article on this subject written by seilers has declared that the blockade in modern times is not of the value which it used to be, and that, owing to the danger of submarines you cannot have a close blockade..."³

Since treaties under English constitutional law are

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1. British Documents, Vol. VIII, pp. 352-366.
 2. 27 H.C. Deb., 5s, p. 872.
 3. Ibid., p. 914.

4. 52 H.C. Deb., 2s, p. 101.

5. 10 H.L. Deb., 2s, p. 101.

ratified by Royal prerogative, the Government was of the opinion that the question of ratification of the Declaration of London did not require Parliament's assent. However, due no doubt to the sharp controversy, the double issue of the Prize Court Convention and the Declaration of London was included as Part III of a general Naval Prize Bill, and submitted to Parliament, with the assurance that ratification would not be decided on until the Bill had received parliamentary consideration¹. The Bill was passed by the House of Commons on 7 December 1911, by 172 votes to 125², but was rejected by the House of Lords five days later, by 145 to 53 votes³.

Thus, the world was to enter the Great War without a common legal framework for the distribution of rights as between neutrals and belligerents. The circumstances that consolidated the Declaration of Paris half a century earlier had passed with time, and the Declaration of London proved too ambitious.

"Née de transactions ingénieuses, parfois assez artificielles aussi, elle était largement une oeuvre législative que des circonstances favorables eussent pu consolider, mais qui devait

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1. Cf. 10 H.L. Deb., 5 s. p. 894 seq., and 19 H.C. Deb., 5 s. p. 1438. It was also contended, *inter alia*, by T.G. Bowles, that the rules of the Declaration as altering the Law of Nations, which is part of the Common Law, per se required parliamentary assent.
 2. 32 H.C. Deb., 5 s. p. 1716.
 3. 10 H.L. Deb., 5 s. p. 894.

s'écrouler sous la rapide détérioration des relations internationales." 1

The lesson from all these attempts at conventional codification seems to be

"que l'on ne peut inviter les gouvernements à préciser leurs vues sur les règles de droit international sans mettre à nu et, par conséquent, sans risquer de remettre en question, les intérêts politiques qu'elles tiennent en équilibre." 2

1. Ch. de Visscher, *op.cit.*, p. 185.
2. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

III - 1914 - 1918: SCANDINAVIAN

1. Europe's Peaceful Corner

As Foreign Policy

"Looking at external relations, it is always being said that this was indeed the most peaceful foreign policy." The words are in many ways characteristic of Norway's attitude in international affairs after the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905. Primarily, this attitude reflected a strong, traditional dislike for entanglement in Great Power politics, and had found its clearest expression in a continuous and not unqualified opposition to the growth of imperialism. In line with this attitude the aim for the newly independent state should be "to keep out of participation in coalitions and alliances that are likely to lead to belligerent adventures together with any of the European warrior States".

As interpreted by the new government, however, this aim could not be achieved by an inactive attitude of complete isolationism. In the words of Norway's first Minister for Foreign Affairs, E. Leivland, concerning the period 1905-1914: "The questions are: 1905, the 1905-1906 campaign, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 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3884, 3885, 3886, 3887, 3888, 3889, 3890, 3891, 3892

In 1902, the Norwegian Storting adopted
a resolution II: 1914 - 1916: NEUTRAL PROSPERITY

recognized by the Great Powers, and recognized

1. Europe's Peaceful Corner

"No Foreign Policy"

"Looking at external relations, it is always being said with much force: We want no foreign policy." The words are in many ways characteristic of Norway's attitude to international affairs after the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905. Primarily, this attitude reflected a strong, traditional dislike for entanglement in Great Power politics, and had found its historical expression in a continuous and not insignificant contribution to the growth of neutrality. In line with this tradition, the aim for the newly independent State should be "to keep out of participation in combinations and alliances that can drag us into belligerent adventures together with any of the European warrior States".

As interpreted by the men in government, however, this aim could not be achieved by an innocent attitude of splendid isolation. In the words of Norway's first Minister for Foreign Affairs, J. Lovland, continuing the speech from which the above quotations are taken, the task demands assiduity, requires daily vigilance ... " 1

1. Foreign Minister J. Lovland, in the debate on the country's future form of government, 28 October 1905. Stortingsforhandlinger 1905 - 1906, 7 a, pp. 45 - 46.

In 1902, the Norwegian Storting had unanimously adopted a resolution expressing the desire for a permanent neutrality recognized by the Great Powers, and requesting the Government to enter into negotiations for this purpose. Due to Swedish opposition, the resolution was not acted upon, and was left in abeyance till a more propitious moment. This moment seemed to arrive when the nation became the master of its own foreign affairs, but the specific occasion was presented by a legal problem: the question of whether the "November Treaty" of 1855, guaranteeing the territories of the United Kingdoms against Russia and signed by the Western Powers, did or did not expire with the dissolution of the union. After long negotiations, the problem was solved by a new treaty in 1907, whereby not only England and France, but also Germany and Russia, joined to guarantee the territorial integrity of Norway in return for a promise on Norway's part not to cede any of her territory. Any mention of neutrality, however, was omitted¹.

The value of such a treaty might well be, and indeed was, severely questioned. It has been characterized by one historian as a worthless scrap of paper², and the debate on its ratification by the Storting brought warnings against its providing a false feeling of security. Succeeding Governments also maintained

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1. For a thorough treatment of the whole question of the Treaty, providing valuable insight into the attitudes of the Powers concerned, cf. Omang, Norge og Stormaktene (Norway and the Great Powers) 1906-1914, Vol. I, (Oslo, 1957) in the series of publications from the Archive of the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
 2. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste (The Norwegian Foreign Service), Vol. 2, Stormfulle tider, 1913-1938 (Oslo, 1959), p. 28.

and agreed that the new rules could not be based on the view that the treaty could be a supplement but never a substitute for the nation's military defence¹. The treaty may nevertheless have had its effect as another assurance of Norway's firm intention to remain unattached to any of the two power blocs which took shape in those years - a policy from which there were few if any dissenters. In fact, a Norwegian politician described the position of the country as one where "neutrality was regarded as an unwritten part of Norway's Constitution, a State maxim independent of changing Governments and Storting, a principle which had profound roots in the Norwegian people"².

The intention to remain neutral found renewed expression in the identical declarations of neutrality by the three Scandinavian States on 25 October 1912, on the occasion of the war in the Balkans³. This moment was also found suitable for the formulation of more detailed neutrality rules, on the basis of the Hague Convention of 1907. Sweden and Denmark therefore started negotiations for this purpose, and Norway was later invited to join⁴. As far as Norway was concerned, the new neutrality rules were issued under Royal Decree on 18 December 1912. In an accompanying joint declaration, the three Governments stressed the importance of a common policy in such matters,

1. Ibid., p. 39.

2. St.ferh. 1920, 7 a, p. 425.

3. UD, P 2 L 2/12.

4. According to a later statement by Count Ahlefeldt from the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the conservative Swedish Government was opposed to the participation of Norway, and the invitation could only be extended after the liberal Government's accession to power in Sweden. Ibid., Hagerup - Irgens,

9/1/1913.

and agreed that the new rules would not be altered by any of them without advance consultation with the others¹.

As to the question of the country's awareness of the "vigilance" which its neutrality demanded, it was more equivocal. Norway had never been an important military power, and almost a hundred years had gone by since the last time the country had been involved in war. The consequent impression of secure remoteness from the European battlefields, in addition to the increased feeling that civilization and liberalism had carried even the great European Powers to a stage where their political conflicts could be resolved without resort to armed force, were no doubt conditioning factors for a political climate marked by a lack of concern for international affairs. However, the main basis for this "insular" attitude was internal in character. The celebration of the dissolution of the union with Sweden inaugurated an era of national enthusiasm, economic enterprise and belief in the future - under the slogan of "the new working-day" - which left little room and desire for active participation in international politics. To large segments of the public, therefore, "having no foreign policy" signified a concentration of interest around internal tasks and problems.

With regard to the specific issue of defence, the rapidly deteriorating relations within the union with Sweden, which on two occasions - in 1895 and in 1905 - contained distinct threats of war, had nevertheless provided Norway with a relatively

1. Norge: Overenskomster med Fremmede Stater, No. 10, 1912
(Official treaty publication series).

high degree of preparedness for defence. Apprehensions of a possible resuscitation of animosity on the Swedish side, moreover, played a major motivating part in the sustained defence efforts in the first years after 1905¹, notably within the liberal "Venstre" party which was then in power. Still, such rather irrational motives necessarily had a short lease of life for public opinion, and remained in the minds of those concerned with shaping defence policy only with sufficient strength to counter-balance more pacifist trends and thus to maintain a status quo in military readiness, until signs of a more real danger made their appearance.

In 1911 the mounting tension in European affairs reached its height in the Second Moroccan Crisis. At the same time, the German High Sea Fleet undertook large-scale exercises in Norwegian territorial waters. This coincidence could hardly fail to counteract dangerous illusions about Norway's safe position, remote from potential theatres of war. In the following year, the Storting adopted a naval construction programme of the relatively very high sum of twenty million kroner. Also, from this time onwards, a second alternative entered into the actual military planning: in addition to a possible attack from the East, - from Sweden or Russia, the eventuality of an enemy landing on the west or south coasts was from now on envisaged².

During the remaining two years of peace, the issue

1. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. 2, p. 34 et seq.
2. Ibid., p. 27, and Ørvik, Sikkerhetspolitikken (The Policy of Security) 1920-1939, Vol. I (Oslo, 1960), p. 58.

of defence was the object of two active and diametrically opposite currents of opinion. The growing pressure of socialist agitation against military force, both generally, and as a weapon in the hands of the governing class against the proletariat - the relevance of which seemed dramatically demonstrated by the Government's use of the Navy as a strike-breaker in 1912 -, raised demands for complete demilitarization. At the other end, an increased public recognition of the danger signals in international relations was evidenced in the proliferation of local branches of a national Defence League¹, whose propaganda campaign for more intensive defence preparations found response in both the major political parties. The "Venstre" Government of Gunnar Knudsen, which was to remain in office throughout the war, came to power in January 1913, and at once proposed increases in the defence budget. Further increases were requested in 1914, and the length of service for personnel, both in the army and especially in the navy, was extended.

On the whole, the Norwegian army at the outbreak of the war had a sufficient size to meet minimum requirements of neutral defence, and the soldiers were satisfactorily trained. The navy also had adequate standards of training,

1. Cf. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. II, pp. 31 and 34; and Bergsgård, Frå 17 mai til 9 april (Oslo, 1958), p. 330.

but was still lacking in large or medium size vessels required for patrol duty on the coasts of West and North Norway¹.

A much darker picture was presented with regard to the country's readiness for crisis in the matter of food and fuel supplies. In spite of Norway's traditional, complete dependence on imports for survival, painfully demonstrated by the famine years of the Napoleonic Wars when the English fleet cut the lifeline between Denmark and Norway, the danger was hardly realized, and nothing was done about it. This may partly be explained by a conviction, generally held at that time, that a blockade of the nation's long coastline was impracticable in the era of big and fast merchant steamers. As far as coal was concerned, the only appreciable stores were those of the navy, which held sufficient for three months, and the Norwegian State Railways, which had enough to keep the trains running for about a year².

1. The two large vessels ordered from British shipyards, under the fleet programme of 1912, had not been delivered by the outbreak of the war, and, when built, were immediately requisitioned by the British Navy. Cf. Ørvik, op.cit., pp. 59-61.

2. For a more comprehensive review of Norway's economic preparedness, cf. Keilhau, W. Norge og Verdenskrigen (Oslo, 1927, in "Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Economic and Social History of the World War, Scandinavian Series"), pp. 4-7.

Norway between Britain and Germany

On the last Sunday of June 1914 some shots were fired in Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia. A month later, on 28 July, Austria-Hungary delivered to Serbia the first in what was to become a long series of declarations of war. On 30 July, general mobilization was undertaken by Russia; the next day, Austria-Hungary followed suit. On 1 August the French and German armies were mobilized, and Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, German armies entered Belgian territory on their way to France; in the evening of 4 August, England entered the conflict with a declaration of war against Germany. The chain reaction in the wake of Gavrilo Princip's pistol shot had developed into a large-scale European war.

In Norway, Prime Minister Gunnar Knudsen cut short a trip on his yacht on receiving the news of the crisis which was developing, and returned to Kristiania on the day of the first declaration of war. The atmosphere in the Norwegian capital was still quiet, and on 29 July business was going on at its usual summer pace on the Kristiania exchange. Two days later, however, panic was spreading, and a run on the banks was on its way. On 1 August, precautionary action

on the official level was initiated. The Government issued, simultaneously with the Swedish and Danish Governments, a public declaration of its intention to remain neutral on the occasion of the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia; coastal fortifications were manned; and the navy received secret orders to be on the alert¹.

The Prime Minister left Kristiania that afternoon for his country home near Skien, but was kept informed over the telephone by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, N. C. Ihlen, as the crisis during the night developed towards a major European conflict. A Council of State was then called by the Foreign Minister, and convened in the morning at the Royal Castle. At the meeting, decisions were taken for the full mobilization of the navy, and reinforcements were called up for the coastal defences. The President of the Storting was requested to call an extraordinary parliamentary session as soon as possible².

Notwithstanding Norway's somewhat peripheral geographic position and minor role on the European stage, her

1. UD, P 2 L 1a/14.

2. More detailed accounts of events in Norway in those days may be found in Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen; and Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol 2; and Nissen, Gunnar Knudsen (Oslo, 1956).

attitude in the crisis was of a certain importance to the Great Powers. Given that the country's will and intention to stay neutral could be regarded as clearly established, the question of chief concern was whether Norway would be allowed to stay clear of the conflict. The reply was by no means obvious, but was largely dependent on whether Great Britain became a belligerent or stayed neutral. The military correspondent of Aftenposten, an officer in the General Staff, discussed the question in an article which appeared on 2 August, and emphasized that if Britain came in Norway would have a war "at the front door" for which a "secure lock" would then be needed, since "both England and Germany would in a maritime war be greatly interested in possessing a good and safe port on our coast". A German or an English attempt to secure naval bases on the Norwegian coast were the two serious possibilities as envisaged by strategic planning in Norway, - with the latter apparently regarded as the more likely one¹.

1. Cf. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. 2, p. 134. The prominence of the "eastern" menace in military plans, as shown by Ørvik (op.cit., pp. 37 and 58) is felt by the Author to be an example of military anachronism, and as such largely discounted by those concerned with executing the plans in 1914. An indication to this effect is the orders issued on 2, 3 and 5 August by the General Staff, which only concerned coastal defences around Kristiania, Kristiansand, Bergen, and Trondheim. (Cf. UD, P 2 L lb/14, with reports from the General Staff on the dates given.) Cf. also the article in Aftenposten of 2 August by their military correspondent: "On our Russian borders hostilities are unthinkable for the time being."

As far as can now be seen, Germany's war plans and in particular her naval strategy did not involve Norway as a source of active concern. Although a German naval base on Norway's west coast in principle would seem to constitute an important lever for an attempt to break the hemmed-in position of the German navy, the adoption of the idea by German strategists is for better or worse a more recent thing¹. At the outbreak of the First World War, factors such as the superior strength of the British in the North Sea, as well as the likelihood that Norway would resist the attempt by force, would in any case seem to advise against such a venture.

Germany, therefore, seems to have had no plans or desires for a change in Norwegian policy away from neutrality, and appears to have relied on the maintenance of this

1. A report from Minister Oberlanderff to the Auswärtiges Amt on 3 August merely stated that "Norway will expectedly issue new declaration of neutrality tomorrow,

1. The champion of such ideas, Wegener, began his campaign on a very limited scale in 1915, and was finally "canonized" at the beginning of the Second World War. Cf. Wegener, Die Seestrategie des Weltkrieges, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1941), in particular pp. 15-17, 45-46, and 61. However, strongly critical of the German strategy, even Wegener did not in July 1917 advocate action in Norway in connection with his proposals concerning Denmark. (Ibid., pp. 87-95)

2. Ibid., vol. III, p. 111. Wallenberg, Skizze, p. 111. Cf. also Wegener, Die Seestrategie des Weltkrieges, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1941), pp. 15-17, 45-46, and 61. August 1914, by "bugging" the Norwegian coast as far as possible before turning westward.

together with Sweden and Denmark"¹. In the circumstances, the best that Germany could hope for was a neutrality that was benevolent towards Germany. In this respect, a certain alignment of Norway's policy with that of Sweden, as portended in a despatch from Germany's Minister to Sweden following a conversation with the Swedish Foreign Minister, may have served to reassure the German Government².

For the strategic interests of Great Britain, Norway had an important position as a riparian power on the North Sea, separated from the British Isles by only 190 miles of ocean at the narrowest point. Assuming an effective block of the English Channel, Germany's only exit to the Atlantic passes the shores of Norway, and in any event the safest route goes by way of Norwegian maritime territory³. The British Admiralty, therefore, had two eventualities

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1. Auswärtiges Amt: Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch (Charlottenburg, 1919), Vol. IV, p. 37.
 2. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 156 ".... Herr Wallenberg erklärte, sein norwegischer Kollege habe seine Zustimmung dazu ausgesprochen, dass Norwegen so lange wie möglich mit Schweden zusammengehen und dass, wenn sich ihre Wege trennen müssten, die beiden Länder unter keinen Umständen gegeneinander die Waffen kehrten". (Reichensu-AA, 2/8/1914.) As a rendition of the Swedish-Norwegian assurances of 29 July, it is somewhat tendentious.
 3. Cf. Fayle's account (Fayle, Sesborne Trade (3 vols, in Committee of Imperial Defence: History of the Great War, based on official documents), Vol. I, p. 78) of how the German liner "Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse" succeeded as the only ship in running the blockade outwards in August 1914, by "hugging" the Norwegian coast as far as possible before turning westward.

to consider: either the Germans might attempt to safeguard their Atlantic outlet by basing naval units on Norway's west coast, or the British navy could seek to extend its command over the North Sea by acquiring a base on the south coast of Norway.

With regard to the first alternative, it was no exaggeration when Lord Lansdowne in 1905 stated that it would constitute "a serious blow to British interests", and that the "utmost" must be done "to prevent such an eventuality"¹. On the other hand, the British in 1914 had ground to presume that the Germans would not try such a course unless the ratio of naval strength was more equal. At any rate, the First Fleet kept a watchful eye on this eventuality².

The second alternative seemed nearer to the realms of possibility, and had evidently been seriously considered by British naval authorities. Admiral Fisher, then First Sea Lord, had in March 1907 candidly told Minister Nansen that England might conceivably have to secure naval bases in Norway in a maritime war against Germany³. When the

1. British Documents, Vol. VIII, p. 95. Memorandum quoting telegram from Lansdowne to Sir R. Rodd, Minister to Sweden, 23/5/1905.

2. Cf. Corbett, Naval Operations (3 vols, in History of the Great War, based on official documents), Vol. I, pp. 38 and 77.

3. Cf. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. 2, p. 27.

drafts of the 1907 Integrity Treaty for Norway were being considered, Sir Charles Hardinge, Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, wrote in a minute that the naval experts preferred the omission of any reference to Norwegian neutrality in the Treaty. Sir Edward Grey then agreed that such omission was preferable, as long as the neutrality of Sweden and Denmark was not simultaneously recognized¹.

In April 1913, an exchange of letters took place between Churchill at the Admiralty and Sir Edward Grey concerning provisional naval instructions for emergency measures. Grey then made it clear, with specific reference to the issue of naval bases on the Norwegian coast, that England would respect the neutrality of other countries unless it was already violated by the enemy. He added, however, that "an attack upon an enemy's ships actually in Norwegian waters is another matter"². In fact, on 29 July 1914, the First Fleet passed Dover with course direct for the Skagerak. Its purpose was presumably to be ready for

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1. British Documents, Vol. VIII, p. 111. The linking of Norwegian neutrality to that of her neighbours would seem to refer to the possibility of Sweden or Denmark joining Germany, in which case England would have an imperative interest in getting Norway on her side. Cf. also Hardinge's memorandum, *ibid.*, p. 108, particularly the last paragraph.
 2. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, 2, p. 695. Legally, the violation of neutral territorial waters is not in principle different from, for example, the seizure of a neutral port, despite Grey's vague assumption that "German ships of war found in Norwegian waters on the outbreak of war would presumably have been put there for strategic reasons".

an engagement with the German High Sea Fleet, said to be concentrated off the coast of Norway. That such an engagement would also have been sought within Norwegian maritime territory seems probable¹.

However, it is hardly necessary to evoke principles of legality or morality in order to explain why the British navy stayed away from Norwegian waters when the conflict broke out. Firstly, the German fleet returned from Norway to its base a few days before the war. Subsequently, it seemed content to remain stationary in the Bight of Heligoland, without attempting to use the passage through Norwegian waters in order to reach the Atlantic. Secondly, in the absence of a German provocation, the political

1. Corbett, Naval Operations, Vol. I, pp. 26-27. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 77, on how naval units were sent to investigate reports of a submarine base in the Stavanger area, "with strict orders not to violate Norwegian territory unless the Germans were actually operating in territorial waters". The Germans were not indifferent to this danger. On 22 July, the Chief of Naval Staff declared to the Auswärtiges Amt: "Wenn mit der Möglichkeit einer unmittelbar bevorstehenden Kriegserklärung Englands gerechnet werden muss, so ist auch vom militärischen Standpunkt aus mit einem Überfall durch die Englische Flotte zu rechnen. Unsere Flotte darf bei ihrer grossen zahlmässigen Unterlegenheit einem solchen keinesfalls ausgesetzt werden. Sobald daher mit der Möglichkeit innerhalb von jeweilig 6 Tagen zu rechnen ist, muss die Flotte zurückgerufen werden." (Cf. Gross, Der Krieg in der Nordsee, (4 vols, in "ed. von Mantey, Der Krieg zur See, herausgegeben vom Marine-Archiv), Bd. 1 (Berlin, 1920), p. 8.)

The press bulletin may possibly have been a leakage of a report from Chevalley (*ibid.*, loc. cit., note to p. 1.) quoting Thlen as having said that "nous nous enfonçons allé- gement, la Norvège défendrait sa neutralité."

effects of a forcibly resisted violation of Norwegian neutrality would weigh heavily against such action. It could easily become a decisive factor in pushing Sweden and perhaps also Denmark into the arms of the Central Powers.

Whereas it thus seemed that Norway for the time being would be allowed to remain neutral, the main protagonists were still keeping a close watch on each other's diplomatic moves. With regard to France, Abel Chevalley, the Minister to Norway, informed the Quai d'Orsay on 31 July that "high sources" had assured him of Norway's preparedness to defend herself against possible British or German attempts to capture bases on the south or west coasts¹. He also reported on German attempts to influence public opinion in Norway, but stated as his own conviction that nothing, except a direct threat from Germany, could induce Norway to give up her neutrality in favour of the Central Powers².

Inevitably, strong rumours of German pressure on Scandinavia were already in circulation³. On 3 August, the

1. Documents Diplomatiques Français, 1871-1914, 3e Série (1911-1914) (Paris, 1936), Tome XI, p. 332.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 423 and 559.

3. No evidence has been found of such pressure. When a Paris newspaper later reported that an official Norwegian communiqué had asserted that neutrality would be upheld "malgré la pression de l'Allemagne", Ihlen replied to an enquiry from the envoy in Paris that this had no factual basis. The press bulletin may possibly have been a leakage of a report from Chevalley (*ibid.*, *loc.cit.*, note to P.S.) quoting Ihlen as having said that "Même sous menace allemande, la Norvège défendrait sa neutralité."

Foreign Office received a somewhat alarming report from their Minister to Kristiania, Mansfeldt de Cardonnel Findlay. It stated that a Cabinet Council had been held, at which the King, informing the Ministers that he expected a German ultimatum for a declaration of Norway's intentions, had recommended them to seek an alliance with England. According to the King, this was the only way to assure the country's food supply, and also to safeguard the country against a Russian aggression. Findlay on his own account added that the Government was perplexed as to what course they should adopt, from fear of Russia and Sweden¹.

Disturbing reports were also coming to the Foreign Office from the Swedish capital. On 2 August, Sir Esme Howard had transmitted a warning from the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, K.A. Wallenberg, concerning the possible consequences for Sweden's position if Britain should enter the war. On the following day, after an interview with his Norwegian colleague in Stockholm, Dr. Brunchorst, Howard reported that the possibility of a German ultimatum to

1. Information supplied to the Author by letter from the Foreign Office of 7/3/1961. As to this curious telegram, the Author would at least submit that whatever fears subsisted towards Russia (cf. supra, note on p. 30) or Sweden (with which oral assurances had been exchanged a few days earlier, cf. infra, p. 40), they could in no case be strong enough to cause a serious reconsideration of the already proclaimed neutrality of Norway. (The account of Findlay's report in Bell, The Blockade of the Central Empires 1914-1918 (Official History of the War, London, 1937, declassified 1961), p. 86, is misleading, and e.g. replaces "aggression from Russia" by "Swedish aggression".)

Sweden had also been considered in the Swedish Cabinet¹.

In the face of these various alarming reports, Grey cabled the British Legations at Brussels, the Hague, and Kristiania on 4 August, asking them to inform the respective Governments that Britain expected them to uphold their neutrality, and was prepared to join with France and Russia in "common action" to assist the three countries. An hour and a half later, however, the Ministers were asked to suspend action on the telegram, and instructions to communicate the assurance were not given until 5 August².

several foreign powers, the Norwegian and Swedish Governments have entered into an agreement to observe the following during the state of war which has thus arisen:

The two Governments have agreed to observe the following during the state of war which has thus arisen:

The Agreement with Sweden

In Norway, the last echo of the rumours of a German ultimatum sounded on 8 August, when the British, French and Russian Ministers called at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

1. Cf. Gihl, Den Svenska Utrikespolitikens Historia (History of Swedish Foreign Policy), Vol. IV, 1914-1919 (Stockholm, 1951), p. 34; Howard, Theatre of Life, Vol. II, (London, 1936), p. 222; and British Documents, Vol. XI, p. 304.

2. Cf. British Documents, Vol. XI, pp. 309 and 339. According to Vandebosch (Vandebosch, Dutch Foreign Policy since 1815 (Hague, 1959), p. 121) the cancellation was caused by Grey's fear that Parliament would oppose such far-reaching British commitments at that stage. A similar British assurance to Sweden was, however, given on 4 August, cf. Gihl, op.cit., p. 36.

C. Riste, "Den svenska utrikespolitiken augusti 1914" in Historisk Tidskrift, pp. 347-353 (Oslo, 1952).

at Victoria Terrasse. They each gave assurances that their countries would respect Norwegian neutrality as long as Norway was prepared to resist any German violations and promised their assistance in such events¹.

On the same day, the Great Powers were informed of an agreement on neutrality and non-aggression between Norway and Sweden which had just been concluded. The agreement had the form of an exchange of identical notes, with the following wording:

"On the occasion of war having broken out among several foreign Powers, the Norwegian and Swedish Governments have entered into an agreement to observe the following during the state of war which has thus arisen:

The two Governments mutually declare it their firm intention to maintain separately and to the utmost the neutrality of the respective Kingdoms as against all the belligerent Powers.

The two Governments have further agreed to exclude the possibility that the state of war in Europe in any circumstances shall lead to one Kingdom taking hostile measures against the other."²

Behind the agreement lay a process of negotiations which sheds some light on the respective countries' appreciation of the situation, and also brings in relief their strategic interdependence.

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1. UD, P 2 L 1a/14.
 2. UD, P 12 B 2/14, on which the following account is based. For a fuller treatment of the Agreement, cf. O. Riste, "Den svensk-norske noytralitetsavtalen i august 1914" in Historisk Tidsskrift, Vol. 41, Part 4, pp. 347 - 353 (Oslo, 1962).

As early as on 29 July, the day after the first declaration of war and before the two Governments had issued their neutrality declarations, the Swedish Foreign Minister made the first move towards an understanding between the two countries. Through Baron Ramel, the Swedish Minister to Kristiania, he asked Ihlen if he did not agree that the two countries should "in any circumstances arrange themselves in a way that they did not shoot at each other". With Ihlen's affirmative answer, an informal understanding had thus been achieved between the two Foreign Ministers. The understanding contained nothing new, since only negligible minorities, if any at all, in the two nations would have imagined hostilities between them¹. On the other hand, all wounds from the dissolution of the union nine years earlier were not completely healed, and any rapprochement was therefore of value.

The next step was taken on 1 August, again on the side of Sweden. Reporting by telephone, Minister Brunchorst quoted a statement from Wallenberg to the effect that Sweden would

1. The Author disagrees with Keilhau's characterisation of this understanding, where he says inter alia: "The uncertainty as to Sweden's attitude had thus been removed..." (Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 21). As the above account will try to show, the uncertainty was to be confirmed rather than dispelled.

be willing to conclude an offensive and defensive alliance, if Norway should want this. Two days later, Monday 3 August, Brunchorst returned to the question in a personal telegram to Ihlen. Wallenberg had then repeated the offer, and had remarked that Sweden "is willing to defend her neutrality to all sides, but that any collaboration with Russia is precluded. This in case Norway should consider joining England and on the further presumption of Anglo-Russian association"¹.

On the following day the head of the political department in the Foreign Ministry, J.H. Wollebæk, drafted a common declaration of neutrality which was considered in a Cabinet meeting on 5 August. The text was laid aside, but the Government had now decided to negotiate. The decision was communicated to the Swedish Minister on the same day, with the remark that negotiations would be on the basis of absolute neutrality towards all sides.

Concerning the idea of an alliance, it was not taken up by the Norwegian Government, and did not reappear. Few indications exist about its background, but some can be

1. The wording was Brunchorst's own, and does not appear to be an exact repetition of what Wallenberg had said.

seen natural, if the Swedish Government had believed that the soundings had been conducted through the Swedish Minister at Kristiania, which would have given them a more official character.

2. Cf. Gihl, op.cit., in particular p. 107, where it is stated that Wallenberg was playing the role of a mediator.

deduced from the strong probability that it was Wallenberg's personal idea¹. From his viewpoint, an alliance could serve several purposes, one of which would be to manifest Sweden's will to resist German provocations and thereby to restrain Swedish "activists" from making approaches to Germany. On the other hand, such a neutral alliance could constitute a weighty argument against British intervention in the war - an event which Wallenberg tried to prevent by almost any means². Instead of an isolated, controllable neutral which Norway alone would be, England would then be faced with a neutral alliance of significant military strength, strategically situated on the North Sea, the Skagerrak and the Baltic, and hardly very pro-Entente in its policy. An alliance could on the whole strengthen Norwegian resistance to British overtures for which Sweden may have had some fears.

Ihlen's failure to react positively to Wallenberg's suggestions may be explained by traditional Norwegian scepticism

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1. The probability rests mainly on a report from Brunchorst on 5 August, saying that further postponement of Norway's reply, together with panic rumours from Norway, would "complicate for the Swedish Foreign Minister the fulfilment of the plan telegraphed on Monday". This obviously refers to complications between Wallenberg and the Swedish Government. There is moreover the fact that the plan was brought up in the most informal way, namely through the Norwegian Minister in Stockholm. It would seem natural, if the Swedish Government was behind it, that the soundings had been conducted through the Swedish Minister at Kristiania, which would have given them a more official character.
 2. Cf. Gihl, op.cit., in particular p. 34, on the somewhat risky game Wallenberg was playing for this purpose.

towards Swedish foreign policy. In spite of Swedish assurances of a firm neutrality, the reservation against joining with Russia added a strong pinch of salt, since it would seem to leave only one Swedish answer to a possible German ultimatum.

As the Swedish-Norwegian negotiations were opened in Kristiania on the morning of 6 August, the situation was in any case a different one, with Great Britain's participation in the war, and the discussions came to rest on another level.

The negotiations were conducted by Westman, a high official from the Foreign Ministry, together with Minister Ramel on the Swedish side, and on the side of Norway by Ihlen and Wollebæk. The talks seem to have gone smoothly, and already in the afternoon a draft agreement could be

committed to paper. The draft agreement was accepted by the Norwegian Government in an evening meeting, and Ramel is quoted as having said that Wallenberg was also in agreement and would present it to his Government the next morning¹.

1. Ramel's statement appears in a minute by Wollebæk. Presuming its correctness, this is another interesting indication of policy differences between Wallenberg and his Government.

The crucial part of the draft agreement was a paragraph - numbered (2) - which went as follows:

"For the event that any of the two Governments should see itself unable to maintain neutrality, they bind themselves not to join any belligerent Power unless the other Government declares itself willing to join the same Power or its Allies."

Seen out of context the wording may appear strange and the meaning obscure. However, in the two concrete situations that were nearest at hand: German pressure on Sweden, or British pressure on Norway, the purpose of the agreement would be clear. As an agreement between the two countries for participation on the same side in the war was improbable, this condition would both strengthen their will to remain neutral, and furthermore be a warning to the belligerents that such pressure to gain another ally had small chance of success¹.

At its meeting on the morning of 7 August, however, the

1. Bell (op.cit., p. 92) claims that Norway, in the middle of these negotiations, was "careful to show that their agreement with Sweden ... had not subordinated their natural sympathy for Great Britain to any higher political interest". In evidence he refers to an account, complete with details, of Norwegian measures for naval defence, which Ihlen is supposed to have given to Findlay. The reality, however, seems to be only that Findlay on 6 August reported some general information on defence measures which Ihlen had furnished on his request. Contrary to Bell's claim, no mention was made of minefields, and Findlay said on the whole that the information, to be useful, would have to be more detailed and up to date. (Information supplied to the Author by letter of 7/3/1961 from the Foreign Office.)

Swedish Government rejected the draft agreement. Instead, some important changes were proposed which went in the direction of less precise commitments. In particular, Sweden wanted paragraph (2) only to state, after the comma: "the Government in question shall before joining any belligerent party inform the other Government so as to provide an opportunity for the simultaneous association with the same party".¹

The Norwegian Foreign Minister declared on the same day that the Norwegian Government could not accept the Swedish suggestions, but was still willing to sign the draft agreement. In the afternoon, Sweden then replied that paragraph (2) should be laid aside for the time being. The Swedish Government felt that the original text meant "too strong a restriction on the freedom of action", but this should not be interpreted to mean that Swedish neutrality was less firm.

The talks were resumed in the evening, and finally resulted in a compromise by which paragraph (2) was left out.

1. The other important Swedish modification replaced "bind themselves", in the first paragraph after the colon, by "mutually declare it their firm intention".

10/12/1914). One must presume the major reason to have been Norway's exposed position in regard to German aggression.

2. Cf. Sial, op.cit., pp. 34-40.

In this form, the agreement was adopted by the two Governments on the morning of 8 August, and was made public on the same day.

In view of the situation in which the two countries found themselves at the time, the value of the Swedish-Norwegian Agreement should be considered from two points of view: the external relations of the two countries, and internal relations on the Scandinavian Peninsula¹.

With regard to relations between each of the two countries and the Great Powers, the Agreement may have had a certain temporary significance as another assurance of their neutrality. As shown earlier, there was hardly much doubt among the Great Powers about Norway's intentions to remain neutral, either before or after the Agreement. The doubts in this field primarily affected Sweden, where Wallenberg's statements had more recently furnished fertile ground for suspicions that Sweden was veering towards the Central Powers². This could well lie behind the "strong and immediate

1. A particular side issue is the conspicuous disregard of Denmark in relation to the Agreement. There is no doubt that it was "not apt to arouse utter satisfaction in Denmark" as the Danish Foreign Minister put it in an understatement (UD, P 12 C 4/14, Hagerup-Ihlen 10/12/1914). One must presume the major reason to have been Denmark's exposed position in regard to German aggression.

2. Cf. Gihl, op.cit., pp. 34-40.

pleasure" which Minister Findlay - not an effusive person - displayed when the Agreement was officially communicated to him. Count Oberndorff, the German Minister, gave in the same situation an "expression of satisfaction in more ordinary terms".

The first impression cannot, however, have lasted very long. Already on the same day Baron Ramel made it clear to the German Minister that nothing had changed; the assurance against hostile measures "könne z.B. für den Fall gelten, dass Schweden infolge russischer oder englischer Neutralitätsverletzung sich Deutschland anschliesse"¹. Concerning Findlay, he soon found out about the details of the negotiations, and reported to the Foreign Office that Norway, through the formulation of paragraph (2) which Sweden rejected, wanted to "restrain Sweden from joining Germany"².

For the relations between Sweden and Norway on the government level, the course of the negotiations was hardly

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1. AA, Abt. A, AA im GHQ 1914 - 1916, No. 10: Norwegens Neutralität. Oberndorff - AA, 8/8/1914. Oberndorff in a later report returned to the issue, and stated then that by the Agreement "wollte sich Schweden den Rücken decken". Ramel had also told him that the Entente had understood the Agreement in that way. (AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 4, Geheim. Beziehungen Norwegens zu Schweden. Oberndorff - BethmannHollweg, 30/7/1915.
 2. Asquith Papers. Papers Printed for the Use of the Cabinet. Foreign Office: Memorandum in regard to Sweden's attitude. 1 April, 1915.

fit to remove Norwegian scepticism toward pro-German trends in the Swedish Government. In spite of assurances to the contrary, the rejection of stronger commitments was most likely taken to mean a lack of firmness. From the Swedish viewpoint, on the other hand, Norway's support of more far-reaching proposals would seem to dispel fears that an association with the Entente was contemplated at this stage.

On the whole, the Agreement would seem to have had little effect on the position and the foreign policy of the two countries. However, as witnessed by the warm reaction to the Agreement in both countries, one cannot in longer perspective deprive the event of its psychological value, as a symbol of the cohesion that nevertheless existed between two neighbouring nations¹. By breaking much of the ice which had been formed in 1905, the Agreement created a better climate for co-operation within the limits set by divergent geographical positions and economic interests.

1. Cf. the newspaper Aftenposten, on 8 August: "From Lindesnes to the North Cape minds today turn to our Swedish brothers in affection and warm confidence."

On the Internal Stage

By the public declarations of neutrality, along with the Agreement with Sweden and its notification to the belligerents, the foundation stone was laid for Norway's external relations in the war, in a way which met with public approval. The public was, on the whole, rapidly calming down and adjusting itself to the new circumstances, following the Government's determined measures to halt the initial panic and prepare the country to meet the practical problems that a major European war might impose. Of these problems, the most pressing was the supply of food and fuel. Already on 2 August the Government issued a prohibition on the exportation of such goods, and soon after a temporary price control was instituted. A national Food Commission was set up to co-ordinate action in the field, and inter alia to undertake large-scale imports of grain.

The initiatives thus taken by the Government - most of which were without precedent in an era of economic liberalism and freedom from state interference - produced the desired effects on a short-term basis, and nobody then expected the war to last for four years. The climate of opinion in the war, this percentage was (cf. Statistisk Sentralbyrås undersøkelse av den offentlige meningsundersøkelse), 1939-1950.

nation was governed by the assumption of a short conflict, - hence the Minister of Finance could announce to the Storting, which assembled on 8 August, that "... the impression I have had from statements of people in banking and industry is that we can look towards the future with rather good hopes"¹.

The expectation of a brief war is an important point to be taken into account in an assessment of Norwegian foreign policy in the period, since there seems no reason to think that it was not shared by those concerned with the policy-making process itself - from the Members of the Storting to Ihlen, the Foreign Minister, and Knudsen, the Prime Minister. Of a more basic nature, however, is the impact on policy of Norway's general orientation on the international scene: firstly, the economic interests of the nation; secondly, the traditions, judgements, beliefs and emotions, - all that might be termed the nation's political culture.

In Norway's economic and commercial life there is an evident westward trend, inherent in the country's geographical position and in its strong dependence on free trade and intercourse across the oceans for a prosperous expansion as a carrier nation². Although Norwegian ships are frequent visitors to

1. St. forh. 1914, 7, b, p. 2923.

2. In the combined exportation of goods and services in the four-year period just before the war, the merchant navy's freight earnings accounted for 30.4 per cent. During the war, this percentage was to increase to more than fifty. (Cf. Statistisk Sentralbyrå: Økonomisk Utsyn (Economic Survey), 1900 - 1950, Oslo, 1955.)

ports and harbours in every corner of the globe, their most concentrated traffic before the war was with Western Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Thus, in 1913, Norwegian merchant vessels made over 7,000 calls at British ports, more than 4,000 calls in Norway, and about 2,300 visits to ports in the United States. The other countries with more than a thousand calls were France, with almost 1,900, Germany with about 1,700, and the West Indies with over 1,400. By itself the merchant navy would thus seem firmly to link Norway's interests with those of the strongest sea powers.

Nevertheless, the axiom of the country's "facing westward", which has been so strongly emphasized in more recent times, needs certain reservations with regard to the situation at the outbreak of the First World War. First of all, Norway's trade with Germany was a very important element of the nation's prosperity. In 1913, Norway sent 24.31 per cent of its exports to Great Britain, while 20.84 per cent went to Germany¹. Timber, and products thereof, were predominant in the exports to the United Kingdom, whereas Germany was an important buyer of fish products and ores. For the fishing industry, however, the largest markets were the southern European and overseas countries. Of Norway's imports in the same year, as much as 29.80 per cent came from Germany, mainly machinery and tools, textiles and certain foodstuffs. The United Kingdom provided 24.76 per cent of the imported goods,

1. Figures from Statistisk Årbok (Statistical Yearbook), 1914.

among them such vital items as coal and steamships. The bulk of Norwegian food imports, in particular grain, came from Germany, Russia or from overseas.

With regard to Norway's spiritual orientation, its cultural and intellectual ties to Germany were traditionally strong, especially in the field of education, where for example both the secondary schools and the University were modelled on the German system. However, as Minister Oberndorff accurately observed in a report on the enthusiastic welcome received by Max Reinhardt's theatre ensemble which visited Kristiania in 1915, the Norwegians "were much more alive to feelings of Germanic unity in the cultural sphere than in the field of politics"¹. In spite of the direct inspiration which Germany provided for the increasing strength of socialist ideas in Norway, the nation's political sympathies had a westward direction. Norwegians looked in traditional admiration to the homeland of the French Revolution which had provided the main source of ideas behind Norway's democratic Constitution of 1814, and also to the parliamentary traditions of Great Britain.

Within the setting of the nation's outlook and basic interests, and the limits of the constitutional framework as sketched below, the changing fortunes of Norwegian neutrality in the war came to revolve mainly around two central characters, the Prime Minister, Gunnar Knudsen, and the Foreign Minister,

1. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 17, Bd. 1. Oberndorff - Bethmann Hollweg, 23/11/1915.

Nils Ihlen. As politicians the two men had much in common, and seem to have got on well together, but their personalities were markedly different.

Gunnar Knudsen¹ - once referred to by a Danish newspaper as "Norway's Bismarck" - was a strong personality and a born political leader. He came into politics from a very successful career in industry and shipping, and was elected to the Storting several years before the turn of the century. In politics, his main interest, pursued with characteristic energy and cheerful optimism, was in social reform and welfare issues. A strong will could sometimes lead him to impetuous remarks, but he commanded a great personal respect among the people that he dealt with. His approach to foreign policy was not particularly sophisticated, but his views seem to have been influenced by a strong admiration for Great Britain, in which country he had received his technical education, and for whose leading position at sea he had a natural respect in his capacity as a man whose life and career was closely tied up with the sea.

Of a partly similar background, but with quite a different temperament, was Nils Claus Ihlen². He also came to politics after a successful career in business - as the director of his own machinery factory - and was even more of a practical character without undue concern for sweeping ideas and principles. He shared to some extent Gunnar Knudsen's optimism, but substituted

1. Cf. Nissen, Gunnar Knudsen.

2. Cf. Fasting, Nils Claus Ihlen (Oslo, 1955).

a dilatory reticence for Knudsen's restless energy. If by a diplomat is understood someone with a strong inclination to agility, subtlety and compromise, Ihlen was one by birth. Thus, instead of seeking spectacular solutions to problems as they arose, Ihlen was quite happy with temporary, "ad hoc" adjustments. As a practical man of business with good experience in labour relations, he had been a natural choice for Minister of Labour in Knudsen's first ministry, but in 1913 he accepted the Ministry for Foreign Affairs after Knudsen had experienced some difficulty in filling the post with a suitable man. While this indicates that Ihlen was not an obvious choice for the position, he nevertheless brought from his business life a wide experience in international negotiations and a view of Norway's external relations which was based on practical economics, - a view which would seem to fall in line with Norway's scepticism towards big politics on the international scene. Ihlen's international orientation was most probably conditioned to some extent by the fact that his educational background was in part continental European, as he was trained at the Technical Institute at Zurich. Hence he spoke German and French, but not English.

The point of languages is an important one, since it affected Ihlen's relations with a vital person on Kristiania's diplomatic scene, His Britannic Majesty's Minister, Mansfeldt de Cardonnel Findlay.¹ Findlay is said to have read

1. In fact, the most serious Anglo-Norwegian dispute in the war, the copper conflict, had linguistic roots.

Norwegian, but did not speak it. His conversations with Ihlen were therefore conducted in French - in which Ihlen was certainly the more fluent of the two¹.

Regarding Findlay's personality, opinions are controversial in the extreme, ranging from accusations of general brutality and recklessness and of actions highly incompatible with diplomatic service², to testimonies of the most unreserved admiration³. Somewhere in the middle may be found the picture of a man for whom diplomacy was not an "art" but a religious vocation. Strongly conscious of the Entente's economic grip on Norway, he was also, according to a contemporary description by Samuel Hoare, "resolute to the point of rigidity, downright to the verge of bluntness", and faced the questions of the blockade "with the concentration and dour determination that I should expect to find in an Aberdeen man of business"⁴.

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1. C.L. Paus, Findlay's Commercial Attaché, has stated, in a conversation with the Author, 24/2/1961, that he could understand Findlay's French more easily than any Frenchman's. This would seem to indicate that Findlay spoke it with a heavy English accent.
 2. G.J. Hambro, Den Første Verdenskrig (Oslo, 1958), in particular pp. 86-100 concerning the Casement Affair.
 3. C.L. Paus, in conversations with and letters to the Author.
 4. S. Hoare, The Fourth Seal (London, 1930), p. 37.

The staff of the Norwegian diplomatic service¹ was hardly sufficient even for the normal, peace-time conduct of the country's foreign relations, and far less so for the enormously increased load of work which the war was to impose on its members. The senior members of the service were mostly experienced diplomats who had received their training in the joint diplomatic corps of the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway prior to 1905, but their task as representatives of independent Norway was hampered by the range of their duties - the Minister to Berlin for example was also simultaneously envoy to Vienna and Rome - and even more so by the shortage of subordinate personnel, which compelled the chiefs of mission to perform much of the simple but time-consuming clerical work.

Norway's Minister to Berlin was Thor von Ditten. Having served in that post from 1906, he had a tendency to identify himself too closely with German points of view, and this reduced his value as a policy adviser, although his consequent good relations with the Auswärtiges Amt could often be useful in other respects. Benjamin Vogt, the Minister to the Court of St. James, was a conscientious, hard-working diplomat and on very good terms with the Foreign Office, but he suffered

1. For a comprehensive study of the Norwegian Foreign Service at the time, see Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. II.

2. Howard, History of Norway.

under Ihlen's tendency to conduct relations with Great Britain personally, through His Majesty's forceful and tenacious Minister at Kristiania. In the early part of the war, Norway's Minister to Sweden was Dr. Brunchorst, a former Professor of Natural Sciences. He has been referred to as the "weakest link in the chain"¹ of Norwegian diplomats, and was later replaced by Francis Hagerup, former Professor of Jurisprudence and an internationally known legal expert whom Ihlen often consulted. At the beginning of the war Hagerup was Minister to Copenhagen. Last of the more central posts was Paris, and Norway's Minister there was Count Wedel-Jarlsberg, a colourful diplomat in the old style. A man of the world, whose "cuisine" was reputed to be one of the best in Paris², he had excellent contacts with the French Government, but his reports to the Foreign Minister were more entertaining than actually useful or informative. Wedel-Jarlsberg had, somehow, been a strong candidate for the post of Foreign Minister before it went to Ihlen.

Recruitment to the Norwegian foreign service was severely restricted by budgetary considerations, and distorted by relics of the past like the institution of unpaid attachés. The system thus hardly encouraged the entry into the service of the best qualified personnel. That many of the recruits still proved to be of a high standard was the Ministry's good fortune rather

1. Fasting, op.cit., p. 113.

2. Howard, Theatre of Life, Vol. II, p. 283.

than a result of the system itself. A more permanent deficiency of the system, particularly harmful in the First World War, was the dominance of lawyers in the Ministry and the consequent lack of specialists in economics and trade.

In spite of the fact that in Norway the "right to call up troops, commence war for the defence of the realm and make peace, enter into and dissolve alliances, send and receive envoys"¹ is a Royal Prerogative, the predominant position of the Storting in all affairs of State empowers the Legislature to exercise strict control over the Executive in this domain as well. In the ten years preceding the war, however, the general preoccupation with internal issues and the uncontroversial nature of the nation's foreign policy contributed to what seemed to be a rather widespread indifference to foreign affairs on the part of the Storting. Apart from the constitutional requirement² that important treaties - in particular such as demand changes in the law of the land - must receive parliamentary assent, questions of foreign policy were usually only discussed in connection with the annual Speech from the Throne, - or in budgetary debates when thrifty souls invariably found diplomacy too expensive for the country's means.

A similar lack of concern for Norway's foreign policy was reflected in the press and in public opinion in general. The

1. § 26 of the Constitution.

2. Ibid., second paragraph.

Foreign Ministry, on its side, had "hardly any strong feeling that foreign policy in a democratic society also concerns the people"¹, and there existed no institutionalized procedure for contacts between the Ministry and the press. However, Ihlen continued the practice of his predecessor of holding informal meetings with representatives of the press, mainly for the purpose of avoiding misleading or irresponsible press comments about foreign policy².

To sum it up, therefore, all those who were or should have been concerned in the policy-making process, seemed at the time satisfied to leave the nation's external relations in the rather shut-off compartments of the Cabinet and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, without any large measure of interference. This in some respects idyllic situation could not and did not survive the periods of sharpened diplomatic conflict that the war was to bring, and the most conspicuous change that followed was institutional and structural, namely the setting up of a permanent link between the Foreign Minister and the Storting. The parliamentary Committee for Foreign and Constitutional Affairs, instituted in the second half of the war, has since played an important part in shaping Norway's foreign policy.

Nevertheless, the reasons for the limited participation in determining policy were not structural defaults. The

1. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. II, p. 48.

2. Ibid., pp. 188 - 189.

situation was rather a case of the people "having the government they deserved". Channels did exist through which responsible pressure and constructive criticism could be brought to influence the Government's foreign policy, but they were not being used. Mainly because of a lack of concern, but also because of incapability and, in the field of relations between Legislature and Executive, the former's somewhat excessive loyalty and the latter's exclusiveness in respect of foreign affairs, those charged with the execution of foreign policy were to a large extent deprived of the "checks and balances" of a democratic system.

strategic planning before 1914. The economic implications of the war. Professor W. K. Hancock, "If only the British Government had had a vision of the world in 1914 he would have had a vision of the world in a different calibre". Some planning, but it did nevertheless exist within the framework of Imperial Defence. Compiled from the studies and reports of a variety of officials and the different military and naval authorities. British Government with detailed proposals.

1. Cited in J. H. Johnson, *Imperial Defence*, 1940, p. 122.

in such matters as the

against enemy blockade.

2. Experiments in Economic Warfare

The basic principle of a strategy of economic warfare is to be sure against the possibility of a blockade.

Transit Trade and Contraband

action of the blockade, a decisive preliminary question arises as to the application of international law.

It is hardly necessary to explain why the all-embracing nature, which the First World War was gradually to assume, neither was nor could have been foreseen in British strategic planning before 1914. With particular regard to the economic implications of the conflict, in the words of Professor W. K. Hancock, "if anybody had foreseen them before 1914 he would have had a claim to be a prophet of Old Testament calibre"¹. Some planning, and considerable foresight, did nevertheless exist within the framework of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Compiled into the famous War Book, the studies and reports of a variety of sub-committees provided the different military and civilian branches of the British Government with detailed programmes of initial action

1. Quoted in F.A. Johnson, Defence by Committee (London, 1960), p. 100.

2. Department of State, Reports relating to the operations of the United States (hereinafter cited) (London, 1918), vol. 1, p. 216.

in such matters as war risk insurance for shipping, defence against enemy blockade of British ports, and the treatment of enemy and neutral shipping and trade¹.

The basic blueprint for a strategy of economic pressure against the Central Powers was again² that of a distant blockade. In view of this, however, and failing the ratification of the Declaration of London, a decisive preliminary question arose as to which rules of international law should be applied. In those critical days in the beginning of August, this question was studied by both the French and British Governments³, but as an initial measure the British on 4 August issued a Proclamation listing articles which would be treated as contraband⁴. On the whole, these lists corresponded to those of the Declaration of London.

On 6 August, the United States intervened on the issue with its request that all the belligerent States adopt the Declaration of London as it stood⁵. Germany soon gave an accomodating reply, on the condition of reciprocity from the

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1. Cf. Hankey, The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918 (London, 1961), Vol. I, pp. 85 - 93; and Johnson, *op.cit.*, pp. 131 - 135.
 2. Under Wilson as First Sea Lord, the Admiralty from 1909 - 1911 reverted to the classic idea of a close blockade, cf. Hankey, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p. 98.
 3. Cf. L. Guichard (and C.R. Turner), The Naval Blockade 1914 - 1918 (London, 1930), p. 21.
 4. State Papers, British and Foreign, 1914, II, Vol. CVIII (London, 1918), pp. 72 - 73.
 5. Department of State: Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (hereinafter cited U.S. Documents), 1914, Suppl., p. 216.

other protagonists. England and France, however, were concerned over the problem of the enemy's indirect trade through contiguous neutral countries, in particular the Netherlands. Eventually, the substance of their policy and thereby their answer to the United States became embodied in a British Order in Council of 20 August - followed by a similar French decree five days later - "relative to the adoption, with certain additions and modifications, of the Declaration of London"¹. Disregarding modest official phraseology, what the changes in reality amounted to was "the first step in the whittling away of the Declaration of London"², as one impatient observer put it. The most important modification was the application of the "rule of continuous voyage" to the transportation of conditional contraband³. The Order in Council further extended the definition of "enemy destination" for contraband goods, in order to facilitate interception of enemy trade under neutral colours.

In this way a temporary working basis was created for

1. State Papers, Vol. cit., p. 100.

2. Hankey, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 356. Cf. also Professor Jack (D.T. Jack, Studies in Economic Warfare (London, 1940), p. 84): "It was clear that these modifications cut deep into the principles of the London Declaration."

3. On this problem, vide supra, p. 15 and note.

those parts of the British Navy especially charged with contraband control. For the north-about route into the North Sea the examination of maritime trade was entrusted to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, assisted by cruiser squadrons from the Grand Fleet¹. With the extended powers of detention of conditional contraband, a thorough examination of ships against which good ground for suspicion existed was soon found difficult to carry out at sea, and such ships were therefore sent to a port to be searched. The actual exercise of the right to detain goods of presumed enemy destination - for eventual condemnation in Prize Court - was thus moved to Whitehall, where a Contraband Committee had come into being, composed of representatives of the Trade Division in the Admiralty War Staff and of the Foreign Office. The evidence of the ship's papers could then be compared with trade intelligence, which was collected in a number of increasingly intricate ways by the Trade Division².

Obviously, the Contraband Committee's "decisions, which often related to very valuable cargoes, had to be taken rapidly; for delays in Committee meant overcrowding at the

1. Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, pp. 72-73.

2. On the administrative machinery for treatment of contraband, cf. H.W.C. Davis, History of the Blockade.

1. Emergency Departments (London, 1920), derestricted in January 1959.

2. Hall, op.cit.

ports of examination. But an erroneous decision, which the Prize Court would not uphold, might make the Crown liable for heavy damages and might lead to serious difficulties with a neutral government." ¹

In very doubtful cases the diplomatic representative of the neutral country designated as the destination for the goods was asked to furnish a guarantee against the re-exportation of the cargo, as a condition for its release ².

In spite of the Committee's diligence, the procedure was cumbersome and time-consuming, and the results stood in no proportion to the cost in money and efforts. More than enemy supplies, the British authorities reaped the irritation of neutral trading and shipping interests because of long delays in ports of examination.

At the same time public opinion in Britain was beginning to raise its voice for more effective action to cut off supplies to the enemy, through more extensive lists of contraband, heavier measures against British traders dealing with the enemy, and a firmer attitude towards "the fraud of neutral flags". To the extent that these lines of action lay within the province of internal legislative measures, they were implemented by frequent revisions and extensions of contraband lists, by export

1. Davis, op.cit., p. 7.

2. Bell, op.cit., p. 44.

prohibitions, and by "Trading with the Enemy" acts. However, hardly any measure in these terms was without ramifications into the far more delicate field of diplomatic relations with neutral countries, whose goodwill was of some importance to the Entente. In the first months of the conflict, the pressure exerted on these countries by the Foreign Office was essentially sporadic.

As a convenient grouping of countries in at least similar situations and with similar problems, the Scandinavian States and the Netherlands were in current usage referred to as the Northern Neutrals. With reference to Norway's position towards the attempts to check the flow of supplies to the Central Powers, however, it was in many ways different from that of each of the other countries.

Of primary importance was Norway's higher degree of vulnerability for political and economic pressure from the Entente, through a lack of the means of counter-pressure available to the other neutrals. Unlike the Netherlands or Denmark, she could not, except to a very limited extent, play on the risk of German military retaliation. Denmark also had an important trump card in her export of foodstuffs which Great Britain needed. Sweden, in addition to her pro-German tendencies which had to be kept in check, had a strong leverage in the transit facilities to Russia from her Allies. Norway's only means to counteract Entente pressure were the deliveries of nitrate to France, and the services of the merchant navy. The latter was, however, a double-edged sword, as indicated below. Vol. I, p. 92 ff.

With particular regard to transit trade to Germany, Norway had no common border with the Central Powers, and was therefore geographically less advantageously placed than the Netherlands or Denmark. Even more important was the limited capacity of her ports and harbours. This made it practically impossible to handle large amounts of transit traffic - at least in disguise, such as could be done in established trading centres like Copenhagen, Rotterdam or Amsterdam, or even Gothenburg.

This is not to say that Norwegian traders did not see the opportunity for profit which the transit trade offered. On 26 August, the National Association of Export Trades sent a long letter to the Foreign Ministry, pointing to the probability of a "not insignificant" transit trade through Norwegian harbours, especially to and from the Baltic, "from which our shipping as well as our railways could reap considerable advantage" - not to mention the exporters themselves. The exporters trusted that the Ministry would understand the advantage of as little mention of this in the press as possible, and suggested that the press be circularised to this effect, a request with which the Ministry promptly complied¹. The transit trade in question was, of course, not only to and from Germany. Significant amounts of essential trade were also passing through Norway and Sweden on their way between Russia and the Western Powers, since the Baltic was closed to Entente traffic².

On the other hand, several traders had considerable

1. UD, P 2 L 13/14.

2. Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, p. 92 ff.

anxiety and second thoughts about trading with Germany, as evidenced by a stream of enquiries to the Foreign Ministry whether such trade would be compatible with neutral citizenship. To such enquiries the Ministry for Foreign Affairs took the only correct position for the Government of a neutral State, a position which it tried to maintain throughout the war, and which is perhaps most clearly expressed in the following excerpt from a telegram to Norway's Minister in London:

"The Norwegian Government has during the war always avoided hindering Norwegian citizens from engaging in contraband trade, but it has on the other side found that it ought neither to assist such trade, nor to further the interests of Norwegian citizens therein, nor to seek such commerce protected." 1

It seems safe to assume, on the whole, that, although some Norwegian traders were quick to catch the opportunity for profits that transit trade to and from belligerents offered, their limited capacity - and in some cases reasons of risk or even sentiment and sympathy - kept the amount of German transit trade through Norway comparatively insignificant. In the official British history of seaborne trade in the war,

1. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Ihlen-Vogt, 4/11/1916.

C. E. Fayle maintains that "Norway had practically no trade whatever with the Central Powers"¹ during the autumn of 1914. Although this view may be biased towards showing the efficiency of the British measures, the fact remains that the British Minister to Norway in a report recommended "that every consideration should be shown to her [i.e. Norway's] interests, so long as she follows her present policy of discouraging, in every way in her power, the supply of contraband of war to Germany"².

In fact - and this is another distinguishing element of Norway's position as compared with that of the other Northern Neutrals - Norway's primary and very large stake in a continued flow of world trade was her merchant navy. In her cargo ships, the nation possessed an important economic³ asset, but at the same time a potential political liability. Its character as a potential liability was intimately connected with the fact that Norway, to a far stronger degree than any other neutral country, was dependent on imported supplies, and had no possibility of falling back on her own resources. The British could, therefore, by applying economic and commercial

1. Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, pp. 200-201.

2. Bell, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

3. *Vide supra*, p. 50, footnote 2.

pressure on Norway, force the country into such concessions with regard to the dispositions of tonnage and shipping that the national authority over ships flying the Norwegian flag became largely nominal.

However, for the time being this liability remained a potential one. In the first two years of the war, Norwegian shipping was still sufficiently unhampered by belligerent interference to be able to exploit the boom in international carrying trade which the war had occasioned.

The first indications of what the conflict might have in store, as regards dangers and impediments to neutral shipping and trade, appeared already in August, in the form of German mine-fields in the North Sea off the British coast. The question of the use of mines by belligerents was regulated in the Hague Conventions¹, and the British authorities accused the Germans of violations of these rules by having laid mines indiscriminately across trade routes - an argument which the German Navy could with some justification counter by the contention that the main purpose of the mines was to block the access to British naval bases². Germany was also accused of failure to give the required notification to shipping of the extent and location of the mine-fields.

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1. Formally, the Hague Conventions did not apply, on account of the "si omnes" clause (cf. supra, pp. 11-12).
 2. Hague Convention VIII, Art. 2, to which Germany had appended its reservations, forbids mine-laying "with the sole object of intercepting commercial shipping". The British had a naval base at Chatham, and a war anchorage in the Humber.

Neither Norway nor the other Scandinavian countries found that the mine-laying gave cause for protests to the German authorities, a fact which produced some resentment among the British authorities. As far as Norway was concerned, the reason was partly that Norwegian shipping was not particularly active in the southern part of the North Sea, and thus not very seriously affected¹. Another reason, which was subsequently given from official sources, was that the facts of the case were not clear². Actually, the most serious accusation made by Britain was that the mines had been laid from fishing trawlers disguised as neutral. This accusation, vehemently denied by Germany, was utilized as a primary justification for subsequent retaliatory measures by the British, but was later found to have no factual basis³.

In the first instance, the German mine-fields provided a point of departure for British attempts to facilitate Entente control of shipping entering the North Sea. The Admiralty issued warnings to all shipping of the danger of traversing the North Sea without previously touching at a British port to obtain information as to safe routes⁴. Needless to say, the occasion of such a call at a British port was also utilized for a thorough examination of the ship and its cargo. Efforts to persuade all neutral ships

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1. Norwegian shipping's first casualty was the "Tysla", which went down outside the Schelde on 7 August after hitting a mine. In all, ten Norwegian ships were sunk by mines in the North Sea in the period ending 31 January 1915 (Cf. Payle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, p. 415).
 2. UD, P 2K 14/14, Ihlen-Vogt in reply to Vogt-Ihlen of 7/11/1914.
 3. Cf. inter alia Payle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, p. 91. Also *infra*, p. 80.
 4. Payle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, pp. 89-90.

to call voluntarily at British ports were intensified on the diplomatic level during the autumn, and Norway's Foreign Minister received up to five letters and four visits daily from Findlay concerning this particular issue¹.

During the months of October and November, however, the major efforts of British diplomatic pressure on the Scandinavian countries aimed at obtaining guarantees against re-exportation of goods which they received from abroad. The gist of this campaign appears clearly from a letter sent by Findlay to the Norwegian Foreign Minister on 15 October. The British Minister, after stressing the desire on the part of the Entente to avoid interference with bona fide neutral trade, went on to state:

"On receiving from the Norwegian Government an assurance that cargoes, the exportation of which from Norway is prohibited, will be landed at the port of destination, and that they will not afterwards be re-exported, vessels carrying such cargo will not be detained after verification of their papers in a port. An assurance that cargoes of oil, copper and rubber will not be re-exported from Norway is especially desirable at this moment."²

The Foreign Minister answered rather evasively to this communication, saying that it was already forbidden to re-export

1. Stortinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 18/1/1915. Statement by the Foreign Minister.

2. UD, P 2 K 12/14.

rubber, and that the re-exportation of copper might also soon be forbidden. With regard to the requested assurance, Secretary Lindlay from the British Legation was orally informed that it could not be given, since Norwegian law gave each Ministry the power to dispense from re-export prohibitions¹.

Nevertheless, the Government was already taking certain steps in the desired direction, in order to avoid interference with imports for the country's own needs. As mentioned, the first export prohibitions - on certain food-stuffs and fuel - were issued already on 2 August by Royal Decree², and reaffirmed in more detail in a Provisional Order two days later. On 12 September, the Ministry of Agriculture issued an important announcement on transit trade, to the effect that whereas goods from abroad, consigned to a foreign destination, would not be interfered with by Norwegian authorities, such goods as were addressed to a destination in Norway could not be exported without special permission from the Ministry. An export prohibition on rubber was issued on 20 October, and the ban on copper

1. Ibid., minute of conversation 21/10/1914.

2. Vide supra, p. 49. For export prohibitions and related regulations, cf. Justisdepartementet, Lover, Resolitioner og Skrivelser forenlediget ved Krigsforholdene 1 august 1914 - 31 desember 1916 (Kristiania, 1917).

the issue, with a suggestion that the export of copper might at least have been permitted. The export of copper export came on 11 December, exception being made for copper produced in Norway and certified as being made of internal raw materials. Similar regulations were also made for aluminium.

The view of the Norwegian Government on the question of export prohibitions in general was made clear in a statement on foreign affairs delivered to a closed meeting of the Storting in the middle of January 1915. The Foreign Minister gave details of the strong British pressure on Norway, and revealed certain apprehensions as to what might be demanded of the country in the future:

"In certain of the export prohibitions issued so far in Norway, e.g. the prohibition on copper, we have reserved our right to export such goods as are of Norwegian origin. As long as this principle can be maintained, we shall be able to issue export bans without harm to our own production; but England has already pointed out that when our prohibitions are construed in this way, we retain the liberty of exporting all our own production, while simultaneously being able to import everything needed for the country's own consumption." 1

The answer from the Foreign Ministry to the British request for assurances against re-exportation was hardly of a nature to satisfy the Foreign Office. In another communication, dated 28 October, the British Legation returned to

1. Stortinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 18/1/1915.

2. *State Papers*, Vol. LVIII, pp. 100-101.

3. *Vide supra*, p. 62.

the issue, with a suggestion that the Norwegian Government might at least bind themselves to giving His Majesty's Government "timely and ample warning" of any change or exemptions from the export prohibition. This was accepted by the Foreign Minister, except with regard to dispensations, where such warning would only be given in cases involving contraband goods¹.

On 29 October, the British Government issued another Order in Council relative to the Declaration of London². The attempts by the United States Government to ensure recognition of neutral rights by the belligerents, begun on 6 August³, had been intensified in opposition to the Order in Council of 20 August, and had led to a serious controversy with the British Government. The new Order represented a British attempt to find a compromise solution. From now on, the Entente would refrain from applying the "doctrine of continuous voyage" to conditional contraband, on certain conditions. Firstly, such goods would still be confiscated if consigned either "to order" or to an enemy destination. Secondly, the onus of proof of innocent destination would rest with the owner of the goods. At the same time the contraband lists were considerably extended.

With regard to its professed objective "to minimise the interference with innocent neutral trade ...", the effect of the new approach to conditional contraband was negligible.

1. UD, P 2 K 12/14.

2. State Papers, Vol. CVIII, pp. 156 - 158.

3. Vide supra, p. 62.

However, the United States, while retaining its protesting attitude against interference with neutral trade in general, abandoned its efforts to obtain recognition by the belligerents of the Declaration of London¹.

As the year 1914 was approaching its end, the situation with regard to shipments to Norway through the British sphere of control was the following: non-contraband cargo, the re-exportation of which was prohibited, was permitted to go through on the general guarantees and assurances given by the Norwegian authorities, if definitely consigned to a Norwegian destination. Contraband articles required in addition a special state guarantee for each consignment. This could be issued by the Norwegian diplomatic representative in the country of origin of the goods, but also had to be vised by the British authorities in case the articles were not covered by re-export prohibition. With regard to all other shipments, they were investigated and treated by the British examining authorities according to the circumstances of each individual case.

For the time being, the British Government appeared to accept this state of affairs, and Ihlen therefore concluded that this rendered superfluous the setting up of a central import agency which would be in fact, though not in form, controlled by the Government². This had been suggested by the British to all

1. U.S. Documents, 1914, Suppl., pp. 257 - 258.

2. UD, P 2 K 12/14, Ihlen - Findlay, 30/11/1914.

the Northern Neutrals, and was accepted by the Netherlands through the institution of the Netherlands Overseas Trust. The actual reason behind the British lack of insistence in negotiations with the Scandinavian countries, however, was a change in emphasis from diplomatic negotiations to more direct action aiming at stricter control of traffic in the North Sea.

The North Sea as a War Area

In the autumn of 1914, the war in the North Sea was in reality a war of nerves, as the two giants, the British Grand Fleet and the German High Sea Fleet, were keeping a tense watch in order to observe any movement on the part of the opponent. However, both stayed at a relatively safe distance from each other, remaining on the defensive. The British Fleet was conscious of its superiority, and did not want to make the first move, since the weapon of economic pressure in particular would be impaired by any reduction of this superior strength. The German Navy knew that its High Sea Fleet was weaker than the enemy, and could for that reason hardly afford a major fleet action unless an exceptionally good opportunity should arise. Moreover, a considerable change of the ratio of strength in Britain's favour might bring the prospect of a close

blockade of the German coasts nearer¹.

In the meantime, therefore, the maritime conflict was conducted by other means than direct fleet action: in the first instance through an extensive use of mines. From 7 August onwards, a rapidly increasing number of mines appeared in the vicinity of the British coasts. Most of them, but not all, were German. After the British Government had expressed its indignant protest against German mine-laying in alleged violation of the Hague Conventions, the Admiralty with the Cabinet's sanction reconsidered its initial decision to clear the waters for the benefit of shipping, and subsequently proceeded to replenish the mine-fields². If the mines had presented an immediate danger to traffic along the British east coast, they could now - properly surveyed and controlled - serve as a protection for the same³. Furthermore, the mine-fields provided an argument to persuade neutral shipping to call at British

1. Cf. Wegener, op.cit., p. 8: "Die Flotte beharrte also in der strategischen Position der Deutschen Bucht, hatte also die Verteidigung dieser Deutschen Bucht zur Aufgabe. Da aber der Engländer unsere Position nicht angriff, hat die Flotte mit ihren Vorstößen immer etwas verteidigt, was gar nicht angegriffen wurde."

2. Asquith Papers, Cabinet letters to the King, 17 August, 23 and 30 September.

3. Cf. Hankey, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 214.

ports for information about safe lanes, and incidentally to have their cargo inspected.

In fact, as transpired after the mine-field was laid, the Admiralty went further, and proceeded as a reprisal against the German mine-fields to mine the approaches to the Straits of Dover. The extent of the field was announced, and a passage kept clear for commercial traffic. One of the reasons for this new policy was the danger from submarines¹, recently manifested to an impressive extent in the sinking, by one German submarine, of the cruisers "Aboukir", "Hogue" and "Cressy" off the Dutch coast on 22 September. On 15 October, the German submarines struck again, and the cruiser "Hawke" of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron on the Northern Patrol went down off the coast of Scotland. Moreover, the next evening a submarine was reported inside the fleet anchorage at Scapa Flow, where Admiral Jellicoe's flagship and three other capital ships were lying². On 27 October, the Grand Fleet suffered its first heavy loss, as the battleship "Audacious" hit a mine north of Ireland. The unexpected minefield in

1. Asquith Papers, Cabinet letter to the King, 30 September. Cf. also Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. I, p. 281.

2. Corbett, Naval Operations, Vol. I, p. 209.

1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 241.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

this area apparently revived in the Admiralty the old suspicion that German mines were being laid under neutral flag. In fact, as transpired after the ship in question sought harbour and was interned in Trondheim by the Norwegian authorities a fortnight later, the mine-field had been laid by the German auxiliary cruiser "Berlin", which had managed to by-pass the Northern Patrol. That this was not known by the British until the end of November, assumed a certain significance in what followed.

The danger of submarines and mines which had thus been demonstrated to the British naval patrols did not fail to impress the British authorities and public opinion. In the case of the "Audacious", the Cabinet tried to keep its loss a secret for some days - contrary to British sentiment and tradition¹. The Admiralty now felt the need for drastic measures, and one direction was indicated by Admiral Jellicoe in his two alternative plans for making Scotland's coastal area a prohibited zone for shipping, in order to "assist the operations not only against submarine tenders but also against contraband trade"². On 20 October, the naval correspondent of The Times aired the idea of closing

1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 241. *Private letter to the King.*

2. *Ibid.*, p. 235. *Operations*, Vol. 1, pp. 247-248.

These mines cannot have been laid by any German ship of war. They have been laid by some merchant vessel off the North Sea, for the purpose of relieving the cruisers from patrol duties, and in the days 20-22 October Churchill submitted and got the Cabinet's approval "in principle" to a plan for closing off "the Northern Sea area" up to thirty miles north of Shetland. The details were to be worked out by the Admiralty¹. On 30 October, Jellicoe met the Board of the Admiralty in London. On the same day, Lord Fisher replaced Prince Louis of Battenberg as First Sea Lord.

The new measures, announced by the Admiralty on 2 November, went much further than Jellicoe's plans. The whole of the North Sea was declared a military area. All ships which after 5 November passed a line drawn from the Hebrides through the Faeroes to Iceland would do so at their own risk, due to "dangers of mines which it has been necessary to lay, and from warships searching vigilantly by night and day for suspicious craft"². These "exceptional measures" were justified by the Admiralty as a retaliation against German mines laid "indiscriminately in the open sea on the main trade route from America to Liverpool via the north of Ireland". The declaration went on to maintain:

1. Asquith Papers, Cabinet letter to the King.

2. Corbett, Naval Operations, Vol. I, pp. 247-248.

"These mines cannot have been laid by any German ship of war. They have been laid by some merchant vessel flying a neutral flag which has come along the trade route as if for the purpose of peaceful commerce ..."

Instead of the allegedly dangerous north-about route, shipping to and from the North Sea countries was advised to go by the English Channel and the Straits of Dover, along the east coast of England, crossing the North Sea by a route to be indicated between Farne Island and Lindesnes.

As a retaliation against German mine-laying, the presumption - on paper - that North Sea traffic could be cut off along a line between Britain and Iceland seemed a disproportionate measure, and could therefore hardly be accepted at face value by the affected countries. Clearly the Admiralty's real purpose in declaring the North Sea a war area was to increase the efficiency of the Entente's control of maritime trade, and at the same time to try to diminish the danger incurred by the patrol vessels from mines and submarines.

Whereas the British Foreign Office apparently had no part in the decision to issue the declaration¹, it received more than its share of the effects, in the form of protests from the neutral countries. The indignation was perhaps at its stron-

gest in Norway, whose interests both in trade and shipping were particularly affected by the announcement. The immediate

1. Bell, op.cit., p. 62.

reaction of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was to call a conference of representatives of shipping and trade associations, in order to have their assessment of the situation¹. The consensus of opinion apparently was that the route advised by the Admiralty - through the Channel and along the east coast of England - in addition to its inconvenience was also rather more dangerous than the north-about route, due partly to mines, but also to hazardous conditions of navigation in coastal waters, where all lights had moreover been extinguished. On 5 November, the Norwegian Government in an official communication made representations to Britain along these lines.

A more peculiar communication was a highly private letter, on the same subject, which Prime Minister Knudsen sent to Asquith. Knudsen's letter, dated 14 November, showed a clear understanding of the real purpose of the British declaration. The Prime Minister suggested that Norwegian tramp-vessels should be permitted to pass through "the Minch", where the British could easily control the ships by making them call at Stornoway. Asquith's reply to these helpful suggestions was very friendly, and Knudsen's ideas were passed on to the Admiralty².

The strongest opposition to the advised route came from the Norwegian America Line, which did not dare direct

1. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 58.

2. Nissen, op.cit., pp. 254 - 256. As it seems, the British dispensations were not given to tramp-vessels, and Nissen's claim as to the effect of the Prime Minister's personal diplomacy therefore is not substantiated.

to take the north-about route, passing between
its large passenger liners through the dangerous east coast
passage. The company therefore informed the Foreign Minister
that it intended to let the ships pursue their ordinary
course, which led them well to the north of Shetland, across
open sea and great depths where no mine barrage was possible.
To the risk of being stopped by British warships, the NAL was
"of the opinion that this inconvenience is minimal compared
with the risk we fear would be involved in following the course
indicated by the British Admiralty"¹.

After some negotiations on the issue, the British agreed
to the NAL's demands for dispensation, probably after some pres-
sure had been exerted on the Admiralty by the Foreign Office.
Such a concession, however, was an indication that not only
would the substance of the declaration be leniently applied,
but the dangers awaiting neutral shipping on the northern
route could hardly be of a very serious nature. Several
Norwegian shipping lines now requested similar concessions to
that given to the NAL, and in a couple of weeks dispensation
had been granted to the Svithun and the Mexico Gulf Lines.
The sailing vessels, for which the advised course obviously
created particular navigational problems, were also allowed

1. Vea, Schreiner, Seland, Den Norske Amerikalinje 1910 - 1960 (Oslo, 1960), p. 137.

2. For a vivid and imaginative account of the adventures of the Northern Patrol, cf. S.E. Coatsworth, The Big Blotage (London, 1952).

to take the north-about route, passing outside St. Kilda and calling at the Faeroes for instructions as to a safe course.

The dispensations which were thus given to Norwegian shipping were obtained at the instigation of the Foreign Office. In the case of the Svithun and Mexico Gulf Lines, Sir Edward Grey informed Minister Vogt that he had himself gone to the Admiralty to obtain these concessions¹. In return for these, the Foreign Office tried to obtain assurances that the ships would voluntarily call, for example, at Kirkwall. However, the chances of escaping the vigilance of the cruiser patrols were apparently still good enough to justify the attempt in the eyes of several shipping lines².

In the end, therefore, the overall effect of the "war area" on traffic to and from Norway was not serious. Nevertheless, there remained in Norwegian circles a basic apprehension of the methods of British economic warfare, which may go some way towards explaining Norway's more balanced reaction to the retaliatory chain of events that were to follow. At this stage, the Norwegian view of the Admiralty's declaration was more consonant with an aptly worded German memorandum to Norway on the issue, suggesting that the British Navy hoped - as a result of the declaration - to avoid the search of ships in the open sea, since the experience of the "Hawke" had demonstrated the dangers involved.

1. UD, P 2 K 14/14, Vogt - Ihlen, 24/11/1914.

2. For a vivid and imaginative account of the adventures of the Northern Patrol, cf. E.K. Chatterton, The Big Blockade (London, 1932).

Germany also denied once more as entirely unfounded the accusation of mine-laying under neutral flag, and furthermore explained that the laying of mines in the northern parts of the North Sea was out of the question since the ocean was much too deep for anchoring. The helpful suggestion was therefore offered that "ships steering into the North Sea north of Shetland with courses for Norwegian ports or for the Skagerak could do so without any danger of German mines"¹.

picture of common neutral action, the representatives of the three Scandinavian Scandinavian Co-operation

ber drafted a declaration of neutral rights to war-time trade. From the British view-point, perhaps the most ominous aspect of the neutral reaction against the Entente's interference with their trade was the indication that a united front for the defence of neutral rights was emerging. On 21 October, acting on a Swedish-Danish initiative, representatives of the four Northern Neutrals met in Stockholm to discuss maritime trade between neutral countries under the new conditions imposed by the war². The United States had been formally approached on the question of American participation, but evidently had no desire to be associated with the conference.

The more immediate impetus for the deliberations at Stockholm was the British note of 15 October, mentioned

1. UD, P 2 K 14/14, 14/11/1914.

2. The following account of the Stockholm negotiations is based on UD, P 2 K 13/14. The final text of the note may also be found in U.S. Documents, 1914, Suppl., pp. 360-361.

above¹, which requested assurances from neutrals against re-exportation, and suggested voluntary calls at British ports by all neutral ships for the purpose of cargo examination. However, since the Norwegian Foreign Minister had already replied to this communication, the initial meetings resulted only in a very general exchange of views on the protection of legitimate neutral trade. After an interval, during which the Netherlands slowly disappeared from the picture of common neutral action, the representatives of the three Scandinavian countries in the beginning of November drafted a declaration of neutral rights to war-time trade, on the basis of the freedom of the seas, addressed to both belligerent parties.

The draft appeared to be mainly inspired by Swedish views, and was aimed primarily at the British declaration of the North Sea as a war area. When submitted for approval to the Norwegian Government, however, Ihlen made a number of corrections, which on important points made the note more balanced in its protest against the measures of both the belligerent parties. On the whole, Ihlen desired the emphasis to be put on mines as the primary danger to neutral maritime trade, and did not wish to mention explicitly the Admiralty proclamation of 2 November. After some further alterations, this very moderate communication was transmitted

1. Supra, p. 72.

by the three Scandinavian governments to the main belligerents on 13 November.

In his report on the meetings in Stockholm, Norway's Minister Dr. Brunchorst complained to the Foreign Ministry of the great difficulties in obtaining a common accord and in integrating the views of the different countries participating in the talks¹. He suggested that future consultations should be limited to the three Scandinavian neighbours only - though he found even Denmark reticent about attempts to work out a common policy on different matters connected with neutral trade².

The most important lessons of the Stockholm deliberations were rather on the negative side. First of all, the compass of a united front for the defence of neutral rights had been reduced to include only the three Scandinavian countries. Moreover, even among these three nations, due to dissimilar geographic positions, political sympathies and economic interests, their views and attitudes had turned out to be so different as to warrant only the low common denominator of an innocuously

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1. Cf. the memoirs of P. Munch, the Danish Defence Minister, (P. Munch, Erindringer 1914 - 1918 (Copenhagen, 1961), p. 31) stating that the Danish Foreign Minister, with regard to Sweden's draft note, also thought "that its form was too abrupt, and that it was unilaterally directed against England ..."
 2. UD, P 2 K 13/14, Brunchorst - Ihlen, 12/11/1914.

worded academic statement of neutral rights in general.

As to the American disinclination to participate in a common neutral front, it was restated in a negative reply to a request, from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, that the United States associate itself with a protest against the declaration of the North Sea as a war area¹.

The next attempt² to promote Scandinavian co-operation followed after a very brief interval, and once more came on the initiative of Sweden³. To give added symbolic weight to a new manifestation of Nordic unity, Sweden suggested that the three monarchs should also meet simultaneously with a conference of Foreign Ministers. Stockholm was suggested as the meeting-place, but the King of Denmark, like King Haakon of Norway, preferred Malmö. The Danes feared Swedish pretensions to assume leadership in the North, and felt this tendency would be strengthened by a meeting in the Swedish capital.

1. Cf. A.S. Link, Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915 (Princeton, 1960), p. 132.

2. The account of the Malmö meeting is based on UD, P 12 C 4/14.

3. The idea, originating in Consett's militantly subjective book on the neutrals in the First World War (M.W.W.P. Consett, The Triumph of Unarmed Forces, London, 1923) that the meeting was instigated by Germany, has no support in evidence. It is also irrelevant, since Sweden's interest in closer Scandinavian unity was self-sufficient and needed no external prompting.

In the press communique, which announced that the meeting would take place in Malmo 18-19 December, the motive of the event was said to be "a discussion of means by which the economic difficulties that the state of war entails for the three countries may be limited". A certain bias transpired, however, in a memorandum by the Swedish Foreign Ministry on the purpose of such a meeting, which included a specific reference to belligerent attempts at obtaining "control of neutral countries' trade, incompatible with their [i.e. the neutrals'] rights and also with their duties"¹ - clearly a reference to British measures.

Denmark was rather sceptical with regard to the value of such a meeting. In an interview with Minister Hagerup in Copenhagen, Foreign Minister Scavenius was very apprehensive of the impression that such a meeting might create abroad, since it might impart to Denmark and Norway the doubts that attached to Sweden's attitude in the war. The fear was not unrealistic, and it is worth noting that Sir Edward Grey, according to Minister Vogt, requested the British press to assume a sympathetic attitude towards the Malmo meeting. That such a request was felt to be necessary indicates that the immediate reaction in Britain was not likely to be favourable, and the request in itself was a wise move, since any attacks from abroad on the meeting were more likely than not to strengthen the ties between

1. Swedish Foreign Ministry - UD, 10/12/1914.

2. Bell, op.cit., pp. 87-88

the three countries.

Although the German Government saw in it "the nucleus of resistance against English pressure"¹, nothing very tangible came out of the Malmo meeting. While King Gustaf of Sweden in his speech suggested the desirability of "an agreement on such common or similar measures within the framework of neutrality as were possible without any intrusion on the sovereign rights which were valued as highly by all three countries", both the Norwegian and Danish Foreign Ministers stressed that the meeting was not suitable for any definite agreements. The final press communique hence referred only to "a mutual exchange of information" and similar generalities.

Again, therefore, the essential value of this Scandinavian summit meeting must be sought in its symbolic importance. As the agreement between Norway and Sweden of 8 August had broken much ice at the political level between the two countries, the Malmo meeting had a similar effect at the royal level. In some ways this was even more of an achievement, since the breach in 1905 was specifically a renunciation of the King's authority over Norway's affairs, and thus inevitably had personal implications for King - then Crown Prince - Gustaf.

According to the official diplomatic history of the British blockade¹, the British attitude towards Norwegian - Swedish

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1. Bethmann - Hollweg. Memorandum of 27 December 1914, printed in Tirpitz, Politische Dokumente, Vol. II (Hamburg and Berlin, 1926), pp. 292 - 295.
 2. Bell, op.cit., pp. 87 - 88 and 94 - 96.

collaboration in the war was an ambiguous one. The British Minister to Sweden, Sir Esme Howard, advocated it as a means of achieving a more co-operative Swedish approach towards the Entente, through Norway's influence, whereas Findlay campaigned against it. He felt it might jeopardize the effects of British pressure on Norway, by way of strengthening Norway's position and hence her resistance. Although Sir Edward Grey apparently never defined his own attitude to the issue, the British policy, as Commander Bell rightly states, was mainly in accordance with Findlay's views.

However, Norwegian sources also show that the Foreign Office trod very carefully on the point, in order not to push the issue to a head. This was no doubt the wisest alternative for the British to adopt, and resulted in a balance, where Norway could usually be relied on to exert a certain moderating influence on Swedish foreign policy, and particularly to modulate the relentless legal argumentation in the draft notes from Sweden's Prime Minister, Hammarskjöld. On the other side, traditional Norwegian jealousy would in any case seem to suffice for the maintenance of a certain degree of scepticism toward Swedish policy, - unless British pressure on Norway became too strong.

... ..

As the year 1914 was approaching its end, signs were increasingly evident that the war was assuming the aspect of

a military and naval stalemate. Hopes of decisive military victory were fading into the trenches of Northern France, while at sea the giant fleets continued their nerve-straining shadow-boxing¹.

On the part of the Entente powers, this development was bringing about a gradual concentration of attention on the weapon of economic warfare. The effects were not immediate; and as yet, the attempts at preventing trade with the enemy had little really restrictive influence on neutral shipping and commerce.

Large amounts of trade were still able to escape the vigilance of the British shipping control. Even when intercepted and brought into port for examination, only the cargo which was contraband could be seized. The lists in this respect were still comparatively restricted, and since the inspection authorities had limited means of checking the accuracy of the cargo documents, considerable quantities of disguised enemy trade must have passed through. In addition, all the domestic products of the contiguous neutrals went freely into Germany.

On the whole, these were relatively idyllic conditions, and it was becoming increasingly clear to those concerned that they could not and would not last if economic pressure should really be brought to bear on the Central Powers.

1. "Überblicken wir noch einmal die Nordsee im ganzen, so finden wir beide Gegner im Beharrungszustand ihrer strategischen Position." (Wegener, op.cit., p. 9).

some kind of "blockade" of Great Britain by submarines. It is

3. The First Submarine Campaign

On the side of the Central Powers, while the effects of economic pressure towards the end of 1914 posed no immediate threat to Germany and her allies, the long-term significance of an increasing reliance on this weapon was becoming realised by the German Government. This realisation, in addition to a growing restlessness among the naval authorities, led to a process of reconsideration of strategy through the autumn and winter months, during which interest became focused on the potentialities of submarine warfare.

With regard to this new weapon, it had at first only been used in naval warfare against British warships. Despite their apparent success, the prospects for this kind of warfare were not rated highly by the German naval command. However, on 20 October a German submarine had sunk the British merchant vessel "Glitra" off the Norwegian coast. In the words of a Norwegian newspaper, the fact "that a submarine captures and sends to the bottom a merchant ship is quite a new aspect of this modern weapon's activity"¹. New vistas had opened.

From that time onwards, and spurred in particular by the British declaration of the North Sea as a war area, circles in the German navy led by Admiral von Pohl began agitating for

21. Aftenposten, 21 October 1914. von Pohl, Minister to Berlin, to Norway's Foreign Ministry, 4/2/1915. In US, P 2 K- 1/15.

some kind of "blockade" of Great Britain by submarines. It is outside the scope of this work to retrace the complicated process during which the various counter-arguments - based on international law, on the probable reactions from the neutrals, and on the fact that the submarine fleet lacked the capacity to make action on such a large scale really effective - were brushed aside, one by one, and the ground thus cleared for the action as announced to the world on 4 February 1915.

The declaration, to which Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the Emperor finally appended their approval, was signed by Admiral von Pohl. The waters around the British Isles were declared a war area, in which after 18 February every enemy merchant ship would be destroyed, even if it was not possible to assure the safety of crew and passengers. With regard to neutral vessels,

"auch neutrale Schiffe laufen im Kriegsgebiet Gefahr¹, da es angesichts des von der britischen Regierung am 31. Januar angeordneten Missbrauches neutraler Flaggen und der Zufälligkeiten des Seekrieges nicht immer vermieden werden kann, dass die auf feindliche Schiffe² berechneten Angriffe auch neutrale Schiffe treffen."²

Shipping moving north of the Shetlands, in the eastern part of the North Sea, or in a passage at least 30 miles wide along the Dutch coast, would be safe from the war area.

Along with the communication of this declaration to Norway

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1. The original expression was "Gefahr der Vernichtung", but this was corrected by the Auswärtiges Amt at the last moment.
 2. Cf. Tirpitz, Politische Dokumente, Vol. II, p. 306, note.
 2. Quoted from the telegram sent by von Ditten, Minister to Berlin, to Norway's Foreign Ministry, 4/2/1915. In UD, P-2 K-1/15.

and the other neutral countries came a long memorandum¹ prepared by Ministerialdirektor Kriege, chief of the Legal Department of the Auswärtiges Amt, wherein were set forth the reasons and justifications for the new strategy. The memorandum referred in general to the British measures to prevent trade with Germany, as aiming at the starvation of the German civilian population, and stressed in particular the Admiralty's North Sea declaration of 2 November, to which the announcement of a new war area was a retaliation. The danger which neutral ships would face in the "Kriegsgebiet" was partly minimised, and partly justified, by another reference to the British misuse of neutral flags in order to avoid capture², as well as by the "contingencies of naval warfare".

At face value, the German declaration must be considered as chiefly directed against enemy merchant ships. As such, the campaign was a direct retaliation against the Admiralty's declaration of the whole of the North Sea as a war area, and should therefore be considered in relation to that measure. In the extent of the two war areas, there seems to be no essential difference. As regards, on the other hand, the interference with neutral trade and shipping, through the imposed inconvenience of deviations from normal trade routes, the British war

1. The English version of the memorandum is printed in U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., pp. 96 - 97.

2. It is interesting to note that this old strategem was used by Germany in the invasion of Norway in 1940, and was later defended at the Nuremberg Trials as wholly legitimate.

area was more injurious to neutral interests, since it primarily affected inter-neutral traffic. The German scheme concerned mainly the trade of neutrals with the enemy, and left for example Scandinavian overseas traffic north of the British Isles unaffected.

Concerning the sanctions imposed on ships acting in defiance of the warning, however, whereas the British declaration spoke in general terms of dangers of mines, which it had been necessary to lay, and of warships, "searching vigilantly by night and day", the German notification threatened the actual destruction of ships without guarantees for the safety of passengers and crew. Regarding threats to neutral ships in particular, the German declaration implied similar sanctions for neutral as for enemy shipping. The accompanying memorandum, however, merely stated that it was "advisable for their [i.e. the neutrals'] ships to avoid entering this area", and that neutral ships would only be jeopardized as a result of unavoidable mistakes of identity due to the enemy's abuse of neutral flags to disguise their ships¹.

While the memorandum and the declaration provided the

1. The importance of Dr. Kriege's skilfully phrased memorandum in calming neutral reaction is evident in A.S. Link's account of its reception in the United States. After reading it, the State Department scrapped its "stern, even peremptory" protest, drafted in sole knowledge of the declaration itself. Lansing then wrote to Wilson that the memorandum raised the question whether a strong protest, or any protest at all, was really advisable. Cf. Link, op.cit., p. 321.

framework for an evaluation of the German measure, a number of questions were still left open which only conjecture could answer. Firstly, how effective could the enforcement of such a large war area be, considering the probable forces at Germany's disposal? Secondly, how far would the submarines go in their attempt to establish the real identity - neutral or enemy - of ships encountered within the area? Thirdly, exactly how much concern would the Germans show for the safety of passengers and crew - in other words when would it be deemed "possible to save" the persons on board?

The above considerations seem necessary in order to appreciate the reactions of Norway and the other neutrals to the declaration of Germany's intentions. So far, no ship under neutral flag had been destroyed and sunk without warning and without care for the safety of human lives, and emotional reactions to such an event did not therefore affect or colour the protests at this stage. On the other hand, British and French instructions to their merchant ships for the use of neutral flags as a "ruse de guerre", on which Germany blamed the dangers to neutral shipping, had already been sent out¹.

1. Cf. Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. II, p. 10; Hankey, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 319; and Laurens, Le Blocus et la guerre sous-marine, 1914 - 1918 (Paris, 1924), p. 27. An official British communique was issued on 7 February.

2. Startinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 19/2/1915.

If we attempt to assess initial Norwegian reaction to the "Kriegsgebiet" by way of tentative answers to the questions formulated above, the reply to the first one would be that Germany's blockade could not be made very effective. The day after the announcement, two prominent spokesmen for Norwegian shipping declared that there was "no reason for exaggerated anxiety", and characterized the declaration as "a friendly warning" and "a polite and correct communication" as far as the neutrals were concerned¹. On 19 February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs gave a statement to a closed meeting of the Storting on the new situation in the war at sea, and referred to numerous visits and communications from the German Minister, who had strongly recommended that all traffic to England should be stopped. Ihlen had forwarded this advice to the shipowners, who had held several meetings on the situation.

"However, their opinion has been that one must try to go on as before. To some extent it is also maintained that Germany has hitherto employed all its force against England, and thus hardly possesses any considerable additional resources to put into action at this stage." 2

Perhaps the best proof of Norwegian shipping's unconcern is the fact that their war insurance premiums remained unaltered.

On the second question - that of distinguishing neutral ships from enemy ships in disguise - the shipping spokesmen referred to above thought it "outside all probability" that

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1. Aftenposten, 5/2/1915, p.m. edition.
 2. Stortinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 19/2/1915.

neutral ships would be sunk without closer investigation¹. In this respect, moreover, some active precautions could presumably be taken, and it may be characteristic that one of the reactions² in Norwegian shipping circles to Germany's declaration was of a practical nature. On 6 February, the Government's Shipping Directorate proposed to the Shipowners' Association various measures for more distinctive marking of Norwegian ships, and the proposal was very quickly acted upon by most shipping companies. The shipowners thus hoped that with clearer marks, the submarines would be able to distinguish their ships as genuinely neutral and therefore let them pass unharmed.

What was not known at the time was that the first orders given to the German submarine commanders contained no safeguards for special consideration for neutral shipping. The orders merely stated:

"Objects for attack are ships going to or coming from England; when prospects of a successful attack are equal, ships going to England should be preferred. The sinking of as big and heavily laden ships as possible should be attempted." 3

Only after it became known that neutral shipping lines were

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1. Aftenposten, 5/2/1915, p.m. edition.
 2. The following account of reactions in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries is based mainly on UD, P 2 K 1/15.
 3. Order of 8/2/1915, in Spindler, Der Handelskrieg mit U-Booten (Berlin, 1932 - 1934, in "ed. von Martay, Der Krieg zur See, herausgegeben vom Marine-Archiv") Vol. II, p. 19. Cf. also von Pohl's letter to his wife, two days later: "Wenn die englische Schiffe neutrale Flagge hissen, so schadet das nichts, si werden auch mit denselben in Grund und Boden geschossen". (von Pohl, Briefe (Berlin, 1920), pp. 108 - 109.)

marking their ships with special identification, were new orders issued to the effect that such ships should only be attacked "as a secondary alternative"¹.

On the official level, consultations soon began with a view to simultaneous protests by the three Scandinavian Governments, and Ihlen himself on 9 February drafted a note for transmission to both belligerents. It was very moderately phrased, and referred back to the previous note of November on the freedom of the seas. With regard to the latest measures, it said:

"Whereas the question of belligerent use of neutral flags has arisen, it is maintained that the consideration which the belligerents owe to neutrals should advise against the use of their flags. On the other hand, even if misuse of such flags should occur, no belligerent is justified, on account of a general lack of confidence in the other party's methods of belligerency, in treating ships under neutral flag otherwise than in accordance with the rules of international law."

At the beginning of the consultations, which took place in Stockholm, Minister Brunchorst reported that there was general agreement that the note to Germany ought to have a far more serious tone than whatever was to be sent to England².

When Sweden's Prime Minister Hammarskjöld presented his draft of a note to Germany, Brunchorst found it far too tame for his

1. Spindler, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 20.

2. A telegram from Schmedeman, American Minister at Kristiania, to the State Department, dated 12 February (U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., p. 101) suggests that Ihlen was in doubt whether any protest at all should be sent to the Allies.

2. Vide *infra*, pp. 126-127.

taste, and both he and the Norwegian Foreign Minister made several suggestions for its amplification. Where Sweden, for example, wanted to hold both belligerent parties responsible for loss and damage to neutral interests, Norway wanted this responsibility put only on Germany. In the final texts, delivered on 17 February, the compromise solution stated to both parties that the Governments took all due reservations as regards loss and damage¹.

Ihlen was presumably rather dissatisfied with the final text of the notes, which on essential points went contrary to his own suggestions, and he was now becoming increasingly reticent and sceptical about joint Scandinavian protests². The reason why he did not insist on this occasion may have been that he was leaning towards the opinion, prevalent in Norwegian shipping circles, that the German declaration to a large extent was an empty threat, and that a strict protest was therefore unnecessary.

The German declaration was, in fact, very much of a bluff, since their submarine force at this stage was much too small to impose a successful ban on trade with British ports. One of the primary objects of the announcement was therefore to try to deter neutral shipping from traffic with Britain, a fact which explains the long delay of two weeks between the announcement of

1. The texts are printed in U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., pp. 139 - 140.

2. Vide infra, pp. 126 - 127.

the measure and its execution¹. However, this effect failed to materialize; and instead, the series of neutral protests gave rise to what was at least an attempt by Germany to avoid the destruction of neutral ships - however impracticable this was for the submarine commanders. Already the orders of 18 February required neutral ships to be spared, on "Allerhöchster Befehl". The flag itself was nevertheless insufficient evidence, so all the circumstances had to be taken into account, such as the type of ship, its position, its course, and its general deportment. According to a request from the political authorities, Italian and American ships should be spared even in cases of doubt as to their real identity². In this way, the German submarine campaign was gradually watered down, and its harshness tempered by considerations of political expediency.

One of the ways in which the German authorities sought to avoid conflict with the neutrals, without having to cancel the whole campaign, was their proposal for neutral

1. Cf. von Pohl, op.cit., pp. 110-111. "Wir mussten den Neutralen Staaten Zeit geben, ihre Schiffe aus der gefährdeten Zone zurückzuziehen."
2. Cf. Submarine Order of 18/2/1915, annotated by Bethmann-Hollweg, in AA, WK 18 Geh., Vol. I. Two days earlier von Pohl wrote: "Nun geht also meine so gut angekündigte U-Blockade vollständig flöten. Die Leute in Berlin haben offenbar ganz kalte Füße bekommen; denn die U-Boote dürfen nur Schiffe versenken, die sicher als feindliche erkannt werden. Die Engländer hissen eine neutrale Flagge, malen ihre Schiffe in neutralen Farben, wie sollen das die U-Boote machen." (von Pohl, op.cit., p. 112)

convoys. In a communication to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, dated 18 February, the German Minister Oberndorff once more quoted several instances of alleged British misuse of neutral flags, and stressed the paramount importance of unmistakably identifying neutral shipping as such. "The only safe method", the German Minister wrote, "is navigation by daylight, under convoy, on the self-evident condition that the ships carry no contraband." It was further suggested that the neutral governments should demand that the British reserve the ports on the Tyne for neutral traffic, which traffic would then be guaranteed inviolable by Germany¹.

Ihlen regarded the idea of neutral convoys with considerable scepticism, since it would give rise to a number of difficult problems. The Norwegian navy was of course far from large enough to convoy the country's many merchant vessels. Moreover, once the convoy principle had been accepted, the neutrals could apply it to their own import trade², a practice which would cause easily predictable conflicts with

1. Strangely enough, the submarine order of 18/2 (cf. Note 2, previous page) confidently stated that "Schwedische, dänische und norwedische Schiffe werden gemeinsame Convoys unter Schutz von Kriegsschiffen des einen oder des anderen dieser Staaten bilden."

2. The idea being that neutral ships under convoy are exempt from visit and search, and not in the way Bell seems to suggest, that "Scandinavian vessels on the American route should only receive escort, after they had been examined and passed by our patrols" (Bell, op.cit., p. 224).

2. Aquila Papers, Business letter to the King, 24/2/1915.

Great Britain. However, Sweden and Denmark were interested in the idea - Denmark in part because she felt that an outright refusal might be construed as justifying German ruthlessness in the war zone - and consultations on the issue were held in Copenhagen. It was agreed¹ to enquire about the English attitude to such ideas, and the British Government, as might have been expected, had no sympathy for the suggestion². Another communication to Great Britain concerned the German suggestion for a neutral zone for traffic to and from the Tyne ports. Norway refused to be associated with this proposal in view of the British attitude to convoys, and the idea was likewise rejected by the British Government.

The first Norwegian casualty in the war area was the tanker "Belridge", on its way from New Orleans to Rotterdam. In the early hours of 19 February, off Folkestone in the English Channel, the ship was hit by a torpedo, and barely managed to reach the coast for anchorage. An investigation was held which produced torpedo fragments of obvious German origin, whereupon the German Government, in reply to a Norwegian protest, declared itself willing to express regrets and pay indemnities if the proofs were produced. In later cases during 1915, however, it often proved extremely difficult to decide if the sinking of a ship was due to mines or to torpedoes.

1. At the suggestion of Denmark, not Norway as Laurens (op. cit., p. 29) states.

2. Asquith Papers, Cabinet letter to the King, 24/2/1915.

On the whole, Germany's success in taking the edge off neutral recriminations against the establishment as well as the enforcement of the war area was remarkable. Primarily, of course, this was the result of a gradual alleviation of the measure itself. Shrewd diplomacy, however, also did its part. Dr. Kriege's arguments about the suffering and starvation of German civilians, the emphasis on the other party's misuse of neutral colours, and the willing acceptance of the obligation to indemnifications in the "Belridge" case, all contributed to convey to Norway the impression that the sinking of a neutral merchant vessel was an exceptional and unfortunate accident, the occurrence of which could only be explained by the submarine's difficulty in identifying its target. On this background must be seen Ihlen's tranquil statement to the Storting, some months later:

"Should the results of the investigations, now being carried out by both Norway and Germany, be that ships other than "Belridge" have been torpedoed by German submarines, I have no doubt that the German Government will do all they can to alleviate the consequences of the loss to those concerned, and that the German Government will regret what has happened as deeply as the Norwegian Government. I have no reason to doubt that, should it appear that "Svein Jarl" has been torpedoed and also with consequent loss of lives, the German Government in their sense of justice will do everything to mitigate this disaster." 1

Nor was the impact of German argumentation lost on the United States. On the basis of Germany's presentation of its case, and on a hint from its Ambassador to Washington, Count

1. St.ferh., 1915, 7 b, pp. 1728 - 1731.

Bernstorff¹, the United States Government in the middle of February took the initiative in proposing a "make-shift" adjustment of the belligerents' methods of commercial warfare². In return for a strict adherence by German submarines to the ordinary rules of visit and search in their dealings with merchant shipping, the Entente should agree not to interfere with imports of food for the German civilian population. There are indications that Sir Edward Grey himself at least gave serious consideration to the idea³. However, Germany intervened before the British had answered, with some strict qualifications to her acceptance of the proposal. Thus, in Lord Hankey's words, "our friend the enemy had come to our aid in an embarrassing controversy"⁴. The prevailing mood in the British Government, as well as in public opinion, was not at all in favour of a softening of economic pressure on the enemy: quite the contrary, as the next few days were to show.

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submar The first German submarine campaign was clearly a failure. There was, firstly, the enormous gap between the professed objectives and the means available for their attainment. The small force of submarines at Germany's disposal in February

1. Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House (Boston and New York, Vols. I - IV, 1926 - 1928), Vol. I, p. 447.
2. U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., pp. 107, 111, and 119, inter alia.
3. Cf. inter alia, Bell, op.cit., p. 232.
4. Hankey, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 368. The German qualifications concerned the use of mines.

1915 was quite insufficient for any full-scale blockade of the British Isles, and the campaign also fell short of its aim to scare merchant shipping away from traffic to Britain.

With particular regard to the effect on neutrals, the German measure in fact fell between two stools. The idea of ships sunk without warning and without concern for the safety of human lives on board was enough to create at least a latent abhorrence of Germany's methods of warfare, but was not enough to prevent the sailors and the ships from running the danger since it, too, seemed only potential.

As the reactions of the neutrals to the campaign came to light, the methods were to some extent changed accordingly. However, there still remained some scope for mistakes by the submarines contrary to the political precautions in their orders, and these mistakes, both despite and partly as a consequence of their accidental character, were equally shocking for public opinion each time they happened.

In the long range, moreover, the indirect effects of the submarine campaign should prove even more disastrous to the Germans. Commercial war in its methods was a vicious circle, where each new action led to intensified retaliation from the opposite party; a war of attrition, where the ends more and more came to justify the means - including their effect on the neutral States.

to extend the system of commercial information
4. The British Blockade information

War Trade Intelligence Department.

As has been indicated in a previous chapter, British pressure to restrict neutral trade with the enemy saw a certain increase through the autumn and winter months, as the whole machinery of maritime trade control could be improved and made more effective. One of the most insistent spokesmen for more emphasis on the weapon of economic warfare was the War Council's secretary, M. Hankey, who in his influential "Boxing Day Memorandum" in 1914 stated:

"If our main military effort against German territory is unattainable for the present, the principal weapon remaining is economic pressure. Economic pressure, however, appears to be breaking down to a certain extent owing to the enormous trade with Holland and Denmark, and at the best is a weapon slow in operation." 1

In the middle of January 1915, Hankey initiated several improvements, in the machinery for dealing with questions of economic warfare, which resulted in the setting up of a War Trade Department. The Entente authorities were also working

1. Hankey, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 248.

to extend the system of commercial intelligence, and to co-ordinate the available information through the British War Trade Intelligence Department. The evidence with regard to neutral trade and commerce was obtained from two main sources. One was the reports of British diplomatic personnel or intelligence agents, the other was the censorship of mail, cables and wireless messages. Since the former was of greatly variable value, the reliability of the trade intelligence really increased in proportion with the progress of censorship¹.

Mails and cables were subjected to censoring from the very beginning of the war, but then only for the purposes of detecting and preventing espionage. Censorship with the aim of collecting trade intelligence was first instituted in the beginning of 1915, and had at the outset a limited extent, on account of various legal impediments. There was no problem with regard to mails and cables terminating in the United Kingdom, since there existed no right of action against the Crown for failure to deliver posted letters².

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1. The following is based on Davis, op.cit., pp. 37 - 79.
 2. In fact, "the whole postal administration of the United Kingdom is nothing but a machinery for collecting postal fees with the tacit understanding that the Crown will do its best to carry out the advertised service". Davis, op.cit., p. 56.

As to transit mail through the United Kingdom, this was subjected to censorship after the British Government, in March 1915, decided to suspend the right of free transit stipulated in the Universal Postal Convention. Of the neutral countries, only Sweden protested against this step.

Neutral mails found at sea were inviolable according to the 11th Hague Convention. The first step towards eliminating this barrier to censorship was taken at the end of 1915, when the British authorities began the examination of mail on ships which were "voluntarily" calling at British ports en route to neutral destinations. In reply to a protest from the Netherlands, the British Government stated that this mail, passing through British territorial waters, had until then been accorded immunity only "as a matter of grace".¹

Finally, in March 1916, the British decided to censor also mail on ships diverted to British harbours by the naval patrols. A German precedent for such a step could be found in the searching, in the summer of 1915, of one Norwegian and two Swedish mail-boats, although the letter mail taken

1. Davis, op.cit., p. 60. 82.

2. Aquilino Papers, Cabinet letter to the King, 1916.

3. Davis, op.cit., p. 215. For the problem in connection of 1812, pp. 143-144.

from these boats was later returned, following strong protests from the Norwegian and Swedish Governments¹. As a matter of fact, the British Cabinet in taking this step were more concerned with seizing securities which Germany was remitting for sale in the United States, and less with collecting trade intelligence².

Thus, as briefly sketched, the British policy with regard to postal censorship was evolved through a gradual process, punctuated by neutral protests, and it was not before the year 1917 that the system could be called complete. As early as the winter and spring of 1915, therefore, the reliability of the evidence which could be collected still left much to be desired. On Norway's exports to Germany and Austria, for example, "only the most meagre and fragmentary particulars were obtainable up to the spring of 1918"³.

As a curious result both of the increasing amount of

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1. The Norwegian mail-boat was "Hakon VII". In its reply to the Norwegian protest, the German Government actually stated that the Hague Convention, since not ratified by all belligerents, was not valid (cf. supra, p. 11), and thus provided Britain with an excuse for disregarding the Convention - if excuse were needed. Cf. Davis, op.cit., p. 62.
 2. Asquith Papers, Cabinet Letter to the King, 22 March 1916.
 3. Davis, op.cit., p. 215. For the problem in general, cf. ibid., pp. 143 - 144.

from the Northern Neutrals. And, even if the lack of such information and of its insufficiency, however, the Entente authorities were becoming increasingly suspicious of neutral trade practices, and their suspicions, concomitant with neutral irritation at frequently unfounded accusations¹, did nothing to improve relations between the Entente powers and the neutrals.

At any rate, and notwithstanding the intensification of British trade control, the evidence available to the Entente pointed to a growing flow of goods into Germany

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1. The following incidents may serve to illustrate the prevailing mood of the times. In January 1915, the French Legation in a note to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs alleged that a firm in Arendal had received aluminium hidden in cotton bales. The Ministry's enquiry revealed an incident where the dock workers had complained that bales of cotton on a private consignment were too heavy. However, nothing but cotton was found when the bales were opened by customs (U.D., P 2 K 12/14). In a different vein was a letter from the British Legation a month later, with reference to the Foreign Minister's promise to notify them of dispensations from re-export prohibitions. The complaint concerned a shipment of 90 tons compensation copper to Germany. In what was perhaps not a model of diplomatic phraseology, the letter continued: "Up to the present His Majesty's Legation have received notice of no such dispensation, a fact which is no doubt due to inadvertence and the press of work at the Ministry; since it cannot be seriously contended that considerable dispensations have not been granted His Majesty's Legation feel it therefore their duty to warn the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that, unless the practice of granting permission to export to Germany copper imported from abroad is abandoned, the supply of foreign copper for genuine Norwegian consumers will be endangered if not altogether cut off." (U.D., doss.cit.). The Ministry's reaction was a penciled note: "Not to be answered."

from the Northern Neutrals. And, even if the bulk of these imports were domestic products of the countries concerned, the British authorities were becoming convinced that the re-export prohibitions, issued by the neutral governments, did not provide adequate guarantees that the goods imported to Scandinavia or the Netherlands did not ultimately, either directly or indirectly, benefit the enemy.

The general situation in this respect was not changed by the fact that the position of Norway was seen as quite satisfactory by the Foreign Office. In a survey in the middle of February, it stated:

"No great volume of trade is passing into Germany via Norwegian ports. The Norwegian list of prohibited goods is on the whole satisfactory, but the prohibition on copper extends only to imported copper, and copper produced locally is undoubtedly being sold at present to Germany. The question of buying up the Norwegian output of copper is now under investigation. No goods consigned to a Norwegian port 'to order' can be re-exported if they figure on the Norwegian list of prohibited goods. Nitrate of lime and whale oil are the chief articles giving rise to difficulty at present, and as to these diplomatic discussion still continues." 1

On the other hand, in spite of possibilities of improvement in the existing methods and techniques of economic warfare,

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1. Asquith Papers, Foreign Office: Summary of present position with regard to intercepting commerce for and from Germany. Printed for the use of the Cabinet.

his earlier allegations
views, and stated
clear that one should not
for our trade and shipping.
12/14, Vol. III, Vegt - 12/14

the basic situation had remained unchanged, in so far as the Allied Governments still lacked the "power to seize articles of conditional contraband if they could not be shown to be destined for the enemy Government or its armed forces, or non-contraband articles, even if they were on their way to a port in Germany, and there was no power to stop German exports"¹. If economic pressure was to become "the principal weapon" such as Hankey envisaged, a more radical departure was necessary.

According to Bell, it is not possible to retrace the conceptual history of the new British methods of economic warfare which came into force in March 1915², - even with British documentary sources at hand. Nevertheless, it seems quite certain that the first suggestions were made by the Admiralty, which contained the most concentrated group of advocates of more vigorous economic pressure and thus distinguished itself from the Foreign Office which naturally took a more cautious line³. On 2 February - after German

1. Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers, 1914/1916, Vol. LXXXIV (Cd. 8145), p. 21.

2. Cf. Bell, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

3. An indication of sharpened tensions between these two branches of the British Government is given in a communication from Minister Vogt to the Foreign Ministry of 4 February. Vogt enclosed newspaper reports which confirmed his earlier allegations of the two agencies' conflicting views, and stated prophetically: "I think I ought to declare that one should not expect more lenient conditions for our trade and shipping. Rather the opposite." (UD, P 2 F 12/14, Vol. III, Vogt - Ihlen 4/2/1915).

preparation case from Mr. ...
Submarines had sunk two and attacked two other British
to merchant vessels, but before the announcement of the German
the submarine campaign - Churchill in a Cabinet meeting raised
on the question of more rigorous forms of retaliation against
the use of submarines in attacks on British merchant vessels.
In particular, he suggested the repudiation of the Declara-
of tions of London and Paris ¹.

The proposal was not further considered at that meeting.
However, two days later - as if on the British Admiralty's
request - came the announcement of the German submarine
campaign, which then evidently became the centre of atten-
tion in the British Admiralty. According to Churchill, no
appreciable adverse effect on British trade was expected
from the German submarines. On the other hand, it was im-
mediately realised that the enemy's declaration would streng-
then Britain's position for enforcing her own "blockade" by
more vigorous methods. "We consulted long and carefully
together at the Admiralty on successive days ..."²

1. The first public announcement that new measures were in
Churchill himself at a ...

1. Asquith Papers, Cabinet letters to the King. Unless Churchill is credited with supernatural foresight, this succession of events provides definite proof that the German U-boat campaign merely provided a convenient impetus for British blockade measures which were already being planned.
2. W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis, 1915 (London, 1923), p. 284.

preparation came from Mr. Primrose, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office, on 8 February. In a reply to a question from Lord Beresford in the House of Commons, he declared: "In view of recent German announcements of an intention to disregard the laws and customs of the sea, further modifications in British practice may be necessitated."¹ A week later, Churchill offered some more specific indications of what was forthcoming in a speech on the naval estimates:

"So far we have not attempted to stop imports of food /to Germany/. We have not prevented neutral ships from trading direct with German ports. We have allowed German exports in neutral ships to pass unchallenged. The time has come when the enjoyment of these immunities by a State which has, as a matter of deliberate policy, placed herself outside all international obligations, must be reconsidered. A further declaration on the part of the Allied Governments will promptly be made which will have the effect for the first time of applying the full force of naval pressure to the enemy." 2

From this moment onwards, it seems that the Cabinet's decision must be regarded as irrevocable in its main principles, notwithstanding Sir Edward Grey's continuing

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1. As to what kind of measures the Admiralty favoured, Churchill himself at a later stage stated that the proposals in February were for a rationing system for the small countries subject to the naval blockade. Cf. 90 H.C. Deb., 5 s, p. 1385.
 2. 69 H.C. Deb., 5 s, p. 235.

discussions with Colonel House on the American plan for a compromise adjustment of the methods of commercial warfare¹. The terms of the announcement of retaliatory measures were debated at length in the Cabinet on 10 February, and the draft submitted to the French Government in the following days. The declaration was still under discussion when the Cabinet met on 17 February, with Grey, Lord Crewe and Asquith urging consideration for neutral opinion, in view of "the proposed reprisals being obviously much more injurious to neutral commerce and interests than the more or less illusory German threat"².

The Allied measures in reprisal for the submarine campaign were announced in identical notes to the neutral powers on 1 March. Describing the German measures as an unprecedented departure from the laws and customs of naval warfare, the notes declared that the British and French Governments would henceforth "hold themselves free to detain and take into port ships carrying goods of presumed enemy destination, ownership, or origin", although it was "not intended to confiscate such vessels or cargoes unless they would otherwise

1. Vide supra, p. 107.

2. Asquith Papers, Cabinet letters to the King.

be liable to condemnation"¹.

In a speech to the House of Commons on the day of this announcement, characterizing the determination of the Allies, Prime Minister Asquith declared that

"the words 'blockade' and 'contraband' and other technical terms of international law do not occur, and advisedly so. In dealing with an opponent who has openly repudiated all restraints, both of law and of humanity, we are not going to allow our efforts to be strangled in a network of juridical niceties Under existing conditions there is no form of economic pressure to which we do not consider ourselves entitled to resort. If, as a consequence, neutrals suffer inconvenience and loss of trade, we regret it, but we beg them to remember that this phase of the war was not initiated by us."²

For the German submarines' attempt to cut off the stream of supplies to the British Isles, the Prime Minister had nothing but scorn. "Where is the German Navy?", he rhetorically asked, and went on: "The plain truth is, the German Fleet is not blockading, cannot blockade, and never will blockade our coasts."³

Judging from the Prime Minister's words, there was no lack of firmness in the Cabinet's attitude towards maritime warfare. So far, however, the world only knew what the two

1. The text is printed in U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., pp. 127 - 128.

2. 70 H.C. Deb., 5 s., pp. 600 - 601.

3. 70 H.C. Deb., 5 s., pp. 597 - 598.

Governments considered themselves free to do, - not how they intended to implement their firmness in practice. At this stage it could only be concluded that, apart from the terminology employed, including the statement that confiscation of ships and goods was not intended except for traditional contraband offences, to all intents and purposes a long-distance blockade was contemplated, with the abolition of any discrimination between contraband and non-contraband goods.

The reaction in Norway to these announcements was of a distinctly preliminary character. The Bureau of War Insurance for Shipping immediately issued a circular where its clients were advised against continued traffic to Hamburg. Traffic to Germany's Baltic ports, however, could continue if it kept within Norwegian and Swedish territorial waters¹. In London, Minister Vogt sought to obtain information on how the new "blockade" would be translated into action. On 3 March, he reported that according to sources at the Admiralty, no steps were yet contemplated in the Baltic, and it was not certain that the new measures would be enforced with full severity even against traffic to German ports on the North Sea².

On this basis, Foreign Minister Ihlen inquired of his colleagues in Stockholm and Copenhagen whether it might not be advisable to send a joint communication to the Allies, reserving

1. Copy of communication in UD, P 2 K 2/15.

2. UD, P 2 K 2/15, Vogt - Ihlen, 3/3/1915.

treatment for neutral ships and their cargoes in accordance with international law. Denmark agreed with the idea, but Sweden declined to participate since the Government was still awaiting Britain's reply to the enquiry about a neutral zone for traffic to the British Isles¹. No communication was therefore sent before the full extent of the "blockade" measures was known.

The "Order in Council", on which British enforcement of the new measures was to rest, was issued on 11 March 1915². In its detailed provisions, it confirmed the assumption from the preliminary announcements that a "de facto" blockade would be the result. The terminology and to some extent the rules themselves, however, had had to be adjusted to conform to the existing state of legal doctrine - or to what Asquith had preferred to call "juridical niceties". In the main, the Order contained two directives and two authorizations to the blockade officers. The directives called for the arrest of all ships coming from, or proceeding to, an enemy destination. The authorizations, on the other hand, concerned the detention of vessels proceeding to or coming from other than enemy ports, but carrying goods of enemy origin or ownership. The goods in question should, in the cases covered by the directives, or might, in other cases, be seized and placed in the Prize Court.

1. Vide supra, p. 105.

2. Printed in U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., pp. 144 - 145.

3. Vide supra, p. 17.

4. Vide supra, p. 2.

The explanation for "authorizing" instead of "directing" the detention of neutral-bound vessels was the uncertainty as to the attitude of the Prize Court in regard to the new Order. However, the underlying intentions of the British Government can be found in the recommendations for the execution of the new measures, which stated:

"The object aimed at should be to induce vessels not to carry goods for Germany. Vessels should therefore be detained long enough to make them feel the inconvenience of carrying such goods, and the advantage of not doing so, but they should be given the benefit of doubt when the case is not clear. The treatment should gradually grow stricter"¹

Stated in legal terms the major features of the new situation confronting the neutrals were, firstly, that the "rule of continuous voyage" - acknowledged in the Declaration of London as only applicable to absolute contraband² - would be applied to all goods, and secondly, that it disregarded the rule - established by the Declaration of Paris - that enemy goods on board neutral ships should not be seized³.

On receipt of the British note, to which the Order in Council was appended, the Swedish Government at once proposed that the three Scandinavian nations should send a joint note of protest, and submitted a draft for its wording. The text was exceptionally brief and uncontroversial, which indicated the importance which Sweden attached to a quick reaction, and contained nothing which Ihlen could find

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1. Asquith Papers. Printed for the use of the Cabinet.
 2. Vide supra, p. 15.
 3. Vide supra, p. 2.

objectionable¹. The note from Great Britain to Norway was dated 15 March, and the Scandinavian protest was issued only two days later. It read as follows - in Norway's version:

"The measure announced by the note of the Legation of His British Majesty of the 1st of this month and to which the subsequent note of the 16th ^{sic} like-wise refers, being of such a nature as to affect seriously the law of nations and the legitimate interests of the neutral powers, the Royal Norwegian Government hereby makes the most formal reservations against the application of these measures in as far as they concern Norwegian trade and navigation." 2

Having thus despatched their identical notes, with the necessary reservation for their legal rights in future controversies, the three Governments evidently settled down to wait and see how the blockade would be put into practice, in order to be able to adjust their efforts to the particular problems as they might arise.

For Norway, the occasion arose in the middle of April,

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1. Ihlen's only disagreement concerned the press communiqué on the note, where Sweden had suggested a reference to the effect that the note had been sent "after deliberations in Stockholm". In the communiqué to the Norwegian press, Ihlen omitted this reference - presumably in a gesture of impatience with Swedish insistence on Stockholm as the headquarters of Scandinavian foreign policy.
 2. Printed in U.S. Documents, 1915, Suppl., p. 158. Explaining the protest to the German Minister a few days later, Ihlen said that it was in general terms directed against all new measures that went contrary to international law. From this, Minister Oberndorff concluded that "a practical effect is hardly expected from the protest: it was delivered rather in connection with previous ones as "par acquit de conscience". (D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reichsministerium des Innern, Handelssachen Norwegen adh. 2, Bd. 4, 22/3/1915.)

concerning an oil cargo which had been discharged from a ship of the Norwegian America Line. Taking this incident as its point of departure, the Foreign Ministry's note to the British Government evolved into a broader exposé of Norway's position in relation to the Allied blockade measures, in a markedly conciliatory tone:

"In consequence of the frequent detention of Norwegian vessels which have lately been made in British ports, M. Vogt has been instructed by his Government to point out ... that the Norwegian Government cannot see that they have any security for their shipping and commerce in return for their numerous embargoes which are constantly completed in order to prevent any evasions, and further for the great efforts which the Norwegian Government have always made to maintain a correct attitude.

Some time ago his Britannic Majesty's Government were good enough to promise a quick and prompt examination of the Norwegian vessels, whereas it seems to the Norwegian Government that they are now treated more rigorously than ever, in spite of the attitude which both the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian shipping owners have taken up."¹

The British Government replied to this note three days later. With regard to the Norwegian embargoes and the security they offered against re-exportation, this could not be judged as satisfactory by the British authorities, who had evidence to show that goods, ostensibly sent from Norway to the other neutrals, in fact had gone to Germany.

1. UD, P 2 K 2/15, Note Verbale Vogt - Foreign Office, 21/4/1915.

It must therefore occasionally happen that goods consigned to persons known to be forwarding agents for Germany were retained in Britain. There was one way, however, in which delays to Norwegian ships could be avoided:

"Undoubtedly the best course would be for Norwegian traders and Shipping Companies to follow the precedent set by the Netherlands Overseas Trust, and to form in Norway a similar body which would undertake to prevent the re-export from Norway of all articles consigned to it. If this were done, vessels bound for Norway would, in a short time, pass as easily as vessels bound for Holland do now." 1

As an alternative course for Norway, the note from the Foreign Office suggested that arrangements could be made with the principal Norwegian shipping companies.

At this juncture, Ihlen must have realised that he had but a choice between two evils, and that economic warfare was there to stay also in the cases where it was carried into neutral territory. A modus vivendi must therefore be found, and of the two alternatives the latter would seem to entail the least danger of involving the Government in a degree incompatible with its status of neutrality.

One of the important consequences of this modus vivendi

1. Ibid., Note Verbale British Legation - UD 24/4/1915.

was its inevitable disintegrating effect on the Scandinavian team as it had appeared on the international scene for more than half a year. Although it would still reappear at irregular intervals, the fact that arrangements of a private or semi-private character had invaded the domain previously reserved for diplomatic relations was bound to limit the joint appearances to occasions of major political significance.

Both in April and in May, Ihlen's Scandinavian colleagues several times proposed joint despatches on the issues arising from the March Order in Council. In declining the invitations, Ihlen referred to his own note of 21 April. However, the mere fact that he had not sought Danish and Swedish support on that occasion seems to indicate a trend with which can be linked some of Ihlen's previous ideas. Starting from his basically practical approach to political problems, his view on the utility of involved juridical protest notes was prejudiced from the start, and was the opposite of that of Sweden's Prime Minister, the brilliant international lawyer Hjalmar Hammarskjöld. Ihlen formulated his views in January 1916 in reply to a Swedish suggestion of joint protests against the violation of neutral mails. Assuring the Swedish Government of his full appreciation of their efforts to promote the interests of the neutrals, he nevertheless felt that

"this endeavour of the neutrals; to point out to belligerents where the ways of law and justice lie, and as far as possible to restrict them to those ways, will have less chance of success the more they resort to methods other than those within the province of friendly representation." 1

Moreover, their collaboration had also revealed² divergent political views. According to a Swedish historian, Hammarskjöld's drafts on the occasions when Ihlen desisted from participation "show a marked slide toward the German standpoint: that the neutral State as such has a duty to resist the blockade measures of Germany's enemies"³. What happened in May of 1915 can therefore also be seen as the culmination of Ihlen's developing scepticism concerning neutral protest notes in general, and joint Scandinavian protest notes in particular.

For Norway's relations with the belligerents, however, the major significance of the Foreign Minister's attitude to the events that followed the blockade declaration lies in his acceptance of the idea that private Norwegian business interests could make working agreements with foreign governments, while the Norwegian authorities would stand as interested but formally detached observers. This was a signpost to the future.

1. UD, P 12 C 3/14, Ihlen - Ramel, 28/1/1916.

2. Vide supra, pp. 101 - 102, 104 - 105.

3. Gihl, op.cit., p. 92. On one occasion later that year, when the question of a protest against British misuse of neutral flags reappeared, Minister Brunchorst in Stockholm proposed that "the Swedish note manufacturer, Hammarskjöld" be asked to prepare a draft for discussion by the Danish and Norwegian envoys together with three gentlemen from the Swedish Ministry, - "which means Hammarskjöld behind the curtain". Ihlen's undiplomatic reaction consisted of a pencil note on the cable: "No, let us be free from this editorial committee!" (UD, P 2 K 2/15, Brunchorst - Ihlen, 11/10/1915)

5. The Diplomacy of Business

We have seen how the March Order in Council provided a radical extension of the field where economic pressure could be brought to bear on the enemy by the Allied Governments. This did not obliterate the problem of actually carrying out economic warfare; on the contrary, the question became more pressing than ever. The initial procedure of relying on neutral prohibitions against the re-exportation of overseas products had already demonstrated to the Entente its serious short-comings. Now, when the distinction between contraband and non-contraband had in practice been abolished, and the destination of the goods had become the all-important issue, a total re-export ban would have been needed, and this presumably would be accompanied by a proportional increase of its ineffectiveness. The new situation which had been created therefore seemed to necessitate a different approach by the governments of the Entente.

The neutral governments, on their part, had all the time been apprehensive of any official action, such as

governmental trade control, which might be construed as connivance in economic measures directed against one of the belligerent parties. Thus, although the neutral governments were naturally anxious to see that goods reached the country in sufficient quantity and with the least possible delay, their anxiety was tempered by their concern for the political issues involved. Moreover, there were "natural" impediments to interference from the Government. It should not be forgotten that state control over trade and commerce at the time of the First World War was an almost virgin field, where even the most determined efforts were likely to become frustrated by technical and administrative obstacles. At the beginning of the war, the Norwegian

"... State had no law for regulating prices or conditions of competition, - prices were set through open competition in the free market. Any thoughts of official regulation of prices had never even been seriously discussed. The State had no authority to impose rationing or to requisition goods for provisioning purposes. Export was free, direct regulations of imports did not exist." 1

In an era of economic liberalism, the authorities largely followed the principle that the State should not interfere with industry and trade. It was assumed that free competition constituted the best guarantee for economic progress, while at the same time assuring the lowest possible prices to the consumers.

In a country like Norway, conditions were further complicated

1. Th. Chr. Wyller, *Utvidelsen av Statens myndighetsområde i Norge under første verdenskrig* (The extension of the field of State authority in Norway during the First World War) (*Historisk Tidsskrift*, Vol. 39, Part 4, p. 324. Oslo, 1960).

by geographical factors: a large area, with very low density of population, where mountains and a rugged intricate coastline kept long-distance communications at a rather primitive level. In such circumstances, central administration was a slow and cumbersome task.

However, beside the governments, Entente and neutral, a third element was involved: the people in neutral shipping and trade, among whom discontent was spreading in direct proportion to the growing severity of Allied trade control - which led to more and more ships being detained and delayed for inspection in British ports. The men in private business were inclined to view the issues in a practical light, and felt no particular obligation to subordinate to political considerations their efforts to assure, as far as possible, a regular and profitable trade.

A natural point of convergence between these three elements and their differing interests - the belligerent powers, the neutral governments, and the neutral traders - would be in direct dealings between belligerent authorities and private business interests, with the aim of defining the kind of agreements and undertakings which would satisfy the demands of economic warfare, assure regularity of business to neutral trade, and keep the neutral colours untainted.

Already, the trade relations of private business firms were becoming a political concern. A prerequisite for the Allied ship inspection's ability to distinguish between genuine

neutral trade on one hand, and trade likely to be transited to the enemy on the other, was detailed information on the trade connections of the respective importing firms. For this purpose, lists were compiled, by British diplomatic and consular representatives and others, which already by the end of 1914 covered the formidable number of three thousand firms found as having a more or less suspect character¹. The consignments of these firms would then be subjected to particular investigation. The inevitable consequence of such discriminatory treatment of neutral business was to divide them into two groups - one dealing with the Entente and one dealing with the Central Powers - as it became increasingly risky and even impossible to carry on trade with both parties at the same time. Reporting on the situation in the middle of January, the German Minister to Norway stated that, although Norway preserved an attitude of good will towards trade with Germany, British control was continually being strengthened, and the Norwegian Government "does not dispute that, because of British activity, American-German transit has almost ceased, apart from single ships that manage to pass unnoticed by the British"². In this way, economic warfare was "carried across the neutral borders and had its foremost lines established among neutral businessmen"³.

1. Bell, op.cit., p. 125.

2. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Ministerium des Innern, Handelsachen Norwegen, Adh. 2, Bd. 4.

3. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 65.

line with the British Government, in January 1914¹,
earlier¹, the Shipping and Coal
continue using the north-about route instead of the
route Concerning Norway, the key to an effective and direct
trade control which did not require the active assistance of the
Government was the merchant navy. Its position in this respect
was due not only to its two-fold capacity as a major industry
and as the carrier of the country's foreign trade, but also to
its vulnerability to economic warfare. By way of detaining the
ships for cargo inspection in British ports, combined later with
the power of control over shipping fuel, the Entente possessed
irresistible means to convince the shipowners of the advantage
of co-operation.

The first arrangements in Norway between the British autho-
rities and private business thus came to involve the shipping
companies. According to Bell, the first attempt was made by
the British Minister to Norway near the end of 1914¹. Acting
on his advice, the Bureau of War Insurance for Shipping appa-
rently required certain guarantees from some of the shipping
lines before insurance policies were granted to them. However,
the first actual agreement with a large-scale effect on Norwe-
gian business life was entered into by the Norwegian America

1. Bell, op.cit., p. 157. This is somewhat doubtful, and
may possibly refer to the Bureau's circular after the
March Order in Council, cf. supra, p. 120.

Line with the British Government, in January 1915. As mentioned earlier¹, the NAL had in November been granted permission to continue using the north-about route instead of the recommended route through the English Channel. However, the British were not inclined to extend this concession without demanding some guarantees in return, and in the following weeks pressed their point by way of frequently intercepting the Line's ships and detaining them for inspection at Kirkwall. As evidenced by a letter to the Foreign Ministry from the powerful Shipowners' Association², ships of other companies were also subjected to what seemed like a haphazard practice of the British control measures, since ships were searched on their way even when they had been inspected before departure.

The effect of these detentions was to convince the ship-owners that a case-by-case treatment of the problem through diplomatic channels was "incompatible with the operation of a shipping line where long-range regularity was a primary concern"³. Moreover, since "British views on what constituted contraband were continually changing, it was impossible to arrive at fixed directives which could secure a reliable operation"⁴. The obvious choice was to undertake negotiations directly with

1. Vide supra, p. 84.

2. UD, P 2 K 12/14, Norges Rederforbund - UD, 16/1/1915.

3. Vea, Schreiner, Seland, op. cit., p. 141.

4. Ibid., loc.cit.

the British Government, and the first agreement was accordingly signed by the Norwegian America Line in the middle of January 1915.

Although the text of the agreement has been lost, the gist of it was apparently that the British Legation at Kristiania should inspect the papers for the cargo, and the NAL would, with the assistance of declarations from the consignees, explain every consignment before it would be delivered to the importer. In return for their co-operation, the NAL's ships would no longer be detained by the British inspection. The arrangement was the first step in a process whereby Norwegian business was, in Keilhau's words, to become "entangled in an invisible web of guarantee declarations"; and whereby "consular authorities of foreign powers established for themselves a position of control and power over Norway's economic life which no Norwegian authority had ever had ..."¹

The declarations operated on several levels. At one end, the consumer of certain imported products had to sign an undertaking as to the disposition of his purchase, in order to prevent it from benefiting the enemy. On his part, the dealer was similarly under a strict obligation not to sell the goods except in return for such undertakings. The sanction against offenders was mostly in the form of "black-listing" which, as

1. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, pp. 65 - 66.

the system was extended, could very well mean economic ruin to a firm or an enterprise.

The January agreement with the Norwegian America Line was a secret one, but it obviously would affect too many persons to remain unnoticed for any long period of time. Before Easter of 1915, a number of complaints had been raised against the NAL in cases where the company had refused to release goods brought over by its ships from abroad. The matter was brought up in the German press as evidence that Norway was being subjected to Entente pressure, and the Foreign Minister was questioned about the affair in a closed meeting of the Storting. In his reply, Ihlen stated that the whole arrangement was a private one with which the Ministry had nothing to do. He had himself only heard, after the Manager had returned from a visit to London, that "an arrangement had been made to the effect that the Line's ships in the future could go between New York and Bergen without being picked up on their way in either direction". Only after the complaints became known did the Foreign Minister find out about the terms of the agreement¹. Ihlen further alleged that, whereas the NAL by the agreement had consented to detain "suspicious" consignments, the British Minister had exploited the arrangement beyond its exact terms. The Ministry for Foreign

1. Fasting (op.cit., p. 188) on the other hand claims that Ihlen was informed of the Manager's negotiations in London in January.

Affairs had immediately ordered the goods to be released, and when the NAL protested that this would mean the end of the arrangement, Ihlen had replied that he could not accept the British Minister's authority over such matters on Norwegian territory. In the debate which ensued, the Foreign Minister was strongly commended for his action in the affair¹.

It is not difficult to understand Ihlen's apprehensions about a system which kept the Government entirely outside a foreign government's control over private Norwegian firms. Particularly where private persons or small firms were involved, these were completely at the mercy of the British authorities, and no safeguards existed for the compatibility of these arrangements with Norway's laws, politics and general interests.

The result of Ihlen's action, however, was hardly fit to satisfy the NAL, and shortly afterwards the Manager again went to London in order to negotiate the terms of a new agreement, - this time with Foreign Minister Ihlen's tacit approval². The new agreement, signed by A. Johnsen for the NAL and by Sir Eyre Crowe for the British Government on 14 May, obliged the NAL to require a guarantee from their consignees against re-exportation, and to furnish certificates of neutral

1. Stortinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 22/4/1915.

2. Vea, Schreiner, Seland, op.cit., pp. 144 - 145.

3. Bell, op. cit., p. 243.

proposals for the use of coal as a means of securing its origins for out-bound shipments. In return, Great Britain would not abandon her right of detention and search of the ships, but promised to interfere as little as possible¹.

In the course of 1915, seven other Norwegian shipping lines followed suit and signed arrangements on similar terms with the British Government², presumably also with the Foreign Ministry's knowledge. As Britain's hold on maritime trade strengthened, the companies had hardly any choice if their ships were to go on sailing. This was particularly true after the Allies had decided to use their control of bunker coal and oil as a means of forcing shipping to submit to their demands and conditions.

No single commodity under British control was more essential to the Norwegian economy than British coal, both for domestic use, for industrial use, and as a propellant for trains and ships. What is apt to surprise, therefore, is not that it should have been used as a means of pressure, but that it should take almost a year of war before its potentiality was realised. According to Bell³, the first

1. Copy of the agreement in Records of the War Trade Board, Exec. country file, general (National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

2. Ibid., loc. cit. The seven were: Garonne Line, Norway Mexico Gulf Line, Norwegian Africa and Australia Line, Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab, Thor Thoresen Line, Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab, Otto Thoresen Line.

3. Bell, op. cit., p. 345.

proposals for the use of coal as a means of coercion in industry were made by the British Consul at Stavanger, who in the first half of 1915 repeatedly suggested that the exports of Norwegian canning products could be effectively controlled by way of restrictions on the factories' coal supply. Minister Findlay expressed himself in the same sense. He warned his Government, however, to exercise extreme caution in the matter, since Norway possessed considerably stocks of coal which in a crisis might tide the country over its exigencies until some arrangement could be obtained for the replacement of British by American or even German coal. Thus, although internal difficulties in the British coal industry during the spring and summer of 1915 - evidenced by rising prices and labour unrest - forced the Government to regulate the supply of coal to neutral countries, Norway was assured that its applications for export licences would be met "in as liberal a spirit as possible". It was only suggested that a central import agency for coal should be set up in Norway to achieve an equitable distribution of the imports¹. Coal therefore continued to flow into Norway in comparatively sufficient

1. UD, H 4 I 11 6/15. Foreign Office reply to Norwegian note, 26/6/1915, and cable Vogt-Ihlen, 10/6/1915.

quantities. However, the British Government adopted the deliberate policy of keeping down coal stocks in Norway¹, and Eyre Crowe in August intimated to Minister Vogt that it was necessary to find means to prevent this coal from being used directly or indirectly to help the enemy. It was therefore no coincidence when Findlay, the day after the regulation of British coal exports had been announced, could speak to Ihlen "in quite a different tone from earlier" about the need to curtail the Norwegian pyrites export to Germany². The probable reason why the suggestion of a central agency was not pressed was that Findlay considered direct control by the Legation safer concerning such an important commodity³.

With regard to bunker control, there are different stories about how the idea was born. According to Fayle⁴ the first suggestion came from a London insurance broker; other indications are that it originated in the British Legation at Kristiania. Bell⁵ attributes the first

1. Bell, op.cit., p. 347.

2. Stortinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 14/5/1915.

3. Cf. UD, H 4 I ii 6/15, and Asquith Papers, Findlay - F.O. 4/8/1915.

4. Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. II, pp. 156 - 157.

5. Bell, op.cit., p. 345.

shipowners did not persist in opposing the prior
expression of the idea to Findlay some time in the first
half of 1915, but the suggestion may again have come to
him from his Naval Attaché, H.W.W.P. Consett, whose mind
seems to have been particularly restless about ways to
improve the methods of economic pressure¹. At any rate,
the plan for control of bunker supplies was worked out in
the Trade Division of the Admiralty, and was first applied
to vessels in the trade of Swedish ore from Narvik to Ger-
many, as well as to ships carrying herrings to Germany. On
31 July 1915, Minister Vogt could report that restrictions
on bunkers were being prepared, and that exceptional treat-
ment would be accorded vessels trading to Britain and its
Allies, as well as steamship lines which were "facilitating
the labours of the British Fleet" by calling at Kirkwall
or elsewhere for examination. Norwegian ships calling at
a British port on their return journey, with cargoes which
were shown to be for neutral consumption, could "count with
confidence" on receiving bunkers².

After the institution of bunker control, Norwegian

1. Sir Esmond Ovey, in conversation with the Author on
4 November 1960. Sir Esmond was First Secretary at
the British Legation in Kristiania.

2. UP, H 4 I 11 6/15, telegram Vogt - Ihlen 31/7/1915.

1. Davis, op.cit., pp. 35-36.

shipowners did not persist in opposing the principles of British shipping control, but directed their efforts towards finding, in co-operation with the control authorities, methods by which the control could be exercised with a minimum of difficulty and costly delay for the traders. These efforts led in March 1916 to the institution of the "navicert" or "letters of assurance" system, for shipments from the United States to Scandinavia.

The "navicert" was a permit for shipment through the blockade, granted by the British Embassy in Washington after clearance of the cargo from the Foreign Office. Applications were cabled to the Foreign Office from the Embassy, and were there immediately considered by reference to the various methods available to the British authorities for investigation of the cargoes. In most cases a reply could then be cabled back within 48 hours.

Judging from a memorandum by a Blockade official, the "navicert" system was mutually advantageous, since "whereas on the one hand it has enabled us to conduct the Blockade (in so far as affected by it) with a minimum of hardship to exporters, importers and shipowners, on the other hand it has been by far the most effective instrument in tightening the Blockade"¹.

1. Davis, op.cit., pp. 35 - 36.

following the Rationing by Agreement

were being subjected to rationing, particularly in the case of coal imports, further indicated that the Allies had indicated their preference for a central agency to distribute the licensed imports. This reflected a general desire on the part of the British authorities for a simplification of their efforts to control and supervise the trade practices of the importing firms. As the firms grew in number, a direct control over each single receiver of a few consignments from overseas became increasingly impracticable. In the Netherlands, a central organisation for imports was already functioning early in 1915 under the name of the Netherlands Overseas Trust, and in Denmark two existing trade associations, the Grosserer Societet (Society of Wholesalers) and the Industri-Raad (Council of Industry) were negotiating to undertake similar functions on behalf of Danish external trade.

Although the Norwegian Government
As previously indicated, the Norwegian Government never showed any enthusiasm for a general import and trading trust conceived on the lines of the Netherlands Overseas

Trust, in spite of frequent British suggestions. However, following the increasing harassments which Norway's imports were being subjected to after the March Order in Council, particularly as a result of the shipping control, and with further indications that coal imports might be jeopardized, the Government's attitude was reconsidered. An attempt was subsequently made to obtain an arrangement on a modified version of the central agency principle, in the autumn of 1915. The attempt did not succeed, but the negotiations are worthy of some attention, as well as the causes of their failure¹.

The initiative for negotiations came from the "State Commission for Trade, Industry and Shipping", an advisory body which had the Foreign Minister as its chairman. The ideas gained the adherence of two major business organisations, the Union of Norwegian Merchants and the Union of Industrialists and Artisans, and towards the end of August their representative, H.A.N. Olsen, went to London together with the Secretary of the State Commission, E. Maseng.²

Although the delegates may not personally have been regarded

1. The following account is based on UD, H 4 I ii 32/15, and Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, pp. 99 - 102.

2. Maseng had on the Prime Minister's request been to Holland to study the Netherlands Overseas Trust, and brought back a favourable report, which apparently did much to convince the Government of the advantages of a similar Norwegian arrangement. (E. Maseng in conversation with the Author, 2/4/1962.)

with favour by the Foreign Office - Mr. Maseng's occasional newspaper articles had apparently been too pro-German for their liking - Eyre Crowe in a private letter to Minister Vogt said on behalf of Sir Edward Grey that the Foreign Office appreciated Norway's willingness to form a trust for the purposes proposed. It was also stated, however, that coal could not be included in such a general treaty.

On 27 December 1915, Fleckley wrote to H.A.S. Olsen. The negotiations lasted for about one month, and the major points at issue were the British demands that there should be monthly maxima for the imported amounts - subsequently modified to quarterly maxima - and that shipments under the agreement should be presented for inspection by the British shipping control. To the British request for the Foreign Minister's authorisation to an eventual agreement, Ihlen replied that this could be arranged subject to the Government's approval of the text of the agreement.

On 12 October the drafts were ready for submission to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and were in the following weeks scrutinized and criticised both by the Ministry and the business circles. The main object of criticism seems to have been the quarterly maxima of imported goods. In this way, time went by. On 1 December Minister Vogt reported

a conversation of the Legation's legal adviser, Fredriksen, with Alwyn Parker of the Foreign Office, wherein the latter had expressed himself in favour of the agreement and had stated his surprise that no word had been forthcoming from Kristiania. Then, in the following days, a British agreement with the Danish Associations, negotiated almost simultaneously, was subjected to sharp criticism in the House of Commons¹. On 27 December 1915, Findlay wrote to H.A.N. Olsen that

"there has been such prolonged delay on the part of the Union in coming to a decision as to the drafts for an agreement and circumstances have so materially changed in the interval, that his Britannic Majesty's Government are no longer disposed to conclude the agreement ..."

In view of the conditions which were imposed on Norwegian imports through subsequent Branch Agreements, Professor Keilhau is undoubtedly right in characterizing the Government's failure to conclude the general agreement as a mistake. If governmental involvement was what Ihlen feared, this proved inevitable in an even greater degree half a year later. Moreover, although the agreement, if concluded, would like all others be subject to revision or even

1. Cf. 70 H.C. Deb., 5s., col. 1724 - 1739 and 1744 - 1746.

Allied trade control in Norway. cancellation if the British found it necessary, the Foreign Ministry ought to have realised by the end of 1915 that the time factor worked against the neutrals. Furthermore, should additional reasons be needed for a speedy conclusion, they could be found in the criticism by the House of Commons of the similar Danish agreement. That criticism may well have contributed to the Foreign Office's negative decision on the draft agreement with Norway. The most important reason, however, was that Findlay and the British Legation were against the idea. Findlay had been sceptical of the value of such an agreement from the start. He thought it would be difficult to supervise, and considered that agreements with individual firms or specialised associations would work better in practice¹.

As it was, the improvisation of British trade control in Norway therefore developed along two main lines: arrangements with single, large industrial firms, and the so-called Branch Agreements with existing or newly created organisations of traders in one or a group of specific merchandise. The Branch Agreements became by far the most important aspect of

1. Information supplied to the Author by letters from the Foreign Office (29/11/1961) and from C.L. Paus (11/11/1961). Cf. also Bell, *op.cit.*, p. 317. In fact, as suggested by E. Maseng in conversation with the Author 2/4/1962, Findlay may also have engendered much of the opposition from business circles to the draft agreement.

principles: that of the rationing system. The Allied trade control in Norway, economically speaking, but the first agreement to be concluded was with a single firm.

This agreement¹, which came into force in April 1915, concerned the firm De Norske Fabriker, or DE-NO-FA, whose major products were whale and fish oils and their derivatives. The Norwegian Government claimed that whale and fish oils were domestic products and therefore refused to prohibit their export. However, two strong means of pressure were available to the British: the detention of whaling vessels, and the withholding of essential production additives such as cotton and linseed oils, which DE-NO-FA obtained through its commercial alliance with the Lever concern. By these means an agreement was achieved in which the firm, in order to obtain the required amount of vegetable oil, agreed to sell its whole production to the Lever concern. With this agreement, the British Government had introduced the purchasing method in their dealings with Norwegian industry; a method which was to achieve notoriety a year or so later.

For the time being, however, British efforts in the field of economic pressure on Norway were chiefly directed towards the Branch Agreements, which promoted a different

1. This paragraph is based on Bell, op.cit., pp. 259 - 260.

principle: that of the rationing method. Few words are needed to explain the advantages of the rationing system over the measures initially employed to control the trade of neutrals with the enemy. Whereas the combination of contraband inspection and neutral export prohibitions required close scrutiny of each consignment, its character and its destination, the method of rationing by agreement would enable the Entente to lay the emphasis on the total amount of neutral imports of each commodity. This total amount would be calculated so as not to exceed what was needed for genuine home consumption in the country concerned. In this way, any re-exportation would entail a reduction in domestic supply, and its prevention would become a matter of pure self-interest for the neutral State. The system would also make it imperative for the neutral Government to assure an equitable distribution of the imported goods, in order to stop trade jobbers from depriving the people of essential commodities.

There were several prerequisites for carrying out a policy of rationing. Primarily, the distinction between non-contraband and contraband goods would have to disappear in order to allow a total supervision over imports, a condition which was achieved by the March Order in Council. Secondly, full statistics would have to be tabulated over each neutral country's normal and necessary volume of imports. This endeavour was since January carried on by the statistical division of the War Trade Department. Thirdly, associations would have to be found in the neutral countries with whom agreements could be made in terms that ensured adequate means of control for the Allied authorities.

Norwegian Government The Branch Agreements

The first Norwegian trading association to enter into a rationing agreement with the British Government was the Norwegian Cotton Mills Association¹. This agreement was signed on 31 August 1915, and its terms reflect the main principles on which the later agreements were to rest. In the introduction, it is stated that the British Government's desire is to facilitate the free passage and distribution of raw cotton imported to Norway and destined for domestic consumption. Further, the Association has declared that the average monthly consumption of this commodity in Norway does not exceed 360 metric tons, with a corresponding consumption of cotton yarn not in excess of 170 metric tons. The operative part of the agreement was mainly as follows: the goods were to be consigned to a named buyer, member of the Association, and applications for British export licence would have to be accompanied by a certificate from the Association, in return for certain undertakings by the buyer. On this point, the Association reserved for itself the privilege of free access to the member firm's books, its stocks, etc. for the purpose of control, and the right to submit any disputes concerning guarantees to a commission named by the Association.

The conditions for the agreement can hardly be characterised as particularly onerous for the Association, and from the viewpoint of national interests there was no reason for misgivings. The

1. The account of the Branch Agreements is based on UD, H 4 I ii 30/15, and Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 97 seq.

Norwegian Government therefore gave the arrangements its tacit sanction by agreeing not to dispense from the export prohibition for cotton goods except for the Allies, and by consenting to refer would-be importers to the Association. The reasons for the favourable terms seem to have been twofold: the Association's negotiators presented complete information and statistics on Norwegian cotton imports, and they agreed to quantities that did not exceed normal peace-time requirements. Other associations, whose representatives were in London at the same time, did not show the same degree of co-operation, and had to conduct the actual negotiations with the British Legation in Kristiania.

Already in the next Branch Agreement to be concluded the terms had grown considerably stricter. Signed on 12 November that year, the agreement with the Norwegian Tanners' Association specified inter alia access rights for the British Legation to the Association's records. In order to ensure the Government's co-operation with the conditions imposed on the Association, the agreement explicitly required unofficial governmental approval.

In addition to an agreement with the Royal Norwegian Automobile Club, an agreement with a single firm - namely Vallo Oljeraffineri - was concluded before the end of 1915¹. The latter became the first in a series of agreements by which the British Government secured control over Norway's import and production of oils and fats. All these agreements

1. Cf. Bell, op.cit., pp. 318 - 319, for list of agreements.

were based on the rationing principle, and guaranteed that all raw materials imported should be exclusively for home consumption.

As one agreement followed the other in rapid succession through 1916, the conditions demanded by the British Government became increasingly burdensome, in particular by the jurisdiction established for the British Legation over the associations' affairs. The associations, however, were in no position to bargain, since the British authorities pressed their point by forcible rationing or embargoes, until agreement had been obtained. "During the first four months of the year, therefore, forcible rationing was applied rather vigorously against Norwegian trade, and it was only as the rationing agreements became operative that the system relaxed."¹ The issue came to a head in March 1916 through the agreement with the Oil Group of the Association of Machinery Wholesalers. By the terms of this agreement, the Association had to all intents and purposes become a subsidiary executive agency of the British Government, and had accepted conditions that were contrary to Norwegian law.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs now decided to intervene. A memorandum was composed, containing the Ministry's comments on various points in the agreement, and handed to the British Legation. A circular was also sent to the

1. Bell. op.cit.. p. 496.

various trade associations, advising them to contact the Ministry both before the start of any negotiations and before the actual conclusion of any agreement. The points at issue were the object of discussions in May between the British Legation and the Ministry, but the positions of the two parties proved far too wide apart to be bridged. All that was achieved was a temporary acceptance that the import of lubricating oils could take place under the terms of the draft agreement. In June, a lengthy communication to the Norwegian Legation in London stated the principles for a general norm of agreements which could be acceptable to the Norwegian Government. In return for British concessions on the question of direct jurisdiction over the Branch Associations' affairs, the Government was willing to follow up certain steps already taken, leading to the enactment of legal sanctions against any breaches of undertakings, concerning agreements approved by the Government.

Finally, in July 1916, a modus vivendi was reached on this general basis, - after the Norwegian Government had made clear the political factors involved. "It must be remembered", the Foreign Minister wrote to Minister Vogt, "that these documents, when approved by the Norwegian Government, will become future historical documents from which will

conditions that could often be judged the Government's position in defence of the nation's rights." ¹ Several pending agreements were then concluded and signed through the autumn. According to the information which the American War Trade Board received from the British authorities in 1918, the British strangle-hold over the Norwegian economy included twenty agreements concerning oil and margarine, thirty-five other agreements, and a Black-List which named 1,100 suspect firms ².

Judgement in Norway seems to have been generally favourable with regard to effects of the Branch Agreements, once the modus vivendi on their form had been reached. As one contemporary critic ³ saw them, their great advantage was that the issues could be solved by the business world in a business-like way, without engaging or compromising the Government. Their main danger was that a belligerent, through pressures on and agreements with private business, could bring the country into a state of dependence through peaceful penetration, in such a way that, when faced with main issues and decisive choices, the country's freedom of action was in reality undermined. In retrospect, the conclusion must be that, despite

1. UD, H 4 I 11 30/15, Ihlen - Vogt, 8/7/1916.

2. WTB, Executive Country File, General. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

3. A. Røstad, Krigs- og Fredsproblemer (Kristiania, 1916), pp. 52 - 53.

conditions that could often seem unnecessarily harsh, the agreements contributed to the preservation of the Government's policy of neutrality, and did provide the country with at least its minimum needs of imported goods.

Lord As to the result of the agreements for the Entente's economic warfare, their effect was to bring the most essential imports to Norway under strict rationing and control, and to ensure that these commodities did not benefit the enemy in any way. It can safely be stated that after 1915 the transit trade to Germany by way of Norway, if not completely stopped, was wholly insignificant. The trade that still flowed from Norway to the Central Powers was the export of Norway's domestic products.

Co-ordination of Entente Policy

The parliamentary debates in December 1915, on the Danish agreement, were but one aspect of a wave of criticism which was on the rise in British public opinion at the time against the alleged laxity in the conduct of economic warfare. According to Leverton Harris, M.P. for East Worcestershire, who was to become Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Blockade, the critics could be divided into two schools. There was the Blue Water School, led by naval officers, picturing a contest between the Navy and the Foreign Office, in which the concern of the latter for neutral rights was continually frustrating the Admiralty's willingness and ability to enforce a complete blockade. Their

criticism was usually not tempered by an objective assessment of the legal and political problems involved, and one of the most outspoken leaders of this school, Admiral Sir Charles Beresford, on one occasion prompted Robert Cecil to retort: "The Noble Lord makes a great many statements, and almost all of them are inaccurate."¹

The other group of critics was referred to by Leverton Harris as the Statistical School, whose spokesmen pointed to the figures of import into the border neutrals as conclusive evidence of a voluminous transit trade to Germany. They were hardly convinced by the Government's reference to the extensive changes in "the whole economic and productive geography of the world", and they seldom penetrated the surface enough to discover that behind the figures lay also a basic weakness of the British system: that "trade between neutral and neutral was more strictly controlled than trade between Great Britain and the border States"². Whereas, for example, American cargoes destined for the Northern Neutrals were detained in British ports, and only released on guarantees from the importers that the goods were for neutral consumption, the British exporters were merely required to furnish a declaration of ultimate destination for their shipments, without guarantees from the

1. 75 H.C. Deb., 5s, p. 607.

2. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

3. Although Sir H. Dalsiel in the House of Commons maintained that cocoa was a sustaining beverage, which, he had been told, the Prime Minister used to serve after long and wearying debates (1918 *Parliamentary Deb.*, 5s, p. 835).

consignees¹.

This fact relates to an aspect of economic warfare which was present from the very beginning. In the words of Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, taken from a memorandum of 31 December 1914:

"As my colleagues are aware, the Board of Trade have since the war been paying special attention to the question of replacing German and Austrian goods in home, allied and neutral markets by goods of British manufacture." 2

From the British point of view, a high rate of exports was beneficial for the war economy, and to prohibit exports which the neutrals might then try to replace by German goods seemed like a short-sighted policy. With regard to the commodities which parliamentary critics often referred to, such as tea, cocoa and coffee, it could also be argued that they were hardly essential to the enemy's war potential³.

In a wider context, however, the sustained volume of British exports to border neutrals, accompanied by increased restrictions on neutral imports from other sources, was naturally

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1. Cf. Siney, The Allied Blockade of Germany, Vol. I, (Ann Arbor, 1957), p. 80 seq. An instance is provided in a minute by Scheel of a conversation between C.L.Paus, the British Commercial Attache, and himself in February 1915 (UD, P 2 L 13/14). Paus had asked if the export from Norway of Scottish herrings was forbidden. On Scheel's negative reply, the Attache then asked if the Foreign Ministry could investigate a rumour of such exports from Bergen to Germany. To this somewhat astonishing request, Scheel said that it should be the British authorities' business to ensure that Scottish herrings did not go to Germany. The instance is particularly revealing since the carrying of herrings to Norway, above all in February, seems even worse than carrying coals to Newcastle.
 2. Asquith Papers. Printed for the use of the Cabinet.
 3. Although Sir H. Dalziel in the House of Commons maintained that cocoa was a sustaining beverage, which, he had been told, the Prime Minister used to serve after long and wearying Cabinet meetings (66 H.C. Deb., 5 s, p. 833).

resented by those other sources - including the United States. The British export policy was also viewed with some dismay by France, Britain's major ally, whose own measures of economic warfare made no allowance for French export interests¹.

What was obviously needed was a closer co-ordination of trade policy. It was needed in Britain, as between the Foreign Office and other agencies concerned with stopping enemy trade², and the Board of Trade whose task was to assist and encourage British trade. It was also needed between Britain and her allies, in order to iron out the differences between Britain's more "commercial" conception of the blockade, outlined above, and the French approach, which was strictly "juridical" even to the detriment of French trade interests³. Only a unified policy, which subordinated all other interests to the overall aim of isolating the Central Powers, could make the rationing method really effective.

In Great Britain, an important step towards co-ordination was taken when the Ministry of Blockade was instituted

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1. Cf. Siney, loc.cit., and Bell, loc.cit., for a more extensive treatment of these questions.
 2. That correlation was imperfect even within this category, although on a technical rather than a policy level, is clear from a remark of Lord Emmott, Director of the War Trade Department, in a memorandum of 13 August 1915: "Amongst many other clever things done under Foreign Office instructions of late is the holding up of tennis balls for Switzerland and stopping tennis tournaments there." (Asquith Papers).
 3. Cf. Guichard, op.cit., pp. 73 - 74.

in February, and headed by Lord Robert Cecil who was given Cabinet rank. Lord Robert Cecil was in favour of a strict application of the principle of rationing, and was on that basis able to achieve a better co-operation with the French authorities, who had for some time consistently advocated such a policy.

The views of the new Minister for Blockade were candidly expressed in a confidential memorandum at the end of February:

"Where we cannot get agreements, I see no reason why we should not, in fact, do our best to hamper all imports, to whomsoever consigned, in excess of the figures (ac. of the home requirements of the country concerned). For this purpose, respecting goods not coming within any agreements, it will be necessary to regard all shipments of them with the greatest caution, as is done at the present time. When, in spite of that caution, the amount of any particular class of goods coming forward exceeds the figures we have fixed upon for the home requirements of those goods, every legitimate delay and difficulty should be put in their way, supposing there is not sufficient evidence to put them in the Prize Court. When this becomes known, it is to be hoped that shipowners will begin to enquire whether any particular goods are likely to lead to delay, as indeed they do in many cases now, and we shall secure something in the nature of rationing." 1

1. Memorandum of 25/2/1916, quoted in Davis, op.cit., p. 16.

6. The Norwegian Fish Market

The Norwegian fisheries, both along the coast and on the high seas, were at the time of the First World War estimated to give employment to 100,000 men, out of a population of two and a half million. Fish and fish products were among the most important items in the Norwegian export trade. Average figures for the four years immediately before the War show that fresh fish alone accounted for over 5 per cent of the total export value, whereas dried and salted, canned or otherwise processed fish constituted the bulk of the Norwegian food industry's products, the export of which in the same period averaged 23 per cent of the total value¹.

About half of Norway's fish exports before the War went to distant markets, almost equally divided between America and Southern Europe. Of the remaining half, 19 per cent went to Great Britain, France and Belgium, 16 per cent to Germany, Austria and Holland, and 8 per cent each

1. Figures from Statistisk Sentralbyrå: Økonomisk Utsyn (Economic Survey) 1900-1950 (Oslo, 1955); and Hjørt, Utenrikspolitiske Opplevelser under Verdenskrigen (Oslo, 1927).

1. The following account is based mainly on Hjørt, op. cit. and on Kallhav, Historie om Fiskehandelen.

to Russia and Scandinavia. Only 6-7 per cent of each year's catch were kept for domestic Norwegian consumption.

In order to keep the industry in operation it was necessary to import coal, petrol, salt, metal sheets, olive oil, hemp and cotton. Normally an estimated 85 per cent of these imports came from British or British-controlled sources.

These facts and figures provide, in a nutshell, the background for an understanding of the predicament facing Norwegian fisheries in the situation of economic warfare¹.

Almost from the very beginning of the War there was a rising demand for Norwegian fish. Instead of the normal procedure of buying from Norwegian exporting firms, foreign importers sent their own agents in ships to the west coast, and brought the fish straight from the fishermen to the markets abroad. Price seemed to be a secondary consideration, and the unprecedented prosperity of the fishermen was only to a small extent offset by the higher costs of imported stores and supplies. As the conditions of the market were allowed to continue unchecked through the year 1915, a veritable race developed, led by German buyers, who bought the fish "off the hook", and were able to offer the highest prices.

While the fishermen themselves may have been satisfied by this development, it was viewed with some concern by other interested parties. Among these were Norwegian exporters, by

1. The following account is based mainly on Hjort, op.cit., and on Neilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen.

whose empty store-houses and piers passed heavily laden foreign vessels. The situation also created problems for the Norwegian consumers, who either could not get any fish at all, or, at the best, had to pay exorbitant prices. Another party with a critical view of the development was the British Government, seeing that Germany was being fed by Norwegian fish which had been caught mainly with the use of British tackle and stores.

As the British authorities in the autumn of 1915 were extending their system of guarantee declarations for neutral imports, this was in the long run bound to have serious effects on supplies for the fisheries. To the Norwegian authorities concerned with fisheries' interests, the problems under such a system presented two aspects. There was the question of ensuring compliance with the undertakings, in a complex net of guarantees that extended to the individual fishermen in their scattered villages along the coasts. Then, if the undertakings against export to Germany could be and were strictly enforced, there remained the problem of markets for the fish. The distant markets, like Southern Europe, had largely fallen off because of price increases and transport difficulties, and in Northern Europe the neutral markets had but a limited capacity.

Thus, the fundamental dilemma for Norway as the big winter and spring fisheries of 1916 neared would appear to be whether to find other buyers for the fish, or to find other sources of stores and supplies. However, since the latter alternative was evidently not considered as a practical possibility, an

arrangement with Great Britain emerged as the only salvation in the eyes of the Norwegian authorities. The strongest advocate of action along these lines was the country's foremost expert, the Director of Fisheries, Dr. Johan Hjort. In consultation with his personal and official connections in Great Britain, he obtained their agreement to the principle of British blockade purchases, as a preferable alternative to an embargo on stores and supplies.

In January 1916 a sum of 10 million pounds was allotted to such purchases by the British Treasury, and it was decided - lacking the time necessary for creating a special organisation - that a Norwegian fish merchant should act as a secret agent for the British. In this way it was hoped to prevent an abnormal increase in prices. For Norway, the benefits of the arrangement also included an assurance that imports of stores and supplies would be facilitated.

divided than before, since the

chases had been Blockade Purchases, and Negotiations

Moreover, the British had not

The purchases began early in February, and lasted until 1 April. The situation which was thus created was indeed a peculiar one. "Through commissions, purchasing bureaus and agents, three Governments were actively buying, two of them to assure their own fish supply, the third one to prevent supplies to a power with whom it was at war."¹ The secret of A. Martens, the British agent, was not

1. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 79.

revealed, but the mere existence of a buyer with seemingly unlimited financial resources had an explosive effect on prices. Fat herrings, which in September had gone for the already high price of 40 - 55 kroner per barrel, now fetched an average of 89 kroner.

The result of the venture was that the British managed to secure 70 - 80 per cent of the whole catch, but at a total outlay of 11 million pounds¹. After such an experience, it was highly unlikely that the same method would be tried again, and the problem of an arrangement for the future security of the fisheries was still without a solution. Of immediate urgency was the question of obtaining supplies for the fisheries off Iceland, and it was for this purpose that Dr. Hjort went to London in April. However, his talks with the British authorities also had a more permanent arrangement in view.

The British attitude to the problem was now even more divided than before, since the opposition to blockade purchases had been strengthened by the high costs involved. Moreover, the British had met certain difficulties in arranging payments through the Bank of Norway, because of

1. Although subsequent sale recovered 5.7 million pounds. Cf. Bell, op.cit., p. 488. The same source gives the total British purchases of Norwegian fish, both under this arrangement and later under the Fisheries Agreement, as 514,000 tons at a cost of almost 25 million pounds. The net loss was about 10 million pounds. Davis (op.cit., p. 18) gives the quantity as 456,000 tons, and the amount paid as 21 million pounds, of which 16 million was a net loss. The explanation for the discrepancy may be that Davis' book was issued already in June 1920, at which stage the accounts may have been somewhat incomplete.

unfavourable rates of exchange. H. G. Maurice, Dr. Hjort's British colleague, finally outlined a plan¹ whereby Britain might be willing to continue the purchases on option - with the understanding that it would be exercised - at fixed prices, and with certain guarantees that the supplies imported from Britain would not benefit the enemy. R.G. Pretzman from the Board of Trade, who also participated in the talks, stressed as a condition for such an arrangement that a public declaration from the British Government should be made, to inform the Norwegian population of the British position in the fish market, past and future.

Although not explicitly stated, the most plausible motive for Britain's desire to publicise her intentions and actions was to strengthen the system of guarantees by a moral obligation on Norway's part. However, the Norwegian Government absolutely refused to accept this condition, since it might have "unfortunate consequences"².

This reply was followed by some incidents which did nothing to increase British goodwill towards Norway in the matter. The Norwegian Government refused - presumably

1. Cf. Hjort, op.cit., pp. 41-44.

2. Hjort, op.cit., p. 42.

for fear of becoming directly involved in any bargain - to receive Maurice who had gone to Kristiania for talks on the purchase plan, and at the same time the State Provisions Commission imposed a high tax on the export of cod liver oil for medical use¹. The proposed settlement therefore fell to the ground, and Dr. Hjort now demanded that his resignation, originally submitted in February as pending, be made effective from 1 July.

On his return to Kristiania on 29 April, Dr. Hjort was immediately invited to a dinner at the Grand Hotel with Ihlen and the Minister for Trade, Friis-Petersen, who both urged him to withdraw his resignation and continue his talks on a new arrangement. According to Hjort's account², he declared himself willing to continue negotiations, but could not recommend a new approach to the British unless the Norwegian Government was willing to forego tax levies on Britain's past purchases, and unless some form of announcement from the British Government was accepted. The two Ministers apparently promised their

1. According to Keilhau, the Commission acted in ignorance of the British purchasing arrangements (Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 82).

2. Hjort, op.cit., p. 51.

support on these points.

On Dr. Hjort's request that the British accept a reopening of negotiations, Pretzman from the Board of Trade replied in the affirmative, but expressed the hope that the tax on medicinal cod liver oil, bought by Britain before the tax regulations had been issued, should not be levied. He also repeated the request for an announcement in one form or another. Before leaving for London, Hjort expressly warned the Government against any new taxes on fish products.

Friis-Petersen's reply to Pretzman's tentative conditions reached Hjort soon after his arrival in London. Both points were answered in the negative. To the "announcement" it was replied that:

"If those concerned maintain the necessity of publication in some form, attention should be drawn to the fact that it would probably cause similar measures to be taken by the other side concerning their respective purchases. Otherwise it is remarked that the British purchases are now presumed to be known by all interested parties in this country." 1

In addition, the Norwegian Provisions Commission in bidding for some of the British herrings purchases for the domestic

1. UD, H 4 I 11 11/16, Friis-Petersen - Hjort, 6/5/1916.

2. The following was Dr. Hjort's attitude towards

market, had refused to consider British price demands of for example 60 kroner per barrel of fat herrings. For a barrel which had cost the British 89 kroner, the Commission offered only 50 kroner, and indicated that high export taxes on herrings might be decided if the bid was rejected.

For Dr. Hjort, this succession of events had made his negotiations impossible, and had clearly destroyed the basis on which he thought that an understanding might be reached. The British authorities at this stage, according to Hjort¹, seemed to revert to the idea of an embargo on all supplies to the fishing fleet. All that remained for Dr. Hjort before returning to Norway was to obtain an interim arrangement to save the supplies for the impending fisheries off Iceland.

Basically, the settlement which Dr. Hjort promoted, and to which he succeeded in obtaining Britain's consent²,

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1. Hjort, op.cit., p. 60. This may have been the impression deliberately conveyed to Dr. Hjort. At any rate, the powerful "War Trade Advisory Committee" - which included both Leverton Harris and Fretyman among its members - favoured continued purchases (vide infra, p. 180). The purchase policy was debated in the British Cabinet on 17 May, but was on Lord Crewe's suggestion referred to the War Committee (Asquith Papers).
 2. The following evaluation rests on the presumption that Dr. Hjort's description of the plan, and of the British attitude towards it, is correct.

The main objection of the Norwegian Government would have functioned as a system of guarantee declarations combined with an assurance of British purchases, whereby those using supplies from Great Britain would undertake to sell their catch to agents acceptable to the British authorities. Others could then try to achieve similar bargains with other supply sources. Compared to the agreement which was arrived at later, the plan which was allowed to lapse had obvious advantages, and it is not difficult to understand Dr. Hjort's anger and disappointment at the attitude of the Norwegian Government.

As to the main point in dispute, a public British announcement of the arrangement, such a message to the Norwegian population from a foreign government may be a peculiar procedure. On the other hand, as Keilhau also admits while still defending the Government's viewpoint, it was fundamentally an advertisement of a commercial proposition to whoever was interested. However, the Government even rejected Dr. Hjort's compromise suggestions about different ways in which the declaration could be made¹.

1. Dr. Hjort indicated that it might either be published in England, or announced at a meeting, arranged by the British consul in Bergen, with representatives of the fishing trade, and then subsequently reported in the press.

The main objection of the Norwegian Government was apparently their fear of similar action from the other side. The point is argued by Keilhau, who says:

"It was bad enough that the belligerents by their purchases and declarations in semi-obscurity had carried their trade war on to Norwegian soil. It would become even worse if this market contest should assume the character of an open struggle, making Norway a kind of acknowledged battlefield in the economic war."

The argument does not seem to carry much weight. Once the reality of the split in the country's business world - between traders to the Entente and traders to the Central Powers - was recognised, it is difficult to see how a publication of the parties' intentions and desires could do any additional damage. If a propaganda war was feared, it would seem preferable to have this in the nature of advertisements rather than by planted or inspired articles as was already being done.

The Fisheries Agreement

On 21 June the Norwegian Government unanimously decided to make another appeal to Dr. Hjort, with a view to new negotiations "essentially on the same basis as Dr. Hjort's previous negotiations in London"¹. Dr. Hjort agreed to make another

1. Hjort, op. cit., p. 67. based on Hjort, op. cit., and on
US, S & I 11 11/16.

attempt, and after various preparations and approaches, the talks opened in Kristiania on 20 July, with F. Leverton Harris and J.H. Simpson as representatives of the British Government.

It soon became clear that the situation at this stage was materially different¹. As a basis for discussion, the British submitted a scheme with the following main points: a Fish Merchants' Association should be formed, which should not only import supplies for the fisheries, but also secure and sell to British agents, at mutually arranged prices, all the fish products not required for the domestic market. The Norwegian Government would prohibit all export of fish and fish-products except under licence, and no licences should be given to other than the Fish Merchants' Association. Dr. Hjort remarked that this proposal was outside the field in which the earlier talks had been conducted. He asked whether there were other examples of a neutral country selling its whole production of a certain commodity to one belligerent party, and the British replied by referring to American copper.

The plan was unacceptable to the Norwegian Government, and because of the changed situation Hjort now requested the assistance of Arne Scheel, Under-Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, for the continuing negotiations. It was decided to present a counter-proposal based on the principles of the Branch Agreements, combined with a British pledge to purchase certain quantities of

1. The following account is based on Hjort, op.cit., and on UD, H 4 I 11 11/16.

1. UD, H 4 I 11 11/16, Hjort - op. cit., 20/7/16.

fish at settled prices. However, strongly reminiscent as this proposal was of the scheme which had been allowed to lapse in April, time was no longer opportune for such a settlement. The main reason for the British refusal to combine purchasing commitments with a Branch Agreement was that it was not believed to offer satisfactory guarantees.

Leverton Harris now presented the Norwegians with two alternative suggestions: either British purchases under export prohibition, or a Branch Agreement without British purchases. Faced with this choice, Dr. Hjort had no doubt whatever that the former plan was of a nature to afford "a good basis for the active continuation of the fisheries during the war", and that it would "safeguard the interests of both fishermen and exporters". The other alternative would "reduce the Norwegian fisheries industry in an exceptionally strong degree".

"From the viewpoint of the fisheries, therefore, there is no doubt in my mind that the first alternative must be the only satisfactory one. What the situation may be from a political point of view I consider as outside my field of concern."¹

The issue was now debated in various expert committees with regard to technical details and price questions, while the Government debated the political aspects. The Foreign Minister regarded the alternative of an export prohibition as conflicting with Norwegian neutrality, whereas Dr. Hjort, who was also present, restated as his conviction that Branch Agreements without purchase agreements were worthless and would probably lead to destitution for the greater part of those dependent on the fisheries for

1. UD, H 4 I 11 11/16, Hjort - UD, 24/7/1916.

their living.

The compromise plan which finally led to agreement was brought up by the Prime Minister, and related to an arrangement which the Netherlands had obtained for their agricultural products. Its main principle was a percentage division of exports between the two belligerent parties, and such percentages might then be adapted according to the amount of supplies delivered to the Norwegian fishing fleet by each party. After another attempt to obtain Britain's acceptance of the combination of a Branch Agreement with purchases, attention was directed toward the "percentage plan". The maximum share which would be allowed to go to Germany or other countries was finally settled at 15 per cent after some bargaining¹. Norway's endeavour to obtain a further concession with regard to exports to Denmark and Sweden failed.

The Fisheries Agreement between the Norwegian and the British Governments was signed on 5 August 1916. Briefly summarized, it provided that the Norwegian Government would issue an immediate export ban on all fish products, except fish conserves². Dispensations from the prohibition could

1. Britain at first proposed only 10 per cent, whereas Norway demanded 25.

2. Which were covered by other guarantees concerning tin plate, olive oil, etc.

be given for exports to other countries of as much as 15 per cent of the catch, distributed on certain specified groups of products, but would depend on guarantees that no supplies had been used that were imported from or under the control of Great Britain and her allies. In return, the British Government pledged itself to buy all fish products that were not required on the domestic market, at maximal prices which were fixed for the duration of the war. For these purchases the British Government should receive unconditional export licences. The export to Norway of supplies and equipment to the fishing industry would be facilitated and licensed to the extent that Great Britain and her allies could do so without jeopardy for their own needs. The pledge to purchase needed four weeks' notice for cancellation, whereas Norway could cancel the whole Agreement by three months' notice.

The Fisheries Agreement was thus the final outcome of a long and complicated contest for control over the product of Norway's fisheries in which the conflicting interests of three nations were directly concerned. On one side there was Great Britain, with a strong interest in preventing the provisioning of Germany, and with the power to do so through her position as supplier of the "tools". On the other side

control one of Norway's domestic products, and prevent 55 per

there was Germany, with a vital interest in purchasing fish at almost any price but apparently without sufficient other means of coercion to achieve this end. In the middle was Norway, whose interests were more complicated, and whose only real means to achieve her ends lay in the possibility of playing off one side against the other.

In the first phase, up to the end of 1915, there was a free market, in which Germany was the leading protagonist through her willingness to pay the highest price for the goods. Norway gained through the prosperity of that part of her population which was dependent on fishing, but had to suffer the scarcity of fish at acceptable prices on the domestic market. In the second phase, from January to April 1916, Great Britain dominated the market, to Norway's profit, but the benefits of both parties were on an artificial and short-term basis. In the third phase, covering the negotiations in London in April, the Norwegian Government was the only loser, through their failure to act decisively and catch the opportunity when it presented itself through the good offices of Dr. Hjort.

In the fourth phase which ended in the Agreement, Great Britain was the only one to achieve a clear advantage. By the terms of the settlement, the British were able to control one of Norway's domestic products, and prevent 85 per

cent of the Norwegian fish catch from reaching the German market, by purchasing the fish at moderate and fixed prices. They were also able to continue exports of supplies and equipment to Norway, and on the whole saw their influence over the Norwegian economy appreciably strengthened. Germany lost an important addition to her food supplies, by failing to exert the counter-pressure that offers of German supplies would have constituted.

To Norway, the over-all result was of an ambiguous nature, to say the least. Her national interest in the matter had both economic and political components. On the economic side, the main factor was the fishing industry, which by the arrangement obtained a basic security for the duration of the war, - even though the fixed prices gave no allowance for adjustments to fluctuating prices of stores and supplies¹. Fish for the domestic market was also assured at reasonable prices. However, these economic gains were obtained at disproportionately heavy political costs.

With the Fisheries Agreement, Norway departed from the line followed so far of letting agreements be concluded with

1. An allowance which was made in a similar agreement between Great Britain and Iceland. Cf. Siney, The Allied Blockade of Germany, p. 194.

private business interests in Norway, with the purpose of securing a continued supply of essential imports in return for certain compensatory undertakings. This time the Government was itself engaged, in a deal designed to provide security for a nationally vital industry, even at the cost of an explicit discrimination against one belligerent party. The conclusion of such an agreement would have been justified if realistic alternatives - in terms of other sources of supply for the fishing industry - were demonstrably absent. However, at no point in the process was Germany approached with a request to furnish stores and supplies in return for fish imports. Moreover, an alternative such as an offer of German supplies would have strengthened Norway's hand in the effort to obtain better terms. A belated realisation of the advantage of such an approach appeared in a telegram to Minister Ditten in Berlin, on 19 September, where Ihlen said: "It is possible that our position in the negotiations would have been stronger if we already then had known Germany's willingness to supply material for the fisheries."¹

In the circumstances, by not having clearly established

1. UD, H 4 I ii 11/16, Ihlen - Ditten, 19/9/16.

1. Hjort, op.cit., p. 110.

the lack of alternatives, the position of the Norwegian Government was severely damaged from the very outset in the political conflict that ensued. The Fisheries Agreement marked the end of a long process of economic bargaining, but it also meant the beginning of a series of political difficulties which badly tarnished the Government's foreign policy record.

The sources of disagreement can be briefly indicated without anticipating the events that were to follow. Primarily, there was the Government's - more particularly the Foreign Minister's - attempt to keep the Agreement secret. When Dr. Hjort approached Ihlen two days after the settlement with various suggestions for avoiding too close an engagement of the central authorities in its execution, his suggestions were rejected with the reply that "it presupposes that the Agreement becomes known"¹. One cannot but sympathise with Hjort's astonishment that an arrangement directly affecting 100,000 people could be expected to remain a secret.

The strained relations with Great Britain in the months that followed owed much to disputes over the Norwegian authorities' administration of the Fisheries

1. Hjort, op.cit., p. 110.

Agreement. These difficulties had been anticipated by Hjort in his suggestions to Ihlen just mentioned, and were thus an indirect result of the secrecy that surrounded the treaty. The decision on secrecy has been defended for the reason that a publication of the details at that stage would have entailed serious dangers for Norway's neutrality. While this in itself is an indictment of the Government's handling of the affair, it hardly serves as a defence of the failure to inform Germany in advance, both of the main principles of the Agreement, and of Norway's justification for solving her predicament along those lines¹. The details might be kept secret for some time, but the main content would become apparent through the effects of the new system. In fact, the Germans were on the track already before the effects had been felt.

The reason for not divulging the details of the Agreement was that the formulation on some points left doubts as to whether the concession of 15 per cent "free" exportation would really be applicable. At issue was the provision that export licences under the 15 per cent clause should depend on guarantees that no stores or supplies obtained

1. As it was, even Norway's Minister to Berlin was not informed of its contents until a month and a half after the conclusion of the Agreement. Cf. UD, H 4 I 11 11/16, Ditten-Ihlen, 21/9/1916.

from Great Britain had been used. The British claimed, firstly, that this was not limited to stores and supplies obtained on guarantee during the war. However, through negotiations the Norwegians succeeded in gaining recognition of the fact that no one could be expected to account for the whole history of the equipment used. Secondly, further talks were needed before the British authorities would admit that the fisherman's personal provisions could not be included in "stores and supplies". Thirdly, there was the stipulation that the 15 per cent should be in relation to specified groups of products. Only after protracted discussion did the Norwegians manage to convince the British that the only practical basis for calculating the percentage was the fresh fish weight, not the weight as dried, salted or otherwise prepared for export which the Agreement seemed to imply.

Later criticism of the Agreement has stressed the point that Norway's rights were not sufficiently precise, and therefore relied too heavily on Great Britain's benevolent interpretation of the various clauses. Against this Dr. Hjort maintains that a strong amount of confidence was inevitable in selling goods to a country which had no need for these goods, and that such a situation could not support a "dispute on paragraphs". However, the disputes as to the

later demonstrate¹. The effect as Germany's...
embargo would not have meant an...
exact meaning of the guarantee clauses seem sufficient
the necessities a great effort...
to prove that a benevolent British interpretation should
many to provide...
not have been a foregone conclusion. In fact, Hjort's
fish on reasonable terms.
argument reveals an important bias in his view of Britain's
intentions. He saw as the decisive point the question
whether England needed the goods or not, and defined
Britain's motives accordingly. However, pure generosity
is a rare motive in relations between States, and its assump-
tion hardly a valid ground for international treaties.
Great Britain's willingness to purchase Norwegian fish was
no doubt based on careful considerations. It is well worth
noting that the "War Trade Advisory Committee", an inter-
departmental committee with Sir F. Hopwood as chairman, in
March recommended that the purchases should be continued,
and later even suggested that this policy should be extended
to other countries and other products¹. From Norway's
viewpoint, the primary consideration could only be that
Great Britain desired to prevent fish exports to Germany,
and the means chosen to attain this purpose were in that
connection of secondary relevance. Moreover, the choice

1. of alternative means - such as a supplies embargo - was
not all that simple a decision, as the case of Denmark would

2. Cf. Davis, op.cit., p. 15.

3. UB, II 4 I 11 11/16, Italien - Dänemark, 22/10/1916.

4. Ibid. Ditten - Italien, 21/10/1916.

later demonstrate¹. The effect on Norway's fisheries of such an embargo would not have meant an immediate catastrophe, and in the meantime a great effort would surely have been made by Germany to provide stores, in return for considerable supplies of fish on reasonable terms.

With regard to Germany, Ihlen on 7 August informed the German Minister of a new agreement with Great Britain whereby the "principle of the origin of supplies and stores" was to be applied as a restriction on the sale of Norwegian fish products. However, since the export prohibition would only take effect on 18 August and stocks in hand on that date could be sold freely, the Minister "again recommended that the coming days should be used by Germany for as great purchases as possible"². The day before the prohibition became effective, Ihlen in a dispatch to Minister Ditten in Berlin said that he had the same day informed the German Minister that exports would be prohibited, but that old stocks were free and that "a certain leeway for future dispensations" existed³. In his reply, von Ditten reported that Germany had not yet defined her attitude, but Norway's difficult situation was recognized, and much would also depend on whether Germany would receive "a suitable proportion" of the exports⁴. On 3

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1. Denmark refused British demands of a stoppage of fish exports to Germany; and when the British embargo was enforced, Danish fisheries continued with German supplies. Cf. Bell, *op.cit.*, pp. 488-489.
 2. DZA, Potsdam. Reichsministerium des Innern, Norwegen adh. 7, Bd. I. Author's italics.
 3. UD, H 4 I ii 11/16, Ihlen - Ditten, 17/8/1916.
 4. *Ibid.*, Ditten - Ihlen, 21/8/1916.

September, the German War Ministry revealed to the Norwegian Military Attaché that they knew about the 15 per cent which were to be Germany's only share of Norwegian fish products.

From then onwards the tension in German - Norwegian relations increased sharply. For their recriminations against Norway, the German authorities had had two strong cards handed to them. One was that they could now, without the burden of proof upon them, maintain that German deliveries to the fishing fleet could have been augmented if necessary in return for more fish exports to Germany¹. In addition, the accusation that the Agreement was unneutral was reinforced by Norway's refusal to divulge its contents.

However, the political conflict that was brewing was fermented not only by the Fisheries Agreement, but also by the restrictions in the supply of pyrites to Germany which followed from another agreement between Norway and Great Britain.

1. In the conversation already referred to, Military Attaché Astrup was told in the German War Ministry that German supplies had long been in preparation, and that an offer to adapt 4,000 fisher-boat motors for the use of German benzol had been under way. On 14 September, the German Minister to Kristiania said that, until Germany knew how much fish she could obtain, the German Government could not start sending coal, fishing tackle, etc. to Norway. (UD, H 4 D ii 33/15, Memorandum by Attaché Astrup; UD, H 4 I ii 11/16, Minute by Under Secretary Wollebæk.)

7. Copper and Pyrites

"From Norway also we receive important raw materials for our war industry and large amounts of foodstuffs for our civilian population and our army. Norway is the only country from which we receive great quantities of nickel, which is indispensable for our manufacture of ammunition. In 1915 her deliveries thereof amounted to 3,887 dz. /1/ (estimated value about 8 Million Mark). We received further copper of domestic origin (1915: 13,612 dz., estimated value about 7 Million Mark) and copper and sulphur pyrites (1915: 1,787,630 dz., estimated value about 8½ Million Mark)." 2

This extract from a memorandum of the commercial department of the Auswärtiges Amt gives some indication of the importance to Germany of supplies from the Norwegian mining industry. The value of these materials for the manufacture of munitions was clearly realised by the British authorities, but the question of interference with the supply was complicated by the fact that the goods were domestic Norwegian products. With regard to copper, however, Norway was both an exporter of cupriferous pyrites and ores which could not be refined at home, and an importer of refined electrolytic copper and copper products. Norway's copper needs were greatly increased just before and

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1. 1 dz. (Doppelzentner) equals 2 cwt.
 2. Copy in AA, WK 18 geh. adh. 1, Vol. 5.

during the First World War, in conjunction with the development of the country's large resources of hydro-electric power with extensive copper-wire transmission lines.

In December 1914 Norway issued an export prohibition on copper, expressly excluding from its provisions copper of domestic origin, although the Foreign Minister warned the Storting of his fears that exceptions of this nature might be difficult to maintain in the future¹. In fact, the British were already at this stage pressing for a more inclusive export prohibition, while Findlay was suggesting to his Government that the supplies of Norwegian copper and nickel should be bought up by the Entente². Findlay's proposal was examined by a sub-committee of the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Committee, which however favoured negotiations with particular firms rather than official, large-scale agreements. Subsequent attempts led to nothing; a major obstacle seems to have been the difference in copper prices on the German and British markets³.

The solution to the problem of controlling Norway's

1. Vide supra, p. 74.

2. Cf. AA, Abt.A, Akten der Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandtschaft in Kristiania. Kupfer (Kies) 1915 - 1917, Oberndorff - AA, 2/2/1915; and Bell, op.cit., p. 96. Cf. also the
1. Cabinet Paper quoted above, p. 114.

3. Cf. Bell, op.cit., p. 148.

copper trade, however, lay at the source of her imports of manufactured copper goods. Norway's needs of copper wire were mainly supplied by the United States, and in the early part of 1915 Britain's efforts resulted in agreements with the American exporters whose shipments went through agents in London. In March 1915, Leverton Harris could report to the Cabinet that the equivalent of 95 per cent of normal American copper exports were under control. All shipments were reported to the British consul in New York, and details of all sales were communicated to the British Admiralty¹.

By this control, particularly when combined with British coal and bunker regulations, the British Government was in a good position to exert a determined pressure on Norway in the question of copper and pyrites. Ihlen described Britain's insistent efforts to the Storting in May 1915, in a statement which also made clear that the question was not only one of copper:

"Norway is now the only source which can supply Germany with the sulphur needed for the manufacture of ammunition, and our exports of pyrites have thus been enormously increased. The pyrites export to Germany, which used to average 3,000 tons monthly, rose in February to 25,000 tons, and in March to 28,000 tons. With a sulphuric content

1. Asquith Papers, Printed for the use of the Cabinet.

of 43 per cent this means 12,000 tons of sulphur, which is of the greatest importance to Germany. I understand that England is about to act in this matter." 1

Germany, on her side, was watching the development of the situation through her Minister to Kristiania, and was fully aware of the dangers involved. On 4 February, Ministerialdirektor Johannes in the Commercial Department of the Auswärtiges Amt instructed Minister Oberndorff to warn the Norwegian Government that, if Norway gave in to pressure from the Entente and decided to prohibit the export of her domestic products, Germany would "to her regret" have to adopt similar methods concerning her exports to Norway of sugar, dye-stuffs, medicinal supplies, etc. 2

The relevance of sulphur to the question of copper relates to certain facts about Norwegian pyrites which are explained by the following survey:

"The pyrite deposits of Norway represent different types of ore. Generally speaking, they may be divided into cupriferous and non-cupriferous pyrite ores.

All operating mines except two (Stordø and Bjørkåsen) work cupriferous pyrite ores.

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1. Stortinget, Secret Archives, Meeting of 14 May, 1915.
 2. AA, Abt. A, Akten der Kaiserl. Deutschen Ges.sch. in Kr.a. (Kies) 1915 - 1917.

The cupriferous pyrite ores usually contain about 90 per cent pyrite (iron sulphide) and 5 to 10 per cent chalcopyrite (copper iron sulphide) and sphalerite (zinc sulphide), equivalent to 2 to 4 per cent copper plus zinc.

The non-cupriferous pyrite ores are mainly composed of pyrite and contain little or no chalcopyrite or sphalerite." 1

By December 1915, the British control of American copper exports had created a serious shortage of copper wire and other copper products in Norway, and the situation grew steadily worse as the new year began. Large municipal electrification schemes came to a halt as their orders, already paid for, were stopped either before loading or during trans-shipment in England. In the Foreign Office, a Minister Vogt was told that there was a clear connection between Norway's copper difficulties and her copper exports to Germany.

In February, Ihlen made an attempt to enlist American co-operation towards a solution of the problem, both through Minister Schmedeman at Kristiania, and through the Norwegian Legation in Washington, which presented two memoranda to the State Department on Norway's grievances. The attitude of the United States Government, however, was that it could

1. O.J. Adamson, Industries of Norway, (Oslo, 1952), p. 102.

take no action in the absence of complaints from American copper firms. Orally, the Secretary of the Norwegian Legation was told that the British Government would not let the copper through until Norway had placed an embargo on her own copper products¹.

Ihlen was presumably already aware that some regulation of Norway's copper export was inevitable sooner or later, on account of both Norway's copper shortage and the diplomatic pressure from the Entente. On 8 March, Ihlen told the German Minister of his fears that Norway might have to give in and reserve part of the copper production for compensation purposes, and that the export of non-cupriferous pyrites might also be affected. On the other hand, a strong opposition against interference was forthcoming from Germany and also from neutral countries such as Sweden, as the buyers of pyrites, as well as from the Norwegian producers, who were specially reluctant to lose their most

1. Cf. State Department, 763.72112/2260, 2508, 2509. The U.S. position was restated in Lansing's note to the Norwegian Minister in April - although he indicated a willingness to let the American Ambassador co-operate unofficially with the Norwegian Minister in London in taking up the matter with the British authorities, and again in June, when the State Department's Foreign Trade Adviser, Holder, brought up the issue. Holder's view was that since Norwegian ore continued to go to Germany, the embargo did Britain no good except assist her own trade, and did the United States harm by the loss of a valuable trade.

profitable trade at a time when the industry was suffering from a wide-spread labour conflict. Ihlen therefore deliberately delayed the imposition of restrictions, while seeking to obtain as favourable conditions as possible from the British.

There followed a three months' period, from March to May, during which the three major parties involved, Norway, Great Britain and Germany, sought to clarify the basis on which a solution could be reached providing the maximum benefits for their own interests. It soon became clear that the principle of the arrangement would have to be that of a compensation trade, where refined copper would be exchanged for Norwegian copper ore. However, the Foreign Ministry, supported by the mining industry, insisted on retaining an unspecified percentage of the copper ore for exchange with goods other than copper products which Norway required from Germany¹. This condition, together with Norwegian demands as to price and the percentage allowed for waste in calculating copper ore equivalents, proved unacceptable to the British Government.

1. According to Siney (op.cit., p. 232) the Norwegian Government proposed to send "at most" one third of its copper and pyrites export to Britain.

The British demanded a complete export ban, from which dispensations could only be given on a strict compensation basis¹. Britain's attitude was explained at length in a note from Findlay in April, where he described a strict compensation basis as absolutely reasonable in view of the fact that Norway's output of copper ore was greater than her needs of refined copper. The note also showed that the issue for the British had strong emotional overtones:

"I wish to point out that, as far as my Government is aware, no other neutral State is exporting to the enemies of Great Britain material for the manufacture of munitions of war, and is at the same time expecting Great Britain to facilitate the importation of the same material. It is practically certain that the copper exported from Norway is used for the manufacture of the shells which day after day are causing the death and disablement of the soldiers of Great Britain and her Allies. It is even probable that copper dug in Norwegian mines is part of the material used in the construction of the submarines by which so many Norwegian ships have been destroyed 'with due consideration for the rights of neutrals', and not a few Norwegian sailors killed or wounded. The inflated price of Norwegian copper is, in fact, the price of blood, - the blood of the friendly people to whom Norway would necessarily look for assistance in time of need, and on whom she depends, not only for the continuance of her present prosperity and independence, but for her existence as one of the foremost sea-faring nations of the world." 2

1. Cf. UD, H 4 D ii 33/15, for documents relating to the Copper Agreement.

2. UD, H 4 D ii 33/15, Findlay-Ihlen, 7/4/1916.

However understandable Findlay's sentiments may be, his choice of words was hardly conducive to a favourable reception of his terms. Ihlen, in his reply, wanted to

"emphasize that the Norwegian Government, in decisions regarding Norwegians' free exportation of the country's own products, cannot be governed by the circumstance that the products concerned might be utilized by the enemies of the British Government for the manufacture of munitions."

The principle that a neutral State was obliged to prevent its citizens from supplying belligerents with articles which could be used in warfare would moreover, if universally applied, prevent the export to Great Britain of several Norwegian products. Ihlen's reply finally declared that

"Norway does not regard herself as particularly dependent on any given country apart from what generally follows from the interdependence of all nations." 1

In May, Germany made a determined attempt to prevent the stopping of their imports of Norwegian pyrites, after strong rumours that a prohibition was in the making. The Prussian War Ministry sent Rittmeister Spiess to Kristiania to assist the Legation in negotiations with the Foreign Ministry, and had authorised him, if necessary, to offer

1. Ibid., Ihlen - Findlay, 13/4/1916.

Norway up to 1,500 tons of electrolytic copper annually without demanding equivalent copper amounts in exchange, provided the supply of pyrites remained free. The German offer had, however, been calculated on the basis of an under-estimation of Norway's requirements, and was not made since Spiess decided that it would not have the desired effect. His report concluded that

"Since our main task must consist in keeping the pyrites for our chemical and iron industries, we shall have to consider the acceptance of a situation in which Norway, in return for receiving the 3,000 tons of copper goods from America, reserves her equivalent copper output for England, while we assist with further copper deliveries without demanding compensation in copper." 1

The Copper Agreement

On 30 May the Foreign Ministry submitted to the British Government a proposed agreement, according to which Norway was willing to prohibit the export of unwrought copper, copper

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1. AA, Abt. A Akten der Kaiserl. Deutschen Ges.sch. in Er.a. Kupfer (Kies) 1915-1917. On 27 May, the German Minister nevertheless told Ihlen that Germany was able to supply some copper wire to Norway.

ore, cupriferous pyrites, and residue of copper ore¹. Dis-
pensations from the prohibition could be given for export to
belligerents against copper compensation minus 20 per cent
of wastage, and for export to neutral countries in "reasonable
amounts". The British Government should in return license
the import into Norway of up to 10,000 tons of refined copper,
for which the above-mentioned cupriferous minerals should be
compensation.

In a subsequent interview with the German Minister Ihlen
said that an export prohibition could no longer be avoided,
but that "Norwegian pyrites, in so far as they contain no
copper, will not be hit by the measure".² Ihlen repeated
this assurance some days later, and added that the non-cupri-
ferous ores in question came from the Stordo and Bosmo mines³.

Britain's counter-proposal was delivered to the Foreign
Ministry in a note from the British Legation of 27 June. It

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1. These are the terms employed in a telegram to the Legation in London, in English. The Norwegian text, as submitted to the British Legation at Kristiania, used the equivalent terms - "kobber, ubearbeidet; kobbermaln; kobberholdig svovelkis; og kobberholdig kisavbrand".
 2. AA, Abt. A. Akten der Kaiserl. Deutschen Ges. sch. in Kr. a. Kupfer (Eies) 1915 - 1917, Michahelles - AA, 2/6/1916.
 3. This information had apparently been supplied to the Ministry by a letter from the State Commission for Mines, giving the copper contents in the other pyrites as ranging from 2.7 to 1.7 per cent, whereas the Stordo and Bosmo pyrites were analysed as containing respectively 40 and 49 per cent sulphur, and no copper.

appeared substantially similar to Norway's draft proposal, although some of the figures had been changed, so that for example British licences for copper to Norway would be granted up to an annual amount of 8,000 instead of Norway's proposed 10,000 tons. In the passage referring to the export prohibition, the British proposal, instead of the terms "cupriferous pyrites; and residue of copper ore", used the expressions "pyrites containing copper; and purple-ore containing copper".

In July, representatives of the Norwegian pyrites mines met with the Foreign Minister in Kristiania, and decided in preparation for the copper agreement to form an "Association for the Export of Norwegian Cupriferous Pyrites"¹. Since the normal technical and commercial limit for cupriferous as against other pyrites was one per cent, it was also determined that producers of pyrites below this limit would stay outside the Association.

The final draft for an agreement was submitted by the British Legation on 31 July. The exchange arrangement was still substantially the same, but with the additional provision

1. In Norwegian: "Foreningen for Export av Norsk Kobberholdig Svevelkis", mostly referred to as "Kisexport-Foreningen". It will here be referred to as the Association.

of an emergency import to Norway of 3,000 tons of copper in view of the existing shortage. In return, there was included a so-called "Assurance" which gave the British Government "a first call on any stock of pyrites in Norway or any pyrites which may be produced in Norway until the amount required in exchange for the above-mentioned 3,000 tons of copper has been exported to Great Britain in the form of pyrites".

The Copper Agreement between Great Britain and Norway was concluded by an exchange of notes on 28 and 30 August, on the basis of the draft of 31 July apart from a few subsequent changes. Germany was informed of the settlement at once, and when Michahelles enquired about the exact extent of the export prohibition, Ihlen confirmed that only cupriferous pyrites were concerned. However, he "had not concealed that the time may come when we will be forced to prohibit also the export of pyrites that do not contain copper"¹.

The export prohibition on Norwegian copper products was issued on 1 September. For pyrites, it used "kobberholdig svovelkis", and this was defined in a letter to the

1. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15, Ihlen - Ditten, 31/8/1916.

Ministry of Finance and Customs as pyrites with more than one half per cent copper content. The customs offices were then informed of this limit by a circular from the Ministry. The Norwegian text of the prohibition was enclosed in a letter to the British Legation on the day of issue.

In early September, the two pyrites experts Hunter and Palmer from the British Rio Tinto Company arrived in Kristiania for negotiations on the purchase of Norwegian pyrites from the Association formed for that purpose¹. Then, on 19 September, Findlay told Under-Secretary Scheel of the Foreign Ministry that the export to Germany of pyrites with less than one half per cent copper in his view was contrary to the Copper Agreement. Four days later, a Note Verbale stated that the British Legation had "learnt with some surprise" of the circular to the Customs Offices

1. Rio Tinto was of course the arch-competitor of the emerging Norwegian pyrites industry. Whether or to what extent this affected British attitudes to Norwegian pyrites is not for this Author to say, but the diary of Lord Milner, member of the Board of Directors of Rio Tinto and later a member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet, on 25 July 1916 has a curious reference to a talk with Lord Robert Cecil "about our pyrites contract with Germany". (Milner Papers) As it appears, Lord Milner on that day informed Lord Robert Cecil that the Rio Tinto Company intended to take steps to cancel outstanding contracts for the sale of pyrites to Germany. A letter to Lord Milner two days later stated that "the Government very highly appreciate your suggestion..." (Cf. letter to the Author from the Rio Tinto Company of 3 July 1962, with enclosed photocopy of a letter from Lord Robert Cecil to Lord Milner dated 27 July 1916.)

defining the export prohibition and regarded it as a "distinct breach not only of the letter, but of the spirit of the Agreement, as all copper is extractable from these low-grade ores"¹

Norway's reply was that the Agreement was one of copper exchange, for which purpose only pyrites with more than one per cent copper would normally be considered. The present limit had been set at one half per cent by the Norwegian Government in order to provide a safety margin. The Foreign Minister reminded the British Government that in sales of pyrites the first three quarters per cent of copper were never paid for as copper.

This exchange marked the beginning of the war's most serious dispute between the Norwegian and British Governments. In its most compact form, the issue was whether the term "pyrites containing copper" meant the same as "kobberholdig svovelkis", or whether it meant pyrites with even the faintest trace of copper. In the former case, the copper content would have to exceed a limit down to which copper extraction is feasible; in the latter case, all Norwegian pyrites would be included since none of them are entirely free of copper.

The point has been much debated, both at the time and afterwards, and no definite conclusions have been reached. The most likely answer, however, seems to be that the British Legation, possessing no expert knowledge at the time, arrived at the expression "pyrites containing copper" - unknown in technical

1. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15, Findlay - Ihlen, 23/9/1916.

terminology - by way of a literal translation of "kobberholdig svovelkis". A fairly conclusive evidence that only cupriferous pyrites were included in the deal is the official French version of the Copper Agreement, which speaks of an export prohibition "de cuivre, de minerai de cuivre, de pyrites cuivreuses, [et] de cendres de pyrites renfermant du cuivre"¹. Subsequently, consultations with the newly arrived Rio Tinto experts, against the background of Britain's desire to stop sulphur also from going to Germany, probably convinced Findlay that the term "pyrites containing copper" could by a somewhat stretched definition be said to cover all Norwegian pyrites².

1. Information supplied to the Author by Professor Siney, and quoted from "Comité de Restriction des Approvisionnements et du Commerce de l'Ennemi; Documents numerotes, No. 411." The hypothesis is supported by two further indications. Firstly, an ordinary Norwegian - English dictionary would translate "svovelkis" by "pyrites" and "kobberholdig" by "containing copper". The technical ignorance of the person who drafted the British counter-proposal seems borne out by the fact that "purple ore containing copper", which was also used, is meaningless. "Purple ore" is what goes to the steel works for iron production after the copper has been extracted from the "kisavbrand" or residue of copper ore. Secondly, the British Legation on one occasion referred to the "proposed conditional prohibition of exportation of copper pyrites", thus revealing that copper pyrites or chalcopyrite ($CuFeS_2$) in their view was identical with "pyrites containing copper", and not the same as "pyrites" (FeS_2) pure and simple.
2. It is of some significance that the British Government at a later point in the dispute maintained that there was a definite distinction between "pyrites containing copper", in the Agreement, and "any pyrites" with reference to the Assurance. In the latter, according to a note from the Foreign Office of 13/1/1917, the "qualification" - 'containing copper' - was "expressly" left out. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15.

In the situation after the conclusion of the Copper Agreement, however, the extent of the export prohibition was not the only source of dissatisfaction for the British. In the negotiations between Rio Tinto and the pyrites Association, the question of price was beginning to seem an insurmountable obstacle, since the British market price on which the Rio Tinto offer was based lay far below that of the German or neutral markets. The British Legation now claimed it to be understood that a price had to be settled before the 3,000 tons emergency import of copper could be released, a contention which the Foreign Ministry rejected¹.

Quarrel over Pyrites

The conditions for the new proposal were that the exception of low-grade pyrites from the export prohibition should be withdrawn, and that the Norwegian Government should permit the Association to agree to a price for pyrites to Great Britain, and confidential memorandum to Ihlen which began as follows:

"With reference to the Note Verbale from His Britannic Majesty's Legation which I have had the

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1. Cf. Wolllebæk's Minutes of 9/9 and 11/9/1916, which also state that one of the British representatives disagreed with this claim. The "Assurance" contained no price specification, and the "Agreement" merely stated that the Norwegian copper ores should be delivered "at a price to be agreed upon between the Norwegian exporter and the British importer". Norway's first draft, of 30 May, had proposed the English market price plus 20 per cent, while the British counter-proposal suggested "the ruling British price". Ihlen objected to that since there was no Exchange quotation on pyrites in London, and proposed instead the wording of the final Agreement.

honour to hand to you, I would submit a proposal which I am prepared to recommend to my Government, and which is very much to the advantage of the Norwegian Government " 1

Findlay's proposal seemed to speculate on Norway's long-term copper needs beyond the 3,000 tons, and anticipated the Government's difficulties in finding sufficient exchange pyrites at the existing rate of production. The British Government would therefore be prepared on certain conditions to reserve their first call on pyrites in exchange for the 3,000 tons; to purchase "such pyrites as may be available"; and let this count in exchange for copper beyond the 3,000 tons. In other words, Britain would buy the available pyrites, and let this constitute a copper credit in Norway's favour on which an overdraft to the extent of 3,000 tons would be permitted.

The conditions for the new proposal were that the exception of low-grade pyrites from the export prohibition should be withdrawn, and that the Norwegian Government should persuade the Association to agree to a price for pyrites to Great Britain, both for amounts under the first call and for future compensation purchases. Norway should also give a written assurance that,

"in the event of a reasonable price based on the world market price being offered, and refused by the Norwegian Department interested, no pyrites shall be permitted to be exported from Norway

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1. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15. This memorandum, which is felt by this Author to be essential to an understanding of the dispute, has apparently been ignored in all later debate of the Copper Agreement.

to the enemies of Great Britain, either in exchange or otherwise, until the amount on which Great Britain has a first call has been delivered".

Although Findlay's proposal is not distinguished by its clarity, it seems most reasonable to explain it as a conditional first call combined with a "reasonable" price. If endorsed, this arrangement would satisfy Britain's demands both with regard to price and to the extent of the export prohibition. In return, Norway would be allowed an overdraft on her copper credit with Britain in order to satisfy her future needs. Moreover, the logical opposite of the written assurance would be that if Britain's tenders for pyrites were accepted, other pyrites might then be exported to Germany regardless of the quantities actually delivered to Great Britain¹.

The negotiations between the Association and the Rio Tinto Company continued in the meantime in spite of many difficulties. In fact, on 24 October the talks seemed to have come to a stop, with a letter from the Association to the effect that further concessions could not be given. The Association therefore considered "that we have given you an opportunity to avail yourself of the so-called "first call",

1. Unless this deduction is accepted, the written assurance seems pointless, since its "raison d'être" can only be to furnish an inducement for such price offers to be accepted.

mentioned in the Agreement . . . "1

After pressure from Ihlen, however, a contract between the Association and Rio Tinto was concluded on 28 October, providing for the sale of "the balance of the production of Pyrites, which is available for export from our mines" after allotments for export to neutral countries. This "balance" was estimated at 8 - 12,000 tons monthly, and would be delivered at that rate until the equivalent of 3,000 tons of copper had been delivered. At the same time Ihlen agreed to issue a new export prohibition which would include all pyrites irrespective of their copper content.

Concerning Germany's interests during this time, Ihlen had on 23 October stated to their Commercial Attaché, Dr. Büsing, that Germany could not expect to get Norwegian pyrites until compensation for the 3,000 tons of copper had been delivered to Great Britain. Four days later, however, the German Legation was informed that Ihlen had "a definite hope" that all Stordø pyrites nevertheless could be exported to Germany against compensation for its copper content².

1. UD, H 4 D ii 33/15. In an earlier letter to the Foreign Ministry, the Association had stated that the British price offers in part lay below production costs. Cf. *ibid.*, Kisexportforeningen - UD, 5/10/1916.

2. AA, Akten der Kaiserl. Deutschen Ges.sch.in Kr.s. Kupfer (Kies) 1915 - 1917. Büsing - AA, 27/10/1916.

From the beginning of November, therefore, Ihlen let the export to Germany from Storde continue, and when Findlay objected, Ihlen replied that the export was on the basis of copper exchange and therefore in full accordance with the Agreement.

On 24 November, Findlay in a long letter stated his opinion on the dispute, in reference to his private and confidential memorandum of 23 September. He claimed it to be perfectly clear from his proposal that "the condition was that we should be offered all pyrites before any could go out of Norway except to Sweden, Holland and Denmark under the terms of the Agreement", and stated that although Ihlen never replied in writing to that proposal, his acceptance was in Findlay's opinion clear from the many subsequent conversations.

three "Whether I was right or wrong however in so understanding you, appears to me to be for this purpose immaterial. If you did accept it, it is to my mind abundantly clear that no pyrites can go to any destination except Sweden, Denmark and Holland till it has been offered to us. If you did not, the same result follows from the terms of the 'assurance'." 1

and Ihlen's reply, five days later, stated that Findlay had expressed dissatisfaction with the first call and had demanded an actual contract instead. Ihlen had then done everything to arrange the deal with the Association, in spite of the unfavourable price conditions offered. He claimed that Findlay had declared after the Rio Tinto contract that this fulfilled the first call.

1. UD, H 4 D ii 33/15, Findlay - Ihlen, 24/11/1916. Findlay's interpretation of his private proposal, "that we should be offered all pyrites", does not seem reasonable.

"All my efforts, which were not entirely pleasant for me, took place under the presumption that, when the contract was signed, the 3,000 tons of copper would then be delivered ... I have never held the opinion that [the memorandum of 23 September] should effect any change in the Agreement ... [The memorandum] concerns a proposal which you stated you were prepared to put before your Government, but it has so far not occasioned a reply on my part." 1

With this exchange the copper dispute had arrived at a complete deadlock. Together with various other problems, it was in time destined to create a serious conflict between Great Britain and Norway, which will be reviewed in a later chapter.

... ..

To sum up, Norwegian copper involved the interests of three parties: Norway, desiring to obtain vital supplies of manufactured copper and at the same time to continue to export pyrites to Germany for both economic and political reasons; Germany, in need of pyrites primarily for its sulphuric content and even willing to export valuable copper in exchange; and the Entente, desiring to cut off all supplies to Germany of Norwegian pyrites and copper ores.

For Norway, the best solution would have been a simple compensation arrangement whereby all exportation of copper ore -

1. Ibid., Ihlen - Findlay, 29/11/1916. It is not inconceivable that Ihlen in fact acted on Findlay's private proposal, but on the interpretation indicated above (p. 201, note) - by which exports to Germany could take place after the British offer had been accepted. Then, seeing Findlay's interpretation of that proposal, he may have preferred to fall back on the fact that he had not committed himself in writing.

and possibly pyrites as well - would take place on the basis of a strict exchange of the copper content for an equivalent amount of refined copper. This was also the basic principle of the Copper Agreement, but it was qualified by an emergency arrangement which could be interpreted as a de facto embargo against German pyrites imports for a considerable time. One can only assume the reason for Norway's acceptance of this "Assurance" to have been that the American copper which depended thereon had already been paid for, and thus could not easily be dispensed with¹.

Subsequent disagreements centred on this "Assurance" but were sparked off by a linguistic and terminological dispute due to imprecise formulations, in which a literal interpretation by the strongest party prevailed over a logical one from the weaker side. In fact, the whole copper dispute seems to have abounded in ambiguities, which the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in a disastrous act of negligence failed to dispel in advance.

Although the available evidence is insufficient for any clear conclusions as to what later happened in the copper dispute, it seems to suggest that the British Government made deliberate use of the ambiguities of the settlement in order to obtain better terms than Norway could have been expected to

1. Although there is no evidence of it, there is every reason to assume that the Government was under pressure from local political interests to arrange the import of American copper which municipal councils had ordered and paid for.

concede, with reference both to the price of pyrites and to the extent of the export prohibition. It is hard to believe that the Foreign Minister should have given those concessions without being convinced of a return allowance of exports to Germany, - an issue which in October was particularly vital to the Norwegian Government.

The questions were probably also complicated by the different financial interests, mainly Swedish, but also German and English, which dominated the Norwegian mining industry. From Sweden, Marcus Wallenberg's financial empire exerted a major influence on the affairs of the copper mines, whereas Stordo's production of copper-free pyrites was controlled by Germany¹. Moreover, the Norwegian Government was throughout under heavy pressure from her copper needs, and in the second stage also from the crisis in German - Norwegian relations. In the end, therefore, Norway had to give in to all of Britain's demands, not so much, it seems, because her position in that specific dispute was untenable as because imprecisions and misunderstandings were decided in favour of the most powerful side.

1. The importance of financial control is clear from Findlay's repeated suggestions that Rio Tinto should be induced to buy the Orkla mines. Cf. Milner Papers; Findlay's despatch of 2 January, 1918, No. 22 (Trade and Treaty).

III: 1916 - 1918: NEUTRALITY IN ECLIPSE

The Turning-Point: The Business of Diplomacy

By one of the curious coincidences of history, the Norwegian Fisheries Agreement was concluded on the war's second anniversary. Together with the Copper Agreement which was signed shortly afterwards, and with the events that followed, it divided the First World War into two halves, of equal length but of unequal fortune.

The autumn of 1916 marks a definite turning-point for Norway from the economic point of view. In the words of W. Keilhau, "if peace had come in the autumn of 1916 or earlier, the World War would hardly have caused any serious damage to Norwegian economic life, and the 'judgement of history' on the Government would certainly have been full of praise". Until then terms of trade were in the country's favour, and the increase in prices reflected on the whole a real economic progress. Indices for both industrial production and gross national product show substantial gains from 1913 to 1916, but the following decline brings the curves below the pre-war level by 1918.

From the political point of view, the Agreements on

fish and pyrites represent a turning-point in Norway's position with regard to the Entente's blockade of the Central Powers, and thereby in Norway's relations with the belligerents. Until then the blockade had affected Norway mainly in the supply of imported goods; the effect on Norwegian exports had been strictly secondary, by way of an agreed exchange of raw materials for goods manufactured from or with the aid of these materials. Although trade discrimination in favour of one belligerent party was widespread, it was an effect of commercial circumstances and not a political principle. In the diplomacy of businessmen, business had been the primary consideration, for which the Government was not responsible.

Through the two Agreements of August 1916, however, Great Britain had gained control over two of Norway's main domestic products, in direct co-operation with the Norwegian Government. The principle of the arrangements was still that of exchange; fishery supplies for fish, copper ore for manufactured copper, but elements of a political nature had been interposed. In the Fisheries Agreement the division of the products with 85 per cent to the Entente and 15 per cent to "the others" meant that discrimination had come in as an auxiliary principle. In the Copper Agreement the same followed, partly from the inclusion of non-cupreous

pyrites in the deal, and partly from the British "first call" on all pyrites.

Reviewing Norwegian trade policy in the two first years of the war, there seems no reason to doubt that the system of private "Branch Agreements" had been the right one for the Government to adopt, once the choice had to be made. The alternative meant close governmental engagement in an attempt to divide the country's "favours" among the belligerent powers. This pre-supposed a measure of economic self-determination which Norway, a carrier nation whose prosperity largely depended on shipping service for the Entente and which was also heavily dependent on imports from Entente-controlled sources, neither had nor could achieve except at disproportionately heavy sacrifices.

The advantage of what may be called the "Norwegian system" was that the problems concerning the country's imports and exports could be solved by the business world in a business-like manner, without engaging or compromising the Government. This meant entrusting foreign trade and related areas of the economy to private enterprise, on the assumption that their self-interest and the national interest would largely coincide.

However, the Branch Agreements also had their disadvantage, in an accessory cob-web of declarations, guarantees,

undertakings and control measures whose total effect amounted to a "peaceful penetration" of the national economy under foreign supervision and a consolidation of the country's economic dependence. Moreover, the adoption of the system was to a high degree a point of no return, since its intricate ramifications into most sectors of Norwegian business severely restricted the scope of the Government's own economic manoeuvres.

In the Norwegian system, therefore, governmental concern with foreign trade was feasible only insofar as it meant setting political limits for this insidious bondage, ensuring conformity with the principle of equal rights for the belligerents. In other words, the "reserved domain" of the Government's official policy could be reduced to a certain minimum consistent with national sovereignty, but within that domain nothing could appear that was prejudicial to strict neutrality. Hence, as the demands of the blockade presented themselves, the choice for the Government was either a further abdication of political responsibility or an intervention to preserve national self-determination.

During the first half of the war, the "reserved domain" of state concern was successively diminished. As the exigencies of the blockade grew stricter, however, choice became more difficult, and we have seen how, in the question of the later Branch Agreements, the Government finally had to intervene "in defence of the nation's rights". The intervention was successful.

Regarding the issue of fish and pyrites, the fact that these were Norwegian export products of great importance, both to Norway as the seller and to Germany as the buyer, made the objects of the Government's intervention much more complex. In addition to the political motives of keeping trade relations with Germany on a comfortable level, the object of securing a profitable trade for the two industries played an important or even dominant part. However, to these not irreconcilable motives were added the basic purposes of the Government's action: to assure the continued supply of fishing tackle and refined copper.

As shown above, the Government's political arguments did not result in a modification of British demands concerning fish and pyrites, and the opportunity for arrangements on a simple exchange basis were allowed to lapse. Nevertheless, there was a last resort: a deviation from strict neutrality based on considerations of "force majeure".

The fact that it was and still is possible to argue that the solutions embodied in the Fisheries and Copper Agreements were not the only ones that could satisfy the country's vital needs shows the weakness of the Government's position towards Germany. The unfortunate political results of the Government's intervention stemmed from the fact that the political elements of the Agreements were not demonstrably necessary on national economic grounds. Hence, the business of Norwegian diplomacy appeared to be based on political expediency, for which only the Government could answer.

With regard to commercial matters

1. The Submarine Conflict

many that could hardly be obtained elsewhere

With the two important Agreements concluded in August, the Norwegian Government had departed from its practice of keeping the business of neutrality separate from the policy of neutrality. With regard to fish and pyrites, two of the most desirable export articles as far as Germany was concerned, the Government had itself been instrumental in bringing about arrangements that seriously threatened Germany's future supply of these commodities.

What would be Germany's reaction? The question is hypothetical, but the Norwegian Government cannot have been without means for an approximate delimitation of Germany's possibilities of retaliation. Germany's hand was not a very strong one, since any reprisals against Norway with a really serious effect were quite likely to throw that country into the hands of the enemy. Norwegian neutrality was of benefit to Germany, at least as long as a certain minimum of supplies were forthcoming. Counter-pressure from Germany would therefore have to be applied very carefully, and serious military measures could with reasonable confidence be discounted by Norway from the very beginning.

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2. 00, 24 25 26 27/28
Kupfer (Kiss) 1915-1917

With regard to commercial reprisals, Norway was still the recipient of a number of important commodities from Germany that could hardly be obtained elsewhere. Some action in this field might therefore seem near at hand, and the German Minister, in reports on the outlook for German fish imports, repeatedly suggested that the German supplies should be cut off in retaliation¹. During Military Attaché Astrup's visit to the War Ministry in Berlin on 3 September, the Ministry's spokesman also complained of the export prohibition on copper pyrites, and said the future would show if Norwegian industry and its needs were so fully independent of Germany². However, when the Auswärtiges Amt threatened to go over to the "compensation" principle with a goods-for-goods exchange for German exports to Norway, Ihlen immediately told Minister Michahelles that such a situation would have to be met by further Norwegian export prohibitions, for example on nickel and other minerals, in order to save these articles for compensatory purposes³.

The facts of the situation were that Germany's imports

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1. Cf. Admiralstab der Marine, B, IV, 1-1, Vol. 57, Michahelles - AA, 22/8/1916 and 2/9/1916.
 2. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15.
 3. AA, Abt. A. Akten der Kaiserl. D. Ges. sch. in Kr. a. Kupfer (Kies) 1915 - 1917; Michahelles - AA, 31/8/1916.

from Norway had been considerably increased during the war, and now outweighed German supplies to Norway both in amount and importance¹. The threats of trade reprisals were therefore not followed by action on any noticeable scale, although there seems to have been some minor difficulties in Norway's import of steel goods.

On 7 September a spokesman from the Auswärtiges Amt told the German press that "our trade with Norway is for the time being conducted solely on the principle of compensation"², and Secretary of State Helfferich three weeks later stated to the Budget Commission of the Reichstag that Germany would take reprisals against Norway's attitude over the fish issue. These strong words were however for internal consumption. Helfferich himself had to admit in the same speech that "we do not possess the effective means against the Norwegians that the British, with their mastery of the seas, have . . . "³

A realistic appraisal of Germany's position found expression in a conversation which Minister von Ditten on 14

1. Exports from Norway to Germany had risen from 74 million kroner in 1914 to 181 million in 1915 and 150 million in the first half of 1916, according to Ihlen's statement to Michahelles.

2. Cf. Adm.stab der Marine, B, IV, 1-1, Vol. 57.

3. AA, Abt. A, WK 18 geh., Vol. 22.

October had with the highest official of the Commercial Department of the Auswärtiges Amt, Ministerialdirektor Johannes. Ditten had asked Johannes to desist from applying the compensation principle to Germany's exports to Norway, to which Johannes had replied that Germany had no desire for a dispute with Norway. Johannes then mentioned the mission of Dr. Warburg to Norway for negotiations on a loan, and suggested that such a loan could perhaps be regarded by Germany as a compensation¹.

In reality, what the German reaction amounted to was a political pressure campaign which seemed more aimed at averting further cuts in the supplies from Norway than at revoking a fait accompli. In this context must be seen the agitation of the German press during September, accusing Norway of being almost completely subjected to English domination.

Submarines in the Arctic Sea

About the same time as Germany was receiving these setbacks in her foreign goods supply, a debate was beginning to gain prominence in German politics concerned with submarine warfare. The submarine campaign itself had, after the series of neutral protests which followed its opening in the spring of 1915², mainly been pursued according to the ordinary prize

1. UD, H 4 I 11, 11/16.

2. Vide supra, p. 101 et seq.

rules for cruiser warfare against maritime commerce. The frequent orders to show special regard for neutral ships were invariably greeted with strong dissatisfaction by the Fleet Command as presenting almost insuperable complications for the submarine commanders, but the Chancellor's "urgent political considerations" eventually prevailed. The Fleet Command hence deliberately restricted submarine warfare to a minimum, in order to demonstrate that a campaign free from political restraints was the only effective way of using the submarine weapon.

A brief period of sharpened activity followed the decision of the Entente to arm their merchant ships, in February 1916, but new incidents with America, culminating in the "Sussex" dispute, forced a return to the ordinary rules of cruiser warfare in April. Henceforth the submarine war against commerce in home waters was practically stopped. In August, however, the leader of the Flanders flotilla obtained his Admiral's permission for an experimental campaign against maritime trade in the Channel. After an expedition in which twenty-five enemy and nineteen neutral ships were sunk during the first half of September, one submarine commander noted that the method "... still promised success. However, the widespread arming of English steamers will draw the war increasingly towards neutral shipping."

2. Of those nineteen neutral vessels, ten were Norwegian,

3. "Allerhöchster Befehl" of 17 August 1916.
Tippits, Politische Zeitschrift

mostly engaged in the Anglo-French coal trade¹. The high Norwegian casualties had for the time being no political repercussions, although the Frankfurter Zeitung's German correspondent in Norway, Hartern, on one occasion during the middle of September carelessly remarked to the Editor of Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende that the torpedoing of Norwegian vessels lately must be seen in connection with Norway's attitude in the export of fish and copper to Germany, and that stricter measures were probable².

Far from discriminating against the neutrals, however, the German submarine commanders had orders to keep themselves "most thoroughly informed of all existing rules of submarine warfare regarding the capture and treatment of neutral prizes. Offences and mistakes liable to damage the policy and finances of the Reich must be avoided in all circumstances."³

Towards the end of August the War Ministry in Berlin had informed the Naval Staff of the important supply of war materials which Russia was receiving by way of Archangel and also in

1. Cf. Spindler, Der Handelskrieg mit U-Booten, Vol. III, pp. 222 - 230. The number of neutral ships in the coal trade had decreased in mid-summer, after the imposition of maximal freight rates, but the Norwegians returned after they obtained a special time-charter supplement. Cf. Kloster, Krigsar og Gullflom, (Oslo, 1935) pp. 53 - 55, and Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 181.

2. UD, P 2 K 1/15, minute of 18/9/1916.

3. "Allerhöchster Befehl" of 19 August, 1916, quoted in Tirpitz, Politische Dokumente, Vol. II, p. 562.

transit from Narvik¹. The Naval Staff passed on the information to the Fleet Command, and suggested the desirability of sending one or two submarines to these areas, where submarines so far had not appeared. However, the Fleet Command replied in the negative. Apart from its principal opposition to using submarines against merchant ships as long as they had to comply with the complicated and - for them - dangerous rules of cruiser warfare, the bad weather conditions of the Arctic Sea in the autumn offered small chance of a successful campaign.

The Supreme Army Command, together with the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Holtzendorff, now turned to the Emperor for a decision, and suggested that three submarines ought to be sent as soon as possible. The Emperor was informed of the apprehensions of the Fleet Command, with the counter-argument that the dangers for the submarines in the weakly protected Arctic Sea could not be higher than in the Mediterranean, where the submarines had been successful. The Emperor commented on the telegram that "if it worked in the strongly defended English Channel, it will really work up there", and immediately decided in favour of the proposal. His decision reached the Fleet Command on 15 September, and on 19 September three

1. The following account is based on Spindler, Der Handelskrieg mit U-Booten, Vol. III, p. 232 - 237.

submarines slid out from the mouth of the Ems, with course for the Arctic Sea¹.

The actual campaign was opened only seven days later, by "U 43". In a position north of Nordkyn, two Norwegian steamers were captured. As they were on their way from Russia to England with timber, considered as contraband under German Prize Law, the vessels were sunk after the crews had left them. The ships were the "Danis" and the "Knut Hilde". Two days later the same submarine came across the steamer "Rolf Jarl", also Norwegian, and carrying herrings to Archangel for the Russian army. The ship was sunk outside Grense Jakobselv. On the next day,

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1. "The Supreme Army Command estimates the voluminous transport of war material to Archangel to be serious in its effect on the conduct of the war, as moreover the transport, according to reliable information, will now be considerably increased in the expectation that Archangel will only be ice-free until the middle of October. His Majesty the Emperor has, in spite of the represented apprehensions of the Imperial Command, not been able to close his eyes to the necessity of energetically disturbing the munitions transport to Archangel, and holds the opinion that by cautious action the risk for the submarines will not be greater than in the Mediterranean. His Majesty the Emperor therefore commands the rapid dispatch of three submarines to as successful an expedition as possible to the coast of Murmansk. The boats will there conduct commercial warfare according to Prize Law." The three boats were: "U 43", Kapitänleutnant Jüst, "U 46", Kapitänleutnant Hillebrandt, and "U 48", Kapitänleutnant Buss. The submarines were of the same type, and had the greatest range of action of all the German submarines, namely 11,000 naut. miles at a surface speed of 8 knots. Each carried six torpedoes.

in a position further east, "U 43" sunk two more ships, also bound for Archangel. One of them was the "Nesjar" with a cargo of ammonia, the other was the "Knut Jarl" carrying herrings. On the same day, "U 46" could register its first successes, namely the "Ravn", which like the "Nesjar" carried ammonia to Archangel, and the "Sinsen", on its way to France with a wheat cargo. All four ships were Norwegian. On the following day, 30 September, the "U 46" again captured two ships, the "Hekla" and the "Hafnia", both carrying herrings from Lerwick to Archangel. They were sunk outside Varde. The day's booty for "U 43" was the steamer "Fancy", in the same trade as the two others. Again, all the ships were Norwegian.

The news of the sinkings reached the Norwegian newspapers a few days later, and immediately caused a considerable stir. In a period of five days, ten ships had been sunk in an area so far undisturbed by submarines. All the ships had been Norwegian, and the loss for the Bureau of War Insurance for Shipping exceeded 10 million kroner. Was the Norwegian merchant navy a selected target for the German submarines? Was this the reprisal against Norway's acquiescence in the British blockade?

The first newspaper to draw conclusions was the journal

of commerce and shipping, Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende, whose editor already on 27 September stated: "There can no longer be any doubt that the German submarines are particularly after our ships." In support of these conclusions the paper referred to statements by German "agents" in Norway, forecasting German reprisals for the export prohibitions on fish, raw copper and pyrites¹. As the reports arrived of new disasters in the Arctic Sea the same newspaper went further, and on 2 October presented a long editorial called "The Great Humiliation". After repeating that the submarine campaign was directed particularly against Norwegian shipping, the editor suggested that the submarines could hardly have reached Northern Norway unless protected by Norwegian coastal waters. It was now "high time that the Government rallied to action" in order to correct the misunderstanding that "the Norwegians were a people which gave in when lashed at". The allegation that Norwegian shipping was the selected prey for

1. The newspaper did not further specify its source, but the connection to the statements by the German journalist referred to above seems obvious. It is curious to note that when Morgenbladet, one of the least pro-Entente of the papers in the capital, had promoted the same theory a few days earlier, Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende had characterised it as a "third rate means of pressure" which was "contrary to the dignity of the Norwegian press". Cf. NHST, 18/9/1916.

the submarines was taken up by other newspapers¹. Moreover, the President of the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, former Minister of Commerce Lindvig, stated in an interview with Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende on 25 October: "The facts should not be hidden, and it can hardly be denied that our ships have lately been specially sought after by the German submarines."²

There existed some grounds for suspecting a special campaign against Norwegian shipping. That ten ships were sunk in one area in five days, and all of them Norwegian, was the first one. The prediction by a German journalist that such reprisals could be expected was another. The frequent attacks which had recently appeared in the German press against Norway's "fake neutrality" were also apt to arouse the feeling that Germany was trying to provoke a dispute.

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1. Cf. Dagbladet, 3/10/1916, Tidens Tegn, same date, and Aftenposten, 5/10/1916, inter alia. Carefully chosen figures can prove anything. Thus, by selecting the week 8 - 15 September Tidens Tegn was able to find out that 46 per cent of the sunken ships were Norwegian (Tidens Tegn, 12/10/1916).
 2. The theory was perpetuated by Keilhau, through his work Vår Egen Tid (Oslo, 1938), although it was mentioned with some scepticism in his earlier work Norge og Verdenskrigen. Cf. also Fasting, op.cit., p. 211: "There can be no doubt that this series of attacks was part of an attempt to intimidate Norway."

conspicuously absent. In consideration of these facts

However, these were insufficient indications on which to accuse Germany of deliberate belligerent provocation against Norway. There were several comparatively well-known factors which could explain the high Norwegian losses. Compared to ships from other neutral countries, Norwegian ships were more heavily engaged on the most dangerous routes, such as the English Channel, and in general where the freight rates were the highest¹. Belligerent vessels, on the other hand, were protected by defensive armament, and by the Admiralty's prescribed courses, which by avoiding the danger area provided maximum safety². In the Arctic Sea, moreover, the protection which Allied warship patrols normally constituted was

1. Of the 28 Norwegian vessels lost in September, one was with certainty due to a mine. Of the remainder, 13 went down in or near the Channel, and 10 in the Arctic Sea. Freight rates between Archangel and London had risen from 48 sh. in 1913 to 289 sh. in 1916. For freight rates cf. Kloster, op. cit. The standard work of reference for Norwegian shipping losses is Rapports de Mer sur les Pertes de Guerre subies par la Marine de Commerce Norvégienne 1914-1918, Vols. I-IV, with a Statistical Supplement (Oslo, 1919), published by the Inspector General of Navigation; hereinafter cited as Rapports de Mer.

2. Cf. Fayle, Seaborne Trade, Vol. III, in particular pp. 315-330. By the middle of August, 40 per cent of the British vessels were armed, and of these an average of two out of three managed to escape when attacked. The prescribed courses frequently added 50 per cent or more to the length of the voyage.

conspicuously absent¹. In consideration of these facts Lord Balfour, then First Lord of the Admiralty, stated in a memorandum of 14 October 1916 to the British Cabinet: "If, then, what seems to be a disproportionate amount of neutral tonnage is destroyed by their submarines, it must presumably be in part due to the fact that neutral merchantships are always unarmed; that we are unable to protect the waters round their coasts as effectively as we protect the narrow seas; and that we cannot prescribe sailing routes for their merchant captains."²

With regard to the second and connected contention which was current in the Norwegian press, to the effect that the German submarines on their way north had as a matter of necessity sought the protection of Norwegian coastal waters, it was a loose assumption with no authoritative support³. As early as July that year German submarines

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1. Cf. the report from Norway's Consul-General at Archangel, on the "rather scandalous" conditions in this respect (UD, P 2 K 1/15, Leg. Petrograd - UD, 8/10/1916). Spindler (op.cit., Vol. III, p. 237) also admits that the expedition was "insofern begünstigt, als die feindliche Gegenwehr schwach war".
 2. Asquith Papers, Memorandum on recent naval affairs.
 3. In fact, one of the leading newspapers in the campaign, Tidens Tegn, itself on 28 September quoted an expert opinion which said that the appearance of u-boats in the Arctic Sea confirmed that they were now big enough to carry fuel for such long voyages.

1. The following is based on UD, P 2 K 1/15, Leg. Petrograd - UD, 8/10/1916.

This had caused Sweden to suspect that the submarines had reached as far as the United States. The allegation, however, is interesting as it raised an issue which at that time was much debated, concerning the position of submarines and other warships in neutral maritime territory.

neutrality rules of 1912, aiming at the prohibition of entry for submarines except by reason of bad weather or shipwreck, and then always the flag of nationality displayed¹.

Submarines and Neutral Waters

In a draft reply, forwarded to the Foreign Ministry, because of a lack of experience with such a recent phenomenon as submarines, their position in international law at the outbreak of the First World War was in principle not different from that of surface vessels. Their ability to escape control of their movements and actions by diving, however, was bound to raise the problem of special rules and regulations for their enjoyment of entry into and passage through neutral sea territory, since international law makes it a duty of neutrality to prevent the abuse of such hospitality by one or the other belligerent party.

Sweden had faced this issue already in the autumn of 1915, after several cases in which submarines belonging to the Entente had been observed on Swedish territory¹.

1. The following is based on UD, P 2 L 28/15.

This had caused Sweden to suspect that the territory was being used as a refuge for submarines awaiting suitable objects for attack, and in November the Swedish Government imparted their views to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. Sweden was considering an addition to the common Scandinavian neutrality rules of 1912, aiming at the prohibition of entry for submarines except by reason of bad weather or shipwreck, and then always in surface position with the flag of nationality displayed¹.

In a draft reply, Wollebæk in the Foreign Ministry admitted the desirability of such additions to the neutrality rules, but stressed the dangers involved in any change of the regulations in wartime, since it might be construed as a partial measure. As an alternative solution, Wollebæk would rather see a reminder to the belligerents of the duty of all submarines to remain on the surface when passing through Norwegian waters, with a warning that violations would lead to further restrictions. When laid before the Commanding Admiral, however, the draft was found too forthcoming, and

1. When collecting the Swedish Note Verbale, Minister Brunchorst had made some careless, although not unjustified, remarks on the pro-German effect of such a measure, since the envisaged regulations would hamper only British and Russian submarines in their activities in the Baltic. Brunchorst nevertheless thought the proposal might serve some purpose with regard to submarines on the west coast of Norway.

the note in its final form was nothing but a polite rejection of the Swedish suggestion. The Commanding Admiral stressed particularly that it would be impossible to ensure compliance with such a prohibition.

On 29 November Sweden proceeded on her own with the prohibition, to the strong displeasure of the Entente Powers. According to a report from Wedel-Jarlsberg, Jules Cambon in the French Foreign Ministry had called the prohibition "un acte insinical", and had praised Norway's attitude in the matter.

A month later, however, the Commanding Admiral took up the issue. He was now certain that submarines belonging to the belligerents had on occasion passed submerged through Norwegian waters, and would therefore welcome a reminder to the belligerents of the submarine's duty to stay on the surface with the flag flying. The time was considered propitious for such a notification since there were no very recent cases. In the beginning of February the Foreign Ministry decided to act, but chose the way of oral communications through the Legations in the respective capitals rather than sending a formal note. In comments on the measure, Dr.

Kriege in the Auswärtiges Amt asked why Norway did not issue formal regulations, but was told by Minister Ditten that this

did not seem necessary. Sir Eyre Crowe in the Foreign Office remarked that no such action had been taken in previous periods when German submarines undoubtedly had violated the territory. Both powers however accepted the notification. A few days afterwards a British submarine did in fact violate the rules, and when the Norwegian Government protested, the Foreign Office admitted the infringement and expressed its regrets. During the summer, the Navy on two occasions reported violations of the territory by submarines, but their nationality could not be ascertained.

Towards the end of July, after several cases of violation of Swedish waters by submarines, Sweden decided to issue new and stricter rules against submarines. The boats henceforth risked being fired at without warning by Swedish patrol vessels. At about the same time, the Entente Powers met in a naval conference in Paris in order to determine a common attitude on the question of submarines in neutral waters¹. A memorandum was composed and then presented to various neutral Governments at the end of August. It argued that the difficulties of applying existing rules of naval warfare to the peculiarities of the submarines made a particular treatment

1. Cf. Laurens, op.cit., pp. 107 - 108.

necessary, since any place where submarines could rest or receive provisions was equivalent to a base of operation. Submarines ought therefore to be excluded from the hospitality ordinarily accorded to warships or merchant vessels in neutral waters, in view of the impossibility to exercise control over their use of such hospitality¹.

Norway's attitude in the matter was formulated in a draft note, which was communicated to Sweden and Denmark together with a suggestion that the issue was well suited for discussion at the forthcoming Ministerial Conference, which was to take place at Kristiania. The draft, which also was intended for actual use if incidents in the meantime should make this necessary, concluded that Norway had the right, but not the duty, to exclude submarines from her territory. The Norwegian Government did not, however, see any essential difference between submarines and other warships with regard to their use of neutral ports for rest and provisioning, and as to merchant submarines, they had to be regarded in the same category as other merchant ships.

1. French text of the memorandum in UD, P 2 L 28/15. The memorandum to Sweden had necessarily a different form, but contained similar arguments. The reference to merchant vessels pertained to a recent German innovation of merchant submarines, i.e. large submarines without armament used as merchant vessels in order to bring particularly valuable cargoes safely through the British Blockade.

A few days later the Commanding Admiral sent a memorandum to the Foreign Ministry which to some extent accepted the argumentation of the Entente's memorandum. The Admiral concluded by recommending the exclusion of "belligerent submarines equipped for warfare" from Norwegian territory, in conformity with the Swedish regulations. He cited no events that might make this necessary, and referred only to such general considerations as "the development during the war of the submarines' conduct of war and their range of action, connected with the difficulty of controlling that their right of passage through territorial waters is not abused"¹. Concerning merchant submarines, these should only be required "to appear on the territory conspicuously and in surface position".

The Ministerial Conference of the three Scandinavian powers was held at Kristiania in the days 19-22 September, and resulted inter alia in a draft for an answer to the submarine memorandum. The text included large parts of the Norwegian draft, and concluded as follows: "Until experience has shown the difficulties for the maintenance of neutrality that arise from the use of merchant submarines, the question

1. One may well ask why it would be less difficult to keep submarines out altogether.

of new and special rules for this kind of vessel cannot be taken up for consideration." Both in form and content the reply on which the three Governments were agreed was thus a rejection of the proposed exclusion of submarines from neutral territory, unless "events should make this necessary"¹.

So far only one neutral Power had replied to the Entente's submarine memorandum. At the end of August the United States Government had come out with a rather sharp rejection of the proposals. The American Government knew of no circumstances which made existing rules of international law inapplicable to either belligerent or merchant submarines. The Foreign Office, presumably eager to obtain at least one

1. UD, P 2 K 1/15. This document was drafted at the Conference and appears to be intended as a model reply from Denmark and Norway with which Sweden was in principal agreement. Cf. also Hagerup - UD, 9/10/1916, with a Swedish enquiry whether a note had been sent by Norway "in the form of the Kristiania meeting". On the other hand, Keilhau (Vår Egen Tid, p. 279) states that it was impossible for the Conference to formulate a common answer. The reality may be what the Danish Foreign Ministry told the German Minister when handing him Denmark's reply, to the effect that there had been agreement on the principles, but that identical replies had not been prescribed (Brockdorff-Rantzau - AA, 8/10/1916, in AA, Weltkrieg, Vol. 235). Cf. also Scavenius, Dansk Udenrigspolitik under den første Verdenskrig (Copenhagen, 1959), p. 60, that there was "agreement to regard it as very difficult if not to say dangerous to accept the request [for a ban on submarines]".)

favourable reply to the memorandum, now turned its attention to Norway, in connection with the numerous losses of Norwegian ships from submarine attacks in the English Channel. On 23 September, the Morning Post contained an article which Minister Vogt reported to have been planted by the Foreign Office. It stated that Norway was the main object of the submarine campaign, and suggested that Norwegians were greatly disturbed by the events. The contents of the article were such that Ihlen found it necessary to assure the German authorities that the Norwegian Government had had nothing to do with it.

The Submarine Decree

As the shipping disasters in the Arctic Sea began, however, the Norwegian press drew the same conclusions as the Morning Post. On 2 October, Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende, as well as Morgenbladet which was one of the least pro-Entente newspapers, proposed a Norwegian submarine decree consonant with the existing Swedish regulations. The press campaign reached full circle two days later, when the Westminster Gazette connected the proposals of the Entente's memorandum

with the hospitality allegedly enjoyed by German submarines in Norwegian waters. The article was quoted in the Norwegian press, and on 5 October Tidens Tegn also demanded a Norwegian decree.

When faced with a press campaign of these dimensions, and apparently based on vague suspicions and loose assumptions, it does not seem far-fetched to look for ulterior motives or influences. To some extent, the opposition press was no doubt eagerly seizing an opportunity to demonstrate that the Government lacked the strength and will to defend the nation's interests in relation to other countries. To Norwegian shipping circles, moreover, whose organ was in the forefront of the campaign, it was of obvious interest to obfuscate the fact that their ships were often concentrated on the most dangerous routes; partly for fear of socialist agitation which might create difficulties with the sailors. In this respect, the aims of Norwegian shipping coincided with those of the Entente - in particular the British - authorities, although the motives of the latter were more complex.

The British were naturally apprehensive of anything which might deter neutral shipping from Entente traffic. Thus, with regard to the submarine menace, they desired on one hand to minimise its psychological effect, by finding particular

explanations that did not reveal the insufficiency of anti-submarine defence, and on the other hand to have submarine warfare outlawed as cruel and essentially different from ordinary economic warfare. All these aims were served by the psychological pressure from the Entente, centred on the submarine memorandum, underpinned by British newspapers, - and echoed in the Norwegian press, although in different degrees and no doubt more or less deliberately.

The agitation against German submarines was of course attentively followed in Germany, both by the press, by the Auswärtiges Amt, and by the Naval Staff. On 2 October, Ministerialdirektor Johannes wrote in a memorandum concerned with eventual counter-measures to the British Blockade:

"Our submarine cruiser warfare against contraband traffic to England has of late been very lively, and has found a considerable number of victims among neutral ships. This fact has been utilized with success by the English press, partly by falsification of the statistics, in order to convince the neutrals that the German action is relatively less aimed at England than at the neutrals, and that the latter ought not to acquiesce in such a treatment. There are unmistakable indications that these arguments do not fail to impress public opinion at least in Norway, whose merchant navy has suffered most ..."

However, Dr. Johannes sounded a cautious note on the question of reprisals against the Blockade. "On the whole, the greatest care is needed in the use of counter-pressure. Each

ill-advised step increases the great danger [that neutrals may be forced to take sides in the conflict]."¹

From the German Legation at Kristiania, Naval Attaché Hilmers on 4 October reported on the press campaign, and suggested that the Legation ought to do everything to "counteract the stupidities of the press, such as the misleading statistics, the contention that we only conduct our submarine war against the Norwegian Merchant Navy, or that our submarines enjoy hospitality in territorial waters and reciprocate by torpedoing Norwegian ships, etc."². The Minister, Hilmers went on, thought such refutations would serve no purpose, but had promised to talk to the Foreign Minister. On the following day, Michahelles said to Ihlen that the press campaign rested on three false assumptions, namely: that the sinkings had any connection with the export prohibitions; that they were particularly aimed at Norwegian ships; and that the submarines were passing through Norwegian territory³.

As the Entente in the early days of October found the time propitious for a publication of their submarine memorandum,

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1. AA, Weltkrieg 18 Geheim, Vol. 20
 2. Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV, 2-5, Vol. 49.
 3. Ibid., copy of telegram Michahelles - AA, 5/10/1916.

(A) German submarines make no distinction between the foreign neutral powers. When a specially large number of Norwegian ships are sunk, the explanation is that they are specially active in carrying out work for Germany's enemies.

Hilmer on 5 October communicated to the Naval Staff his fears regarding Norway's eventual attitude to the memorandum, in view of the agitated state of public opinion. The grave concern of the Chief of Naval Staff found expression in a letter to the Auswärtiges Amt which, although not sent until 17 October, was drafted six days earlier:

"I find it right to retort to this memorandum with a communication from the German side which demands that the same rights be given to submarines as are accorded to other ships. Should a neutral power accede to the opposite wishes of the English Government, this must be regarded by us as a deviation from neutrality in favour of our opponents."

In these words Germany's attitude towards a Norwegian submarine decree had in principle been defined.

The German press also made considerable efforts to refute the allegations against the submarine campaign on instructions from the German censorship. On 6 October, on the advice of the Naval Staff, the spokesman for the Auswärtiges Amt told the journalists to follow these principles in their comments on the matter:

- (1) The sinkings have in every case occurred in regular cruiser warfare, whereby submarines operate in surface position.
- (2) The rules of the Declaration of London have in every case been observed. As it was impossible to bring the prizes to German ports, the sinkings only occurred after the safety of the crew had been assured.
- (3) German submarines make no distinction between different neutral powers. When a specially large number of Norwegian ships are sunk, the explanation is that they are specially active in contraband traffic for Germany's enemies.

(4) The sinking of Norwegian ships will cease when these ships renounce the carriage of contraband.

(5) Norwegian territorial waters are of course not used as bases for the German submarines. This could also easily have been prevented by Norwegian patrol vessels. 1

The German efforts, however, were of no avail. The agitation in Norway reached still higher as the fate of the crew from the steamer "Ravn" became known. It was first believed that the crew had reached the coast safely, but later reports stated that one boat had reached a desolate spot on the Russian coast, after several hours of desperate struggle against frost and heavy seas during which some of the sailors had died. The other boat, with the captain on board, had vanished. "The Dead are Calling" was the headline in Tidens Tegn on 10 October, when the full extent of the "Ravn" disaster was known. "There is the Norwegian Government?"²

1. Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV, 1-1, Vol. 60.

2. As was often the case, the reports from the ship's crew and the story of the submarine commander conflicted. While the survivors brought accusations of cruelty and negligence against the submarine for not assuring their safety, Commander Hillebrandt maintained that the coast was clearly visible, so that he estimated the boats could reach land in four hours. It is noteworthy, however, that shortly before sinking the "Ravn" the submarine had allowed a Swedish steamer to steer closer to the coast before capture on account of rough weather. Moreover, having just afterwards sunk the "Sinsen", Hillebrandt was then talked into towing her boats some distance towards the coast. (Cf. Hillebrandt's report and war diary, in Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV, 2-5, Vol. 50) It should be stated, however, that the conduct of the submarine commanders in the other nine cases seems to have been unobjectionable.

The pressure of those days on the Norwegian Government and the Foreign Ministry must have been enormous. The situation was already complex enough because of complaints and pressures from both Britain and Germany in regard to fish and pyrites. In the submarine issue, the agitation from the Norwegian press, as assisted by the Entente, now focused more and more on the demand for some action on the lines of the Allied memorandum on submarines.

On 5 October the mounting pressure acquired significant support, in a memorandum from the Shipowners' Association to the Foreign Ministry requesting measures against the shipping losses. The communication expressed the fear that the seamen might at any time refuse to sail, and warned of the consequences this would have for the nation's economy. Although not directly stated, the theory that Norwegian shipping was a selected victim for the submarines was implied in a suggestion that the sinkings might be connected with German allegations - entirely unfounded - of a chartering of Norwegian ships to the British Government for war service¹.

With regard to what the Government and the Foreign Minister held to be the facts in the submarine issue, there

1. UD, P 2 K 1/15. The request was repeated in a letter of 12/10/1916.

can be no doubt that they disbelieved the thesis that submarines were using Norwegian territory. Apart from the refutation of this allegation by the German authorities, reports from the Intelligence Service of the Norwegian General Staff confirmed that the submarines appeared to avoid neutral territory on the north coast. In a speech in Trondheim on 7 October, the Minister for Defence stated that there were no grounds for suspecting that the submarines were violating Norwegian territory¹. There is also reason to believe that the Foreign Minister at least had strong doubts about the "special campaign" against Norwegian ships². At any rate, the issue had long since ceased to be one of facts and had become one of emotions and political prestige.

Ihlen was still not inclined towards any demonstrative actions against Germany at this stage, and for good reasons. A draft reply of 10 October³ to the Shipowners' Association contained suggestions for alternative measures to reduce shipping losses, such as a ban on the carriage of contraband

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1. Cf. Morgenbladet, 9/10/1916.
 2. If not, Ihlen would hardly have included the German reassurances on this point in the press communique which was sent out.
 3. On that same day Denmark's negative reply to the Entente memorandum had been communicated to the Foreign Ministry, in accord with the Kristiania Conference. This fact should have been an additional warning, since thereby all the neutrals had rejected the proposals against submarines, apart from Spain. (The Netherlands had previously banned all warships from their waters.)

produced a draft with the following
or negotiations with the German authorities¹. Concerning a
prohibition on submarines, even if complied with, the Foreign
Ministry did not see how this would hamper the submarines,
and thought that reprisals would on the whole only make re-
lations with Germany worse than at present.

On 9 October Ihlen drafted a press communiqué on the
submarine issue which concluded against positive measures,
and presented this at a meeting with the editors of the
Kristiania newspapers². K. Domaas, the Editor of Norges
Handels og Sjøfartstidende, warned Ihlen against publishing
the communiqué in that form, since it was one thing that the
Government was unable to act, but quite a different one to
admit this inability in public. Two editors supported this
view³. The meeting continued the next day, and Ihlen now

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1. As to the first one, it was hardly serious. On the second point, the Foreign Ministry may have had in mind an analogous arrangement to the Danish food and fodder agreement, which secured Danish trade to Britain in these commodities in return for commercial concessions, or the Swedish timber agreement (Holzsabkommen).
 2. Cf. a series of articles by the Editor of Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende in December 1923 - January 1924, in particular the issues of 10 and 19 January.
 3. One of the two apparently was R. Thommessen of Tidens Tegn, who did not return to the meeting the next day and instead published an editorial demanding the kind of action he knew the Foreign Minister was considering. This led to a strong attack on his alleged illoyalty to the Foreign Minister from five other Kristiania dailies. Cf. Aftenposten, 11/10/1916, a.m. edition. Thommessen claimed he did not know about the meeting the next day.

produced a draft with the following conclusion: "The Government have, however, decided to take up for consideration the question of restricting by new regulations the access of submarines to Norwegian maritime territory."

The decision had thus gone in favour of a ban on submarines, and only the implementation of the decision seemed to remain¹. On 12 October the Foreign Ministry informed the Ministry for Defence that it was in agreement with the issuance of a Royal Decree, in conformity with the draft as formulated by the Ministry for Defence on instructions from the Cabinet Conference two days earlier².

The Royal Decree concerning submarines was issued on 13 October, and deserves to be quoted in extenso:

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1. Cf. Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende 11 October, characterising the communiqué as a "bond on the future, whose value depends on prompt payment through action. Everything rests on the implementation."
 2. UD, P 2 L 28/15. Keilhau (Vår Egen Tid, p. 280) claims that the Prime Minister had demanded the form of a Royal Decree, whereas Commanding Admiral Dawes suggested the less striking form of naval instructions. However, neutrality rules proclaimed by Royal Decree cannot be altered by Naval Instructions alone. - The haste with which the final steps were taken is all the more apparent when considering that the Government, in addition to its disregard of the agreement from the Ministerial Conference three weeks earlier, was violating the Scandinavian Neutrality Declaration of 1912 (vide supra, p. 23-4), by changing neutrality rules without advance consultation with the other contracting powers. This violation seems to have gone unnoticed both at the time and later on, and had no political consequences.

"I. Submarines, equipped for warfare and belonging to a belligerent Power, must not navigate or stay in Norwegian maritime territory. If they violate this prohibition, they risk being attacked by armed force without warning.

The prohibition shall not prevent a submarine from entering Norwegian territory because of bad weather or shipwreck to save human lives; the vessel shall then on the territory remain in surface position and fly its national flag and the international signal showing the cause of its presence. The vessel shall leave the territory as soon as the reason which justified its entry has ceased to exist.

Other submarines than those mentioned cannot enter or navigate in Norwegian maritime territory unless this occurs by daylight in good visibility, and then in surface position with the national flag flying.

By reason of the difficulties connected with distinguishing the different categories of submarines, a foreign submarine navigating in Norwegian waters must itself carry the risk for any damage or destruction caused by mistakes as to the vessel's character.

II. This Decree comes into force on 20 October 1916."

The Royal Decree was greeted with calm satisfaction by the Norwegian newspapers. The British Minister also registered his satisfaction with the decree in a private and confidential letter of congratulation to Ihlen: "The United States should have led the way. I hope they will now follow the example given by Norway." 1

1. UD, P 2 L 28/15.

authentic text by Germany's Protest

Secretary of State in the Department of State
"in order to expedite further arrangements" of the
In Germany the newspapers raised a storm of protest against the Norwegian Decree and demanded a strong answer from the German Government. Under the headline "Norway's humiliation", the Hamburger Fremdenblatt on 15 October attacked the Norwegian measure in severe terms, and stated in particular that it went farther than the Swedish decree since it also concerned merchant submarines. Otherwise, the general tenor of the press was a determined condemnation of the discrimination between submarines and other warships. At the censorship meeting on 16 October, the Auswärtiges Amt was still somewhat cautious in its advice to the press since the complete text of the decree was not yet on hand. Its spokesman said that the Ministry would energetically oppose a differential treatment of submarines and other warships, but added that a discrimination against Germany would only exist if the other belligerents were given privileges in Norwegian waters which were denied to Germany¹.

The Chief of Naval Staff, however, did not await the

1. Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV,1-1, Vol. 65.

authentic text before he on 17 October informed the Secretary of State in the Auswärtiges Amt of his position "in order to expedite further consideration" of the matter:

"So long as both belligerent parties were equally interested or indifferent to the question of free passage by submarines through Norwegian waters, the Norwegian Government found no occasion to order any restriction in this right of passage by which their neutrality was in no way affected. A few weeks ago the British Government addressed itself to the neutrals, among them Norway, with a request to withdraw from submarines the rights accorded to other ships, with a view to limiting the submarine danger for England. The above-mentioned decree from the Norwegian Government followed on this request. Hence it is concluded that the purpose is to restrict the freedom of movement of the submarines in favour of one of the belligerent parties.

In the interest of maritime warfare, I request Your Excellency to raise the sharpest protest against this unneutral act of the Norwegian Government, and to inform the Norwegian Government that its action makes it impossible for German submarines to tow the crews of sunken prizes into Norwegian maritime territory. The Norwegian Government must itself be responsible for accidents arising therefrom." 1

On the following day the German press was informed in the "Oberzensurstelle" that, in the opinion of the Auswärtiges Amt, the Norwegian decree was "not in accordance with the spirit of true neutrality". The Minister at Kristiania had

1. Ibid.

that extent equally unneutral, as only Germany
been informed accordingly¹. Submarines and the measure
has only been called into existence by English

On the evening of Friday, 20 October, Minister Gustav
Michahelles at Kristiania handed the following note to
Foreign Minister Ihlen:

"Your Excellency,

The Royal Norwegian Government has on the
12th [sic] of this month issued a Decree concern-
ing the treatment of submarines of belligerent
Powers which in the opinion of the Imperial
Government is not in harmony with Norway's duties
of neutrality. After the generally recognised
fundamental rule of international law, which is
confirmed in the introduction to the Hague Con-
vention on Neutrality, a neutral Power may not
during the war alter the rules existing at the
time of its declaration of neutrality, unless ex-
perience has rendered it necessary for the pro-
tection of its rights. Such experience does not
exist for Norway, since only ordinary warships of
Germany's enemies but no submarines from either
belligerent party have violated Norway's rights.

The Decree furthermore conflicts with the
fundamental rule of international law according
to which the rules of neutrality may not unila-
terally disfavour one belligerent party, since the
decree is evidently only directed against German
submarines and has actually been announced as a
reprisal against the justified cruiser warfare of
those vessels. By this Decree, the Norwegian
Government has moreover been the only neutral
Power to accede to England's demand for restric-
tive measures against German submarines.

Finally, the Decree envisages particular
restrictions for merchant submarines, and is to

1. Adm. . stab der Marine, B, IV, 2-5, Vol. 49.

that extent equally unneutral, as only Germany possesses merchant submarines and the measure has only been called into existence by English pressure.

On instructions from my Government I therefore have the honour to enter a decisive protest against the Royal Decree of 12 October, and to express the firm expectation that the Royal Government will on reconsideration withdraw the decree.

Please accept, Your Excellency, also on this occasion the expression of my highest consideration.

(signed) Michahelles."

Having read the note to Ihlen, Michahelles added that the small States in their own interest should avoid restrictions on submarines, since these vessels would be their best weapon in maritime warfare¹.

Through the submarine decree the Norwegian Government had seriously aggravated the dispute with Germany which had been in the making over the export restrictions on fish products and pyrites. Instead of establishing a modus vivendi in the relations between the two countries, for which there was still a solid foundation in the exchange of important goods, if aided by a more sober realisation of the limitations on their freedom of action in foreign policy, the

1. UD, P 2 L 28/15.

The first of these two points had been cited to the Norwegian Government had become involved in a chain reaction from which a catastrophe could at times seem the only issue. The road into the tangle was paved with a short-sighted submarine memorandum from the Entente¹, and by a press campaign, fomented to some extent by Britain, which in the rush of events and emotions mistook indications and coincidences for proofs.

However, even at this stage in the process there was much truth in the statement by Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende to the effect that "everything rests on the implementation", - although in a different sense². By a careful wording of the decree, following closely the Swedish model, the German recriminations would have been deprived of much of their force. As it was, the Norwegian decree on two points went further than its Swedish predecessor: firstly, by the addition "to save human lives" in the clause defining the exceptional circumstances; and secondly, by the requirement of "daylight in good visibility" for the entry of "other submarines"³.

1. Cf. Laurens, op.cit., pp. 112 - 113, showing how a consideration of the full consequences of the demanded prohibition demonstrated "combien il serait dangereux d'engager l'avenir pour satisfaire un désir particulier et immédiat".

2. Cf. also the criticism from the House of Commons, in H.C. Deb. 5 s, p. 904 - 910.

3. Vide supra, p. 241, note 1.

4. For the Swedish decree, in English translation, cf. State Papers, 1916, Vol. CX, p. 560.

5. Vide supra, p. 241, note 1.

The first of these two points had been added to the Defence Ministry's draft during the Cabinet Conference which settled the final wording, for the double purpose of further specifying force majeure for the submarines and of permitting also the landing of crews from sunken ships¹. However, the second purpose could hardly be said to follow logically from the wording, and the first purpose, unless superfluous, seemed like a further limitation of the admissible emergencies, in other words like a further restriction on the submarines².

As to the second point, it was the result of an unfortunate metamorphosis in the drafting process. The initial aim seems to have been to lessen the risk of mistaken identity for these "other submarines", by a re-phrasing of the already existing requirement of surface navigation. Thus, in the Commanding Admiral's memorandum referred to above³ the word "conspicuously" - 'aapenlyst' - had been added. However, while the Admiral's wording was retained in the Naval Instructions pertaining to the decree, the Defence Ministry's draft invented the far-reaching alteration to "daylight in good visibility". The wording made all the difference, and gave it the appearance of a severe

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1. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Komm.Adm. - Forsvarsdept., 28/11/1916. Both purposes were distinctly formulated in the Naval Instructions that followed the decree.
 2. A benevolent interpretation would be a different matter. In the censorship conference of 16 October (vide supra, p. 243) the spokesman for the Naval Staff said that, although it was doubtful whether the submarines could save only their own lives or also those from sunken ships, the second alternative would seem more probable since the first one was an obvious right in international law.
 3. Vide supra, p. 230.

restriction on merchant submarines, inter alia.

With regard to the other points in Germany's protest, the Norwegian Government had also placed itself in an unfortunate exposure to the argument that Norway lacked the "experience" which alone justified alterations in the rules of neutrality. This had been admitted publicly by the Government both in the press statement and in the Defence Minister's speech referred to above, notwithstanding the three cases of violation reported earlier in the year, where at least one was moreover a British violation¹. The Government had further laid itself dangerously open to the allegation that the decree was a "retaliation", instigated by Britain against the intensification of German submarine warfare, by allowing the three events to become connected not only in time, but also in space. This refers to the exceptionally unfortunate press statement of 18 October, concerning the reply to the Entente memorandum, which mentioned both the sinkings in the Arctic Sea and the Government's decree in the same breath, so to speak².

Of the three stages by which Norway had become involved in the conflict with Germany - the Entente memorandum, the press agitation, and the decree - the lack of circumspection evident in the preparation of the decree would seem the most difficult one to justify. Norway had thereby exposed herself as an easy target for a pressure which in contemporary eyes seemed to lead the country uncomfortably near to the brink of war.

1. Vide supra, p. 228.

2. The German Government was not alone in its conclusion that there was a causal connection between British pressures and the Norwegian decree. Despite Norway's denial, the same view was represented in the Danish Government. Cf. P. Munch, Erindringer 1914 - 1918 (Copenhagen, 1961), p. 190.

2. The Test Case

Submarine Warfare . . .

Germany's reaction to the submarine decree evidently made a deep impression in Norway at the time. There are indications that business circles began preparing for a state of war; many owners of houses in the capital took out insurance against bombardment and war damage; some Norwegian diplomats made dispositions for the safety of their families if the worst should come to the worst¹.

The protest note of 20 October was at once followed up by statements from prominent German spokesmen on foreign affairs that further explained the source of Germany's grievances. On 21 October, Aftenposten published an interview of its Berlin correspondent with Under-Secretary of State Zimmermann, who stressed the gravity of the situation and claimed that the Entente had reserved for Norway the place as "the first neutral nation to strike a conscious

1. Cf. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 147, and UD, P 2 L 28/15.

blow against Germany in a matter which - as Norway knows - is of an extraordinary importance to Germany". He thought the Norwegian public should understand that "we cannot admit that a Power with whom we have so far been on a friendly footing should attempt to stop us in an issue of this nature". Ministerialdirektor Kriege of the Auswärtiges Amt, in a conversation of the same day with Minister Ditten, declared that the protest was directed against Norway's decree, and that there was considerable bitterness against Norway in German naval circles¹.

The Norwegian Government found itself in a very difficult spot in determining its policy towards the German demands. While the dispute between the two countries was formally concerned with restrictions on the access of submarines to Norwegian waters, the regulations themselves, as well as Germany's protestations, were also symbols of deeper and more complex political realities. On Norway's part, the decree had been issued as a documentary proof of the Government's determination not to be intimidated by violence in their defence of the nation's interests. On the side of Germany, her demand for the decree's withdrawal was in fact a claim for recognition

1. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Ditten - UD 21/10/1916.

2. Vide supra, p. 249.

of the use of submarines as a legitimate means of economic warfare. What primarily interested the Germans was not the access to Norwegian territory; it was the acceptance by the neutrals of submarine warfare as equal in principle to the Entente's methods of economic blockade.

Subsequent studies of the German-Norwegian dispute have made much of the apparent coincidence between the protest note from Germany and the business-like trade negotiations that had just begun between the two countries, and have tended to project the German demands as a pressure campaign in favour of economic concessions¹. However, even without taking into account the now available German evidence which, as shown above², proves the protest to have been made mainly in the interest of maritime warfare, that interpretation suffers from obvious defects. Commercial grievances may well have played a part in determining Germany's policy, but her major concern was the submarine war.

Firstly, although the trade negotiations themselves began on 18 October, the fact that German overtures for a

1. Cf. in particular Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 142 et seq. Bell (op.cit., p. 498) also adheres to that view, and offers moreover the incredible suggestion that the Norwegian Government, on issuing its decree, should have threatened to stop all exports to Germany "if no satisfaction were given".

2. Vide supra, p.244 .

commercial settlement had already been made on 11 October - two days before the dispute erupted - makes the coincidence less striking. Furthermore, Germany's trade proposals were quite modest, and appeared to be based on a commercial quid-pro-quo exchange which made an "ultimatum" like the protest note seem quite a disproportionate measure¹. Primarily, however, an economic interpretation of the German-Norwegian dispute fails to recognise the vital importance which Germany at this point attached to foreign attitudes towards submarines and submarine warfare as a weapon in the economic struggle.

The struggle for and against submarine warfare was at that time raging on several fronts. On the international level, the Entente Powers were trying to halt the submarine threat against their overseas trade by way of a propaganda campaign aimed at the outlawry of this weapon as an exceptionally cruel and inhuman method of war. The "submarine memorandum" to the neutral nations in August was a focal point in this crusade, and the Norwegian decree, at least in German eyes, was the first affirmative answer to its demands².

In Germany, on the other hand, although outwardly united

1. The protest note of 20 October was at the time referred to as an ultimatum, a description which hardly corresponds to reality since a war seems to have been far from Germany's mind. - For the trade negotiations, cf. UD, H 4 H ii 5/16, and infra, p. 272 et seq.

2. Cf. previous chapter.

in defence of submarine warfare, the political and military leaders were engaged in a bitter contest over the proposed unrestricted U-boat campaign¹. In this debate as well, the Norwegian submarine decree could be seen as a test case. For those opposed to a campaign without political and humanitarian restraints, the Norwegian decree with its background of resentment against the shipping disasters in the Arctic Sea could serve to demonstrate that "when these sinkings, which are only the result of ordinary commercial warfare, arouse such feelings . . . , one can easily imagine what effects the unrestricted submarine war would have . . ." ²

The German navy, however, was evidently quite convinced that the Norwegian decree was issued in response to British demands. If this discriminatory attitude against submarines was not effectively checked, it might arouse a massive neutral opinion against the very means which the Naval Staff was increasingly coming to rely on for Germany's final victorious

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1. For an interesting study of this contest and its implications, cf. Birnbaum, Peace Moves and U-boat Warfare (Uppsala, 1958).
 2. Akten des AA im GHQ, 1915/1919, U bootkrieg No. 42, Vol. II: Bethmann-Hollweg - v. Grünau, 2/10/1916. The words, intended for Field Marshal Hindenburg, referred in particular to the agitation in Spain after the sinking of several ships in the Spanish fruit trade, but would seem equally applicable to the situation in regard to Norway.

effort¹. With this in mind it is not surprising that the Chief of Naval Staff should take the initiative in calling for measures against the Entente's memorandum, and that he then should demand an immediate and sharp protest against what he saw as the first positive reply to the anti-submarine campaign.

Thus, in addition to the fact that a Governmental note of protest such as the German one tends to acquire a prestige value of its own once it is issued and made public, the vital cause of submarine warfare would seem to make it imperative to Germany's interests that some satisfaction should be given to the specific demands which the note contained.

In preparing Norway's reply to Germany, the Government took the precaution of calling to Kristiania both Bitten, their Minister to Berlin, and Hagerup, who was Minister to Sweden and an acknowledged expert on international law. A series of meetings was also held with a group of the leading members of the Storting, including the leaders of all the political parties. Various draft replies were worked out in the Ministry for Foreign

1. Cf. the letter from v. Tirpitz to v. Trotha, 16 October 1916: "Vorbereitet müsste, wenn Zeit dazu vorhanden ist, der U-Krieg werden durch energisches Vorgehen gegen das wenig wohlwollende oder sogar unneutrale Verhalten europäischer Kleinstaten. Norwegen gäbe z.B. jetzt eine prachtvolle Gelegenheit." (Tirpitz, Politische Dokumente, Vol. II, p. 580)

Affairs and then debated in those meetings¹.

On the whole, the reply note from the first to the final draft was a polite rejection of the specific German accusations against the Norwegian decree, seasoned by minor verbal concessions. It denied the charge that the decree was inspired by demands from the Entente, and justified the regulations by referring to the shipping disasters in the Arctic Sea and also by citing earlier instances of violation of Norwegian territory by submarines of "other belligerent powers". The note declared that there had been no intention of discriminating against merchant submarines.

The drafting process, however, soon revealed the existence of two more extreme factions, of which one led by the Radical Castberg opposed any concessions to the German protest, whereas Ditten and Mowinckel - the President of the Storting - took the initiative in proposing more substantial awards to Germany's grievances, such as the insertion of a paragraph recognising the justification "in principle" of submarine warfare against commerce. More significant was a new conclusion to the note expressing Norway's desire to "accommodate the wishes of the German people" insofar as her ability and her

1. For reports of the meetings, cf. Castberg, Dagboker, Vol. II (Oslo, 1953).

duties of neutrality would permit¹. Behind that cryptic passage was the idea that a reconciliation between the two countries might be obtained through increased Norwegian exports to Germany.

Already in the meeting with the Parliamentary group on 28 October, Ihlen had suggested that Germany's complaints were due to bitterness against the partiality of the Norwegian press, and also to the desire for economic concessions. On 30 October, a strictly confidential telegram was received from Ditten which stated: "Believe possible avoid revocation of prohibition if our reply indicates basis for further negotiations through one or the other concession." Ditten himself arrived in the Norwegian capital the following day, and during the afternoon he prepared a version of the draft reply which had a new paragraph inviting a commercial settlement². In the next meeting with the Parliamentary representatives, Ditten spoke in confirmation of Ihlen's view as to the source of Germany's discontent, and was supported by Mowinckel who in the meantime had conferred with the German Legation. When Mowinckel had explained to the German Minister the difficulties of revoking the submarine decree, Michahelles had replied that, since

1. UD, P 2 L 28/15. The note of reply was delivered to Michahelles on 8/11/1916.

2. Ibid., Ditten - Ihlen, 30/10/1916, and Ditten's draft, No. 6, dated 31 October p.m.

the decree in reality was the final link in a series of unneutral acts against Germany, the Norwegian Government must at least show their desire for a solution by an offer of commercial favours, for example in regard to fish exports¹.

As it was, Ditten's commercial proposition only survived in the form of that somewhat obscure hint in the final passage of the note². However, what was not written could be expressed verbally. The fact that Ditten and Mowinckel with their access to spokesmen of the Auswärtiges Amt agreed on seeking a settlement in the field of trade would naturally have weighed heavily with Ihlen. At any rate, after the final meeting with the parliamentarians, he authorised Ditten to suggest an economic arrangement when handing the note to

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1. Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV,1-1, Vol. 63, Michahelles - AA, 29/10/1916. Mowinckel promised to pass on these suggestions, and this may have been part of the background for Hilmers' optimistic report to Berlin on 1 November: "Ich habe das Gefühl, dass die ganze Art, wie der deutsch-norwegische Zwischenfall von uns behandelt worden ist, hier sehr gut gewirkt hat. Die Norweger haben ein Paar Tage eine heillose Angst gehabt und haben gesehen, wohin ihre schwache einseitige Politik führt. Diese günstige Position kann von uns geschickt ausgenutzt werden, und uns wirtschaftliche Erfolge einbringen..." AA, Abt. A, Norwegen, No. 17.
 2. Already Hagerup's annotation of Ditten's draft put the paragraph in question into brackets, and the suggestion would in any case seem certain to have been opposed by Castberg.

the Auswärtiges Amt in Berlin¹.

Norway's reply note got a very cool reception in the Auswärtiges Amt. According to Ditten's report, Zimmermann had declared that "the German Government notes with satisfaction that the Norwegian Government recognises the justification in principle of submarine warfare, but finds the reply otherwise unsatisfactory and must maintain its standpoint". After a plea from Ditten, who feared a resumption of the German press attacks on Norway, Zimmermann nevertheless promised to instruct the newspapers that a basis for further negotiations had been provided, following Ditten's statement that "The Royal Government has the hope that the newly opened trade negotiations between the two countries for an arrangement of their economic relationship may lead to mutually satisfactory results." The Under-Secretary of State strongly urged the Norwegian Government to make a positive offer of supplies as proof of their good intentions².

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1. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Ihlen - Ditten, 4/11/1916. The intention seems to have been that Ihlen would say the same to Michahelles, but as it turned out he only remarked that "as the note will show, the Norwegian Government have sought to express their strong desire to preserve and develop friendly relations" (Ibid., Minute of 8/11/1916). As this was hardly what the note itself amounted to, the hint should nevertheless have been clear enough.
 2. Ibid., Ditten - Ihlen, 11/11/1916; German version of reply note with Ditten's declaration attached in AA, Akten des AA im GHQ 1915-1919, Norwegen No.22. Ditten's report to Ihlen stressed the trade issue, and stated: "The chief prerequisite for a conciliatory German attitude is that the Norwegian Government makes trade concessions of significance to Germany."

Ihlen evidently interpreted Ditten's report of his interview with Zimmermann to the effect that the German Government were less concerned about the submarine regulations than about supplies of Norwegian products. He disclosed this in an interview with Michahelles, who apparently saw no reason to counteract this impression. Naval Attaché Hilmers, on the other hand, found that Ihlen's ideas meant "a complete reversal of our position", and had to be reassured by the Naval Staff that Zimmermann's statement must have been incorrectly reported¹.

The Norwegian Government now turned their attention towards their trade relations with Germany, in the belief that therein lay the solution to the dispute between the two countries. Germany, on her side, was clearly quite content to reserve for the time being the demand for a revision of the submarine decree, and to let Norway buy goodwill through the contemplated trade concessions.

1. Adm.stab der Marine, B, IV, 1-1, Vol. 65, Hilmers-Admiralstab, 14/11/1916 and draft reply, which said: "... Zimmermann hat gesagt: 1) Note ist unbefriedigend; 2) Weitere Verhandlungen sind überhaupt nur möglich weil Ditten mündlich Konzessionen auf wirtschaftlichen Gebiete angeboten hat; 3) Uboot darf nicht schlechter behandelt werden als jedes Kriegsschiff"

war between Norway and Germany
and Norway... v. the British Blockade

Whereas the Norwegian

however, must not

Britain The Entente Powers, and Great Britain in particular, had been keeping a close watch on the development of the dispute between Germany and Norway from its very beginning. From 14 October onwards, all the Foreign Office correspondence with a bearing on the issue was referred to the Cabinet, and the Norwegian Legations in London and Paris could soon report that, although the dispute was not thought likely to lead to a rupture between Norway and Germany, both British and French assistance was being prepared for the eventuality. Neither power seemed to favour Norway's entry into the war. When the French Council of Ministers considered the situation in Norway on 27 October, they decided to advise the Norwegian Government against taking an open conflict. Otherwise they recognised the issue as being primarily a British concern¹.

ture, Despite the apparent common interest in avoiding a

1. Cf. Bell, op.cit., p. 499; UD, P 2 L 28/15; Pingaud, Histoire Diplomatique de la France pendant la Grande Guerre (I - III, Paris, 1937 - 1942), Vol. III: Les neutralités et les tentatives de paix, pp. 116 - 117.

3. Cf. Appendix

war between Norway and Germany, the objectives of the Entente and Norwegian Governments were in reality contradictory. Whereas the Norwegian Cabinet was seeking a solution "which, however, must not be of a nature involving a humiliation", Britain and France saw "a little humiliation" as a matter for Norway alone, but regarded it as an entirely different question if the solution should in any way conflict with the rights of the Allies in Norway¹.

The situation in Norway was brought up for discussion in the British Cabinet on 25 October. In view of the seriousness of the circumstances it was decided to request the views of the military and naval authorities on British action in the event of Norway being forced into war. In the War Committee the next day, Sir Edward Grey briefly referred to the issue, and it was decided to take it up for consideration when the Admiralty and the General Staff had submitted their report². The first memorandum to be presented to the War Committee, however, was a long paper from the Blockade Department of the Foreign Office with Sir Eyre Crowe's signature, dated 29 October³.

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1. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Ihlen - Vogt, 29/10/1916, and Minute of conversation with Minister Chevalley of 7 November.
 2. Asquith Papers: Cabinet Letters to the King; Milner Papers: W.P. 24 (Cabinet Committee on War Policy. Norway. Précis of Recent Developments. 11 June, 1917) War Committee 79, Minute 5.
 3. Cf. Appendix I, for the complete text.

Crowe's memorandum began by assessing the effect on the blockade if Norway should be forced by Germany to join the war. On the assumption that Norwegian territory could be made secure against invasion, and that the British Navy had sufficient resources to exploit the strategic advantages that Norway's entry would provide, Sir Eyre considered that Norway's participation would strengthen Britain's control not only of Norwegian but of Swedish and Danish trade as well. In addition, the Norwegian merchant fleet would greatly alleviate the Entente's shortage of shipping.

On the other hand, since the operative question was whether Norway should be encouraged to resist Germany's demands at the cost of a rupture, Crowe's memorandum went on to paint an extremely sombre picture of what might happen if Norway gave in to German pressure. Declaring that "what Germany requires from Norway is practically the cessation of her carrying trade to or from the United Kingdom", Crowe projected Norway's attitude as a test case for the blockade's "to be or not to be". On these premises, the inescapable conclusion was that the interests of the Allies demanded Norway's resistance to German threats even if the result should be Norway's entry into the war.

The War Committee considered Crowe's memorandum in

their meeting on 31 October. The views of the military and naval experts were still not available, but the Chief of Naval Staff, who took part in the debate, questioned Crowe's assumptions in regard to the defence of Norwegian territory. He pointed out that the British Navy could not provide safety against invasion by land from Sweden, and said that the defences of the Norwegian ports were quite inadequate. Nevertheless, the War Committee took the following decision:

"The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should put diplomatic pressure on Norway not to give way to Germany, and to promise the full support of the Allies if the result of following this advice should be the outbreak of war between Norway and Germany." 1

The members of the War Committee were evidently much impressed by the relentless argumentation and alarming prospects put forward by Sir Eyre Crowe, and were hardly in a position to investigate the factual basis for his claims as to what was at stake in Norway. However, the disparity between Germany's actual demands on Norway and Crowe's assumptions about "the cessation of her carrying trade" seems clearly connected to certain events at that time concerning Norwegian shipping. A further evidence to this effect is

1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24, War Committee 80, Minute 7.

2. Asquith Papers: Printed for the use of the Cabinet.

the War Committee's sanction, at the same meeting, of

other "A proposal to permit the transfer of Norwegian vessels to the British register, on the understanding that the Captains must be of British birth. This would give the Norwegian shipowners the benefit of our insurance, and would give us the benefit of being able to arm Norwegian merchant ships." 1

The question of shipping was very much in the foreground during this period. In Britain, a memorandum of 1 November from the Shipping Control Committee to the Cabinet characterised "the present and prospective tonnage situation as so serious that unless immediate steps are taken . . . , there is good reason to fear that the shortage of shipping, already serious, will become, if it has not already become, a source of positive danger to the country" 2 .

For the Norwegian merchant fleet, October was another month of disaster, causing heavy losses for the Bureau of War Insurance. Already in the beginning of the month the Bureau had refused to insure voyages to the Arctic Sea, and on 23 October it was rumoured that a general rise in the insurance premiums was being prepared. When the Board of the Bureau met on 27 October, the newspapers stated the alternatives to be considered as being either an over-all premiums increase or

1. Ibid., loc.cit.

2. Asquith Papers: Printed for the Use of the Cabinet.

a refusal to insure contraband traffic in the North Sea and other dangerous areas. The Bureau's decision, announced on the following day, was to raise all premiums, and also "not to accept, for the time being, certain voyages which just now appear to be especially dangerous". One of these voyages, apparently, was the Anglo-French coal trade¹.

In reporting this potentially grave threat to the Entente's tonnage supply, Minister Findlay presumably drew the hasty conclusion that the decision on insurance was the result of German pressure on Norway, and thus managed to convince the Foreign Office that the point of no return was near in Anglo-Norwegian relations². Events that were to follow seemed to confirm the fears of the Foreign Office. On 1 November Chevalley, on the way to resume his duties as French Minister to Norway after a period of home leave, called at the Foreign Office to have an interview with Sir Edward Grey. He said that according to his latest information Norway was yielding

1. Cf. Aftenposten of 10, 23, 27, and 28 October 1916.

2. That Findlay should have taken such an alarmist view was not entirely his own fault, since he should obviously have been reassured of the purely temporary nature of the Bureau's decision. There are indications that Ihlen consciously nourished rather than tried to alleviate Findlay's anxieties, in order to prepare the ground for concessions to Germany that might adversely affect British interests. Bell (op. cit., p. 500) claims that Ihlen on 26 October suggested his reply to Germany might be met with an ultimatum.

thought Norway's neutrality to Germany, and was already "calling in her ships". After Grey had shown him the telegrams sent to Findlay after the War Committee's decision and asked him what more could be done, Chevalley suggested that all the Norwegian ships which did not fulfill their contracts should be denied bunker coal. Norway should also be told that if she gave in to Germany, all her supplies would be cut off in a week's time. Minister Chevalley added that the Allies "ought to be prepared, if Germany forced Norway into what was practically an unneutral position, to seize a naval base by force", since this was what the Norwegians would really expect¹.

The War Committee resumed discussion of the situation in Norway on 2 November, in the light of Lord Grey's report of his conversation with Chevalley. On the Committee's table was also a long memorandum from the Imperial General Staff concerning the naval and military possibilities in the case of Norway's entry into the war².

Although the experts of the Admiralty and the War Office

1. Asquith Papers. Foreign Office mimeographed memorandum, dated 1 November 1916, initialled G., circulated to War Committee. - The phrase "calling in her ships" is a peculiar one indeed, and conjures up strange visions of how this would happen in reality.

2. For the full text of this memorandum, cf. Appendix II.

thought Norway's neutrality on the whole must be advantageous to Germany, and that the German pressure therefore might be a bluff, a foothold in Norway would nevertheless offer both strategic and other advantages to the Germans, and a military occupation of the country with Swedish aid was not inconceivable. If Norway were encouraged to resist Germany's demands, she would need guarantees of assistance, and the Entente could only offer naval support in addition to munitions such as aircraft and anti-aircraft guns. The prospect of having Norway as an ally was, on the whole, not viewed with favour by the Imperial General Staff, since it would impose far too heavy a strain on the material and financial resources of the Entente, although they admitted, somewhat inconclusively, that the dangers of a peaceful settlement between Norway and Germany might be more serious than the drawbacks of Norway's entry into the war.

The decision of the War Committee on 2 November was to strengthen the diplomatic pressure on the Norwegian Government. Communications should also be sent from the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade respectively to the Government and the ship-owners in Norway, in this sense:

"We cannot believe that Norway will yield to Germany. The question has been considered by the Naval and Military authorities, and we are of opinion that Norway has nothing to fear from German invasion, for we could, and would, protect her if she appealed to us in time. On the other hand, if she took what we

consider un-neutral action by cutting off or hampering our trade with her, such a procedure would at once be reciprocated, the consequences of which would be the cutting off of all overseas supplies for Norway . . . " 1

The communications would also repeat the offer of British assistance in regard to insurance for shipping, although it was reported to the War Committee that the Norwegian ship-owners had not shown any willingness to transfer their vessels to the British Register².

Of a more practical nature was the War Committee's decision that the Admiralty should give Norwegian ships the benefit of their advice about routes to be followed in order to avoid submarines. This was in accordance with a request the same day from the Norwegian Legation³.

The note whose content had been laid down by the War Committee was dispatched at once to Norwegian shipowners, in the form of a circular from the brokerage firm H. Clarkson & Co. in London, and did not fail to arouse immediate and strong indignation. The reply from the Shipowners' Association, sanctioned by the Foreign Ministry, called the letter both

1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24, War Committee 81, Minute 7.

2. Ibid., Minute 9.

3. Cf. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Vogt - Ihlen, 2/11/1916.

3. Ibid., Ihlen - Vogt, 2/11/1916.

"unnecessary and unfortunate", and declared that the decisions of the Bureau of War Insurance were wholly justified in view of the enormous losses sustained by Norwegian shipping in the areas concerned. There had been no pressure whatsoever from "the other side", and the refusal to insure certain voyages - a purely temporary measure - had already been withdrawn¹.

The somewhat crude disguise of "Clarkson's dispatch" appears to have left little doubt as to its official origin.² As to the equivalent note from the Foreign Office, however, it was never delivered, and was presumably stopped by Findlay at the last moment when he realised that his alarm was a false one. Ihlen nonetheless requested Vogt to inform the Foreign Office that "The Norwegian Government have neither negotiated about nor contemplated any concessions regarding the Norwegian merchant navy as a price for Germany's goodwill towards Norway. The Government have had no influence on the decisions of the Bureau of War Insurance."³

The British Government's alarm in regard to Norway's position in the beginning of November had one practical effect.

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1. Ibid., copy of telegram Norges Rederforbund - H. Clarkson & Co.
 2. Minister Vogt through some "irregular" sources found out about both communications on the day of the War Committee's decision, and promptly informed the Foreign Ministry. Cf. Ibid., Vogt - Ihlen, 2/11 and 6/11/1916.
 3. Ibid., Ihlen - Vogt, 4/11/1916.

Minister Vogt's request for permission to purchase anti-aircraft guns for Norway, referred to in the War Committee's meeting on 9 November, was considered by an Inter-Allied Munitions Conference the same day, and was granted in the way that Britain and France each promised to supply five guns¹.

However, the British Legation continued to view with anxiety the developments of German-Norwegian relations. During a visit to the Foreign Ministry in the middle of November, Commercial Attaché C. L. Paus stated that Findley was suspicious of Norway's intentions concerning trade to Germany, and continued: "It is considered practically impossible for Norway to bind herself at all in regard to exports to Germany without causing repercussions on Norway's imports. The whole thing is incalculable." This was evidently meant as a thinly veiled threat of a retaliatory embargo if Norway should offer Germany any commercial concessions².

1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. War Committee 84, Minute 4; War Committee 86, Minute 4.

2. UD, H 4 H 11 5/16, Wollerbæk's Minute of 15/11/1916.

Concessions and Compromise

Already in the trade negotiations between Norway and Germany, which ended provisionally on 25 October, the Germans had made it clear that the crucial points to them were the supply of pyrites and fish under Norway's new agreements with Great Britain. On neither of these issues did the talks provide a satisfactory solution. Norway's only definite offers were that Germany would get all the fish which the Agreement allowed to be freely exported, and that the "old stocks" of fish would be sold to Germany at controlled prices. As to pyrites, Ihlen was able shortly afterwards to express "a definite hope" that Stordo's production would continue to go to Germany¹.

Following the invitation from the Norwegian Government in connection with the reply note of 8 November, Germany now began to press more strongly for a solution of the dispute which would also provide some economic benefits. In the afternoon of Wednesday 15 November the German Minister delivered to

1. Vide supra, p. 181, in regard to fish exports, and p. 202 - 203, concerning pyrites.

fish exports, complete satisfaction was given to Germany's requests. When handed to Michahelles on the same day, it the Foreign Ministry his Government's specific demands, in three points. In regard to fish, Germany wanted the export allowance of fifteen per cent to be calculated from the average catch of the last five years instead of on an annual basis as required in the Fisheries Agreement¹. Norway should also negotiate with Great Britain for an increase in the percentage allowance. The remaining two points of Germany's communication concerned the submarine decree, and demanded that the rules that affected merchant submarines should be struck out entirely, whereas the rest of the decree should be made to conform to Sweden's Royal Decree of July 1916.

This memorandum was delivered to the German Legation on 18 November. The German demands on this occasion also had a time limit attached: Minister Michahelles had instructions to request an answer by Saturday, and if Norway did not come to terms, her attitude would be declared as unsatisfactory by the German Government².

On the following day, the Norwegian Cabinet ratified two memoranda on the points at issue. In the first one, concerning

1. Ihlen had already in a letter to the Ministry of Supplies proposed a similar arrangement. An annual basis was unpractical, since it meant that the amount that could go to Germany after the catch was over also governed the amount of stores and supplies to be provided by Germany before the catch began.

2. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Minute of 16/11/1916.

fish exports, complete satisfaction was given to Germany's requests. When handed to Michahelles on the same day, it was received with the remark that it would be "very helpful"¹. The other memorandum had the following content:

"The Norwegian Government consider they can allow access for war submarines of belligerent powers to Norwegian territory when necessary for the vessels on account of bad weather or shipwreck.

The Norwegian Government are willing to disregard the rules of their Decree in cases where it is certain that a submarine seeking Norwegian territory is equipped for purposes of commerce. The Norwegian rules will thereby be in full conformity with Sweden's regulations, according to which each submarine is treated as a war submarine unless it can be concluded with certainty that it has the other mentioned purposes." 2

This memorandum was delivered to the German Legation on 18 November. It was evidently too vague and inconclusive to satisfy the Auswärtiges Amt, and Secretary of State Jagow's reply to Michahelles only specified Germany's attitude.

"The dispute caused by the Norwegian decree would lose its acute character if Norway would completely remove the restrictions for merchant submarines and alter the regulations for war submarines in accordance with the Swedish model - in other words permit the access to territorial waters on the surface by heavy sea or shipwreck. Germany would still maintain the view that a neutral Power may not prohibit the passage through its territory for belligerent vessels. Alterations of the Submarine

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1. Ibid., Minutes of 16 and 17/11/1916.
 2. Ibid., Pro Memoria 16/11/1916.

Concerning merchant submarines a new and separate decree might
Decree must of course be undertaken by the Norwegian Government on their own, so that, while Norway is informed of our attitude, our agreement may not be outwardly visible ... "

The reply further instructed Michahelles to press for an advance settlement of the economic issues, and to emphasise the seriousness of the situation ¹.

It is clear from Jagow's instructions that Germany wanted a formal recantation by the Norwegian Government, regulations for merchant submarines. On both points Germany which Germany then in a show of generosity could accept as a modus vivendi that satisfied Germany's minimum demands.

Ditten nevertheless continued to advise the Foreign Ministry that "We should be able to meet the wishes of the German Government in the question of merchant submarines and food supplies provided the Decree can be retained in its form." ²

On 2 December Ihlen made another attempt to settle the dispute without any significant revisions of the wording of the submarine decree, by proposing to Michahelles that submarines should be allowed to enter the territory "because of bad weather or shipwreck or to save human lives" ³.

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1. Adm.stab der Marine, B, IV, 1-1, Vol. 64. Copy of AA-Ges.sch. Kristiania, 19/11/1916.
 2. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Ditten - Ihlen, 27/11/1916.
 3. Suggested change in Author's italics.

Concerning merchant submarines a new and separate decree might be issued which made it clear that their access was not forbidden¹.

The German Government, however, again insisted on having their minimum demands satisfied, which meant that they "already from reasons of prestige would require at least an alteration on the Swedish model, in other words a limitation of the rules for war submarines and the removal of any special regulations for merchant submarines". On both points therefore an express change in the wording of the decree would be necessary².

In January 1917 the curtain finally went up for the last act in the submarine conflict. In a telegram of 18 January, Ditten reported that Michshelles had been instructed to demand an official revision of the submarine decree, so as to make it conform to the Swedish decree, as a condition for settlement. In a letter which followed, Ditten commented

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1. The Defence Ministry and the Commanding Admiral were willing to go much further in answering Germany's demands, but this was apparently opposed by Castberg and others in the parliamentary group that met again on 30 November. Cf. *ibid.*, Komm. Adm. - Forsvarsdept. 28/11, Forsvarsdept. - UD 1/12, and Minute of 2/12/1916; Castberg, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 136 - 144.
 2. Cf. Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV, 1-1, Vol. 65, AA - Ges. schaft Kristiania 6/12/1916, and UD, P 2 L 28/15, Minute of 12/12/1916 in Ihlen's own hand. By now, Ditten had also come around to the view that "a partial revision of the Decree" would be necessary. Cf. *ibid.*, Ditten - Ihlen 1/12/1916.

that such a solution "seems advantageous since we then avoid complications with a trade agreement which to my latest information has small chances of success"¹.

Talks between Michahelles and Ihlen on 19 and 20 January resulted in a recommendation for a new and revised decree which the Foreign Ministry then communicated to the Ministry for Defence. In addition to the already proposed change "or to save human lives", the passage on "Other submarines" would be altered to refer to "Submarines, equipped for warfare and belonging to a non-belligerent Power" and hence would not concern merchant submarines². The fourth paragraph of the original decree was struck out.

The new decree was issued on 30 January, and was welcomed by a statement in the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung on 2 February:

"The Norwegian submarine decree has hereby lost its character of being directed against Germany, and, although the German viewpoint has not been fully accepted by the Norwegian Government any more than

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1. UD, P 2 L 28/15. Ditten went on to say that "we are so tied up with England that we retrieve by one hand what we give to Germany with the other, and this was not the basis on which I advocated a settlement of an economic nature".
 2. The paragraph in its new version hardly served any practical purpose since it would concern only neutral submarines. To strike out the paragraph altogether may nevertheless have seemed a more conspicuous concession and therefore less attractive to the Government.

Gov. by the Swedish Government, the new decree as well as the Swedish decree may yet seem justified by the neutrality interests of two States located so closely to the theatre of maritime warfare."

The settlement was sealed by a temporary trade arrangement on 23 January. Neither party could offer much of substance, but there were mutual assurances of the greatest possible goodwill concerning exports, qualified in Norway's case by a reference to "existing agreements with other countries". Norway moreover promised, on a month-by-month basis, not to issue new export prohibitions for nickel, molybdenum, calcium-carbide, ferro-silicon, calcium-nitrate, and fish conserves. A loan from the Bank of Norway was also included in the deal¹.

Although the concessions to Germany which thus ended the dispute were of comparatively minor importance, the settlement hardly qualifies as a "diplomatic victory" for Norway². The conflict could have been solved at an earlier stage, through the concessions which made the decree conform to its Swedish counterpart. The dilemma of the Norwegian Government should not be under-estimated, hard pressed as it was between the public's demand for firmness and Germany's threats. However, if the

1. UD, H 4 H 11 5/16.

2. Cf. Keilhau, Vår Egen Tid, p. 288: "The outcome became one of the few diplomatic victories which a small country in dangerous circumstances has won in a conflict with a Great Power."

That the situation was not originated by Germany's protest, inferred from the trade negotiations which preceded Germany's protest.

Government could have brought itself to admit that careless phrasing was the crucial point, not the prohibition itself, the necessary verbal amendments would hardly have had a serious effect on the position of the Government¹.

As to the force of Germany's menacing language, relations between the two countries were tense at times, but a danger of war was never actually present. There were, in fact, clear German indications to the contrary, such as the German newspaper comment which Michahelles handed to Ihlen on 27 October after instructions from Berlin. Referring to attempts by the Norwegian Government's organ to calm public opinion, this excerpt from Der Tag expressed its entire agreement that "there is absolutely no reason for alarm in our relations with Norway"².

To Norway, the support she received from Denmark and Sweden during the dispute was of essential value. Although

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1. That a clumsy phrasing of the decree was the primary cause for the dispute is illustrated by the fact that the Naval Instructions, pertaining to the two decrees and issued respectively on 14 October 1916 and 30 January 1917, were practically identical apart from the addition "or to save human lives".
 2. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Minute of 27/10/1916. The newspaper went on to stress, however, that if Norway's reply was only an elaboration of her previous stand, this would not be satisfactory. - Conciliatory remarks were also forthcoming from Germany's Minister to Stockholm, and caused Ihlen on 2 November to inform the Legations in Paris and London that he had "reason to assume that Germany will not break with Norway". That the situation was not critical could also have been inferred from the trade negotiations that went on after Germany's protest.

both countries would have had grounds for complaint about the way Norway had partly disregarded and partly acted contrary to previous agreement with her neighbours, concerning neutrality rules and submarines, they were of course aware of the threats which a rupture between Germany and Norway would entail for them as well. Thus, they had a natural wish to see an adjustment of the relations, no doubt preferably by economic concessions since that would strengthen Norway's and thereby their own resistance to British pressure. Sweden's support was especially useful for Norway, as it led Germany to fear that a recall of the Norwegian Decree might have a similar but highly undesirable effect on the Swedish regulations¹. It was unfortunate that Norway did not take advantage of these fears by proposing a revision of the decree on the pattern of the Swedish precedent.

Norway's attempt to shift the dispute to the level of a purely economic settlement was, of course, doomed from the

1. Cf. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 7, Vol. 7 (Memo. on the history of the submarine conflict) "Die deutsche Haltung bei den Verhandlungen wurde auch durch die Erwägung beeinflusst, dass eine Zurückziehung der ganzen Norwegischen Verordnung leicht die gleichzeitige Aufhebung der Schwedischen Verordnung hätte hinter sich ziehen können. In diesem Falle wäre aber nach den Erklärungen Wallenbergs damals auch das Abkommen über die Kogrundsrinne ins Wanken (?) gekommen".

very beginning, since it rested on a false assumption of the nature of the conflict. One of the main reasons why the attempt was made was probably the Government's fear of the loss of prestige involved in an open retreat on the issue of the decree. Ihlen himself may also have been influenced by the consideration that commercial wrangles were more shielded from the public eye, and thus afforded more scope for his special facility for ambiguities, subtleties and compromises. On the other hand, Ihlen was badly served by his two main sources of knowledge of Germany's intentions. Michahelles appears to have been rather confused through much of the dispute, and even advocated solutions which the German Government had previously discarded¹.

The Ditten's advice to Ihlen seems to have been the main basis for the belief that economic concessions could take the place of a revision of the submarine decree. In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, Ditten persisted

1. Cf. UD, P 2 L 28/15, Minute of 8/11/1916. On receiving Norway's reply note to the German protest, Michahelles gravely complained that Norway "had not accepted an extension of the prohibition to all warships", - a solution which Germany earlier had indicated as unacceptable. (Ibid., UD - Ditten, 8/11/1916.) Michahelles was at the time severely criticised for his incompetence, both by Hilmers and by Minister von Lucius in Stockholm. His handling of the submarine dispute probably contributed to his recall half a year later.

up to 1 December in his opinion that the original form of the decree could be preserved intact. Ditten's dedicated efforts to maintain a good relationship between Norway and Germany had suffered a severe setback particularly in the Fisheries Agreement, - about which he had not been consulted and which he never ceased to criticise. An improvement in trade relations must therefore have appeared to Ditten as the first condition for strengthening Norway's position in Berlin; even to the extent of obscuring his realisation of Germany's concern to justify U-boat warfare, a subject on which German opinion, in his own words, "was very touchy, since the submarines were Germany's only weapon against England's war of starvation"¹.

The emphasis on the mistaken economic interpretation of the dispute may seem unnecessary in view of the meagre concessions involved in the settlement in January. However, Germany had in the meantime reaped considerable benefits in terms of fish and pyrites supplies. By delaying settlement of the dispute, Germany succeeded in prolonging these ad hoc concessions, which brought about the far more serious conflict

1. Castberg, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 122, quoting Ditten's remarks in the meeting of the parliamentary group of 1 November 1916.

between Norway and Great Britain.

In regard to British policy towards Norway, the heavy-handed approach of "Clarkson's dispatch" may serve as a symbol both of a general British nervousness about the tonnage and supply situation, and of a deterioration in Anglo-Norwegian relations as the strangle-hold of the blockade was gradually being strengthened. The decision to apply diplomatic pressure was inspired by improbable alarms, supported by unrealistic promises of assistance, and carried out by amateurish diplomacy. As long as Entente support was limited to ten anti-aircraft guns and the pious wish that no rupture would occur, then the diplomatic pressure and embargo threats would seem better reserved for real emergencies.

On the other hand, if the British Government's information had been correct, the situation in Norway could have presented a test case for the blockade, in which a gamble on the assumption that Germany desired no conflict might seem justified. Britain's misapprehensions about what was at stake together with a request that statistics be furnished to show the amounts registered as "old stocks". The statistics were not furnished, although Iolien must have been aware of the dispute, - a failure which is all the more strange as Norway was requesting military assistance from the Allies.

1. Vide supra, p. 131

3. The Crisis of Confidence

In the Fisheries Agreement between Great Britain and Norway, concluded on 5 August 1916, it was stipulated that stocks of fish on hand before 18 August - the date when the export prohibition came into effect - could be sold freely. These "old stocks", thought to be fairly small, had to be registered with the authorities, who could then issue licences for export to Germany provided this did not conflict with previous guarantees given by the fishermen. As Ihlen informed the German Minister that an agreement on fisheries had been concluded, he made it clear that these "old stocks" were available¹.

Only a few weeks had passed after the signing of the Agreement, however, before the British Legation became suspicious of the large amounts of fish exported to Germany. The apprehensions were communicated to the Foreign Ministry, together with a request that statistics be furnished to show the amounts registered as "old stocks". The statistics were not furnished, although Ihlen must have been aware of the

1. Vide supra, p. 181.

seriousness of the British suspicions. Towards the end of September, in fact, he asked the Ministry of Customs and Finance to exercise strict control over the issue of export licences¹.

At all events, the export of fish to Germany continued at a rather high rate. From the end of October onwards, as Findlay understood that negotiations were in process concerning Norway's dispute with Germany but did not know what the negotiations were all about, he was evidently becoming convinced that Norway was buying time by ad hoc concessions to Germany in the supply of domestic products. By the middle of November, when the British Legation found out about the pyrites export to Germany from the Stordo Mines, this to Findlay must have seemed a confirmation that something contrary to Britain's agreements with Norway had been arranged, in regard to both pyrites and fish products².

When the British Minister lodged his complaints with the Norwegian Government about their execution of the Fisheries and Copper Agreements, the Foreign Ministry replied by maintaining, in regard to pyrites, that the export from Stordo

1. UD, H 4 D ii 11/16, memorandum of 27/9/1916.

2. Cf. Bell, op.cit., p. 500: "Finally, Mr. Findlay never doubted that something damaging to our recent agreements was promised ..." Also, p. 501: "... as Mr. Findlay never wavered, that the agreements were being put out of operation in order to placate the German government ..."

was in full accordance with its interpretation of the Agreement¹. Concerning fish, the Foreign Ministry drew attention to the big herring catch in the middle of August, but promised to look into the matter.

At the end of November Findlay submitted a series of sharp recriminations against the Norwegian Government's behaviour in regard to the Fisheries and Copper Agreements. Receiving no immediate satisfaction, he then on 9 December informed the Foreign Office about his accusations, and recommended that an ultimatum be presented to the Norwegian Minister in London, to the effect that if Norway persevered in a policy that was prejudicial to British interests this would be met by drastic action on the part of the British Government².

In London, Lloyd George's new Government had just been brought to power by the desire to improve on the conduct of the war, and his War Cabinet held its third meeting on 12 December. In a two-hour session, the situation of Norway was discussed at length, in relation to Findlay's report about the illicit exports to Germany and his recommendation that an ultimatum should be presented to the Norwegian Government.

1. Vide supra, P. 203.

2. Milner Papers: W.P. 24, War Cabinet 3, Minute 4.

The Minister of Blockade, Lord Robert Cecil, opposed the form of an ultimatum, and referred in this connection to the views of the naval and military authorities on Norway's position, presented to the War Committee on 2 November, which had concluded against involving Norway in the war.

Instead of an ultimatum, Lord Robert Cecil suggested a strong protest which, if it failed to produce results, could then be followed up by economic pressure such as embargoes on copper, fishing material, coal, etc. In the War Cabinet's debate it was pointed out that such action on Britain's part was incongruous, since the Entente was preparing at the same time to give assistance to Norway in equipment for aerial defence. Nevertheless, the War Cabinet took the following decision:

"The Minister of Blockade should send for the Norwegian Minister and make a strong protest against the action of the Norwegian Government. If this failed, we should exercise economic pressure to the utmost possible extent, as proposed by Lord Robert Cecil. The Minister of Blockade should point out to the Norwegian Minister the absurdity of the position if we were to continue to assist Norway in providing against aerial attack while she persisted in supplying Germany." 1

On 18 December Minister Vogt received two memoranda

1. Ibid., loc.cit.

from Robert Cecil with charges of violations of the Agreements between Great Britain and Norway concerning pyrites and fish. In regard to copper, it was declared that the export of pyrites to Germany before compensation pyrites under the first call had been exported to Great Britain was illegal. Concerning the Fisheries Agreement, violations were alleged on several points, relating among other things to the failure to supply information and to the export of so-called "old stocks". According to the British Government, more than 100,000 barrels of fat herrings had been exported to Germany up to the end of 31 October. Much of this, it was maintained, had in reality been caught after the export prohibition had come into effect.

When the two memoranda were delivered to Minister Vogt, he embarked on an explanation of Norway's difficult position in face of the conflicting demands of Germany and Great Britain, but Lord Robert Cecil only retorted: "Here are two Agreements, which must be fulfilled." Four days later, as no immediate reply to the protests was forthcoming from the Norwegian Government, Lord Robert Cecil went one step further, and ordered an embargo on coal exports to Norway.

2. UD, R & D 11 6/13

issue¹, reports The Coal Stoppage that the Norwegian Government might have to consider whether they could any longer...

The British coal embargo was first brought to the knowledge of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry by way of a letter from Findlay to the Director of the State Provisioning Commission, dated 23 December¹. In reply to an application for coal licences on behalf of the Kristiania City Council, Findlay stated in his letter:

"I am unable at present to recommend any such applications in view of instructions from my Government that such recommendations ... are to be suspended until certain questions respecting the execution of our agreements respecting fish and pyrites have been satisfactorily settled." 2

On 26 December Findlay paid a visit to the Foreign Ministry and informed Ihlen of the substance of his reply to the State Provisioning Commission. Ihlen, who in the meantime had been embittered by the British Government's refusal to consider his suggestion that two Norwegian negotiators should be sent to London to seek a settlement of the

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1. Keilhau's allegation (Norge og Verdenskrigen, p. 169), that the Foreign Ministry received no notification of the coal stoppage from the British Legation, is contradicted by Fasting (op.cit., p. 237), who says that Findlay personally informed Ihlen about Britain's decision on Christmas Eve.
 2. UD, H 4 D 11 6/15.

reconvened on 17 January. Findlay, ... a communique was issued which ... on the background of the ...

issue¹, retorted that in this situation the Norwegian Government might have to consider "whether they could any longer disregard the Royal Decree of 30 April, 1904, whereby it was forbidden for Norwegian vessels to carry coal to belligerents' military and naval forces"².

The advent of the new year did not seem to bring any hope that a solution of the crisis in Anglo-Norwegian relations was near. On the contrary, there was a turn for the worse after the British Minister had been the subject of violent attacks in Morgenbladet. The background for this incident was a press statement from representatives of the Coal Importers' Association, issued at Findlay's suggestion, wherein the Norwegian public was informed that the coal embargo was due to Norway's failure to fulfill her contractual obligations³.

As to the realities behind the disputes that caused "economic pressure to the utmost possible extent" to be exerted on Norway, an attempt has been made in an earlier chapter

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1. UD, H 4 I 11 11/16, Ihlen-Vogt, 21/12/1916, with reply from Vogt of 23/12/1916.
 2. Ibid., Minute of 27/12/1916.
 3. Although Findlay's procedure was rather peculiar, it must be seen in connection with the Government's failure to inform the public themselves. Ihlen delayed his first statement until 5 January, and then merely said that he would inform the Storting of the dispute when it reconvened on 17 January. Finally, as late as 23 January, a communique was issued which contained some information on the background of the conflict.

to explain the situation concerning pyrites. There, the fundamental issue arose out of disagreement as to what had been concluded between the parties, whereas the conflict in regard to fish was a more relative one, of whether the amounts exported to Germany were within or in excess of what the Agreement allowed.

It is beyond doubt that considerable amounts of fish were illegally exported to Germany during the autumn of 1916. To a certain extent, this may well have been due to the difficulty of effectively bringing under control the fish trade in the more remote districts in the two weeks that elapsed between the signing of the Agreement and the day the export prohibition took effect¹. Some of the irregularities may also have been due to mistakes by subordinate local officials.

However, it is also certain that the Norwegian Government, when faced with increasing pressure from Germany during the submarine conflict, began to turn a blind eye to the insufficiency of their control measures. This is the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from a telegram from the German Legation of 27 December 1916, relating to the German-Norwegian

1. The difficulty of obtaining reliable figures is indicated by the fact that the amounts which the British claimed to be illegally exported fluctuated from 100,000 barrels to 40,000. It may also be significant that the British Purchasing Agency was on occasion not sure about the size of its own fish stocks.

trade negotiations. The telegram recommends a dilatory treatment of the question of a trade agreement in order to benefit from ad hoc concessions by Norway, and states:

"It will be known that the so-called old stocks of fish and liver oil are exempt from the export prohibition, and experience has demonstrated that these old stocks are being continually replenished."

The German Minister went on to explain that their "War Commission for Oils and Fats" quite recently had bought another shipment of liver oil at a value of 250,000 kroner from "old stocks", all while the Norwegian authorities were keeping their eyes shut so as not to disturb the negotiations for a final settlement¹.

The process towards a settlement of the Anglo-Norwegian conflict started moving on 3 January, 1917, when the Foreign Ministry sent two long notes to the British Government. In the communication concerning fish, reference was again made to the unusually good herring catch in the first half of August as the main reason why the old stocks were much larger than expected. However, investigations recently undertaken in response to Britain's allegations had revealed that,

1. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 17. Michshelles - AA, 27/12/1916: "... und die Behörden drücken bei diesen Transaktionen offenbar beide Augen zu, weil man die schwebenden Verhandlungen nicht stören will."

although the control in most districts had been quite satisfactory, some irregularities had occurred in the northernmost counties. Proceedings were being instituted against some offenders, but the amounts involved were small, and there was nothing to indicate that the faults were deliberate or in any way caused by dishonest motives¹.

In the note regarding the copper dispute, the Norwegian Government maintained its previous stand on the interpretation of the points at issue, according to which the "Assurance" had been fulfilled by virtue of the Rio Tinto contract. This contract had been extremely profitable to the Rio Tinto Company, and could only be obtained with the assistance of the Norwegian Government, - an assistance which could not have been expected unless the contract was presumed to replace the original first call².

As the Foreign Minister was dispatching the two notes to the Foreign Office, the Prime Minister was engaging in

1. UD, H 4 D 11 11/16.

2. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15. For the negotiations on the contract, vide supra, pp. 201 - 202. According to a letter from the Pyrites Export Association to the Foreign Minister, dated 2/12/1916, Rio Tinto bought the pyrites for 41 kroner per ton, and subsequently sold 21,000 tons to Denmark at a price of 103 kroner. (Ibid.)

another exercise of personal diplomacy¹. In a private and confidential letter to Lloyd George, Gunnar Knudsen declared with reference to the dispute between their two Governments that "there exists a certain misapprehension on the part of your Minister at Kristiania", and expressed strong regret that Britain should refuse to receive the two emissaries that Norway had proposed to send.

"For men from the smaller nations it is both disappointing and perplexing to receive such a reply from the British Government, whose leader is Lloyd George, - Lloyd George who with Mr. Asquith has repeatedly told the world that the Allies are fighting for the rights of the small nations"

As Lloyd George replied to Knudsen's letter with nothing but a restatement of Britain's opinion concerning the two disputes, even if couched in very polite terms, the Norwegian Prime Minister retorted on 19 February with an explanation of the views of the Norwegian Government. The exchange added nothing to what had already been put forward at the ordinary

1. For a previous occasion, cf. supra, p. 83. In between, the Prime Minister in September 1916 had corresponded with Asquith regarding Britain's detention of ships in the service of the Norwegian Government. Cf. Nissen, op. cit., pp. 261-264. For the exchange with Lloyd George referred to here, cf. ibid., pp. 266-276. There does not seem to be any basis for Nissen's contention that this exchange contributed in any large measure to the solution of the Anglo-Norwegian dispute.

diplomatic level, and ended with a brief letter from Lloyd George dated 24 March. It said that the dispute had in the meantime been resolved "in a happy manner", and assured the Norwegian Government that their good faith had never been doubted.

From the first reactions of the British Government to the Foreign Ministry's notes it transpired that there were no longer serious differences in the fish issue. Concerning copper, however, there was no reason for optimism, although Minister Vogt had heard indications that Findlay's advice was now regarded with more scepticism in London. Vogt also remarked that one of his meetings with Cecil and Crowe had an air of "demonstrative friendliness" about it¹.

The British Government's reply was delivered to Minister Vogt on 12 January. On the question of fish, while repeating the contention that the statistics regarding old stocks were wrong and misleading, and that illegal exports had taken place, Britain was nevertheless willing to regard that incident as closed in view of Norway's admission of the mistakes and her promise to take action against the offenders.

In relation to the Copper Agreement the reply noted that Norway did not dispute what the British regarded as the essence of the matter, namely that Britain had not been offered the pyrites that were allowed to go to Germany. The British Government nevertheless accepted that the export to Germany was the

1. UD, H 4 I 11 11/16, Vogt - Ihlen of 6, 10, and 11/1/1917.

result of "a genuine misapprehension of the real purport and scope of the obligations", and would consider the issue as settled, - provided the pyrites export to Germany was stopped¹.

The "concessions" in the British Government's reply were of course purely verbal, and were only designed to make it easier for Norway to accept surrender on the point that really mattered: the actual export to Germany of pyrites. The Norwegian Government, however, did not want to stop this trade as long as the controversy with Germany was still open. Recent reactions from the German Legation, after a hint from the Foreign Ministry that Stordø pyrites might also have to be stopped, strongly suggested that the time was still not ripe for such a step².

In this situation, and with evidence that Britain was becoming impatient for a reply from the Norwegian Government, Ihlen decided to attempt a compromise³. On 1 February, therefore, in a reply to the British note of 12 January, he proposed that no-cupriferous pyrites from Stordø, which in any case could not go to the Entente since the mines were controlled by German capital, might be allowed to go to Germany to the amount of 40,000 tons a year. It was stressed that this would only

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1. Ibid., Vogt - Ihlen, 13/1/1917.
 2. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15, Minute of 17/1/1917. The Legation in fact maintained that Norway was bound by obligations to Germany in this respect, a claim which Ihlen rejected.
 3. In fact, the Russian Minister to Norway on 30 January had seemed to imply to Ihlen that certain small amounts of pyrites might ultimately be permitted to go to Germany. Cf. *ibid.*, minute of 30/1/1917.

constitute eight per cent of Norway's total pyrites output. Britain's reply was a blunt refusal. Forty million tons of pyrites, Lord Robert Cecil said to Vogt, is the equivalent of forty million shells.

On the other hand several hints were forthcoming that the British might be more willing to consider a compromise on fish exports. On 12 February, Ihlen therefore informed Michahelles that all efforts to obtain a pyrites allowance for Germany had been in vain, but there was some hope in regard to future fish exports. The German Minister apparently was very understanding, and replied that as long as some other concessions could be indicated, a renewed conflict might still be avoided. Ihlen then offered Germany a loan of ten million kroner, and also promised export licences for considerable amounts of hides and skin¹.

On 14 February Ihlen instructed Vogt to inform the British Government of Norway's willingness to order a cessation of pyrites exports to Germany, provided the British coal embargo was lifted. The information was received by the British Government "with much gratification", and with the "earnest hope and confident belief of His Majesty's Government that with

1. Ibid., Ihlen - Ditten, 12/2/1917. Michahelles' reaction indicates that he had already given up the Norwegian pyrites, and in telegrams to the Auswartiges Amt of 11 and 13 February he advised in favour of accepting Ihlen's substitute concessions. Michahelles stressed that it was in Germany's interest to strengthen the Norwegian Government against the pressure from more anti-German circles of the Storting, and also attached some hope to a remark from Ihlen that Norway might perhaps cancel the Fisheries Agreement with Great Britain. Cf. AA, Abt. A. Akten der Kaiserl. Deutschen Ges.sch. in Kr.a, Kupfer (Kies) 1915 - 1917.

British Government, based by... the settlement of the present understanding... the cordial re-
relations which have always existed between our two countries may
be fully re-established upon a lasting basis"¹. The coal em-
bargo was accordingly withdrawn on 17 February.

The Virtue of Necessity

In this manner the dispute between Great Britain and Norway
had been resolved². While this dispute had its specific origins
in differences over the interpretation and the carrying out of
the two Agreements concerned, the reason why these differences
were elevated to issues of major significance, inspiring bitter-
ness on both sides, can only be sought in a crisis of confidence
between the two countries. As it seems, a situation had been
created in which each Government felt it was being deliberately
misled by the other.

Apart from their specific complaints against Norway, the

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1. UD, H 4 D 11 33/15, Ihlen - Vogt, 14/2/1917 and Vogt - Ihlen, 17/2/1917.
 2. Although the most important issue, that of the correct interpretation of the Copper Agreement, still remained. Ihlen's idea, contained in the telegram to Vogt of 14 February, that the issue should be considered by a commission of one English and one Norwegian lawyer, came to nothing. The fact that the Norwegian lawyer G. Gram, when asked, had indicated that his opinion might very well differ from that of the Norwegian Government may have caused Ihlen to lose interest in the idea, although the most likely reason why the investigation was never carried out is that "dead corpses are best left buried". The British would in any case have to achieve a cessation of the pyrites export to Germany, by this or the other means.

British Government, beset by serious problems such as the threat to food supplies posed by an impending shipping shortage, began to fear that the British grip over Norway was slipping under German pressure¹, - a fear which the secretive attitude of the Norwegian Government did nothing to dispel.

From Norway's viewpoint, on the other hand, Britain's policy in the second half of 1916 was apt to appear as that Machiavellian "meanness which brings reproach without hatred"². Having been brought into conflict with Germany by a policy that favoured the interests of the Entente, the Norwegian Government must have found Britain's attitude both unfriendly

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1. Cf. Crowe's statement that the War Cabinet "is worried that Norway is now dominated from Germany" (UD, H 4 I 11/16, Vogt-Ihlen, 22/12/1916); and Cecil's statement: "It is not only the breaches of agreements arrived at that have caused our attitude of late, but we have had a growing feeling that Norway was being pushed into her actions by un-founded German threats, and sensed a serious danger that Norway in this way would find herself in a slide. We decided to put a firm stop to this in the interests of both nations." (Ibid., Vogt-Ihlen, 6/1/1917.)
 2. Machiavelli, The Prince (London, 1948), p. 126. Cf. also Knudsen's letter to Asquith of 6 September, 1916: "Feelings have been somewhat changed from what they were two years ago. Your speeches about the rights of the small nations at that time created great satisfaction and sympathy all over Norway, but these feelings seem now to cool off. We then feared German hegemony and brutality. However, as the British blockade becomes more severe, with bans against supplies which are exclusively for domestic consumption, we are coming to fear also British hegemony." (Nissen, op.cit., p. 261.)

and intransigent. The unfounded threats of Clarkson's telegram and the warning against any concessions affecting Allied interests could only inspire apprehension against Britain's motives, and the British Government's interpretation of the Copper Agreement seems to have been felt as a deliberate trap.

A more particular crisis of confidence seemed also to have arisen between the Norwegian Foreign Minister and the British Minister at Kristiania. With regard to Ihlen, the pressures, problems and harassments of his difficult task seem to have caused in him a progressive reticence and reservedness¹. When opposed to Findlay's drive and rigidity, the resulting relationship could hardly be of a very cordial nature, and the conflict appears in fact to have been a cumulative process, where strains on Ihlen made him uncommunicative,

1. This was noticed also by the not particularly sensitive Prime Minister, Gunnar Knudsen, who in some reflections after the war noted: "My only criticism against Ihlen was that he was very reserved and uncommunicative." (Nissen, op.cit., p. 249). In fact, the war probably had serious effects on Ihlen's health, and he survived it by only a few years. - A harsher criticism of Ihlen appears in the diaries of Castberg, a prominent politician who was strongly pro-Entente in his views. In December 1916 he wrote: "Ihlen has stared himself blind at the day-to-day vexations in his Ministry, and he is a man for the day, without great lines or principles; agile, they say. Indeed, so agile that he is in danger of the fate that nobody will believe his word." (Castberg, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 146).

which again made Findlay suspicious and led to further pressure. Findlay's ubiquitous concern and incessant demands, not adequately covered by diplomatic polish, must have been felt by Ihlen as both humiliating and irritating. Findlay, on his side, was probably no less irritated by Ihlen's ambiguities and evasiveness.

On the level of policy, Norway's approach to the problems as they arose was furtive and dilatory as a result of being subjected to pressure from both sides at the same time, while the proportions of Britain's policy were distorted by the transformation of the issues to a test-case for the success or failure of the Entente's economic warfare. The conflict could therefore only be dissolved when the two-sided pressure was relaxed through a reconciliation of some sort between Norway and Germany, and when the British had achieved a more sober assessment of Norway's position.

There was considerable truth in the remark, made at the War Committee's meeting referred to above, about the incongruity of a relationship in which military aid and ultimatums are deemed to serve the same aim. However, the argument could be turned the other way around, so as to show the inconsistency of a policy by which a country, whose economy was in most essentials working for

the Entente's benefit, and whose merchant fleet was almost exclusively serving the same alliance, was being subjected to "economic pressure to the utmost possible extent" because of suspicions of pro-German tendencies.

On the other hand, if one disregards the moral overtones of the conflict, the British Government seems to have assumed, for the most part quite rightly, that economic pressure on Norway had an extremely wide safety margin before reaching the point where Norway might seek some sort of arrangement with the enemy¹.

In London, the debate for or against Norwegian neutrality went on through December and January. A French contribution was received on 11 December in the form of a letter from Marshal Joffre to Sir William Robertson. Joffre discussed the possibility of a German aggression against Norway assisted by Swedish action against Narvik, and urged that the Entente ought to consider and prepare for this contingency. Taking this view into account, the Admiralty War Staff in

1. The British may in fact have underestimated the danger of German coal deliveries to Norway, offers of which were made in the beginning of February. However, the offer came rather late, and its effect was destroyed by Michaelles who valued this card so highly as to demand nothing but the cancellation of the Fisheries Agreement in return. (Of. inter alia DZA, Potsdam, Ministerium des Innern, Norwegen Adh. 7, Bd. 3, Michaelles - AA, 3/4/1917.

2. *Palmer Papers*: ...
(Appendix 2).

was still dependent on certain
a paper of 22 December came to the conclusion that a German
declaration of war against Norway would be advantageous if
Sweden remained neutral. If not, it was a question of
whether the Allies could spare enough troops to defend Nor-
way¹.

The next stage in the debate began towards the end of
December, when the Commander in Chief of the Grand Fleet pro-
posed naval action in the North Sea involving an infringement
of the territorial rights of Norway². The aim of the action
was to render the passage of German raiders more difficult,
by control and search in Norwegian waters. The Commander in
Chief was aware that this might throw Norway into the war, but
considered that this would be to the Entente's advantage re-
gardless of which side Norway joined. The Admiralty, how-
ever, while agreeing with the naval considerations, were
against the proposal on account of the political effect on
the other neutrals. When the War Cabinet discussed the pro-
posal on 30 December, it was also pointed out that the Entente

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1. Milner Papers. From a "General Summary of Certain Papers relating to Norway", in a secret memorandum on "The Position of Norway" prepared by the Naval Staff for the War Cabinet, dated 6 December 1917. It is interesting to note that Joffre vastly underestimated Norway's strength. His figures were 70,000 plus 30,000 "Landsturm", whereas Ørvik (op.cit., p. 59, note) quotes a report from the Norwegian General Staff to the effect that the total war strength was 197,000.
 2. Milner Papers: W.F. 24. War Cabinet 23, Minute 16 (Appendix 2).

was still dependent on certain supplies from Norway, and the action as proposed might also result in Swedish supplies being cut off¹. The War Cabinet decided to leave it to the First Lord to discuss the matter with the Commander in Chief, with a view to possible other measures against the German raiders².

The conclusion to this round of discussion of Norway's position appears to have been a telegram to Findlay from the Foreign Office on 2 January, which pointed out that the War Staff and the General Staff

"were averse to the entry of Norway into the War as our Ally, and doubted our ability to protect Norway against air raids, or to seize a Naval base if Norway resisted. Therefore no threat of employing military or naval force against Norway should be made, but there was no objection to economic pressure being used." 3

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1. This must have been the warning from the Ministry of Munitions about the importance of certain Norwegian metals and minerals for the Allied munitions factories, mentioned by Bell, op.cit., p. 502. Under-Secretary Addison from the Ministry of Munitions was present at this meeting of the War Cabinet. (Cf. Addison, Four and a Half Years, Vol. I (London, 1934), p. 290) The Norwegian Government were obviously not aware that they here possessed a first-rate means of counter-pressure.
 2. The Commander in Chief must have insisted on his scheme, since the War Cabinet on 29 January found it necessary to re-assert that: "It would not be to our interests to take the initiative in any violation of Norwegian neutrality." (Milner Papers: W.P. 24. War Cabinet 47, Minute 19.)
 3. Milner Papers, W.P. 24, War Cabinet 23, Minute 16 (App. 2). The minute gives no clue as to the background for the advice against threats of using force, but it seems probable that it was an answer to suggestions from Findlay for more drastic pressure, in line with his previous proposal for an ultimatum.

Even with regard to economic pressure the British Government may have had some second thoughts at this time, judging by a memorandum from the Minister of Blockade to the War Cabinet on 1 January. The memorandum reviews the whole field of the blockade in terms of results of the rationing policy, and finds that a practically complete stoppage has been achieved in regard to Germany's supply of overseas goods imported via neutral countries. However, much trade in the domestic products of the neutral countries was still going on, and the Minister doubted whether the Allies

"could venture upon any further coercive pressure to stop this kind of trade. We had already tried the policy of withholding, or threatening to withhold, supplies of goods which were wholly or mainly produced in the United Kingdom and the British Empire (such as coal and jute); and we had not produced so much effect as we had hoped. If we took the further step of imposing a general embargo on all imports, from whatever source, we might throw these countries into the arms of Germany; or, if they came to terms with us, they might be punished by a German invasion of their territories." 1

However, in February 1917, the most immediate impetus for clearing the field of past controversies was Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare. From Germany's viewpoint, efforts to pacify neutral opinion and if possible to obtain the withdrawal of neutral shipping from trade with France and the British Isles now took preference over prolonged

1. Summary of the memorandum as given by Davis, op.cit., p.17.

quarrels for commercial concessions. An effective submarine campaign would moreover deflect all neutral trade to Germany's benefit.

Seen from Great Britain, an effective submarine blockade would at any rate restrict Anglo-Norwegian trade to a minimum, in which case a British coal embargo would have no meaning. The aim of Entente policy, on the other hand, must be to keep up an active trade with Scandinavia and also to assure the continuance of the vital services of the Norwegian merchant navy, for which purposes it was necessary to bury old conflicts.

On Norway's internal scene, the worsening of relations between Norway and the Great Powers, the shipping losses, and the coal shortage in an exceptionally cold and severe winter, were for the most part blamed on the nation's Government. Knudsen and his Ministers were therefore subjected to a storm of hard criticism both by the public, by the newspapers, and by the parliamentary opposition. In heated debates in the Storting during January and February, demands were raised with considerable force for a coalition Government, and found support even within Knudsen's own party. However, in spite of all the attacks, which in particular stigmatized Ihlen's foreign policy as having the confidence of nobody, either at home or abroad,

the Government rode out the storm with the only concession of instituting a permanent Committee of the Storting in which the representatives could at least have a feeling that they controlled foreign policy.

4. Unlimited Submarine War and the Norwegian Merchant Navy

The steep rise in Allied and neutral shipping losses during the late autumn of 1916, due to the intensified cruiser warfare of the German submarines, brought into sharp relief the inadequacy of measures for the protection of merchant vessels. As far as Allied vessels were concerned, the situation could be gradually remedied by the installation of defensive armament, but this provided no solution for shipping under neutral colours.

Notwithstanding the decision of the British Admiralty to make available its advice on safe routes¹, the losses of the Norwegian merchant navy continued at an alarming rate. Although October marked a preliminary peak with a loss of forty-nine ships, the figure for November was still as high as twenty-nine, and for December it rose again to thirty-five².

At this stage, the great debate which was to lead to the institution of the convoy system was only just beginning. In December, however, there was made at least a positive attempt

1. Vide supra, p. 269.

2. Figures taken from Rapports de Mer, Statistical Supplement.

1. Cf. Lord ...
1920), pp. ...

2. Vide supra, p. ...

at reducing the dangers to shipping in the North Sea, by the organisation of "protected sailings", which meant that all vessels trading between Scandinavia and British North Sea ports were provided with some naval protection on the daylight part of their voyage. Ships on their way to Britain sailed from Norway at dusk, with rendezvous at dawn in a certain position from which they were escorted to Lerwick. On the eastward route they left Lerwick at dawn under naval escort, dispersed at dusk, and reached Norwegian shores at dawn¹.

Judging by Norwegian shipping losses, which in January amounted to forty ships, the scheme of "protected sailings" was not very successful. However, it was hardly given a fair trial, for on 1 February the war at sea took on new dimensions with Germany's unlimited submarine warfare, against which there seemed for the moment to be no defence possible.

Germany's decision to start the new campaign, approved by the Chancellor and the Emperor on 9 January 1917, ended a long and bitter political struggle between supporters and opponents of a submarine war without restrictions². The argument that finally decided the contest was the assurance from the Naval Staff that, with a calculated loss of 600,000 tons of shipping a month, the Entente would be forced to come to

1. Cf. Lord Jellicoe, The Crisis of the Naval War (London, 1920), pp. 110-120.

2. Vide supra, p. 253-254.

terms before the year's harvest could provide a new lease of life for the British.

The German memorandum, announcing the area around France and the British Isles within which "jedem Seeverkehr ohne weiteres mit allen Waffen entgegengetreten werden", was delivered to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry the day before the measures would take effect. With equal regard to neutral ships, the declaration stated that "navigation within the prohibited area will be at their own risk. Although precautions have been taken for the safeguard, within a certain time limit, of ships actually on their way to ports within the area on 1 February, it is urgently advised that these ships should be warned and re-directed with all available means."¹

In order to prevent panic, the Ministry on the same evening telephoned the Kristiania newspapers and asked them to refrain from big headlines or commentaries "likely to frighten the public". The papers apparently complied with the request, but Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende the next day strongly denounced the declaration as a violation of international law and demanded a sharp protest from the Norwegian Government.

The drafting of a joint Scandinavian protest was undertaken at once by the Swedish Prime Minister and the Danish and

1. UD, P 2 K 2/17, Michahelles - UD, 31/1/1917.

Norwegian envoys at Stockholm, and a draft prepared by Hannar-skjold was submitted to the respective Foreign Ministries after four days. In spite of its qualities as a legal treatise, Norway considered it far too long and involved, - Wollerbæk's comment was that "long notes have on the whole the defect of inviting manifold interpretations". Both Denmark and Norway instead worked out their own drafts which were sharper and more concise, and Ihlen indicated to Hagerup that he might prefer to send his own protest note if Sweden insisted on her version¹.

The end result of the deliberations was a jointly drafted note which was finally dispatched to Germany on 13 February. The protest was focused on the points where the German declaration deviated from the requirements for a legally instituted blockade, and Michahelles on its delivery at once remarked to Ihlen that those legal norms were irrelevant since no blockade had been declared².

At any rate, whatever the intentions of the Government, its protest could hardly be more than "a paper objection from

1. Ibid., Ihlen - Irgens, 9/2/1917, Hagerup - UD, 5/2 and 8/2/1917, UD - Hagerup, 9/2/1917, inter alia. The operative passage of Norway's draft protested against "a conduct of war which conflicts with the principle of the freedom of the seas, and which seems intended to disregard the requirements of international law for the effectiveness of blockades and the respect due to neutral vessels and the lives of those on board".

2. AA, Abt. A. WK No. 18 Geh., Michahelles - AA, 13/2/1917.

which no practical results were awaited"¹, and the matter of crucial importance to all parties concerned was therefore the reactions in shipping circles to Germany's measures. A Norwegian newspaper characterised the situation on 3 February as one where "the leading shipowners are biding their time. Some for the time being hold back their ships, others have not yet made a decision, others again have not changed their dispositions."² The German Legation on 4 February observed with satisfaction that many vessels remained in port, and firmly requested the Navy to spare the NAL's "Bergensfjord" which was expected at Kirkwall any day on its way to Norway. If the passenger liner were sunk the German Naval Attaché feared a complete reversal of the favourable climate of opinion in Norway³. In order that the largest possible number of neutral ships might be removed out of the reach of the Entente, Germany gave a time limit of five, subsequently extended to nine, days during which ships might leave the danger area in safety. The shipowners were also offered the facilities of the Nauen wireless transmitter in order to divert their ships from the war-zone,

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1. AA, Nachlass Michahelles, Manuskript. (Microfilm AHA II.)
 2. Excerpt from Tidens Tegn sent to the Legations abroad by the Foreign Ministry.
 3. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 12. Hilmers - Reichsmarineant, 4/2/1917; Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV, 2-5, Bd. 66. The request was granted by the Naval Staff.

but this offer was declined by Norwegian shipowners on the grounds that acceptance would imply a recognition of the German blockade¹.

As however the first days of the campaign passed by in suspense while nothing much happened, the attitude in shipping circles became more confident, and on 7 February a spokesman of the Shipowners' Association indicated to Ihlen that "it was not supposed that the German blockade would have any appreciable effect on the traffic to England"². The German Minister also reported to Berlin that the Norwegians tended more and more to regard the blockade as a paper scheme, and the Naval Attache asked the Naval Staff if it was "not possible, or not intended, to publish some successful reports on the campaign in the near future". In the opposite case, he feared the traffic to England would soon be resumed³.

On the other side of the North Sea, the British Government was acting rapidly in terms of precautions against the threatening shipping shortage. Ships lying in Entente harbours and flying neutral flags were at once debarred from leaving until further notice, although Norwegian passenger

1. Ibid., Hilmers - Reichsmarinesamt, 5/2/1917.

2. UD, P 2 K 2/17, Ihlen - Brunchorst, 7/2/1917.

3. Adm. stab der Marine, B, IV, 2-5, Michahelles - AA and Hilmers - Adm. stab, 6/2/1917.

would be permitted to leave for the war area.
vessels were soon after given special permission to sail.
Measures on a longer range were considered at a meeting of the War Cabinet on 2 February. It was decided to notify the neutral Governments that the German declaration also constituted a threat to their supplies of essential goods from Entente sources, and to warn against actions likely to hamper any arrangements of the British Government with neutral shipowners. Robert Cecil's shipping committee was given the task of approaching neutral shipping with a view to chartering arrangements or, if necessary, requisitioning¹.

The advice to the Norwegian Government was transmitted by Findlay on 3 February, the same day as Ihlen received a private letter from Findlay which praised the attitude of the Norwegian War Insurance in not raising its premiums;

"an attitude which is worthy of a maritime nation which occupies so important a position in the sea-borne commerce of the world and cannot fail to cause an excellent impression." 2

On 8 February Lord Robert Cecil said to the Norwegian Minister that the detention of all neutral ships, against which Norway had formally protested, was a temporary measure, and also announced the "ship-for-ship policy" whereby one Norwegian ship

1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. War Cabinet 52, Minute 5 (b), (c) and (d).

2. UD, P 2 K 2/17.

would be permitted to leave for each that arrived from outside of goodwill towards the Norwegian Government.
the war area.

Hence, the German Government once again failed in its
A week later the British Government laid down a series of
their immediate objective of wholly deterring Norwegian
conditions on which neutral ships could receive bunkers and be
ping from traffic to the blockaded parts of the Atlantic
permitted to sail from the blockaded ports. Ships arriving in
from now on a steadily increasing number of vessels
Britain with an "approved cargo" of foodstuffs or other essential
on their way to British and French ports. Before
commodities would be able to return to their country of origin
only two Norwegian steamers had left Bergen for
at once, but those coming in ballast would first have to under-
the last ten days of February the number of departures
take certain obligatory voyages between British and French ports.
thirty-seven, and before 9 March fifty-three ships had
However,

In the same period, over sixty vessels had left British
ports "The principles outlined above cannot be applied
in the case of Norwegian vessels pending a settle-
ment of the differences between the two Govern-
ments which have led to the present restriction
on the export of coal to Norway." 1
See, however, the note above referred to with a greatly
fleet Evidently the coal embargo was in the circumstances more
embarrassing for Britain than for Norway, and the relief on the
part of the British Government was all the greater as the dis-
pute was buried a few days later. In the note of 17 February,
accepting Ihlen's proposal to this effect, the British Govern-
ment declared that not only would the special restrictions on
Norwegian coal imports be recalled, but twelve ships with coal
cargoes for Norway would immediately be released "in view of
the existing scarcity of coal in Norway and as a special mark

1. Ibid., Vogt - Ihlen, 14/2/1917.

2. Ibid., P. 2. K. 2/17, reports from the Norwegian Shipowners' Association.

of goodwill towards the Norwegian Government." ¹

Hence, the German Government once again failed to achieve their immediate objective of simply deterring Norwegian shipping from traffic to the blockaded ports of the Entente, as from now on a steadily increasing number of vessels put to sea on their way to British and French ports. Before 17 February only two Norwegian steamers had left Bergen for England; in the last ten days of February the number of departures rose to thirty-seven, and before 9 March fifty-three ships had sailed. In the same period, over sixty vessels had left Britain for ports in Norway ².

The increased activity of Norwegian shipping in the North Sea, however, had its sombre aspects. With a greatly increased fleet of submarines operating without restraints of a political or humanitarian nature, the German campaign this time was no empty threat, and the result was that a rising number of Norwegian ships were never able to reach their destinations. During February the losses were still comparatively moderate as twenty-nine steamers were sunk, but this must be seen in relation to the limited traffic in the first half of the month. The figure for March told a different tale, with fifty-two steamers sent to the bottom. Of the 590,000 tons of world shipping lost in

1. UD, H 4 D ii 33/15, Vogt - Ihlen, 17/2/1917.

2. UD, P 2 K 2/17, reports from the Norwegian Shipowners' Association.

that month, Norway's merchant fleet accounted for 108,065 tons¹. It was moreover not just a matter of tonnage but of human lives, and in these circumstances a strong hatred was growing in Norway against the methods of German warfare. As the German Minister Michahelles recorded in his memoirs from the time, the feelings went so high that German-speaking guests on occasion had to be requested to leave their tables in Kristiania restaurants, and his own departure from Norway in the summer "caused no regrets on my part; the unfriendly attitude of the people made us feel as if in enemy territory."²

The Tonnage Agreement

The question of a transfer of Norwegian shipping to the service of the Entente had from early February been the subject of deliberations both in Kristiania and in London. The plan first considered had in view a purchase of Norwegian tonnage by the British Government, but this was for several reasons rejected by Norway after having been debated in the parliamentary

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1. Tonnage figures from Salter, Allied Shipping Control (Oxford, 1921), in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Economic and Social History of the World War, British Series.
 2. AA, Nachlass Michahelles, Manuskript, (Microfilm AHA II).

Commission for Foreign Affairs. The alternative of simple chartering, while satisfactory for the more distant overseas trades, would on the other hand not give the vessels in the North Sea traffic the measure of protection which the arming of ships under belligerent flags constituted. Alarmed by the high losses, the Norwegian Government in March took the initiative in the search for a satisfactory arrangement in this particular area, and at the end of the month the idea of a tonnage exchange was put forward. By the terms of this scheme Norwegian ships engaged in the dangerous Anglo-Norwegian trade would be chartered or requisitioned for employment on less exposed routes, while the North Sea traffic would be taken over by armed British steamers. In return for the services of the merchant fleet, Norway would be assured of receiving her minimum needs of coal from Britain for the duration of the war¹.

The plan for a tonnage transfer by chartering or requisitioning was accepted by the Storting in secret meetings towards the end of April, and the ships could then be turned over as they became available, although the final arrangement, left to the Shipowners' Association in full accordance with the Government's wishes, was not finally settled before the end of July.

1. For a detailed treatment of the tonnage agreement and the preceding negotiations, cf. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, pp. 186 - 200.

While most of the tonnage would be taken in charter, the need for requisitioning could not be excluded. This procedure is not normally the subject for agreements, and the delicate nature of the final solution permeates a Foreign Office memorandum on the subject:

"Although only a semi-official body, the Ship-owners' Association were reluctant formally to commit themselves to some points in the agreement to which His Majesty's Government attached importance. They were, however, understood to be prepared for His Majesty's Government to force their hands on such points, and to acquiesce in such action by His Majesty's Government. For this reason no attempt was made to draft a precise agreement; and the agreement consequently remains in the form of a lengthy correspondence." ¹

Although March was to remain the culminating point for Norwegian shipping losses in the First World War, the month of April was another period of major disaster with forty-three vessels or 99,041 tons sunk. After that, however, the rate of losses decreased to seventy thousand tons in May, to sixty thousand in June, and in the six remaining months of 1917 it fluctuated between forty-eight thousand and seventeen thousand tons.

Despite the arranged removal of Norwegian ships from the North Sea traffic, the most important reason for this decline

1. WTB, Executive Country File, General. Foreign Office memorandum on the Norwegian Tonnage and Coal Agreement, 30/11/1917.

in shipping losses was the institution of the convoy system. After 23 April, all trade between British and Scandinavian ports sailed in organised convoys escorted by ships of the British Navy. Contrary to the many doubts expressed in high naval circles in the debates prior to its introduction, and notwithstanding many difficulties to be overcome in the initial period, the convoy scheme proved an unqualified success as a protection for seaborne commerce and was progressively extended to cover most of the important trade routes of the Entente.

The matter of most serious concern to the Norwegian Government in the discussions preceding the tonnage agreement was how the German Government would react to such a wholesale transfer of merchant tonnage to the enemy. Already on 3 February the German Minister informed the Auswärtiges Amt that rumours of British purchases of Norwegian tonnage were in circulation, and he volunteered this suggestion:

"It might be useful if news reached Norway of some sinkings without previous warning in the war zone, so that Norwegian sailors could be deterred from hiring themselves for voyages to England." 1

When the same rumours were reported to Admiral Holtzendorff by Hilmers, he wrote to Zimmermann that this could only be seen as an inimical act against Germany. Zimmermann replied that the

1. Ibid., Chief of Naval Staff.
1. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 12.

with Norway.¹

sale of ships to foreign countries was forbidden by Norwegian law, although large-scale dispensations would be seen as a "not friendly" gesture¹. As the Commission for Foreign Affairs - of whose proceedings the German Legation was kept informed by the socialist member Anders Buen - in February opposed the idea of a tonnage sale, this presumably calmed Germany's fears for the moment. However, rumours persisted, and on 21 March the German Minister cabled Berlin that a British offer to purchase 500,000 tons had been made. He proposed a declaration to the Norwegian Government to the effect that such a transaction would be regarded as an unneutral act, but Zimmermann instructed him that

"To give permission for the sale of Norwegian tonnage to British shipowners is no more unneutral than to license the export of contraband to belligerents. The permission only assumes the character of an unneutral act if such a permission is not given to us."

He told Michahelles to try to prevent that a permission be given, but if it seemed unavoidable, he should demand the same permission for Germany. "Your Excellency may add as your opinion that a refusal of this demand or any adverse influence on their shipowners must have seriously damaging effects on our relations

1. Ibid., Chief of Naval Staff - State Secretary in the AA, 4/2/1917, with reply, 5/2/1917.

with Norway." ¹

Insistent demands for sharp resistance to any form of tonnage transfer to Britain were also made by Admiral Holtzendorff to the Auswärtiges Amt. However, the assurances of the Norwegian Government that no such thing was contemplated seem to have convinced Michahelles. Even after the Commission for Foreign Affairs and the Storting in secret sessions had given the Government a free hand on the issue, Ihlen and others were able to reassure him that

"there is unanimity that no ships will voluntarily be transferred to England, and the issue is left at whether England will take the ships by force." ²

The tonnage agreement, in fact, seems to have been Norway's best-kept war secret. Strong suspicions could of course not be avoided when the Germans saw that Norwegian ships were being requisitioned, and the German Naval Staff seems in particular to have been convinced that the Norwegian Government in some way was behind it, but the suspicions could not be

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1. Ibid., Zimmermann - Michahelles, 22/3/1917. In the original text, which had been corrected in ink, the final paragraph stated: "A refusal of this demand or an adverse influence on their shipowners is to be designated as a probable cause for war." Through a Director Glässel, Germany in fact tried to start a charter agency in Norway for trade between Scandinavia, Holland and Germany, but with no success since the shipowners feared British reprisals. Cf. ibid., Michahelles - AA, 29/3/1917.
 2. AA, Abt. A, WK 18 Geh., Michahelles - AA, 23/4/1917.

substantiated¹.

In April of 1917, however, Norway's fear of a violent German reaction against the transfer of tonnage to the Entente sparked off a renewed consideration of the question of military and naval co-operation between Norway and Great Britain. This time, the strategic implications of the entry into the war of the United States came to play an important role.

note to Germany after the Sussex crisis of the previous year, some speculation was still possible in view of President Wilson's reluctance to take the final irrevocable steps. On 2 February Norway's Minister to Washington, Heland Bryn, reported from "very good sources" that the President was seeking to avoid an open conflict, but that agitation in America was higher than ever before in the war and would probably drive Wilson to a breach with the Central Powers¹. On the same day Lansing notified the German Ambassador of the severance of diplomatic relations and delivered him his passports.

1. Cf. AA, Abt. A., WK 18 Geh., v. Hintze - Hertling, 20/12/1917: "Ich habe zu der Feststellung des Herrn Chefs des Admiralstabes "Und zwar ist es die Norwegische Regierung selbst die diesen Übergang veranlasst und fördert" gehorsamst zu melden, dass natürlich die Norwegische Regierung auf meine unzähligen Vorhaltungen diese Behauptungen auf das strikteste bestreitet. Es ist mir unmöglich gewesen, Beweise dafür zu erhalten, dass die Königlich Norwegische Regierung mit dieser Ablehnung wesentlich lügt, ich würde aber jedem verpflichtet sein, der solche Beweise beibringt."

5. America enters the War

Of all the neutral countries, the United States was of course the one whose reaction to the German submarine campaign was awaited with the greatest anxiety - or the greatest hope. Although Washington's attitude had been foreshadowed in the note to Germany after the Sussex crisis of the previous year, some speculation was still possible in view of President Wilson's reluctance to take the final irrevocable steps. On 3 February Norway's Minister to Washington, Helmer Bryn, reported from "very good sources" that the President was seeking to avoid an open conflict, but that agitation in America was higher than ever before in the war and would probably drive Wilson to a breach with the Central Powers¹. On the same day Lansing notified the German Ambassador of the severance of diplomatic relations and delivered him his passports.

A. G. Schmedeman, the American Minister to Norway, informed Ihlen of the action of his Government on 4 February, and declared that President Wilson "believes it will make for the peace of the world if the other neutral powers can find it

1. UD, P 2 K 2/17.

possible to take similar action". Ihlen, however, replied by calling attention to Norway's particularly exposed position as being different from that of the United States, and said that Norway, after studying Germany's announcement, would probably take whatever action was thought advisable after consultation with her Scandinavian neighbours. In a second interview two days later Ihlen told Schmedeman that a special session of the Cabinet had resulted in a decision to limit present measures to a joint Scandinavian protest against Germany's notification of unlimited submarine warfare. When Schmedeman inquired about Norway's position if the new campaign should affect Norwegian merchant vessels, Ihlen reiterated that all further action would be taken jointly with Denmark and Sweden. Reporting these conversations to the State Department, the American Minister summed up Norway's policy as one where "aside from her general fear of being drawn into the European conflict, the main determining factor.... is the particular menace to her safety involved in her comperative proximity to Germany"¹.

There seemed in the circumstances little reason to doubt what Washington's next step would be, and the imminence of America's entry into the war provided rich fields of speculation about the effect of such an event on the strategic situation,

1. Ibid., Schmedeman - Ihlen, 4/2/1917, Ihlen - Schmedeman, 7/2/1917; State Department 763.72/3219,3262,3560.

also with regard to the remaining neutrals. As far as Norway was concerned, an early indication of what prospects might arise was given by the Commanding Admiral of the Norwegian navy, Admiral Dawes, - "a brave, honest man, but barbarously outspoken" as he is characterised by the official British historian¹. In a telegram to the Foreign Office of 1 March, Findlay reported an utterance of his to the effect that the United States Fleet ought to be based in Norway².

In the meantime, events like the "Zimmermann Telegram" had made German - American relations even more intolerable, and on 2 April President Wilson in a speech to the Congress advised a formal declaration of a state of war between the two countries, - an action which would "involve the utmost practicable co-operation in counsel and action with the Governments now at war with Germany"³.

America's formal declaration of war followed on 6 April, and in a telegram the next day to the Foreign Office, Minister Findlay gave his views on what this event could mean in terms

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1. Bell, op.cit., p. 629.
 2. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. There may well be a connection between Dawes' candidness and the American Minister's request of 24 March for a naval attaché in Kristiania "owing to present conditions here and in view of the probability that questions of technical nature may soon arise ..." (State Department 121.55/397, Schmedeman - State Department, 24/3/1917.
 3. US Documents, 1917 Suppl. 1, p. 198.

of economic warfare. The telegram showed an immediate realisation of the possibilities of improvement in the blockade now that American supplies could also be brought under strict control. Summing up the situation in so far as Norway was concerned, Findlay declared:

- "(a) America, having a free hand, could make further supplies to Norway contingent on cessation of export to Germany;
- (b) In which case America would be bound to guarantee Norway from attack by air or sea, in order to do which she would require air bases and naval stations." 1

As to the views of the Norwegian Government, Findlay said that they feared Germany would attack Norway if the supplies of nickel, carbide, fish etc. were cut off. Factories such as Norsk Hydro, manufacturing nitrates, would then be exposed to destruction by German Zeppelins. Findlay expected that Norway would attempt to temporise on the question of stopping exports to Germany, since the country's grain supplies seemed sufficient to last until the end of the year. In a telegram a week later, the British Minister suggested that Britain should try to meet the fear of air attacks by supplying Norway with anti-aircraft guns and aeroplanes².

On 16 April the War Cabinet held a meeting during which

1. Milner Papers, W.P. 24.
2. Ibid., loc.cit.

Lord Robert Cecil gave a report on the situation in regard to Norwegian shipping. He said that Norway was likely to agree to the proposed transfer of her tonnage to Allied service, but it was feared that this might lead to German reprisals against Norway. The report recommended a study of the possibilities of providing material for Norway's air defences. The Norwegian Government had already requested such assistance to the extent of twenty aeroplanes and thirteen anti-aircraft guns. The War Cabinet decided to refer the issue to the Air Board, strongly recommending a positive decision, and five days later Findlay was authorised to offer twenty aircraft and nine mobile guns. The condition was that the Norwegian Government should co-operate in bringing about the suggested shipping transfer¹.

As the Norwegian Storting towards the end of April authorised the Government to go ahead with the tonnage arrangement, the question of Germany's reaction became a source of active concern also for Minister Vogt in London. On 24 April, apparently acting without specific instructions from the Foreign Ministry, he had a confidential talk with Sir Eyre Crowe on the matter. Reporting the conversation to Ihlen, Vogt said that England, according to Crowe, was afraid of being misunderstood

1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. War Cabinet 119, Minutes 21 and 22; War Cabinet 121, Minute 8 et seq.

if she took the initiative in offering assistance in the event of German reprisals. "It had however occurred to him [Crowe] that the American Fleet so far as he knew was available, and he asked if my Government in this connection had considered an approach to Washington." Vogt also said in his report that American naval officers in London had given his Naval Attaché to understand that they would welcome the possibility of using Norwegian waters for operations¹.

Vogt's own opinion was not clear from the report to the Foreign Ministry, but Lord Robert Cecil on the following day told the War Cabinet that the Norwegian Minister thought war between Norway and Germany was likely "sooner or later". Vogt had therefore wanted to know what action the British could take to protect the Norwegian coast. In regard to Sweden's probable position if the war was extended to Norway, Cecil said there was considerable anxiety in Sweden as to what might happen, but he had reason to believe that Sweden might have to ally herself with Norway in the event of a conflict. The War Cabinet decided to recommend that Norway should send naval officers to London in order to "concert measures with the Admiralty". The Norwegian Government should also be informed that the question of American assistance ought to be explored.

1. UB, P 2 B 1/14, Vogt - Ihlen, 24/4/1917.

2. UB, P 2 B 9/17, Vogt - Ihlen.

The First Sea Lord was instructed to discuss eventual American assistance with Admiral Sims, the American liaison officer on naval affairs¹.

The War Cabinet's suggestions were forwarded to the Norwegian Government in Vogt's telegram of 26 April. He stressed that Britain regarded consultations with the Admiralty as vital, and "if anything is left undone on our side, the responsibility will be ours"². The Foreign Ministry does not seem to have replied to Vogt's previous report of 24 April, but on 28 April, after a Cabinet conference, the following telegram was sent to London:

"Your telegram 26 current on military co-operation: Inform British Foreign Secretary: The Norwegian Government greatly appreciate British Government's concern for preparing military assistance to Norway in case Germany should want to attack. The Norwegian Government must however from their knowledge of German-Norwegian relations assume that Germany would not want to inflict war upon Norway because of the tonnage question or for any other reason. In these circumstances the Norwegian Government find it highly dangerous to conduct negotiations with one of the belligerent parties, namely England and her Allies, in order to insure against attacks from the other belligerent party, - negotiations which on previous experience in the present war cannot be presumed to remain concealed and which, when revealed, will arouse suspicion and thus increase precisely that danger of involvement in the war which Norway desires to avoid.

I have already some days ago verbally advised the German Minister that Norwegian shipowners on account

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1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. War Cabinet 126, Minute 9.
 2. UD, P 2 L 9/17, Vogt - Ihlen, 26/4/1917.

of the German submarine war will see themselves constrained to transfer their ships from the North Sea to safer waters. I have given him to understand that this transfer will be to Allied traffic, and I have said that British ships in that case will have to take over the Anglo-Norwegian trade. I have so far heard nothing from Germany on the matter." 1

When Minister Vogt informed the British Foreign Secretary of the substance of Norway's reply, he evidently did not conceal his own disagreement with the negative attitude of his Government². The British Government now demanded an answer in writing, in order that the British could not later be blamed for not assisting Norway, and in forwarding this request Minister Vogt again tried to argue in favour of a more positive approach to the British proposals. He thought Ihlen's assumptions about Germany's intentions were based on rather meagre evidence, and pointed out that the reactions of the German Government would only become apparent when she realised that the result of the tonnage transfer would be a strong increase in the number of armed merchant vessels under British flag. If the Government nevertheless wanted to maintain their negative

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1. Ibid., Ihlen - Vogt, 28/4/1917. The draft contained this middle paragraph, which was struck out: "The Norwegian Government are well aware that if Norway, contrary to expectation, should be attacked by Germany, they will regret not having prepared on their part the military assistance which England and her Allies will extend to Norway, but nevertheless find they must take the consequence of their present view of Germany's relationship to Norway to the extent of not increasing the danger of the moment."
 2. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. May 1917.

reply, Vogt suggested that he could hardly forbid his Naval Attaché to approach the Admiralty privately and on his own responsibility, in regard to the matter of naval co-operation. The British Foreign Secretary, Vogt said, had emphasised that it was not a question of military assistance but of naval co-operation, and had not seemed to like Norway's answer although he did not think it very likely that Germany should want to force Norway into the war¹.

In spite of Minister Vogt's persuasive attempts the Norwegian Government did not change their opinion, and the proposal for naval consultations therefore fell to the ground, although Ihlen agreed that a private approach by the Naval Attaché could not do any harm. The official written reply was delivered in the beginning of May. It contained no reference to the absence of any real danger of German aggression, since Vogt feared this might be used to justify a refusal of Norway's request for air defence equipment².

Norway's cautious approach to anything that might compromise her neutrality again became apparent when the British Government proposed to send two Royal Flying Corps officers to investigate sites for aerodromes in Norway, presumably in connection with Britain's offer of aeroplanes to the Norwegian

1. UD, P 2 L 9/17, Vogt - Ihlen, 30/4/1917.

2. Ibid., Vogt - Ihlen, 1/5 and Ihlen - Vogt, 2/5/1917.

Government. The proposed visit was rejected, since the Government preferred to have the investigations carried out by a British officer who was already in Norway. Later, however, they offered to send two Norwegian officers to England to study the aeroplanes that were to be supplied¹.

The available evidence gives somewhat fragmentary clues as to the reasoning of the British Government at this moment. However, the proposal that Norway should seek American naval assistance, if connected to Findlay's hopes of a more complete blockade, suggests that the British wanted to create a situation where Norway's most effective argument against further blockade measures - the danger of German reprisals - would be nipped in the bud by the power most likely to be swayed by the argument, namely the United States.

Against such a background it is easy to understand the dissatisfaction of the British Foreign Secretary at Norway's negative reaction to the naval talks. However, although the possibility of a Norwegian initiative now had to be discarded, the situation of Norway remained a source of concern. Findlay's suggestions for an American policy which combined assurances of assistance with demands for an embargo against Germany had in the meantime been passed on to the naval authorities for

1. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. May 1917.

their comments, and the Admiralty replied in a letter to the Foreign Office of 7 May¹. Although they recognised certain disadvantages in such a policy, as for example that Norway could not be safeguarded against air attacks which might jeopardize Allied imports of Norwegian electro-chemical products, and that American naval commitments to Norway might reduce their assistance to the British Navy in the Atlantic, the Admiralty were on the whole favourable. They concluded that

"the advantage of stopping supplies to Germany outweigh the counter-disadvantages so long always as the United States are prepared to undertake the liability that in the event of Germany declaring war they (the U.S.A.) will send a sufficient naval force and other equipment to Southern Norway." 2

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1. At the same time, the French General Staff were studying "the best means of aiding Norway in case of an invasion". Cf. Pingaud, op.cit., Vol. III, p. 118.
 2. Milner Papers, Secret. The Position of Norway. Naval Staff Memorandum for the War Cabinet. 6 December 1917, with a general summary of "certain papers relating to Norway". - According to Bell, (op.cit., p. 630) the Admiralty discussed the question of American co-operation with Admiral Mayo [Sims?], the London representative of the US Navy, who agreed with the Admiralty's ideas "and, presumably, reported to Washington accordingly". No evidence has been found of such a report. It would seem natural that Balfour should have discussed the issue during his mission to Washington in April-June. On the other hand, he may have found it inopportune in view of the probably negative reaction.

originating with German intelligence reports, of which
to acquire Tensions between Norway and Germany

of similar reports of the previous autumn, the German Government maintained a healthy scepticism toward this information.
The German submarine campaign continued to embitter the relations between Norway and the Central Powers during the spring and early summer of 1917. As a general measure of precaution in case Norway should decide to join the war on the side of the enemy, the German naval authorities on 1 April laid down operational directives for the event. Actually, the plans concerned Norwegian territory only indirectly, and were mainly aimed at neutralising the impact on German strategy of Allied naval bases in Southern Norway. For this purpose Germany considered she would have to obtain control over the Kattegat and adjoining Danish waters, by an occupation of Jutland and the establishment of a minefield in the Kattegat's northern exit. The action would otherwise involve an extension to the Norwegian coast of the area of unlimited submarine war¹. The only directive which affected Norwegian territory in a more direct way was a plan for bombing the Norwegian capital and certain industrial plants in Southern Norway².

Towards the end of May there was a new wave of rumours,

1. A map showing the planned extension was dispatched from the Naval Staff to Zimmermann on 31 May, for his information. AA, Abt. A, WK 18 Geh.
2. Cf. Hubatsch, Weserübung (2nd ed. Göttingen 1960), pp. 11 - 12.

originating with German intelligence agents, of British plans to acquire a naval base on the Norwegian coast. As in the case of similar reports of the previous autumn, the Auswärtiges Amt maintained a healthy scepticism toward this information, although Ludendorff, who passed on the telegrams to Wilhelmstrasse, seems to have taken them seriously¹. However, a report was also received, based on information from Swedish sources in London, which stated that talks in progress between England and Norway seemed likely to result in Norway placing herself openly on the side of the Entente. Her ships were to be handed over to England, and a naval base would be put at the disposal of the Allies.

The information which was forthcoming must have impressed Admiral Holtzendorff, who now admonished the Auswärtiges Amt that if rumours continued he felt he could not further delay the start of operation "War with Norway". Ludendorff also found the situation critical, and advised the Auswärtiges Amt that all the necessary preparations should be made even if the specific rumours should be inaccurate.

"England will not shrink from a violation of the rights of neutrals in order to limit the freedom of action of our submarines and also to open the Baltic for the purpose of exerting direct pressure on Russia. For this she needs a foothold on the south coast of Norway. The reports I have

1. Cf. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 7; Norwegen No. 12; AA im GHQ 1915-1919, Norwegen No. 22; passim, in the period concerned.

received thus confirm my judgement of the situation as a whole, and do not introduce a new idea...
To investigate the reports must in these circumstances be seen as an unnecessary effort." 1

The alert apparently had a short life, since the rumours of any impending British designs on Scandinavia could not be substantiated. However, the period was also rich in more particular sources of tension between Norway and Germany. In May two Norwegian ships on Government service, the "Thorunn" and the "Harald Haarfagre", were captured by the Germans in the North Sea with cargoes of fodder and foodstuffs. The Norwegian Government delivered a particularly sharp protest against the seizure of the "Thorunn" as being contrary to Prize Law, but Germany showed no sign of being willing to release the ship. The case was debated by the Storting, and also aroused considerable public indignation².

In June some incidents occurred off the north coast of Norway, because of Germany's declaration of the Arctic Sea as a prohibited area. This declaration had been issued on 22 March and was presumably intended to prevent traffic on Russia's northern supply route, but the area also covered traditional Norwegian fishing grounds, and the Norwegian Government therefore

1. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 12. Grönaus in GHQ - AA, 4/6/1917.

2. Cf. St. forh. 1917, 7 a, pp. 1570 - 1587. Norway claimed the ship had been captured in territorial waters, but Germany disputed this and also said the ship's papers were not in order.

had protested strongly against the announcement¹. The German Naval Staff was not wholly opposed to some kind of compromise in regard to the enforcement of the prohibition in these waters, but suggested to the Auswärtiges Amt that concessions to Norwegian fisheries should be made conditional on more fish exports to Germany. Michahelles approached Ihlen with feelers for a settlement along those lines, but was given to understand that the Fisheries Agreement with Great Britain barred any increase in fish exports to Germany².

After some negotiations Norway instead agreed to extend for another three months the provisional trade agreement which had subsisted after the January settlement of the submarine conflict³. The German Government made it clear that the return concessions to the fisheries in the area would only apply as from 1 July since a time lag was needed to notify the submarine commanders. When some fishing-boats nevertheless went out into the area in June, they were stopped by submarines whose crews then boarded the boats, threw the whole catch to sea, and destroyed fishing tackle and other equipment on board the boats. The seemingly pointless brutality of this action was sharply condemned in Norway, and the event was the subject of indignant

1. Cf. UD, P 2 K 2c/17.

2. Ibid.; AA, Abt. A, Akten des AA im GHQ 1915-1919, Ubootkrieg No. 42. Zimmermann-Grünau, 17/4/1917.

3. Vide supra, p. 278.

interpellations in the Storting¹.

However, what really detonated the conflict between the two countries was the arrest, on 16 June, of the German diplomatic courier Rautenfels and the discovery in his baggage of a large and varied assortment of bombs and other explosives. Despite the German Government's attempts to give a plausible explanation as to the purposes of Rautenfels' traffic, most Norwegians were convinced that there was a direct connection between it and the mysterious explosions on board various ships after their departure from ports in Norway. The excitement following Rautenfels' arrest by the Kristiania police was such that the German Minister himself at one stage thought a slight additional pressure from England or America would be sufficient to bring about a rupture of German - Norwegian relations. The German Government on their side made insistent efforts for the release of the courier, claiming his diplomatic immunity. Their particular fear was that a prolonged arrest might lead to dangerous indiscretions in regard to Naval Staff secrets that Rautenfels possessed. On 25 June the Auswärtiges Amt inquired of the German Minister whether a German ultimatum to Norway

1. St. forh. 1917, 7 a, pp. 641 - 645, 1432 - 1442, 1740 - 1750.

2. AA, Abt. A, 24/5/17.
V. Grünau, 24/5/17.
3. AA, Abt. A, 24/5/17.
2/917.
11-1-17.
11-1-17.

might secure the immediate liberation of the courier¹.

That the crisis nevertheless blew over quite soon was largely due to the coincidental exchange of German Ministers in Kristiania at the end of June. Michahelles had long been under strong criticism from his Naval Attaché and others, and towards the end of May Zimmermann thought the time might be propitious for a change, since a suitable successor was available in the person of Admiral von Hintze². Von Hintze's first advice to Berlin after he had taken up his post was to urge the necessity of a generous treatment of the "Thorunn" case, as a show of good will, and then to furnish Norway with an explanation of the Rautenfels affair which could exculpate the German Government. More tolerable relations between the two countries could then gradually be restored³.

1. Cf. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 17, Adh. 1. Rautenfels was in fact a courier of the German Navy, and the explosives were apparently intended for ships in Norwegian and Swedish harbours. There is reason to believe Michahelles' assurances that neither he nor the Auswärtiges Amt knew exactly what Rautenfels was doing, since his dealings in Kristiania were with the Naval Attaché Hilmers. The German documents cited contain the draft of a dispatch, never sent, in which the Auswärtiges Amt suggests that in view of the Rautenfels scandal courier baggage from other departments would thereafter have to be inspected by the Auswärtiges Amt before it could be provided with diplomatic seal. Nevertheless, the Rautenfels affair was at the time blamed wholly on the Auswärtiges Amt, and was one of the points of accusation against Zimmermann when he was forced to resign by the Reichstag shortly afterwards. Cf. Matthias etc., Der Interfraktionelle Ausschuss 1917-18, Part I (Düsseldorf, 1959), pp. 38, 40, 43, 66.

2. AA, Abt. A, AA im GHQ 1915-1919, Norwegen No. 22. Zimmermann - v. Grünau, 24/5/1917.

3. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen 17. v. Hintze - Bethmann Hollweg, 6/7/1917.

In London, the deteriorating relations between Germany and Norway in May and June added urgency to the strategic debate concerning Norwegian neutrality. On 19 May Findlay reported on the reaction in Norway to the "Thorunn" case. Two days later the War Cabinet was considering Norway's position in connection with "the suspicious movements of a German merchant vessel in Norwegian waters". The Admiralty seems to have been considering action against this vessel inside Norwegian territory, but the political considerations of the adverse effect from a British violation of Norwegian neutrality evidently carried more weight. On the other hand, the prevalent opinion in the War Cabinet at this stage was that "there seemed a possibility of getting Norway in" on the side of the Allies, and the Admiralty now thought this would be to Britain's advantage. The previous objections from the War Office had mainly been due to a fear of Swedish hostilities against Norway, a danger which they now found to be considerably diminished¹. The War Cabinet hence reached the following decision:

"The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should keep under careful observation the possibility of bringing in Norway on the side of the Allies." 2

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1. In March, Hammarskjöld's Government had been forced to resign, and was succeeded by Swartz's moderately Conservative and more pro-Entente Cabinet.
 2. Milner Papers: W.P. 24. May 1917. War Cabinet 141, Minute 13.

A few days after this meeting of the War Cabinet the Foreign Office received a lengthy report from Findlay on the mood in Norway after the "Thorunn" affair. The British Minister also referred to Swedish sentiments following the sinking of ships carrying foodstuffs to Sweden, and suggested that this coincidence of resentment against Germany in the two countries constituted a favourable moment for imposing strict conditions on their imports from America. The Foreign Office now informed Findlay of the Admiralty's revised opinion regarding Norway's entry into war, "in the changed situation produced by American Naval co-operation", to which Findlay replied that this change, together with the possibility that Norway's resentment against Germany might produce a critical situation, called for certain preparatory considerations on the part of the naval and military authorities¹. On 11 June an assessment of the Norwegian situation from the military point of view was submitted by the Director of Military Intelligence. The report adhered in general to the views expressed by the Imperial General Staff in November of the previous year², - "unless it can be certain that there is no possibility of Sweden taking hostile action against Norway". The military objections to Norway's entry were again mainly the

1. Ibid., May 1917. The documents give no information as to what these "considerations" were.

2. Vide supra, p. 267 and Appendix II.

delay¹.
strain on Allied resources and manpower which the defence of Norwegian territory would involve, as well as the fear of a successful German bombardment of the Norwegian munitions industry. The paper also expressed concern that Norway's entry should give Germany a pretext for invading Denmark, an action which would provide the Germans with vital Danish supplies in addition to the strategic advantage of controlling the approaches to the Baltic. Again, however, the military view was equivocal; and the Director of Military Intelligence was not certain that his objections might not be overruled by advantages which the Navy might see in Norway's participation¹.

In telegrams of 20 and 21 June Findlay reported on the crisis that was developing in Norway's relations with Germany after the arrest of Rautenfels, and urgently stressed the need for Britain to be "prepared for any eventuality and in a position to act at a moment's notice". The War Cabinet met on 22 June, and then had before them both Findlay's telegrams and the report on Norway from the Director of Military Intelligence. Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, introduced the question by stating that Norway might at any moment be at war, and that Britain's policy therefore would have to be determined without

1. Milner Papers: From the summary of papers relating to Norway, in the Naval Staff memorandum for the War Cabinet of 6 December 1917 entitled: "The Position of Norway".

delay¹.

Balfour's remarks were followed by a "rather heated discussion" in the War Cabinet about British policy towards Norway². On behalf of the War Office, Lord Derby re-stated the military objections to British commitments in Norway, but again with the admission that these might be overruled by naval considerations. Lord Jellicoe, the First Sea Lord, indicated that the shortage of ships had become less of a problem lately, since Washington's recent decision to ration supplies to Scandinavia would reduce the number of vessels required for blockade duty. Nevertheless, he found that

"the desirability or otherwise of Norway joining the Allies turned largely on the Naval assistance to be rendered by the United States Admiralty. Jellicoe suggested that the United States Government should be asked whether they were prepared to supply submarines, destroyers, a cruiser squadron and a division of battleships, to be based on our ports ready for eventualities." ³

After a further word of caution from General MacDonogh, the Director of Military Intelligence, about the danger of a German invasion of Jutland, the War Cabinet decided that Norway should be discouraged from entering the war, although it was

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1. Milner Papers, W.P. 24. June 1917. War Cabinet 168, Minute 13.
 2. Milner Papers, Diary, 22 June 1917.
 3. Milner Papers, W.P. 24, loc.cit. Cf. the opinion of the Admiralty one month earlier, due to "the changed situation produced by American Naval co-operation".

expected from the United States
necessary

A copy of Page's telegram to the Allies
"not to convey the suggestion that the Allies
were impotent to help her should she be forced
to go to war. Our Naval Forces should at
least be able to protect Norway from invasion
by sea, and we could provide a certain amount
of protection against Zeppelin raids." 1

The War Cabinet further resolved that the question of
Norway should be referred to the recently constituted Cabinet
Committee on War Policy "for early consideration". In the
meantime, Balfour would confer with the American Ambassador
about the possibility of American assistance in case Norway
should declare war on Germany.

On the following day, 23 June, Ambassador Page cabled the
State Department that, according to Balfour, Germany was humili-
ating Norway for the purpose of forcing her into the war.
Britain was using her influence to restrain Norway, but hosti-
lities seemed imminent and Allied assistance might soon be re-
quired. On her side, Great Britain was getting ready to pro-
vide naval and air defence support, but Balfour found it pro-
bable that several large American naval units would be needed
to protect parts of the south coast of Norway. The British
Government would therefore like to know if such help might be

1. Ibid., loc. cit.

expected from the United States¹.

A copy of Page's telegram was forwarded to President Wilson, and Secretary of the Navy J. Daniels, as it appears, also put the issue to Wilson directly in a conversation, the gist of which was recorded in Daniels' diary in the following words: "Would we send dreadnoughts to Norway? 'GB is very careful of her ships' said WW."² America's attitude on the more general policy level was laid down in a memorandum from Daniels to the Secretary of State on 3 July. Although it did not contain any specific reference to Norway, this paper nevertheless made it clear that the United States were unwilling to separate any division from the main fleet for service abroad except in absolute emergencies³.

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1. State Department 763.72/5473. Printed in US Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, Vol. I, p. 108. The wording of the telegram suggests that Balfour, with Page's collusion, was prepared to go to some lengths in the effort to obtain American Naval assistance. The references to Germany's "evident purpose to drive her into war", and Britain's "using its influence to restrain Norway" were hardly accurate as a description of the situation. The Admiralty were, however, preparing to send a British Naval force to Norway in an emergency, and had their operational plans ready by 2 July. Cf. Milner Papers, Naval Staff memorandum cited above.
 2. Library of Congress. Papers of Josephus Daniels, Diary, 27 June 1917. - Wilson seems on the whole to have been very sceptical of British naval policy; cf. his telegram to Admiral Sims in London, printed in US Documents, 1917 Suppl. 2, Vol. I, pp. 117 - 118.
 3. Cf. US Documents, Vol. cit., pp. 116 - 117.

American reticence towards commitments to Allied policies whose extent they could not quite foresee also found expression during July and August, in a discussion between Washington and the American Minister to Norway on the question of American bases in Norway. Schmedeman in a telegram of 5 July referred to an interview with Findlay, at the latter's initiative, during which the British Minister had suggested that the Americans ought to prepare for the establishment of an American naval base in case the situation in Norway should suddenly change for the worse. Schmedeman recommended a prompt study of the issue, and quoted Findlay's assurance that "the feeling of friendliness towards the U.S. in this country is such that the establishment of an American naval base in case of war would meet with the approval of the nation". The American Minister also referred to his letter of 26 June containing statements from Norwegian naval officers about the suitability of Christiansund¹ as a base for the American navy. However, the Department of the Navy replied to both these dispatches that they had no desire for a base and did not recommend any further moves on the issue².

1. Should probably have been Christiansand.

2. State Department 811.34557, 763.72/5967.

The outcome of this phase of the Allied debate on Norway's position, therefore, was the preservation of the status quo. The end of Norwegian neutrality could in the circumstances have been envisaged in two ways: a German attack in retaliation against an American-ordered stoppage of Norwegian exports, or a rupture of relations by Norway after strong German provocation. In both cases American military assistance would be required in order to keep Norway for the Entente.

The United States hence held the key to Norway's destiny, and the reluctance of the United States to commit themselves to a policy whose consequences they could not predict and therefore mistrusted settled the issue for the time being. Washington's refusal to accept naval commitments to Norway was probably due partly to Wilson's idea that Britain was saving her own Navy and partly to disbelief in any emergency affecting Norway. The reaction might have been different if the request for assistance had come from Kristiania and not from London, but this situation the British Government had failed to achieve. America's circumspection in regard to economic pressure, on the other hand, stemmed from fear of forcing the neutrals into the arms of Germany or of exposing them to German reprisals.

Britain's efforts to overcome America's reluctance in these respects met with little success. The British may also

have increased American suspicions by their simultaneous pursuit of both economic and naval policy objectives, each of which required a different image of Norway's position. If American naval assistance was needed, Norway and Germany would be represented as being on the brink of war, whereas American economic pressure on Norway depended on assurances that Norwegian fears of German aggression were unfounded. Although these images were not as mutually exclusive as they seemed, the dichotomy had its effect on American policy towards Norway during the long trade negotiations that followed.

on 3 April the American Consul General, after talks with the Foreign Office, wrote to Ambassador Fogel:

"Our friends in the Blockade Department are quite prepared to believe, I think, that the Department of State will not recede from its expressed position on points of law, and that it will consider the blockade to be just as illegal after we go to war as now, and will have a still poorer opinion of the black list, but they probably hope that the Department will recognize these weapons as existing *de facto*, and will behave towards them, if I may so express it, as attitudes of restrictive neutrality." 2

In addition to inundating the American Embassy with plans, advice, requests and demands of various kinds...

1. On America's policy towards the Baltic (see also the pioneering work in U.S. Policy towards the Baltic, 1942).
2. U.S. Documents, 1942, vol. 2, p. 11, et seq.

British Government in the First World War

6. America's Economic War

ton in order to work out a course.

In With the economic power that the United States possessed, one of the most crucial questions raised by America's intervention in the war was the effect this would have on the Allied Blockade. It was also the most delicate one, in view of Washington's past record of opposition to the principles on which the blockade had so far rested¹. The American attitude towards co-operation in blockade matters was a topic of speculation in London even before the formal declaration of war, and on 3 April the American Consul General, after talks with the Foreign Office, wrote to Ambassador Page:

"Our friends in the Blockade Department are quite prepared to believe, I think, that the Department of State will not recede from its expressed position on points of law, and that it will consider the blockade to be just as illegal after we go to war as now, and will have a still poorer opinion of the black list; but they probably hope that the Department will recognize these weapons as existing de facto, and will assume towards them, if I may so express it, an attitude of benevolent neutrality." 2

In addition to inundating the American administration with plans, advice, requests and demands on blockade matters, the

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1. On America's policy towards the neutrals in general, the pioneering work is T.A. Bailey, Policy of the United States toward the Neutrals, 1917-1918 (Stanford University Press, 1942).
 2. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 804.

British Government in the first month of American belligerency also sent a diplomatic mission led by Arthur Balfour to Washington in order to work out a common policy for economic warfare. In general, what the British demanded and the French supported was that America should make further supplies to the European neutrals contingent on a cessation of exports to Germany. With individual variations due to the political situation however, "pressure of the strongest kind" was at present suggested for Sweden and Spain, "very definite pressure" for Norway, and "pressure of a highly flexible and judicious character in the case of Denmark and Holland"¹.

In regard to Norway the British Government summed up the situation in the following words:

"Norway, like other neutral countries, fears attack from Germany. Her policy has been to temporize and hope for the best. She exports milk, fish and other important articles to the United Kingdom and in the event of severe controversy with the Allies she might cut these off. At present, however, it is not thought likely either that Germany will attack Norway or that Norway will cut off supplies to the United Kingdom. Caution is however necessary. As a first step it is suggested that the United States might make any further export of copper or copper goods to Norway conditional on an absolute assurance that no further pyrites will be shipped to Germany so long as the war lasts, and might use her control over Norwegian supplies of cereals, feeding stuffs, oil, meat and leather to stop or at least reduce Norwegian exports to Germany, especially as regards nickel, carbide, fish . . ." ²

1. Ibid., pp. 828 - 829.

2. Ibid., pp. 834.

To the extent that American policy was expressed in the negotiations with the Balfour mission, it seemed largely concerned with the euphemistic exercise of substituting "blockade" by terms like "the right of the United States to control its exports to any country" for purposes connected with American war efforts. A certain reservation could, however, lie in their position on the question of preventing exports from neutrals to the enemy "whether of imported or native produce". In a reply perhaps more notable for its omissions than for what it actually said, the United States declared its willingness to assist

"in preventing its exports from reaching the enemy or from being used by neutral countries to replace produce exported by them to the enemy; but the United States is unwilling to carry this policy to the point where it might force neutrals into the arms of Germany". 1

As the United States was getting off to a slow start of its export control system, the British Embassy in Washington in a long memorandum of 5 July sought to allay American fears that the blockade might throw neutrals into the "arms of Germany". Concerning in particular the danger of Germany attacking the neutrals in reprisal against the cessation of exports, the British considered such attacks to be beyond the military capacity of the enemy. Even with regard to sudden acts of aggression,

1. Ibid., p. 866.

the memorandum characterised the danger as "hypothetical and remote", and "rather as a danger to be forestalled by consultation between the United States and British General Staffs, who are probably in a position to concert measures to meet it, than as an argument in favour of inaction"¹. The arguments, however, may not have sounded entirely convincing to the United States Government which two weeks earlier had been warned by Balfour of German pressures on Norway with the purpose of "driving her into the war"².

The first sign of a fundamental difference between the export policies of the Allies and the United States appeared as a result of President Wilson's instructions to the newly created American Exports Council. In spite of the request from Lord Eustace Percy, British adviser to the Council, "to make further exports to neutral countries from the United States dependent upon an absolute stoppage of all exports to Germany whatsoever"³, and instead of the Council's own recommendation that, although neutrals should get their domestic requirements of food, neutral food exports to the enemy should be restricted as far as possible or feasible from the political or military viewpoints, Wilson's memorandum stated that all articles were to be freely licensed

1. Ibid., p. 894.

2. Vide supra, p. 344.

3. State Department 600.119/274, Percy - McCormick, 13/7/1917, with copy of letter Percy - Hoover, 8/7/1917.

to Norway as well as Switzerland. Subsequently, "at the earnest solicitation of Mr. Hoover and the British Government", the Council got the President's approval for qualifying this by the phrase "subject to such conditions as the Exports Council may impose", but Wilson nevertheless made it clear to Frank L. Polk, Counselor to the State Department, that "he was of the opinion that Norway by her efforts to maintain a correct attitude occupies a special position among the neutrals and therefore deserves every consideration when the export control is being put into practice"¹.

President Wilson's views concerning Norway were restated shortly after by Secretary of Commerce Redfield, who told the Exports Council on 17 July that Wilson

"wished to treat Norway very liberally in the granting of licences; and further, that while the President wished to work in accord with Great Britain and the other nations associated . . . , he drew a distinction between Norway and other neutral countries of Europe".²

Again, the British intervened with an urgent call on Polk the same evening for a careful consideration of Norway's case. In a memorandum to Polk Lord Eustace Percy explained Britain's relations with Norway:

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1. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the Exports Council, 3, 11, 12 and 13 July 1917; Polk Papers, Correspondence files, Polk - Wilson, 12/7/1917; UD, H 4 B 4/17, Bryn-Ihlen, 13/7/1917.
 2. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the Exports Council, 17 July 1917.

"It is difficult in such documents to avoid the appearance of disregard for neutral interests, but I do feel that in this matter we may be acquitted of any 'strong-arm' policy. We have relieved Norwegian ships by British ships in the dangerous North Sea services; we are supplying Norway with coal and with much besides that she needs"

Lord Eustace Percy recommended that all shipments from the United States to Norway should be suspended and that no food, feeding stuffs, metals, minerals, pyrites or other ores or woodpulp should be allowed to go from Norway to Germany. The French Ambassador, who also called on Polk that evening, said that although he agreed that Norway should be liberally treated each shipment needed careful examination¹.

On the next day Wilson told Polk over the telephone that, although he still wished Norway to be given the most-favoured nation treatment, he agreed that every shipment ought to be fully investigated. The policy towards Norway should nevertheless be a liberal one. Herbert Hoover then interpreted this for the Exports Council as meaning that it was America's desire to cooperate with Norway and assist her in every way possible, while at the same time protecting home requirements².

The differences of opinion between the United States and the Allies were not limited to Norway, however, and at the end of July the State Department took up for review the whole issue

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1. War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, General, Percy - Polk, 17/7/1917; Wilson Papers, File II, Polk - Wilson, 18/7/1917.
 2. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the Exports Council, 19 July 1917.

of policy co-ordination. On 28 July Polk wrote to Secretary of State Lansing, then on vacation at his usual retreat in up-state New York, that

"I think it is quite clear from his conversation prepared to go as far as the Council recommends. He feels that the neutrals have
"yesterday we got down to the bottom of things and are beginning a negotiation with the British and French to find out exactly how far they are willing to say we should go. They have written rather briefly at times as to what we should do with the neutrals, but have also warned us, or rather begged us, not to interfere with their agreements with particular neutrals. I will see the British and French on Monday and make them announce a definite policy". 1

In connection with his talks with Allied diplomats in Washington, Polk also cabled a lengthy questionnaire to Page in London concerning both the future of British and French agreements with the neutrals and the question of meeting any military emergency that might arise as a consequence of Allied demands on the neutral countries².

The policy differences were apparently also reflected inside the Experts Council, where two of the most prominent members, Herbert Hoover, the United States Food Administrator, and Vance C. McCormick, a leading figure in the Democratic Party, were engaged in persuading the Council to adopt much more radical policies toward the neutrals³. On 31 July Polk took up the question of Scandinavia with President Wilson, and afterwards

1. Lansing Papers, Vol. 29, Polk - Lansing, 28/7/1917.

2. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 912.

3. Auchincloss Papers, Diary, 30 July 1917.

4. Ibid., Polk - Wilson, 26/7/1917.

wrote to McCormick:

"I think it is quite clear from his conversation that he is not prepared to go as far as the Council recommends. He feels that the neutrals have legitimate right to trade with whom they please and we have an obligation from the standpoint of humanity towards them. I think he is prepared to go some distance on these lines, but I think, from what he told me, he would be unwilling to accept our recommendation." 1

The specific recommendation mentioned in the letter was to stop licensing food supplies to Denmark. This policy was backed by Hoover, but Polk in submitting it to the President stated that, while it would be a workable policy and thus better than no policy, America "need not be that bald" 2.

Britain's reply to Polk's demands for a full statement of the attitude to be taken towards the neutrals was submitted in several instalments through August. The problem of how far the neutrals could be pressed without fear of German reprisals was dealt with in a Foreign Office memorandum of 4 August. In regard to Norway the British Government declared that she was "unquestionably economically at the mercy of the Allies". Referring to the commodities that still went from Norway to Germany, the memorandum stated that there "ought to be no difficulty in inducing Norway to abandon all these exports, though here again financial arrangements will have to be made to prevent industrial

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1. Polk Papers, correspondence files, Polk - McCormick, 31/7/1917.
 2. Ibid., Polk - Wilson, 28/7/1917.

advantage to us than the...
dislocation ...". It should also be taken into account that the Allies relied on Norway for supplies of ferro-chrome, carbide, nitrate of ammonia and aluminium as well as for transit facilities to Russia and co-operation in the shipment of iron-ore from Narvik.

The memorandum then went on to examine the record of Norwegian neutrality:

"It may be said, in parenthesis, that the doctrine that Norway has behaved specially well amongst the northern neutrals does not seem sustainable. No doubt she has been more dependent on the Allies than some of the others, and has therefore been in some respects more amenable. She has also unquestionably allowed her ships to sail in Allied interests, but since a great part of her national wealth depends on her shipping industry, and shipping can only be used, if it is to be used at all, directly or indirectly in Allied interests, she could have only refrained from that use of it at enormous loss to herself. - On the other hand it must not be forgotten that it was only with the greatest difficulty, and by exerting to the full our economic power over her, that we induced her to limit her exports of fish and pyrites to Germany, and then only on terms which gave very considerable profits to the Norwegian fishermen and mine-owners."

Concerning the military aspects of Norway's situation, the Foreign Office found that since the danger of Norway joining Germany was negligible, the only danger that remained was of sporadic German bombardment.

"It is not proposed here to discuss the exact nature of the assistance that we could give to Norway in this case. It is enough to say that, though we are not particularly anxious to have Norway as an ally, yet, perhaps on the balance, she would be rather an

advantage to us than the reverse if she came in
for our side." 1

On 30 August the Exports Administrative Board, a newly
created agency under the Exports Council, suddenly decided that
all export licences to the northern neutrals were to be with-
held "for the present"². The probable reason for the decision
was to furnish an impetus for the neutrals to seek a definite
arrangement of their trade, but it soon became apparent that
America was not yet prepared to state her conditions for further
supplies to Norway. Despite appeals from the British as well
as from Minister Schmedeman that this should be done, the Ame-
rican administration still refused to state their terms.

The hesitations of the Exports Administrative Board may
have been connected with the fact that the question of Norway's
strategic position had again been opened by the British. In the
middle of July, by way of a post script to the War Cabinet's
debate on 22 June, the Admiralty had requested the Foreign Office
to enquire about the possibility of American naval assistance
in the event of a sudden rupture between Norway and Germany³.

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1. State Department 600.119/359, Page - State Department,
13/8/1917, enclosing Foreign Office memorandum of 4
August. Cf. also U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II,
note 5.
 2. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the Exports Ad-
ministrative Board, 30 August 1917. As an exception,
however, it was provided that "applications for licenses
to export food to Norway shall be brought to Mr. White's
attention".
 3. Milner Papers: "The Position of Norway". Naval Staff
Memorandum for the War Cabinet, 6 December 1917. General
Summary of Papers, Item (8).

For some reason the Foreign Office waited until 3 September before instructing Spring-Rice in Washington to discuss the question with the American Government. Although the British Naval Staff recognised the disadvantages of Norway's entry into the war, they wanted nevertheless to be prepared for any contingency and desired to know if American co-operation could be expected¹. While there is no indication as to the reaction of the American Government, the fact that the problem was again being considered was hardly fit to reassure them about Norway's safety against German aggression.

The climax of this particular interlude, however, was yet to come. Lord Reading, who arrived in Washington later in September on a special mission from the British Government, brought a secret document to Wilson with the conclusions of the "Northern Neutrals Committee". This committee had been set up in June under the Cabinet Committee on War Policy, with Sir Edward Carson as chairman, to study the strategic situation². What these conclusions were can be inferred from the following letter from House to Wilson, written after McCormick had told House that the Exports Administrative Board was about to settle on a policy of embargoes towards Sweden and Norway:

"I advised him to do nothing until he had seen you, since it was a matter of such importance that it might mean bringing into the war all of Scandinavia and possibly against the Allies.

1. Ibid., loc.cit.

2. Bell, op.cit., pp. 630-631.

I suppose you have read the confidential memorandum prepared by the British War Council and left with you by Lord Reading. No one knows of this in American(sic) outside of you, Lord Reading, Wiseman and myself, therefore the English, French and Italians with whom McCormick's board have reached an agreement concerning embargoes, do not know the real situation. From that memorandum, it would seem that it would be a bad thing for the Allies for any of the nearby neutrals to get into the war, either for or against the Allies and for the reasons expressed therein." 1

The result of this stage of Allied policy formulation, therefore, evidently was to confirm at the highest level the apprehensions in America about the ultimate results of a strict embargo policy towards Scandinavia.

Norway's "habitual optimism"

The first warning about the probable effects of America's entry into the war on Norway's imports of food came in a telegram from Norway's Minister to Washington, Helmer Bryn, on the day after the United States Congress had declared war. Bryn explained that the increased domestic requirements as well as the needs of the Allies would make it more difficult for Norway to have her needs satisfied, and recommended a cessation of Norwegian food exports in order to strengthen the country's case in

1. Wilson Papers, File II, House - Wilson, 29/9/1917.

2. Ibid., Bryn - Diary.

future negotiations. The Government, however, at that particular time had good reason to avoid giving Germany any further cause for grievances¹, and Ihlen therefore replied by requesting Bryn to inform the State Department of the regulations that were already in force in the form of export prohibitions and agreements with the British Government. Bryn should further "declare to the American Government that the insufficiency of Norway's own food production makes a maintenance of the present rate of supplies from the United States necessary to avoid famine in Norway". In acknowledging the instructions, the Norwegian Minister stated that he did not fear that Norway's requirements would not be given due consideration, "since no neutral European country is regarded with more sympathy here than Norway"².

During May and June Bryn continued to supply the American Government with information regarding Norway's situation, and also had several appointments with Lansing, the Secretary of State, and with Secretary of Commerce Redfield. His impressions of these talks were that, while stricter export regulations were being prepared, Washington was not impervious to arguments about the merits of Norway as a special case³. The optimism in this respect was decisively confirmed on 13 July, when

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1. The transfer of Norwegian shipping to Allied service was being prepared at this time. Vide supra, pp. 317, 321.
 2. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Bryn - Ihlen 7/4 and 20/4/1917, Ihlen - Bryn, 11/4/1917.
 3. Ibid., Bryn - Ihlen, 14/6/1917, inter alia; Lansing Papers, Diary.

acting Secretary of State Polk informed Bryn about the President's views concerning Norway and said that Norway would meet with "very few difficulties" in regard to her necessary imports from the United States¹.

On that same day the "Hellig Olav" departed from Kristiania en route to the United States with a Norwegian trade mission on board. The mission, led by perhaps the most famous of Norway's citizens, the polar explorer and scientist Fridtjof Nansen, had been charged with the task of negotiating a trade arrangement between the United States and Norway, - although at least one member of the Norwegian Government seems to have found the whole mission unnecessary after the news of Wilson's Norwegian sympathies. This was the Prime Minister who, as Nansen on 1 August was being received in the White House to deliver his credentials as "ministre plénipotentiaire en mission spéciale", was embarking on another of his ventures into personal diplomacy at the highest level².

In his letter to Wilson, Gunnar Knudsen expressed his relief at the news of Wilson's goodwill towards Norway, and suggested that this almost made the Norwegian trade mission superfluous. He then went on to describe the misfortunes of being

1. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Bryn - Ihlen, 13/7/1917.

2. Omang, Norsk Utenrikstjeneste, Vol. II, p. 210; Knudsen's letter to Wilson in Wilson Papers, File II. Vide Appendix III. Nansen at White House: Wilson Papers, Executive Office Diary, 1 August. Cf. also U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, pp. 1035 - 1036.

a small neutral nation, and explained that if the Scandinavian countries entered the war they would be on opposite sides, - a somewhat lighthearted assertion about the attitudes of his neighbours. By implying that Norway would get all she needed from America as a matter of course, the Prime Minister's letter can hardly have done any good, although there is no indication that it did any harm.

- Besides formal appointments with Secretary of State Lansing and other members of Wilson's cabinet - and more pleasant social functions like the tea which Nansen and Bryn had at Lansing's house on 10 August¹, the main contact of the Norwegian negotiators with their American counterparts during the first weeks was through "informal conversations" with Herbert Hoover, the United States Food Administrator. At these talks the neutral representatives were presented with an - again - "informal" and rather vague memorandum setting forth the basis on which American foodstuffs would be supplied to the neutrals and requesting in turn their co-operation in providing information about their "genuine domestic requirements"². The memorandum was not passed on to the Foreign Ministry until much

1. Lansing Papers, Diary, 8 and 10 August; Daniels Papers, Diary, 8 August 1917.

2. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the Exports Council, 7 and 12 July 1917; Wilson Papers, File VI, Item (4010), Hoover - Wilson, 14/7/1917; State Department 600. 119/332a, State Department - Schmedeman, 8/8/1917. Text of memorandum in U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, pp. 908 - 910.

later; an omission which created a great scandal in Norway when it was discovered by the Government's opponents¹. Otherwise, the mission's time was spent in arranging licences for individual shipments to Norway, and in providing the Exports Administrative Board with various statistics and information about Norwegian trade.

Although Nansen reassured the Norwegian Government in the middle of August that "the impression that Norway's position here is relatively good receives steady confirmation"², there was no sign of actual negotiations, as each party seemed to wait for the other one to take the initiative. On 20 September Nansen wrote to Ihlen that an agreement seemed several months away, and enquired if the mission ought to continue. The British, who during September were preparing to cancel their agreements with Norway in order to clear the field for the American agreement, were even more impatient. In a memorandum to the War Cabinet dated 28 September the War Trade Intelligence Department strongly

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1. For the starting debate, vide infra, p. 368. The delay of the dispatch can probably be explained by the anomalous situation in which Norway had two envoys in Washington of equal rank. The affair was blown up far beyond its true proportions, although Norway's failure to supply the requested information was real enough. Cf. War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, Agreement, letter Jones-Polk, 6/11/1917: "A request for information was made ... in a memo informally presented to the Norwegian Mission on the 24th day of July last. We have never had a satisfactory statement in answer to our inquiry."
 2. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Nansen - Ihlen, 14/8/1917.

condemned the American habit of giving exceptional concessions for imports of cereals to Norway, actions that would enable Norway to "continue a policy of passive resistance for at least six months", and went on:

"Mr. Wilson seems to be of the opinion that we must not press Norway too hard unless we are prepared to undertake the responsibility of defending her against attack. But on this point he has reserved his decision. In the meantime the action of his Government has confirmed the Norwegians in their habitual optimism. It seems useless under the present circumstances for His Majesty's Government to take any drastic action with regard to our Norwegian Agreements " 1

Even stronger words were forthcoming from Minister Findlay in Kristiania. In a telegram to the Foreign Office of 18 October he characterised the American policy in the following words:

"Americans hold all the cards both theirs and our own and should score every trick but do not appear to have the courage even to lead. They seem incapable of learning from blunders they have already committed and determined to continue the disastrous policy and piecemeal transactions."

Findlay further stated that the alleged impossibility of cutting off all fish exports from Norway to Germany was "a bare assertion unsupported and unsupportable by any reasonable argument"².

By the time this telegram was sent, however, there were

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1. Milner Papers: War Cabinet Paper: Summary of Blockade Information.
 2. Milner Papers: Findlay- Foreign Office (Trade and Treaty) No. 5825. 18 October 1917. Confidential.

some signs that the negotiators were getting ready for business.

On 2 October the Americans

"Resolved that the Exports Administrative Board considers it undesirable to grant further licenses for the exportation of foodstuffs to Norway, or to enter into any additional special agreements involving such exportation until the negotiations now being conducted shall have resulted in the conclusion of a satisfactory agreement ..." 1

A few days later Nansen cabled the Foreign Ministry that the last week had brought a noticeable change in the situation, and that he found it increasingly clear that as a condition for supplies the Americans intended to demand a full stoppage of exports to Germany. He strongly suggested that the only way of meeting this would be to propose "radical decreases" concerning fish and certain important articles, and a complete cessation of other supplies to the enemy².

Ihlen replied to Nansen's telegram that he could discuss reductions but not cessations in Norwegian exports, and made it clear that all proposals to be made needed advance approval by the Norwegian Government. At the same time Ihlen gave an interview to Chevalley, the French envoy, during which he stated that Norway was waiting for firm and clear propositions from the American Government about what the Allies required from Norway. He also indicated that the Norwegian Government might

1. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the Exports Administrative Board. 2 October 1917.

2. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Nansen - Ihlen, 8/10 and 11/10/1917.
Fish, Percy - McCormick, 20/10/1917, Percy - ... 25/10/1917 and note of 30/10/1917.

consider a transfer of the negotiations to Europe¹. On 16 October Nansen discussed the question of Norwegian fish exports with J. B. White of the War Trade Board - this Board being essentially the same as the Exports Administrative Board although with somewhat extended powers. During their talk Nansen apparently put forward as a tentative suggestion that the fish exports might be reduced to 40,000 tons a year. Two days later a telegram from the trade mission requested a priority list for the goods that the Government still desired to export to Germany².

The first British reaction to the proposed cut in Norwegian fish exports came from Findlay. In a telegram which Lord Eustace Percy passed on to the chairman of the War Trade Board Vance McCormick, Findlay strongly disagreed with the suggestion, since it would allow Norway to give definite help to the enemy for the remainder of the war. In letters of 29 and 30 October, however, Percy gave as Britain's conditions for accepting the 40,000 that a settlement of the agreement with Norway should be reached within a fortnight and that no other exports to Germany should be allowed³.

1. Ibid., Ihlen - Nansen, 11/10/1917 and minutes of 13/10/1917. Cf. also War Trade Board, Cables received from U.S. Foreign Service Representatives. Schmedeman - State Department, 11/10 and 14/10/1917.

2. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of the WTB, 16 Oct. 1917; UD, H 4 S 4/17, Nansen - Ihlen, 18/10/1917.

3. War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, Memo.s, Fish, Percy - McCormick, 26/10/1917, Percy - WTB, 29/10/1917 and note of 30/10/1917.

As November came, neither of the parties had yet made a definite statement of its conditions. In Norway the stocks of food and other essential supplies were dwindling, and in an unprecedented open debate in the Storting on the Government's trade policy violent attacks were forthcoming against both the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Supply. They were charged with misleading the people by failing to explain the seriousness of the country's food situation, by not imposing a system of rationing imported supplies such as Sweden had already had for a year, and for general incompetence in the handling of the American memorandum to the neutrals¹. Although none of the two censure motions proposed gathered enough votes to threaten the Government's comfortable majority, it was clear that the Government would have to make a move and declare their willingness to go at least some distance on the way to a severe reduction of exports to Germany.

The question, however, was how far it would be necessary to go, and on this point the Allies were still sharply divided. Already there were outward signs of a split, as Lansing intimated to Nansen that England had been the actual obstacle for an earlier arrangement; as Minister Vogt in London was given to understand that the position there was "mainly dependent on the export policy of the United States"; and as Wedel-Jarlsberg,

1. St. forh. 1917, 7 b, 2339 - 2343, and 2378 - 2452.

the Minister to France, cabled to Ihlen that French and English policies were determined solely by American demands¹. Relations were also acerbated by more specific grievances, such as the sharing of Norwegian tonnage where the Americans insisted on fifty per cent as their allotment. In Washington, Polk was also showing signs of irritation at Britain's "belated presentation of objections" to proposed arrangements, and seems in particular to have disliked Lord Eustace Percy².

All these annoyances were lurking under the surface as Allied representatives met in London in the middle of November to discuss blockade questions. The American representatives were Vance McCormick and Dr. Taylor. The meeting agreed that the aim in regard to Norway was to achieve a full stoppage of exports to Germany, "with the possible exception of some fish". Debating just how much fish exports should be allowed the American delegates pointed to Norway's friendly attitude as well as to the fact that other neutrals were to be permitted some food exports. Lord Robert Cecil was less satisfied with Norway's attitude, but nevertheless agreed that a fish export of 40,000

1. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Nansen - Ihlen, 16/11/1917, Vogt - Ihlen, 18/9/1917, Wedel - Jarlsberg - Ihlen, 29/10/1917. Lansing, being highly concerned about America's reputation, in a telegram to Schmedeman of 24 November instructed him to make it clear that "we are acting with the Allies and frequently we are compelled to yield to them and make terms more onerous on neutrals". Cf. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1073.

2. Polk Papers, Diary, 31 October, 3 and 8 November 1917.

3. Polk Papers, Diary, 10 and 12 November 1917.

tons might be conceded as a last resort¹.

The outcome of the conference was a recommendation to transfer the negotiations with Norway to Kristiania, to be conducted there by the Allied Ministers. The basic demand should be a total cessation of Norwegian exports to the enemy, but an export of up to 40,000 tons of fish might be conceded if necessary. Comprehensive instructions for the talks were to be prepared in London². As these suggestions reached Washington Polk discussed them with T.D. Jones, a personal friend of Wilson who on the latter's recommendation had been made acting chairman of the War Trade Board in McCormick's absence. Jones, who was evidently less radical than the majority of his Board and more in line with Wilson's own attitude, agreed with Polk that it was undesirable to transfer the negotiations from Washington, and that McCormick and Taylor "were being fooled" by their Allied colleagues³. Jones felt quite strongly about the matter, and took it up with President Wilson in an interview on 15 November, after which he cabled to McCormick that the President

"directed me to cable you that he is entirely unwilling to go any further than the principle of action already settled, namely, that we will supply or attempt to supply nothing to Norway except what we can be shown the people actually lack and we cannot undertake to supply

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1. War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, Agreement. Report on meeting at Foreign Office, 9/11/1917.
 2. Ibid., and U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1059, Page - State Department, 9/11 and 11/11/1917.
 3. Polk Papers, Diary, 10 and 12 November 1917. Papers, Diary, 10 November 1917.

them with any food elements of which they deprive themselves by exportation. He is not willing to take part in insisting that there be no export from Norway to Germany as he regards that as inconsistent with the principle upon which the United States has always insisted and the rights which she has always demanded for herself ..."¹

In a personal telegram the next day to E.M. House, who was in London with the American delegation, Wilson explained that he

"felt obliged on principle to take the position therein stated. It is based not only on principle but on the facts and advice contained in the confidential memorandum brought over by Reading and is all the more dictated by good sense in view of the present critical situation."²

McCormick, however, immediately appealed to Washington to reconsider the rejection of his recommendations, since he felt that Wilson's attitude rested on a misunderstanding. He also persuaded House to intervene by way of a telegram to Wilson on 18 November:

"McCormick and Lord Robert Cecil appreciate how delicate the situation is and nothing is contemplated which will bring about a crisis in Norway and Denmark. They believe Nansen and the Norwegian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs do not represent the sentiment of either the Government or the people. McCormick believes if you will allow him to go ahead as planned a speedy agreement can be secured. He proposes not to press the matter beyond the safety line ..."³

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1. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1065, State Department - Page, 15/11/1917.
 2. Wilson Papers, File II, Wilson - House, 16/11/1917.
 3. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1069-70; House Papers, Diary, 18 November 1917; Auchincloss Papers, Diary, 16 November 1917.

Wilson, however, was not to be moved, and replied to House with the following telegram:

"Am distressed to differ with McCormick but inasmuch as we are fighting a war of principle I do not feel that I can consent to demand of Norway what we would not in similar circumstances allow any government to demand of us, namely, the cessation of exports of her own products to any place she can send them. I am convinced that our only legitimate position is that we will not supply the deficiencies which she thus creates for herself if the exports are to our enemies." 1

- Wilson's determined intervention settled the issue, and opened the field for a long process of bargaining about the limits of Norwegian exports to Germany. The outcome of the November debate was a serious setback for the British point of view, and Lord Robert Cecil did not conceal his disappointment in a letter which he wrote to Colonel House shortly afterwards. He protested in particular against the implication that Britain's attitude took insufficient account of the military and naval considerations in regard to Norway, questions which "we really do know more intimately and fully than can at present be the case in the United States" 2.

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1. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 986.
 2. House Papers, Correspondence, R. Cecil - House, 22/10/1917.

Calcium carbonate
Ferruginous
Co
The Process of Negotiation
Sulphur
Sulphur

Minister Nansen, who had taken little or no part in the debate which settled that limitation and not cessation of Norwegian exports should be the condition for supplies to Norway¹, had in the meantime presented to the War Trade Board the first inclusive Norwegian proposal for an arrangement. The proposal, delivered on the evening of 16 November, asked what supplies Norway could expect to receive from the United States in return for certain specified reductions in Norwegian trade with Germany. The indicated reduction concerned two groups of commodities: one consisting of certain metals and minerals whose export to Germany might be stopped entirely, the other containing a small number of chemical products and ores, molybdenum, and fish, whose export was suggested reduced to given limits. In the latter group, the proposed maximum for fish was 40,000 tons, with an additional 8,000 tons of fish and fish products not covered by the Fisheries Agreement with Britain. For the other commodities in this group the proposal gave the following

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1. Nansen had an interview with Lansing on 14 November on the "seriousness of the Norwegian situation", cf. Lansing Papers, Diary, 14/11/1917. However, Nansen saw Wilson only on 20 November, after Wilson's intervention which settled this issue. Cf. Wilson Papers, Executive Office Diary.

schedule:

Calcium carbide	20,000 tons
Ferro-silicon	5,000 tons
Calcium-nitrate	18,000 tons
Molybdenum	100 tons
Pyrites	In accordance with the Copper Agreement with Great Britain

The list of goods the export of which was to be wholly forbidden included such important metals as antimony, manganese, nickel, tin and titanium¹.

The Norwegian proposal was favourably received by the Americans, who thought it provided a "fair basis for negotiations". Major Grimprel of the French Embassy and Lord Eustace Percy of the British Embassy, on the other hand, expressed their strong disapproval in letters to Jones. Grimprel found the schedule for ores and chemicals totally unacceptable, and suggested that French public opinion would never tolerate such concessions. Percy called the proposition a "cleverly laid trap" which confirmed that no useful result could be hoped from negotiations with Nansen. "Especially vicious" was the proposed export of ferro-silicon, and the reference to the Copper Agreement was "absolutely and wholly inadmissible" since the actual export prohibition which that arrangement constituted would soon lapse².

1. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1068.
 2. Ibid., loc.cit.; War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, Agreement, Percy - Jones, 17/11/1917, and Grimprel - Jones, 24/11/1917.
 1917.

After conferring with Percy and Grispriel the War Trade Board on 27 November delivered a counter-proposal to the Norwegian mission. While accepting Nansen's proposal "in principle", the Board nevertheless enumerated a series of objections which amounted to a virtual embargo on all except fish exports to Germany¹. Norway's reply, dated 7 December, maintained "with regrets" the proposal of 16 November in all its essentials, apart from certain reductions in the group of limited exports. In regard to the counter-proposal's apparent implication that the export of articles not specifically mentioned would be prohibited, the Norwegian Government stated as their presumption that the goods not mentioned could be exported freely².

The British, however, informed the War Trade Board that they were still unwilling to accept any Norwegian exports to the enemy other than fish and fish products, and as the next note from the War Trade Board accordingly contained no further concessions the negotiations seemed destined for deadlock. As an added precaution against procrastination on the part of the Norwegian Government the American proposal stipulated that present fish exports to Germany must not exceed 4,000 tons monthly³. In a telegram of 21 December to the Foreign Ministry Nansen stated

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1. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1073.
 2. Ibid., p. 1081.
 3. Ibid., pp. 1087 - 1091; War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, Agreement, Percy - Jones, 7/12 and 11/12/1917.

as his impression from the talks that the terms now offered were not far from being an ultimatum¹. The new firmness of the War Trade Board was not easily reconcilable with Wilson's stand on principle. In fact, after Wilson's telegrams to House and McCormick both Polk and Jones had serious second thoughts about the wisdom of using the President as an arbiter on blockade policy².

Around Christmas time the Norwegian Government undertook a large-scale review of their trade and provisions policy, under mounting pressures from several quarters both at home and abroad. The effects of the Allied embargo were becoming more and more noticeable, and a gesture such as the release of a few shipments to Norway as a "Christmas gift" was of questionable value. A system of rationing was finally instituted to take effect from 1 January, but came too late to make the nation's supplies last for any prolonged period. Some hope still attached to the possibility of an increased exchange of goods with Sweden and Denmark, particularly the import of Danish agricultural products. This question was in the foreground during the meeting in Kristiania of the three Scandinavian monarchs, accompanied by their Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries, at the end of November. Concerning Norwegian deliveries to Denmark in return for imports, however, Prime Minister Knudsen had to admit that "Norway, for

1. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Nansen - Ihlen, 21/12/1917.

2. Polk Papers, Diary, 19 and 20 November 1917.

the time being, was severely tied up", and had little to offer¹.

Relations with Germany offered the most serious cause for the Government's concern. Trade between the two countries was still continuing on a month-by-month prolongation of the arrangement concluded in January 1917, but since the departure of Nansen's mission to Washington Minister von Hintze had used all his persuasive talents to achieve more definite commitments before a Norwegian-American agreement had become a fait accompli. Activated both by fears of German reprisals against a Norwegian embargo and presumably also by an optimistic view of American leniency, Ihlen at the end of November intimated that he intended to work for a permanent arrangement of the trade with Germany, an arrangement which would contain specific promises of Norwegian exports. Hintze then promptly reported to Berlin that "the question of allowing Norway - in return for political and military guarantees - to cease exports to Germany, in order to secure her supplies from the Entente and the United States, has fallen away"². From then on Hintze never allowed Ihlen to forget his promise; and as the Norwegians persisted in expressing their optimism, the German Minister adopted the more profitable method of deliberately exaggerating Germany's expectations.

Against a background of threats that an agreement with the

1. On the Kings' meeting, cf. UD, P 12 C 2/17.

2. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 7, v. Hintze - Hertling, 23/11/1917.

United States in disregard of German interests would not be met with mere half-measures, Germany thus secured almost a power of veto over Norway's concessions to the Allies; a situation which apparently created a serious split in the parliamentary Commission for Foreign Affairs at the year's end. The opinion of Ihlen and other opponents to acceptance of America's last proposals prevailed, and on New Year's Eve Nansen was instructed to request licences for imports of grain, oil and phosphates in return for accepting a temporary limitation of fish exports to 4,000 tons monthly¹. Nansen, however, refused to present the suggestion which "betrayed a total lack of understanding" of the situation. He once more demanded to be informed of the minimum quantities acceptable for the export to Germany, and threatened to return at once unless he received a definite answer².

On the extra stimulus of America's resolve to publish her proposal of 20 December the Norwegian Government in the middle of January worked out another proposal for the War Trade Board. The only significant new concessions were the offer to include chrome in the list of prohibited exports, and to limit the export of pyrites so that none would be supplied before 1 May and only 4,000 tons a month thereafter. Before transmitting the proposal to Washington Ihlen told von Hintze that he would try to keep open

1. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, 11, p. 1110; UD, H 4 S 4/17, Ihlen - Bryn, 31/12/1917. Report of meeting in

2. Ibid., Nansen - Ihlen, 4/1/1918, pp. 1118-1126 (Norwegian proposal), pp. 1118 and 1127 concerning publication.

3. Ibid., p. 1126.

the export of 48,000 tons of fish, 15,000 tons calcium carbide, 12,000 tons calcium nitrate, 4,000 tons ferro-silicon, 25 tons molybdenum and some iron ore. Hintze then went to Berlin to meet with representatives of the interested Departments, and succeeded in getting their approval of this schedule as a basis for an understanding¹.

Norway's proposals to the United States were delivered by Nansen on 2 February. It was a long and carefully worded statement, explaining the problems of Norwegian neutrality and including figures of expected Norwegian exports to the Entente as a telling contrast to the quantities proposed for Germany. The note's form thus clearly anticipated its publication, which occurred on 5 February, after the American proposal had appeared in the press on 29 January². Two days after submitting the proposal to the War Trade Board Nansen sent McCormick a letter quoting certain German threats against Norway that had appeared in the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, reminding him that this paper was "the recognized mouthpiece of the German Government"³.

On receiving Nansen's memorandum the War Trade Board referred it to two of its members, White and Chadbourne, for suggestions, and this resulted in an informal proposal for a compromise

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1. UD, H 4 H 11 5/16, UD - Ditten, 19/1/1918; AA, Deutsche Gesandtschaft, Kristiania: Deutsch-norwegisch-amerikanische Verhandlungen betreffend Abkommen. Report of meeting in Auswärtiges Amt, 22/1/1918.
 2. U.S. Documents, 1918, Suppl. 1, II, pp. 1118 - 1126 (Norwegian proposal), pp. 1116 and 1127 concerning publication.
 3. Ibid. p. 1126. 8/2/1918.

which was handed to Nansen on 7 February. It indicated that an agreement could be reached at once on the general basis of the American proposition of 19 December, as modified by an allowance for export to Germany of 8,000 tons calcium carbide, 8,000 tons calcium nitrate and 1,000 tons ferro-silicon. These exceptional allowances, Nansen was warned, could only stand for a few days, although after two days of intensive negotiation they were supplemented by 40,000 tons iron ore, 1,000 tons zinc, and 40 tons aluminium. The export of pyrites, molybdenum and a few other articles was expressly prohibited¹.

Nansen cabled these suggestions to Kristiania at once, and urged acceptance by 14 February. He also quoted McCormick as saying that this final goodwill owed much to President Wilson's influence after Nansen's interview at the White House². The Norwegian Government had in the meantime been prepared for a similar compromise by the French Minister to Norway, Chevalley, with the only difference that the figures for calcium carbide and ferro-silicon were 10,000 and 2,000 tons respectively³. Not wanting to forego this last chance of a bargain, Ihlen replied that he accepted the proposal - with Chevalley's figures. In

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1. War Trade Board, Minutes of meetings of WTB, 9/2/1918; Executive Country File, Norway, Agreement, Note Verbale to Nansen of 7/2/1918; U.S. Documents, 1918, Suppl. 1, II, p. 1127.
 2. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Bryn - Ihlen, 8/2, 10/2 and 12/2/1918. The reference to Wilson presumably concerns the interview of 20 November 1917.
 3. Ibid., Minute of 8/2/1918.

a last hectic exchange, Nansen requested authorisation to accept even with 1,000 tons ferro-silicon, and Ihlen replied in the affirmative but hinted that "something else" might be obtained instead. Finally, on 20 February Minister Bryn could report to the Foreign Ministry that 2,000 tons ferro-silicon had been conceded in return for signature as soon as possible. Ihlen immediately cabled his consent, and expressed his gratitude to Nansen for the result¹.

On 12 February Ihlen had headed a memorandum to von Hintze with the latest figures reported by Nansen for Norwegian exports to Germany. Von Hintze, The Agreement

cautious, apparently reserved his remarks until he had heard from Berlin, but now began to press more strongly the earlier German request for Norwegian

At the end of February the principles and main provisions of the agreement between the United States and Norway had therefore been settled. From Kristiania, Schmedeman reported that everybody was delighted with the prospects, and that both His Majesty the King and Foreign Minister Ihlen had expressed their satisfaction "and their personal thanks" to the American Minister².

However, a lot of unfinished business remained before the actual agreement could be signed and put into effect. The drafting process was undertaken in Washington at once by Counselor

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1. Ibid., Bryn - Ihlen, 16/2 and 20/2, and Ihlen - Bryn, 13/2, 14/2, 17/2 and 21/2/1918.
 2. War Trade Board, Executive Country File, Norway, Agreement, Schmedeman - State Department, 25/2/1918.

Chadbourne of the War Trade Board, aided by lengthy communications from Lord Robert Cecil that brought both detailed suggestions and a general admonition about the need for precision since the "Norwegians are past masters in the art of bargaining". On 2 March the draft agreement was transmitted to London for comments by the Allies¹.

In the meantime the Norwegian Government had to face the task of arranging relations with Germany on a satisfactory basis. On 12 February Ihlen had handed a memorandum to von Hintze with the latest figures reported by Nansen for Norwegian exports to Germany. Von Hintze, although pessimistic, apparently reserved his remarks until he had heard from Berlin, but now began to press more strongly the earlier German request for Norwegian neutrality guarantees. Although at first intended as a conceivable substitute for a trade arrangement, this request had repeatedly been urged on the German Minister by the Auswärtiges Amt in spite of his protestation that the Norwegian Government did not understand the purpose of this and was becoming suspicious².

The insistence of the German Government was motivated by

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1. Ibid., R. Cecil - Sheldon for WTB, 25/2/1918. In the version of Cecil's comments cabled to Washington the quoted remarks were apparently left out, cf. U.S. Documents, 1918, Suppl. 1, II, pp. 1134 - 1138. For the draft agreement, vide ibid., pp. 1138 - 1145.
 2. UD, H 4 H ii 5/16, Ihlen - Ditten, 14/2/1918. Cf. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 7, v. Hintze - AA, 23/11, 13/12 and 18/12/1917, for early mention of guarantees.

a general fear that each new Norwegian commitment to the Allies increased the danger that the country would "slide" over to the enemy's side, in the absence of "formal ties" for the conservation of neutrality. It was at this time also that German suspicions about the nature of the tonnage transfers to the Entente were at their highest¹. Ihlen long tried to convince the German Minister that a formal declaration was superfluous, and referred to the Swedish-Norwegian agreement of 1914 as well as to the prologue to Norway's proposal to America. When this failed he on 16 February delivered a new version of his memorandum of 12 February with a passage expressing Norway's "firm determination to maintain an absolute and impartial neutrality"².

Ihlen's efforts were of no avail, and Germany's persistence finally resulted in a declaration, delivered to the belligerent powers on 9 March:

"Norway will, during the war, remain impartially neutral, will maintain her independence, and is determined if necessary to resist by force of arms any violation by any power or group of powers of her territorial rights, and to prevent the use of Norwegian territory as a base by any power whatever. The Norwegian Government considers it a

1. Vide supra, p. 322, note.

2. Norwegian sources for the discussion on guarantees are UD, H 4 H ii 5/16; H 4 S 4/17; and UD, P 2 L 1a/14, the latter containing a long dispatch from Ihlen to Hagerup dated 2/3/1918 with a summary of the negotiations with Germany. - Ditten, in a communication to Ihlen of 23/2/1918, refers to statements from the Auswärtiges Amt to the effect that rumours of British requests for bases in Norway were at the background of the desire for guarantees. German sources, however, contain no mention of this.

logical consequence of its policy of neutrality that it should refuse during the war to enter into any negotiations with a power or group of powers or conclude any agreement which would render it impossible to maintain neutrality.

Finally it is a satisfaction to the Norwegian Government to point out that at no time in the course of the war has any power requested Norway to participate in the war, or approached her for assistance or for permission to establish a base on Norwegian territory, or in any way made requests or representations with a view to persuade Norway to abandon her neutrality." 1

Originating from German suspicions, the declaration now engendered suspicion on the part of the British Government. In a letter from the British Embassy to the State Department, Lord Reading said that it

"may be open to the construction that the Norwegian Government would abandon the agreement with the United States if Germany should declare such an agreement unneutral, or that the Norwegian Government would not oppose Germany in the event of a German attack on Denmark or Sweden or if Germany were to sink all supply ships from this country". 2

In acknowledging the declaration the Allied Governments therefore stated that they took it to mean that Norway would uphold not only her duties but also her rights as a neutral³.

- The process of drafting the Norwegian - American trade agreement and of submitting it to the Allies for review and comment took longer than expected, and only on 13 March did Nansen receive

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1. U.S. Documents, 1918, Suppl. 1, II, p. 1150.
 2. State Department, 763.72111 N 83/7, Lord Reading - State Department, 22/3/1918.
 3. U.S. Documents, 1918, Suppl. 1, II, p. 1151.

a draft from the War Trade Board. He found it totally unacceptable. "Entirely new things that have never been discussed are included, and matters upon which there was agreement have been left out." When he raised the issue with McCormick and White they seemed rather apologetic and said that it had been worked out by Counselor Chadbourne as a purely tentative formulation¹. As Hansen asked that Schmedeman should submit a copy to the Foreign Ministry in Kristiania the War Trade Board, feeling they could not refuse, instructed the Minister to do this but asked him to emphasize that it was "preliminary and tentative only"².

The American draft was in the hands of the Norwegian Government on 18 March, and during the month that followed there was a busy exchange of comments, criticisms, revisions and corrections between Kristiania and Washington. In his first telegram Ihlen could not resist suggesting a bargain for a couple of additional concessions, but after a sharp answer from Hansen the comments were restricted to objections which even in Findlay's opinion were reasonable in addition to being of considerable importance³. Most of these had been altered in Norway's favour when Ihlen in the middle of April faced a highly critical Commission for Foreign

1. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Bryn - Ihlen, 15/3 and 16/3/1918.

2. U.S. Documents, 1918, Suppl. 1, II, p. 1151.

3. Ihlen suggested (i) that by herrings to be exported to Germany might be understood gutted herrings, and (ii) that the allowance for canned fish might be taken to mean net weight. For Findlay's comments, vide UD, H 4 S 4/17, Minute of 15/4/1918.

Affairs¹. In the growing scarcity of food and other commodities in the country people were getting impatient for the final conclusion of an agreement which they thought to be settled at the end of February, and tended to blame the Foreign Minister for the delay.

After 20 April, however, Nansen also was getting restless about the Government's hesitation to accept the War Trade Board's demands on the few points still outstanding, and in the afternoon of 30 April, without waiting for a reply to an "ultimatum" which he had sent to Ihlen a few hours earlier, Nansen signed the almost book-size agreement together with Vance McCormick. The agreement took effect on 10 May, but the exports from the United States to Norway were to begin at once².

Compared with the demands which the Allies were at first ascribing to the vacillations of American trade policy, and contemplating concerning Norway, and the conditions presented by the American proposals up to February, the terms she got in the final agreement were extremely good. Viewed from this angle, therefore, the perseverance of Ihlen and the Norwegian Government, accompanied by Nansen's negotiating skills, resulted in what may

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1. War Trade Board, Records pertaining to negotiation of Trade Agreements, Schmedeman - State Department, 20/4/1918.
 2. UD, H 4 S 4/17, Nansen - Ihlen, 30/4/1918, replying to Ihlen's "evasive and ambiguous" previous telegram, and demanding a yes or a no. Reply Ihlen - Nansen, 1/5/1918, instructing him to sign with reservations. The first draft for this telegram, by Wollebæk of the Foreign Ministry, only authorised signature after all outstanding points had been cleared. Ihlen's final telegram had been approved by the Cabinet and by the Commission for Foreign Affairs.

On the other hand the evidence now available shows that

well be characterised as a diplomatic victory, especially when considering that the opponent held practically all the cards.

To the inevitable question of whether it was worth the strain, the internal conflict, the scarcity of food and other supplies which the interminable bargaining carried in its wake, several answers are possible. However, on the assumption that there was a real danger in Germany's reaction to a severe Norwegian embargo - an assumption which was the Government's own and therefore provides the most reasonable basis for judgement - the reply must be in the affirmative.

Moreover, the long delay before agreement was reached was less due to Norway's hesitation than to the difficulty of establishing a common Allied policy. On this concern much can be ascribed to the vacillations of American trade policy, arising from a multitude of factors such as inexperience, genuine idealism or if preferred a somewhat schizophrenic turn-coat complex, a sudden awakening to enormous power, - and quite possibly the swelter of the 1917 summer in Washington, D.C.

The difference between America's hesitation at anything that might "throw the neutrals into the arms of Germany" and Britain's determination to accomplish the almost perfect blockade seems to speak convincingly against the myth that the United States as a belligerent threw all principles to sea and became "an even greater criminal" than the United Kingdom.

On the other hand the evidence now available shows that

Norway greatly over-estimated the danger from Germany. The crux of the matter, as Sir M. de Cardonnel Findlay lucidly expressed it, was that

"the danger of forcing Norway into the war is fully appreciated by the German Government, and will be carefully avoided by them on the ground that any such development would give the enemies of Germany a naval base on the Norwegian coast". 1

As it seems, the Foreign Office had mainly itself to blame for failing to establish this concept in the minds of the Americans, since it allowed opinions that were "somewhat inconsistent or at variance with each other" to reach Washington.

It is nobody's source of complaint that the Norwegian Government should have preferred, in any case, to err rather widely on the side of safety in their assessment of the German danger. It is less understandable that they should add to their own burden by assuring the German Legation of their optimism in regard to America's conditions, thereby stimulating Germany's expectations. "Such argumentation to the German Minister's face appears somewhat peculiar", von Hintze admitted to the Auswärtiges Amt, and could only suggest the explanation that candid speech was a national custom².

On the whole, however, the Government's achievement in the trade agreement deserved more credit than it got. They failed

1. U.S. Documents, 1917, Suppl. 2, II, p. 1039.

2. AA, Abt. A, Norwegen No. 7, v. Hintze - AA, 23/11/1917.

to impress on the public the gravity of the situation; but as to the connected and persistent criticism that the delay of food rationing hampered Nansen's mission, it misses the point entirely. American export to Norway was not intended as a relief operation; it was designed as a hard bargain, and the way to convince the Allies that there was scarcity of supplies in Norway was not by rationing, but by accepting severe reductions in exports to Germany.

... Besides means such as the arming of merchant vessels and the organization of convoys, the need to protect the sea routes also led to greater interest being focused on the use of mines on a larger scale. Already in April 1917 the idea of an anti-submarine barrage across the North Sea between Britain and Norway was being studied in the Navy Department in Washington¹. After the measures taken to close the English Channel to enemy traffic, the North Sea had become the only exit for the German submarines on the way to their operations against shipping in the Atlantic. A barrier across the North Sea, with the distances and depths involved, would be a project of stupendous proportions, and both the British Admiralty and others were inclined to regard it as technically and

1. For official accounts of the Northern Barrage project, cf. Navy Department, Office of Naval Records and Library, Historical Section. Publication No. 2: The Northern Barrage and other Mining Activities (Washington, 1920). Hereinafter referred to as U.S. Navy No. 2. Cf. also Navy Department, Office of Naval Intelligence, Historical Section. Publication No. 7: The American Naval Planning Section London (Washington, 1915). Hereinafter referred to as U.S. Navy

7. The Northern Barrage and Norwegian Neutrality

The most urgent task facing the Allies at the time when the United States entered the war was to defeat the submarine peril. For the American war effort itself, it became an essential prerequisite to safeguard the lines of communication across the Atlantic, in order that troops and supplies might be transported to the European fronts. Beside means such as the arming of merchant vessels and the organisation of convoys, the need to protect the sea routes also led to greater interest being focused on the use of mines on a larger scale. Already in April 1917 the idea of an anti-submarine barrage across the North Sea between Britain and Norway was being studied in the Navy Department in Washington¹. After the measures taken to close the English Channel to enemy traffic, the North Sea had become the only exit for the German submarines on the way to their operations against shipping in the Atlantic. A barrier across the North Sea, with the distances and depths involved, would be a project of stupendous proportions, and both the British Admiralty and others were inclined to regard it as technically and

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economically unfeasible. In Washington, however, the idea found enthusiastic supporters in Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and in Secretary of Commerce Redfield, who advocated the project in a meeting of Wilson's Cabinet on 4 May¹.

During the summer the Navy Department continued to study the technical problems involved, and at the same time sought to convince the British Admiralty that it could be done. The first formal consideration of the project took place during an Allied Naval Conference in London in September, and the debate showed "a favourable attitude in principle toward the northern barrage project leavened with doubts of its practicability"². The plans division of the Admiralty then produced a tentative outline for a mine barrage across the North Sea from Aberdeen to Ekersund, and on this basis it was decided to proceed with the planning of such a barrier.

On 30 October the North Sea barrage was approved by President Wilson and his Cabinet. Josephus Daniels, the Secretary of the Navy, was still inclined to regard it as "of doubtful practicality", but was persuaded by his naval advisers, that, although very costly and very difficult, it was "the only plan possible to shut off the submarine"³. At a series of Inter-Allied

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1. Daniels Papers, Diary, 4 May 1917. For Roosevelt's insistence on the plan, cf. Roosevelt, E., The Roosevelt Letters, Vol. II (London, 1950), pp. 287 - 288 and 293 - 296.
 2. U.S. Navy No. 2, p. 30 et seq.; U.S. Navy No. 7, pp. 297 - 299.
 3. Daniels Papers, Diary, 29 and 30 October 1917, and correspondence with F. D. Roosevelt.

Conferences in London and Paris during the following month, it was finally decided to undertake "the closing of the North Sea by establishing and maintaining a mine barrage"¹.

While the early doubts about the scheme centred on the technical difficulties involved, it was nevertheless clear from the beginning that serious strategic and political problems would arise. In order to be effective, the 250 miles of barrage would have to be patrolled by naval vessels and by aircraft, for which bases would be required within comparatively easy reach of the whole field. Moreover, presuming the barrage could be made effective in the open sea, there still remained the three miles of neutral territory along the Norwegian coast. Although the access of submarines to these waters was forbidden by Royal Decree, the Allies were rightly sceptical about Norway's ability to enforce full compliance with the prohibition. As the planning progressed, therefore, the Allies once more examined the question of Norwegian neutrality.

The naval authorities, not surprisingly, were inclined to treat Norwegian neutrality somewhat cursorily as just another obstacle to be overcome. Thus, a Navy Department memorandum from the Bureau of Ordnance to the Chief of Operations, dated 30 July 1917, stated:

"The proposed line from Scotland to Norway must, to be at all effective, extend into the territorial waters of Norway, thereby involving the question of

1. U.S. Navy No. 7, p. 31.

2. Ibid., p. 31.

1. U.S. Documents, 1917, 2, I, p. 384.

Norway's neutrality. It would seem that if the German submarine is permitted by Norway to use her territorial waters, it becomes incumbent upon the Allies to take measures to prevent such use." 1

In the paper from the plans division of the Admiralty, already referred to, the need for bases in Norway to survey the eastern end of the barrier was dismissed. Concerning the possibility of German submarines using Norwegian waters to by-pass the minefields, however, the Admiralty found that "this can only be overcome by converting the neutral into an ally or by ourselves preventing the enemy submarines from using these waters" 2. The Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, on the other hand, subsequently warned that an adequate patrol of the eastern parts of the mine barrage would be impossible without an Allied base at Stavanger. After further discussion of this problem, the Admiralty for the time being concluded that the chances of obtaining a Norwegian base were "unfavourable", and hence decided to work out an alternative position for the barrier. This new line stretched from the Orkneys to Bergen, and was twenty miles shorter, - a fact which might make patrolling somewhat easier, although the Americans thought this was more than offset by the disadvantage of the greater depths involved 3.

As it transpires from the preparatory discussions between the Navy Department and the Admiralty, both the purposes and the

1. U.S. Navy No. 2, p. 21.

2. Ibid., p. 31.

3. U.S. Navy No. 7, pp. 302 - 303; U.S. Navy No. 2, pp. 92 - 93.

expected results of the mine barrage were viewed differently by the two parties. The Americans, who had initiated the project and on whom would fall the main burden of producing the equipment and laying the mines, tended to rely on the mines themselves to immobilise or destroy the German submarines, whereas the British, more sceptical as regards the effectiveness of the minefields alone, rather hoped that the deterrent effect of the presence of the barrage would at least canalize the submarines into fairly narrow routes where they could be intercepted by Allied patrols¹.

One consequence of the British point of view was to make the Admiralty reluctant to give up the idea of a Norwegian base for the patrols. On 6 December 1917, the Naval Staff submitted a long memorandum to the War Cabinet which again surveyed the position and neutrality of Norway². Admitting that the "alteration of conditions due to the lapse of time has necessarily carried with it variations of the Admiralty views regarding the advantages or otherwise of Norway entering the war...", the paper went on to describe the plan for the North Sea barrage, and stressed:

"3. The efficiency of the barrier would be greatly increased with a base in Norway, as an air patrol could then be carried out over the Eastern portion.

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1. Cf. the Admiralty memorandum quoted in U.S. Navy No. 2, p. 94: "It is the patrol craft armed with various antisubmarine devices on which we must rely to kill the submarine. It is on the mine fields that we rely to give us intensity of patrol."
 2. Milner Papers: Secret. The Position of Norway. Naval Staff Memorandum for the War Cabinet. 6 December 1917.

Without a base in Norway, this is not possible A strong force based on Stavanger would protect not only the patrols on the Eastern side but also those on the Western; and, in addition, this force would be in a favourable position for intercepting any forces operating against our coasts or attempting to break out into the Atlantic.

4. The objections to bases on the Norwegian coasts which previously weighed with the Admiralty are all altered in marked degree by the developments ..."

However, the Admiralty only considered obtaining a base with Norway's voluntary consent, in return for adequate Allied guarantees for the protection of Norway against retaliation from the enemy.

"The seizure of a base in Norway, without the latter's consent, should not be attempted, as we should then be in honour bound to give them unlimited assistance.

Should Germany take the initiative in violating Norwegian neutrality, we should at once seize Stavanger and take steps to prevent the use by the enemy of other bases in Norway for their submarines."

Minister Findlay was as usual immediately informed of the Admiralty's changed opinion regarding a Norwegian base, and replied by a report to the Foreign Office on 23 December¹. Findlay emphasized that he saw absolutely no likelihood of Norway either joining the war or voluntarily consenting to the establishment of Allied bases on Norwegian territory. The climate of opinion was at present unfavourable to the Entente on account of the embargo and also in reflection of the prevailing war situation.

1. Milner Papers: Findlay - Foreign Office No. 6785 (K) 23 December 1917. Most Secret. Circulated to King and War Cabinet. Secret. Circulated to

"It is impossible to say whether Norwegians would actually fire on our ships if such an attempt were made: but I am sure that Government would only yield to force, or a show of irresistible force and would then yield under protest. This applies equally to seizure of a base by American fleet but much less opposition and anxiety would be aroused in the country if base were seized by Americans as they are not open to suspicion of desiring to keep a Gibraltar in the North. Question of resistance would probably depend to a great extent on Officer Commanding at point seized, and on suddenness of seizure."

If it should be necessary to seize a base, Findlay therefore urged that it should only be done with an overwhelming force, without warning.

The Foreign Office replied to Findlay's telegram three days later by stating that there seemed to be some misunderstanding, as the War Cabinet had never contemplated the forcible seizure of a base in Norway¹. "Such a proceeding would be as foolish as it would be indefensible." The Cabinet's intention had merely been to inform Findlay of the present opinion of the Admiralty "in case some unforeseen aggression by Germany on Norway should make it possible to carry out such a policy". Again, however, Findlay answered that the

"chance of our securing a base on Norwegian coast with assent of present Norwegian Government is so remote that it can be almost excluded and consequently no policy Naval or otherwise can safely be based thereupon.

I am not convinced that even a direct violation of Norwegian territory by Germany would induce present Ministry to declare war, though it might justify us in stating that unless Norway endeavoured to defend her neutrality against Germany

1. Milner Papers: Foreign Office - Findlay No. 5885, 26 December 1917. Most Secret. Circulated to King and War Cabinet.

was so we could no longer be bound to respect it.

I see no prospect of Germany giving us such a chance. Except in two instances they have been most careful to avoid any violation of Norwegian waters and have been careful to avoid driving Norway too hard obviously fearing she might give us a base." 1

After this exchange between Findlay and the Foreign Office the Operations Committee of the Admiralty laid down, as a directive for those concerned with preparations for the Northern Barrage, that the planning would have to proceed "on the assumption that no Norwegian base is likely to be available" 2.

In early March of 1918, the preparations had reached a point where the British could begin the first part of the actual mine-laying operations. The barrier was divided into three sections, the one in the middle - Area "A" being somewhat longer than sections "B" and "C" combined. During March, the British sowed mines in Area "B", the western end of the barrage. For the time being only deep mines were laid, in order to keep the surface free for the operations of the Grand Fleet. Towards the end of April the Americans were ready to start their mine-laying, and a warning was then issued against navigation in the waters concerned, from the eastern end of Area "B" up to the limit of Norwegian coastal territory. By mistake the northeast corner of the notified area was inside Norwegian waters, but after a protest from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry the notification

1. Milner Papers: Findlay - Foreign Office No. 6819 (K) 28 December 1917. Most Secret. Circulated to King and War Cabinet.

2. U.S. Navy No. 7, p. 304.

was accordingly amended¹. The first mining excursions into areas "A" and "C" were undertaken in June, and from that time onwards the barrage grew gradually both in length and in density. As of 7 September the barrage stretched practically across from British to Norwegian waters, and by the end of October a total of 70,263 mines had been laid, more than fifty thousand of which were American. As the notification of the danger area reached the Scandinavian Governments in April, Sweden proposed a joint protest against mine-laying in these waters. Nothing seems to have come of this suggestion, but a letter from Commanding Admiral Dawes implies that there was a clear awareness of the potential dangers of a situation where German submarines might use Norwegian waters in order to bypass the eastern end of the Allied barrier². Robins, the Secretary of the United States Naval Consulting Board, merely drew a logical conclusion when he wrote to President Wilson in June that the Northern Barrage, in order to be fully effective, would have to be extended into Norwegian territorial waters. As his own opinion, Robins added that the American people would fully support their Government in presenting an ultimatum to Norway in this sense³.

On 16 July Maurice Hankey, the Secretary to Lloyd George's War Cabinet, noted in his diary:

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1. UD, P 2 K 14/14, Vol. 3.
 2. Ibid., Komm. Adm. - UD, 28/5/1918.
 3. State Department, 763.72111 N 83/1.

"The Prime Minister kept me until about 7.45 talking on the terrace. He told me that Eric Geddes had informed him that the Scotland - Norway anti-submarine mine barrage is now complete; that a German order to submarines has been captured saying that they must go out through Norwegian territorial waters; that this neutral passage is to be watched, and if submarines are seen in it the Norwegians are to be told that, if they do not close it, we shall." 1

Three weeks later, on 7 August, Findlay on instructions from his Government delivered a peremptory note to Foreign Minister Ihlen. It informed the Norwegian Government that the mine barrage had been laid, and that as a result German submarines were demonstrably using Norwegian territory as a passage in order to escape the danger of the minefields. Such use of Norwegian waters being forbidden by Royal Decree, the British Government now expected Norway to secure the enforcement of this prohibition by the only method possible, namely the mining of territorial waters to the east of the Northern Barrage, keeping an inner passage open to peaceful traffic. In a final section, the note declared:

"In this situation His Majesty's Government confidently believe that the Norwegian authorities will either themselves undertake the mining operations required, or that they will allow the British Government to undertake them on their behalf." 2

On 8 August Findlay told the American charge d'affaires, Schoenfeld, that he had demanded that the passage be mined within

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1. Hankey, Supreme Command, Vol. II, p. 827. That the barrage was by then complete was of course an exaggeration.
 2. UD, P 2 L 8/18, Findlay - Ihlen, 7/8/1918. Cf. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, p. 1770.

four days, and had been promised a reply within two days. He suggested that the American Government ought to present a similar demand, and Schoenfeld immediately requested instructions from Washington in this sense¹. The American Naval authorities were then already pressing the State Department for such action, which they considered of vital interest to the United States. On a question from Frank Polk, the Counselor of the State Department, Daniels replied that he did not think it necessary to consult the President about the matter. Polk now prepared a note to Schoenfeld, but as it was about to go he received a memorandum from President Wilson which caused the telegram to be delayed. In this memorandum, and later on the telephone, the President said that he did not oppose the sending of a communication to Norway, but it must not be in the nature of a joint note with the British².

It is doubtful whether Wilson had actually approved the note which Schoenfeld finally delivered on 15 August on instructions from the State Department. Although there was no suggestion of a time limit, the note contained a very firm demand for "new and effective measures" against the passage of German submarines, and made the accusation that Norway had "not enforced impartial compliance with this Norwegian decree of

1. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1769 - 1770.

2. State Department, 763.72111 N 83/12; Polk Papers, Diary of 8, 9 and 10 August, and Correspondence files, Polk - Wilson, 10/8/1918.

neutrality"¹. The other Allies had in the meantime made oral representations to Ihlen of a much milder nature, and the Italian Minister had stressed that it was "no demand, but rather a piece of advice". The French envoy also had admitted that international law did not justify any demand for the proposed measures. From Paris, on the other hand, Wedel-Jarlsberg reported that France and England had agreed to demand the closing of Norwegian waters².

Accordingly to Findlay, Ihlen had been "very much disturbed" at Britain's demand, and even more so with Findlay's insistence on speedy action. Having delivered his note on 7 August, the British Minister had returned to the Ministry after two days to enquire if anything had been done and again to stress that work must be begun by 12 August³. What the Norwegian Government feared was, of course, the reaction of Germany. After the tensions earlier in the year in connection with Norway's negotiations in America, German - Norwegian relations had undergone a process of stabilisation through the summer. In July a definite trade agreement was finally in sight, and its conclusion was mainly dependent on more recent German demands concerning the employment

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1. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, p. 1772. That Wilson had not seen this note is suggested by a letter from Lansing to the President on 14 August, which states: "In relation to the Norwegian matter concerning which you spoke to me this morning, I find a telegram was sent yesterday to our Minister at Christiania. A copy of this I enclose for your information." (Wilson Papers, File II, Lansing - Wilson, 14/8/1918.)
 2. UD, P 2 L 8/18, Minute of 13/8/1918, and Wedel Jarlsberg - Ihlen, 15/8/1918.
 3. State Department, 763.72111 N 83/13; letter Schoenfeld - State Department, 9/8/1918.

of Norwegian shipping¹.

In retaliation against the increased chartering of neutral ships for Entente service, the German Government had added a provision - paragraph 55(c) - to their Prize Law, making any vessel from a neutral State, whose fleet was mainly employed by the Entente, liable to capture for enemy service unless special "circumstances" applied. One of these "circumstances" was the possession of a German certificate, which could only be obtained on an assurance that the cargo would in no way benefit Germany's enemies. Norwegian shipping now found it advisable to enter into negotiations for a general "certificates agreement" with Germany². By the beginning of August an arrangement had been obtained, and this accordingly removed the last obstacle for a definite trade agreement between the two countries.

In the situation prevailing, therefore, the Norwegian Government must have had a certain reluctance to open new quarrels with the German Government. A cautious strategy was adopted to deal with the Allied demands for mine-laying, and the reply to the British Government, delivered on 12 August after consultations with parliamentary leaders, with naval authorities, and with Minister Hagerup in Stockholm, rejected the idea of mine-laying in Norwegian waters³. The note stressed that the Norwegian submarine

1. UD, H 4 H II 5/16.

2. Cf. Keilhau, Norge og Verdenskrigen, pp. 204 - 208.

3. UD, P 2 L 8/18, Minutes of 9, 11 and 12 August. Cf. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, p. 1771.

decree was "founded on Norwegian interests alone" and did not impose "any other duty of international law than to ensure that the Decree is equally applied against all". Nevertheless, the Norwegian Government had ordered an intensified supervision of the area concerned, and would appreciate further information about the instances of alleged violation of the Submarine Decree, - a clear indication that the note was not Norway's last word on the issue.

Britain's next communication was handed to Ihlen on 19 August. The note characterised Norway's reply as unsatisfactory, and gave details of several violations observed by British submarines, warning that "the continuance of the present state of affairs would almost amount to an unfriendly act..." However, the British Government expressed gratitude for the willingness to increase vigilance in the area, and would hence postpone any action on their part "for a short period"¹. The period of respite had in fact been settled at fourteen days by the British War Cabinet, evidently in consultation with the French Government². Failing American support for such an ultimatum the French Government in turn withdrew their support, and the time limit was therefore not served on the Norwegian Government by Findlay. The French Minister at Kristiania, however, had already told Ihlen of

1. UD, P 2 L 8/18, Findlay - Ihlen, dated 18/8/1918. Cf. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, p. 1775.

2. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1780 - 1781.

2. State Department, U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1780 - 1781. Cf. also U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1780 - 1781.

the two weeks' deadline before he could be informed of his Government's change of mind¹.

The main opposition to Britain's peremptory line towards Norway came from President Wilson himself. When, on 22 or 23 August, Wilson received a copy of Schoenfeld's telegram about the second British communication and the contemplated time limit, he instructed Lansing to inform the British that he was "not in sympathy with the course they are taking" In a letter to Lansing of 23 August the President wrote that this should be done

"... unofficially, but very plainly, so that they may understand that they shall not draw us into any unneutral [*sic*] action towards Norway of any kind. You will have to make it pretty plain because it is evident that Schoenfeld is inclined to do what his British and French associates desire."²

Subsequently the State Department dispatched a second note to Norway, repeating its claim that the Norwegian Government had an obligation to prevent the passage of German submarines through territorial waters. The tone, however, was markedly conciliatory:

"In the circumstances the Government of the United States most earnestly urges the Norwegian Government to take all necessary steps to prevent a situation which might cause serious embarrassment to both Governments which would be deeply regretted by the Government of the United States as it has only the most

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1. Ibid., p. 1782; UD, P 2 L 8/18, Minute of 20/8/1918: "He said he was aware that the British Minister had been here yesterday to deliver a reply and that the British Minister had given us [*Norway*] a respite of 'quinze jours' to arrange the matter."
 2. State Department, 763.72111 N 83/61. For the relevant telegram from Schoenfeld, vide Note 2, on p. 403.

viol friendly feeling for the Government and people of Norway and is desirous to prevent as well as to remove all causes of difference affecting the good relations of the two countries in their intercourse with each other." 1

Ihlen in the meantime had proceeded by his own methods to achieve a settlement. On 19 August he instructed the Legations in Berlin, London, Paris and Washington to notify the respective Governments of certain recent cases where Norwegian waters had been violated by unidentified submarines, and to ask for investigations whether their submarines had been involved. A similar note concerning further violations was delivered on 29 August². A more direct indication of what the Foreign Minister had in mind was contained in a telegram to Minister Ditten in Berlin, dated 31 August, asking his opinion as to the likely repercussions on German - Norwegian relations if Norway should decide to mine the territorial waters concerned³.

Ditten's answer was that there could hardly be any serious objection, provided Norway's right to lay mines was legally "undisputable", and provided the violations had been caused by more than one of the belligerent powers⁴. In the first week of September the Entente powers delivered their replies to Norway's enquiries. Apart from the British Government, which admitted to one

1. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1782 - 1784.

2. UD, P 2 L 8/18. Cf. U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1777 and 1785. In between these two notes the Government decided to extinguish all lighthouses and beacons in the passage by the mine barrage.

3. UD, P 2 L 8/18, Ihlen - Ditten, 31/8/1918.

4. Ibid., Ditten - Ihlen, 3/9/1918.

violation, the replies were in the negative¹. The German Government, however, remained silent, and when Ditten prodded the Auswärtiges Amt for an answer, he was told that it might take some time. In Kristiania, despite the Government's attempt to prevent discussion of the matter, rumours of mine-laying in Norwegian waters were current, and the German Minister suggested to Ihlen that if such measures were contemplated this might be construed as an obstacle to legitimate German navigation in those waters. Ihlen replied that the Norwegian Government had to consider the means available to ensure respect for their Submarine Decree, but added that if it should become a question of mines these would only be laid in certain exposed areas. The safety of peaceful maritime commerce would in any case be taken into account².

On 14 September the much-delayed trade agreement between Norway and Germany, providing among other things for the export to Germany of the goods allowed under the agreement with the American War Trade Board, was signed by E. Colban of the Foreign Ministry and by von Reiswitz, the German Commercial Attaché³. Three days later chargé d'affaires Schoenfeld could inform the

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1. Ibid., Vogt - Ihlen, 3/9, Wedel-Jarlsberg - Ihlen, 5/9, and Bryn - Ihlen, 6/9/1918.
 2. Ibid., Ditten - Ihlen, 3/9/1918; Ihlen - Ditten, 4/9/1918. In order to avoid complications from press reports and rumours about submarines on Norwegian territory, a quiet censorship of outgoing telegrams had been instituted, and the Norwegian press had been requested to refrain from publishing such reports.
 3. UD, H 4 H II 5/16, Ihlen - Ditten, 15/9/1918.

State Department that a decision about the means to protect Norwegian sea territory could be expected in a week's time. Schoenfeld had also heard from the American Legation in Stockholm that Sweden and Denmark shared Norway's resentment at the British methods of compulsion, and appreciated the attitude of the United States in the affair¹.

Finally, on 26 September the question of preventing the violation of Norwegian waters by submarines was debated in the parliamentary Commission for Foreign Affairs. Two days afterwards, on the King's return from a visit to Copenhagen², both this Commission and the Cabinet unanimously agreed to institute mine-laying in Norwegian maritime territory for the purpose of enforcing the Submarine Decree. Ihlen at once prepared a circular telegram to the Norwegian Legations with an announcement of the decision. The same text was then delivered personally by Ihlen to the belligerents' envoys in Kristiania, in a rapid succession of audiences, each one being allotted fifteen minutes. The notable exception was the German Minister, von Mutius, who came first on the list and was given thirty minutes. The telegram announcing the decision to Minister Ditten in Berlin was furthermore accompanied by another dispatch from the Foreign

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1. State Department, 763.72111 N 83/35, letter Schoenfeld - State Department, 17/9/1918.
 2. The official archives give no indication of the King's role in the affair. However, according to Chr. A. R. Christensen (in Fra Verdenskrig til Verdenskrig (Oslo, 1961), p. 110, Vol. 8 in the recent series Vårt Folks Historie) the King, both in letters and cables, warned King George V against creating a new Belgium on this occasion.

Ministry, containing various arguments to be used in the Auswärtiges Amt, if necessary, in justification of Norway's action¹.

The extra precautions, however, were not necessary. In the way it was done, the decision offered no grounds on which a formal German protest could be based, and von Mutius' only comment was to express concern at the possibility that the mines might constitute a hindrance to merchant shipping in those waters. The acting German Naval Attache, Jacobs, had an interview with the Commanding Admiral a couple of days later during which he asked if the mining had been decided under pressure. The Admiral rather ambiguously replied that he did not know, but on a further question of whether they were Norwegian mines he assured the Attache that they were "Norwegian mines, Norwegian personnel, and Norwegian waters"². The Auswärtiges Amt in Berlin similarly offered no objections, and Naval Attache Meyer reported after a visit to the Naval Staff that the action was clearly resented, but there was no real basis for a protest.

Despite the mild German reaction, there was of course hardly any doubt that Norway's decision was a result of Allied pressure. Thus, the Berlin newspaper Germania wrote:

"The areas concerned are Norwegian coastal waters which England could not block because Norwegian sovereign rights stood in the way. Norway has now under pressure from the Entente carried out this closing and thereby taken care of England's concern

1. UD, P 2 L 8/18; State Department 763.72111 N 83/36-37, World inter alia. The text of the circular telegram is printed in U.S. Documents, 1918, 1, II, pp. 1787-1788.

2. UD, P 2 L 8/18, Komm. Adm. - UD, 30/9/1918.

lest German submarines might by this route reach the open seas. Our Navy laughs at Britain's belief that she can obstruct the exit of the submarines in this manner."

The Norwegian mine-laying was hardly an act in strict accordance with neutrality. Notwithstanding the legal justifications which could be found, and the theoretical defence which could be constructed, these did not alter the fact that the mines were laid in direct conjunction with the Entente's Northern Barrage. Nor could Norway have a duty as a neutral to prevent the access of all submarines to her territory. Her duties in this respect were limited by her capacity and subject to the over-all condition of impartiality in enforcing the Decree in question.

In reality, on the other hand, Norway had no choice if she wanted to avoid an open conflict, since it was clear that the British threat to take matters into their own hands was seriously meant. By the procedure which the Norwegian Government followed in reaching their decision, the action could at least formally be defended, although it is open to speculation whether Germany at a different time would have been satisfied with critical commentaries. In the circumstances of the autumn of 1918, however, the action remained without consequence. The actual mining operations were concluded about the middle of October, when the German war effort was already at ebb. Two weeks later the German submarine war was abandoned, and shortly thereafter the First World War came to its bitter end.

CONCLUSION

Neutrality in the First World War was a flexible matter. Within the prescribed bounds of neutral rights and duties there remained a wide passage permitting considerable diversions on either side of the ideal of strict impartiality. For Norway, the major and overriding principle of her neutrality was simply to stay clear of the conflict. From the beginning to the end the whole nation was determined to keep out of the war.

The positive aspect of this resolve was its firmness, which promised frustration to any attempt at enrolling her on one side or the other. Happily for Norway no coercive attempt was ever made, but indications are that it would have been resisted by every means including force. On the other hand it also meant that she would, if necessary, rather compromise her impartiality than abandon her formal neutrality. Inevitably, the testing question becomes: Abstention at what price? Were the limits transgressed beyond which neutrality became an empty phrase, a cloak used to evade duties and responsibilities?

During the first two years of the war these questions did not arise. The nation was instead left to develop its own brand of the nineteenth century liberal concept of neutrality, wherein industry, trade and commerce arranged their own foreign relations as best they could. The state as such had to remain

strictly neutral, and at each cross-roads the Government took the line of least resistance, abdicating responsibility as long as this did not endanger a narrowly defined sector of essential national interests. The watch-word seemed to be "business as usual"; profits being taken where they offered themselves within the generous field where neutrality was irrelevant.

The profits were considerable, but from 1916 onwards the debit side of the account sheet gave them an increasingly bitter taste. The losses of the merchant fleet were the worst: before the war ended about half of its tonnage had been sunk, and about two thousand Norwegian sailors had disappeared. Less measurable were the effects, both immediate and long-term, of the unhealthy economic climate; on one side wild speculation and quick profits, on the other side inflation, deprivation and social unrest. Many of these effects might have been forestalled by a provident Government, but the Norwegian Government was an executive without experience in a situation without precedent.

In the second half of the war it also transpired that the earlier idea of "business as usual" was a sham, concealing a network of intricate bonds on the economy that threatened even the limited field where not only private but also vital national interests were at stake. Exports and imports became political concerns when the nation's prosperity, not to say survival, depended thereon. Serious disputes followed between

Norway and the two belligerent parties, partly from the impossibility of meeting their mutually exclusive demands, but also from the Government's failure to justify some of its more radical deviations from the middle course.

Norway's policy of neutrality was without question overwhelmingly pro-Entente. This was dictated by necessity, in order to secure the country's economic welfare. It was also governed by opportunity, simply because it was, after all, less dangerous to antagonise Germany than to incur the wrath of Great Britain. From 1917 onwards, after a more ambivalent start, the nation's sympathies seem also to have been firmly aligned with its policies. The occasional complaints in Entente quarters about the Government's or the Foreign Minister's pro-German tendencies may be dismissed as merely reflecting the mood of the moment. The Foreign Minister should be judged by his policies, not by his rare outbursts of irritation at the party which could and did press its demands ad nauseam, confident that they would somehow be met in the end. In the words of Schoenfeld, writing to the State Department on 14 August 1918, Britain was at certain junctures "no doubt willing to suffer any amount of verbal castigation at the hands of the Norwegian Government" if necessary in order to obtain some urgent concession.

Notwithstanding Norway's increasingly biased policy towards the belligerents, she seems to have held a somewhat exaggerated view of the dangers of German retaliation. It is hard to say

to what extent this may have been a deliberate safety margin, or how much may be accounted for by clever German diplomacy. In the second half of the war it was nevertheless becoming clear that Norwegian neutrality was advantageous to Germany with even the barest minimum of economic concessions, whereas the Entente was only satisfied with a neutrality from which a maximum of benefits could be derived.

It was precisely in order to determine this varying maximum that the Entente on several occasions undertook reassessments of Norway's neutrality. For the Allies it was a question of the price that could be demanded for permitting her to remain outside the conflict; for Norway the issue was how much she could afford to pay. Although one would like to think that the status quo each time survived because of the sanctity of neutrality, or because of Norway's presumed willingness to oppose offenders by force, this is wrong insofar as these factors would hardly have prevailed against a clear-cut case of strategic advantage, - especially if this advantage could be obtained by a "little violation" such as, for example, a small mine-field in Norwegian coastal waters. Still, the strength of Norwegian neutrality was a significant deterrent at several junctures, and seems to have played a decisive part in determining America's attitude in the crucial month of August 1918.

On most occasions, however, what tipped the scales in favour of continued neutrality was that the risks of converting

Norway into an ally were greater than the benefits which could be expected from a foothold in Scandinavia; all the more so if these benefits could anyway be obtained as concessions from the Norwegian Government.

In cases such as the disputes over fish and pyrites, where economic concessions to the Entente may have held the balance, the Government's motives were rather mixed. Although a rejection of Britain's demands could be construed as endangering neutrality, their acceptance was likely to appear unneutral to German eyes. The Government most often solved this dilemma by claiming economic "force majeure", and such force proved throughout to be the Entente's strongest ally. That the concessions provided both satisfaction to the Entente and economic security for Norway presumably made it easier for the Government to pay the price. However, the admission of economic motives whose necessity could often be questioned did much to tarnish the record of Norwegian neutrality.

The situation was different concerning the mining of Norwegian waters: a concession on the borderline of neutrality, with an Allied violation of that neutrality as the alternative. In the circumstances that prevailed at the time the action of the Government was justified, although at an earlier stage in the war the situation might have been different.

Apart from these excursions into a man's land of blurred distinctions, the reason why there is still a certain ambivalence

in many minds about Norway's policy of neutrality in the First World War may well be the metamorphosis which the attitudes to neutrality underwent between 1914 and 1918. From the pinnacle of righteousness, loftily perched and endowed with the gifts of a selfless judge and arbiter, the neutral descended to become regarded by many as a spineless profiteer, a mercenary soul reaping wealth from the distress of those engaged in fighting a just war for the defence of humanity. Some of the lost prestige was recovered when the bitter end-of-war atmosphere lifted, but the pre-war image of the neutral as an innocent sufferer from the bellicose power greed of others appeared destined to oblivion.

Looking at Norwegian neutrality in a longer perspective, two factors emerge to explain why the country could remain neutral in the First World War but not in the Second. There is, firstly, the changing concept of neutrality itself. With her heavy dependence on overseas trade and the fortunes of the merchant navy, as well as the increasingly westward orientation of her economy, Norway's neutrality was only conceivable in terms of the nineteenth century variety, in which the state could uphold the fiction of impartiality while the rest of the nation was working almost exclusively for one belligerent party. Since the First World War, the progressive involvement of the state in the nation's affairs soon made this variety obsolete. Indeed, even if the distinction between state affairs and private business

could be maintained, the total nature of wars in the twentieth century made it all the more difficult to retain the measure of moral disengagement which seems necessary if neutrality is to be combined with self-respect, - unless the preservation of a nation's neutrality can be construed as some higher obligation and offers recognised advantages to all belligerent parties.

The second reason why the days of Norwegian neutrality were numbered was her strategic position as revealed by the study of the First World War. Both the British blockade system, in its advanced stage of development at the end of the war, and the potential importance to Germany of submarine warfare, suggested by the campaign of 1917, brought into focus the extreme precariousness of Norway's situation in a future conflict between the two great North Sea powers. Germany would need a passage to the oceans and the world overseas, and Britain would have to bar or at least impede this passage. For both these objects Norway constituted the natural fulcrum. The fundamental reason why neutrality could last throughout the First World War was that, as neither had foreseen the nature of the war that was coming, neither was prepared to seize and exploit the opportunities offered by a strategy in which Norway was involved.

History does not repeat itself, however, for some try to learn from the past and others do not. In 1940 Germany was determined not to let her naval resources go to waste in passivity, whereas Great Britain was planning a blockade of Germany

which would be effective from the outset. The projection of these conflicting purposes pointed to the rugged features of the Norwegian coast, and the preparations on both sides had the elements of a race to get there first. There was no second prize, but there would in either event be another loser: the Norwegian nation. A victim of the proverbial tendency to prepare for the previous war, Norway watched the gathering storm in an almost fatalistic commitment to the neutrality of the past.

SECRET

Naval Operations in the North Atlantic

Printed for the use of the War Department

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET

1. That since the entry of Germany into the war, the side of the Allies, would have in the commercial life of Germany, is a question which cannot be entirely separated from the purely naval and military aspects of the war, and its consideration apart from that wider or more general aspect can be valuable only by some certain preliminary assumptions in the naval and air field.

2. It is accordingly assumed, for the purposes of the present memorandum, that British naval power will be sufficient to secure the security of Norwegian territory from invasion, and that there is no occasion to anticipate the possibility of any sharing the fate of Iceland.

3. It is further assumed that Germany will be able to send her ports and harbors, her railways and factories against hostile raids sufficiently to prevent a stoppage of the Norwegian export and carrying trade, and that regular shipping at sea can be effectively protected against by hostile warships other than submarines, so that the danger from the latter can be largely discounted.

4. It is, lastly, presumed that when the British can freely operate on the Norwegian coast and in the adjacent waters, the patrolling of the North Sea can be carried out in a more effective manner, and that there will

1. Legation Report: Berlin, 14th May, 1940.

APPENDIX I

an increased chance of trading to or from Sweden. It should more especially suit for vessels Crowe's Blockade Memorandum¹ the north-about route no longer attain safety.

Printed for the use of the War Committee

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM

1. WHAT effect the entry of Norway into the war, on the side of the Allies, would have on the commercial blockade of Germany, is a question which cannot be entirely disengaged from the purely naval and military aspect of the problem, and its consideration apart from that wider and dominating aspect can be usefully undertaken only by making certain preliminary assumptions in the naval and military field.
2. (It is accordingly assumed, for the purposes of the present memorandum, that British naval power will ensure security of Norwegian territory from invasion, and that there is no occasion to contemplate the contingency of Norway sharing the fate of Serbia.)
3. It is further assumed that Norway will be able to defend her ports and harbours, her railways and factories, against hostile raids sufficiently to prevent a stoppage of the Norwegian export and carrying trade, and that Norwegian shipping at sea can be effectively protected against attack by hostile warships other than submarines, and that the danger from the latter can be largely diminished.
4. It is, lastly, presumed that when the British navy can freely operate on the Norwegian coasts and in Norwegian waters, the patrolling of the North Sea can be rendered closer and more effective, and that there would be

1. Asquith Papers: Bodleian Library, Oxford.

an increased chance of intercepting neutral vessels trading to or from Swedish, Danish, and Dutch ports. It should more especially become increasingly difficult for vessels to elude our patrols, when following the north-about route to or from America, if they can no longer attain safety by hugging the Norwegian coast.

5. On the above assumptions, if Norway, owing to German aggression, became our ally, the blockade would be materially facilitated in several ways, the most notable of which would be:-

- (a) The stoppage of all Norwegian exports to Germany, of which particular importance attaches to nickel, copper, iron ore, refined zinc, molybdenite, carbide of calcium, ferro-silicon, and other electric-furnace products.
- (b) The definite diversion of the whole Norwegian mercantile marine into trade directly beneficial to the Allies.
- (c) The opportunity of putting greater pressure on Sweden, Denmark and Holland, through interference with their shipping in the direction of further curtailing the export of their own products to Germany.

6. Although not, strictly speaking, a part of the blockade the question of our own oversea supplies is so intimately connected with it that to the above must here be added the following further advantages:-

- (d) Greater security for the regular flow of our essential and general supplies from Norway, and so far as they come through Norway from Sweden also, owing to the cessation of all German pressure tending to put obstacles in the way of their freely proceeding to this country: iron, steel, iron ore, copper, nitrate (most important), aluminium, zinc, timber, wood pulp, etc.
- (e) Enhanced safety of the northern sea route to Archangel in the ice-free period, and, throughout the seasons, to the Murman coast, if and when the Kola railway is completed.
- (e) Loss to us of the large number of vessels now chartered to carry coal and other supplies engaged in Allied trade.

7. Whether these advantages are considered sufficient to make it in itself desirable to have Norway enter the war is a question the answer to which in part depends on naval and military factors, including those connected with munitions, as to which the Departments concerned are well qualified to express an opinion.

8. It is, however, important to realise that, if Norway now gave in to Germany's menaces, it may be taken for certain that her general policy towards Germany on the one hand, and the Allies on the other, would be seriously altered. She would become less friendly to us, and her neutrality would become exceedingly "benevolent" towards Germany. If, accordingly, the problem to be considered is what advantages, from the blockade point of view, we should derive from Norway's joining the Allies, it is not really sufficient to enumerate those advantages; it is equally necessary to state the disadvantages which would flow from the submission of Norway to German demands.

9. What Germany requires from Norway is practically the cessation of her carrying trade to or from the United Kingdom, a trade which in the winter, at any rate, is of the utmost importance both to Russia and Rumania. If Norway is forced to come to terms with Germany the stoppage of this trade is what she may have to agree to. What then would this involve for the Allies?

10. The effects would be almost incalculable. This much may be foreseen:-

(a) A very serious crippling of Russian resources.

(b) Very possibly the loss of Roumania.

(c) The stoppage of our supplies of the Norwegian and Swedish iron and steel nitrates, zinc, aluminium, and electric furnace products, the continuance of which are considered vital for us by the Ministry of Munitions.

(d) The cancellation of the various agreements concluded with Norway for keeping the produce of Norwegian industries out of Germany: nitrates, fish, oil, fats, copper, pyrites (furnishing sulphuric acid), zinc, etc., etc., would all go to Germany instead of coming here.

(e) Loss to us of the large amount of Norwegian tonnage now chartered to carry coal to France and otherwise engaged in Allied trade.

11. These would be the direct and immediate results of Norway's accepting German dictation.

12. The indirect effect would be equally far-reaching.

13. If the outcome of the German menace is seen to be that Norway has to submit, it will become practically impossible for the Allies to continue at its full weight their naval pressure on Germany's other neutral neighbours. On the one hand Germany will be encouraged to apply the same measure of coercion on Sweden, Denmark, and Holland and, on the other, each of these countries will draw from the attitude of Norway the conclusion that the road to safety lies in bowing to German dictation.

14. In this way it might happen that the whole policy of using various forms of indirect pressure for the purpose of establishing control over neutral shipping and neutral imports, whilst providing for neutral supplies and tonnage for the Allies, might become impossible of execution.

15. We should, in that case, be compelled to fall back exclusively on the machinery of the Prize Court for the stopping of supplies for Germany passing through adjoining neutral countries. It is to be recognised that without our many agreements with neutral governments and associations, without our control over neutral shipping through our bunkering monopoly and over neutral factories by means of regulating the supply of British coal, our power to enforce the commercial blockade of Germany through the neutral territories surrounding her would be very gravely diminished.

16. At the same time we should probably lose the supplies which we at present compel those neutral countries to send to us in spite of the better prices that Germany offers, and there would be a tendency for all of them to withdraw from the Allied trades.

17. The situation which would be thus created would be so perilous as to force the allies sooner or later to give the northern neutrals the choice between breaking away from Germany entirely, or being themselves included in the blockade. It is by no means certain that in such circumstances most of the neutrals might not follow Germany rather than the allies, and we might find ourselves faced by a combination of the Scandinavian countries and Holland with the Central Powers

which would, among other things, have the result of giving to Germany the command and use of all the territories, coasts, and harbours washed by the North Sea.

18. The effect of such an event upon the whole of neutral opinion, including that of the United States, might well be so serious that rather than suffer its consequences it would be preferable to abandon the blockade altogether.

19. This is the dilemma into which it is not unlikely that we should be led if Norway were to capitulate before the German challenge. It seems, therefore, clearly to our interest to prevent such capitulation; and if the only way for Norway to avoid capitulation is to resist even at the cost of a rupture with Germany, then, from the blockade point of view, it is to the advantage of the allied cause that Norway should enter the war.

(Signed) Eyre A. Crowe

Foreign Office,
October 29, 1916.

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APPENDIX II

THE SITUATION IN NORWAY¹

SECRET

Prepared by the Admiralty War Staff
and General Staff, War Office

1. The action of Norway in prohibiting the entry of submarines into Norwegian territorial waters has given great offence to Germany, and the German Minister at Kristiania has presented a Note claiming that such a declaration of exclusion is an unneutral act aimed at Germany and committed at the dictation of Great Britain, in contravention of the provisions of the 13th Hague Convention. He consequently demands its withdrawal, though a similar declaration made by Sweden has met with no corresponding protest from Berlin. A prospect is thus opened up of Norway being involved in the war, and it is consequently desirable to investigate the motives of German action, the courses open to the Norwegian Government, the advantages and disadvantages to the Entente resulting from the entry of Norway into the war either on their side or on that of the enemy, and finally the action which we should take in either eventuality.

2. It is at present uncertain whether Germany is bluffing or whether she is really prepared to declare war should the Norwegian Government decline to cancel its prohibition. In support of the theory of bluff, it has been urged that Germany's action is intended primarily to affect American public opinion and to strengthen her claim to the free admission of her submarines to United States ports. She may also hope that if the Norwegian Government yield to pressure in the present instance they may prove equally pliant when a demand is presented that Norwegian ships shall be prohibited from carrying contraband of war. It has further been suggested that the disadvantages that would accrue to Germany from the exclusion of her submarines from Norwegian territorial waters are not sufficiently great to cause her to throw away the

1. Asquith Papers: Bodleian Library, Oxford.

advantages which she undoubtedly derives from a neutral Norway. These advantages are a source of supply, a base for her agents, a channel of communication with the outside world, a mart for her traders, and a refuge for her merchant shipping. All these may be reasons why the present pretext is an insufficient one, but they are not conclusive that it is contrary to Germany's interests to force a war on Norway in the event of her refusing to yield to all German demands.

3. Among the reasons which might impel Germany to make war on Norway are the following:- (1) to secure a naval base or bases in that country; (2) to prevent the Entente from obtaining supplies of nitrate of ammonia, carbide of calcium or other chemicals, nickel, zinc, fish, timber, etc. from Norway; (3) to restrict still further the communications between Russia and the Western Powers; (4) to provide an excuse for Sweden to throw in her lot with the Central Empires; and (5) to seize or destroy the Norwegian mercantile marine which is likely to prove a formidable competitor with German shipping when peace returns. The most cogent reason of all, however, would be to obtain some strategical advantage over the British fleet.

4. If Sweden were to side with Germany and invade Norway, it would be much the easiest way by which Germany could attain her objectives, as it is only by a military occupation of the country that they could be completely secured. The Germans themselves are hardly in a position to carry out such an operation, in view of their commitments in other theatres, and of the difficulty of transporting an expeditionary force across the seas in face of the British fleet. It must not be thought, however, that Swedish co-operation is essential for carrying out a modified form of the suggested German programme.

5. There can be no doubt that Germany would gain a great strategic advantage if she were to obtain possession of the Skagerrack, as well as the passage through the Belts. She would thereby obtain better control of the northern entrance to the Baltic, and completely dominate overseas trade with Sweden and Denmark.

6. The seizure of the entrance to the Skagerrack should not be a very difficult operation. An essential preliminary would be the occupation of Jutland, which, as pointed out in the joint Admiralty and War Office memorandum of the 11th October, 1916, will not be defended by the Danes. Once a German submarine base were established at Skagen, and the Great Belt

opened by a German occupation of Funen, it seems probable that the Port of Kristiansand, or some other suitable harbour lying close to the southern extremity of Norway, could be occupied by the enemy, and its communications with Germany could be conducted in security via the Kattegat. It must be insisted, however, that the invasion of Denmark is a necessary part of this scheme, as any attempt to seize Kristiansand or to maintain a hold on it when seized would run grave risk from the British fleet if the eastern route to Germany was not secured. Once Kristiansand was in German hands a Zeppelin base could be established there 200 miles north of the existing most northerly base at Tondern. Such a station would be of great value both for keeping watch over the British fleet, and also for making raids on the British Isles and on the Norwegian towns and factories. A further result of the seizure of the mouth of the Skagerrack would be the isolation of Sweden, which must then inevitably come under the complete control of Germany.

7. A disadvantage to Germany of this plan, and one which is shared by all schemes that result in bringing either Norway or Sweden into the war, is that it would accentuate the stringency of the British blockade. Germany would have to decide whether the strategical advantages she would gain were sufficiently great to outweigh this and other drawbacks. It is thought, however, that the plan is one which might well be adopted as a part of a supreme effort to break the blockade.

8. The possibilities of Swedish intervention should not be entirely excluded from any consideration of the present situation. It is true that competent authorities in Scandinavia report that Swedish public opinion is whole-heartedly on the side of Norway in the present controversy, and that there is no doubt that Germany could readily find some more popular pretext for causing Sweden to join her. At the same time nations are at the mercy of their Governments, and therefore it would be unsafe to put aside all thought of Swedish action.

9. At the present moment Russia is fully occupied, and the effort she is being called upon to make in support of Rumania makes it improbable that she could spare any troops for the invasion of Sweden. If, therefore, the latter were to join the Central Powers she could devote her attention to Norway, and rely on her Boden troops to protect her rear from any raiding detachments that Russia might conceivably send round the north of the Gulf of Bothnia. It is unnecessary here to make any detailed study of the possible course of the operations. The Swedish army is much stronger, better equipped

and better disciplined than the Norwegian, and it is unlikely that the latter would, if not assisted, be able to make much resistance. 1. Germany would then be at liberty to choose such ports as she wished in which to establish her naval bases, but it is to be remarked that owing to the great depth of water and the consequent limited extent of the anchorages, none of the Norwegian harbours, with the possible exception of Trondhjem, is suited to the needs of a large fleet. In fact, in view of the exposure to British naval attack, it is doubtful if Germany would be the gainer by the opening to her of the Norwegian western ports. Without oversea responsibilities the German navy is a powerful force, able to choose its own time to attack the British fleet; but once oversea responsibilities are placed on it, some of its freedom to avoid action with our fleet is lost, as it may be compelled to go to sea at times other than those of its own selection. It is at any rate certain that possession of the western ports would not confer nearly such great strategical advantages on Germany as would be got from the possession of the entrance to the Skagerrack.

10. If Germany were neither to enlist the services of Sweden, nor herself to overrun Jutland, she could do but little in a war with Norway. She could no doubt bombard certain ports on the coast, but the military result would be unimportant. Norwegian vessels could also be torpedoed, but 13 per cent of Norway's mercantile marine has already suffered that fate, so that all that could be expected would be some quickening of the process. Zeppelin raids would form the most probable kind of attack and might be directed against Kristiania, the capital, against Notodden, north of Larvik, whence comes the bulk of the supplies of nitrate of ammonia used by munition makers in France and England, against the zinc works in the Sarpsborg district, and against the carbide factories at Odde. Norway is practically destitute of aircraft and anti-aircraft guns, and consequently there would be nothing to prevent these raids until means of defence were provided by Great Britain. It must not be forgotten, however, that two years ago England was almost equally defenceless and yet Zeppelins affected hardly any damage to military objectives or to important factories.

1. The Swedish first line troops amount to about 220,000, the Norwegian first line troops to 80,000 men. The population of Sweden is 5½ millions, and of Norway 2½ millions.

11. To sum up, it may be said that if Germany decides to drive Norway to war or to submission, it will be to obtain some considerable naval strategical advantage, such as that to be gained by the seizure of the mouth of the Skagerrack, and that such action will coincide with or be preceded by the invasion of Jutland. Sweden might possibly be brought in at once, but more probably be compelled later on by economic and other pressure to side with Germany at a time of the latter's choosing.

12. Should the Norwegian Government be confronted with an ultimatum from Germany they will either have to yield the present point, with certainty that they will shortly be faced with still more onerous demands, or they will have to go to war. They are unlikely to choose the latter course unless they have a guarantee that Sweden will not attack them or else that the Entente will afford them adequate assistance. At the present time the dispatch of an Expeditionary Force to Norway would be beyond the powers of any member of the Entente. Assistance would therefore be confined to such as could be given by the British fleet, and to the supply of munitions. If support is to be given to Norway, aircraft and anti-aircraft guns will be required at the earliest possible moment.

13. It now remains to be seen whether any benefit is likely to be derived by the Entente by the entry of Norway into the war on their side. From a military point of view it may be said that in present circumstances there would be none. The Norwegian army would merely cause a further drain upon our material and financial resources. It would only be in the event of Sweden having previously joined the Central Powers and threatening to attack Russia that the Norwegian army could exert any influence. Even then it is probable that a neutral Norway of known pro-Entente leanings would detain on her frontiers quite as many Swedish troops, and for a longer time, than if she were actually to enter into the war.

14. From a naval point of view the principal drawback to Norway becoming our Ally is that she is almost unprovided with all the essentials with which to make war, and supplying them would be a considerable drain on us. Also we do not want to spread our forces out thinner at present.

15. The Norwegian Navy consists of -

4 coast defence ships (over 16 years old, 16 knots speed, armed with 8.2-inch and 4.7-inch guns, about 4,000 tons).

4 small destroyers.

13 small 1st class torpedo boats.

24 2nd class torpedo boats.

4 very small submarines and a few seaplanes.

The naval personnel is reputed to be good.

16. Norway has considerable fishing fleet and a hardy fishing population. The fishing fleet comprises steam trawlers and drifters, whalers and motor drifters, which could doubtless be organised into an auxiliary patrol force. We could provide a few officers to organise and could provide indicator maps; guns would be wanted which we could not provide except at the expense of our patrol vessels and merchant ships. The Norwegian fishing fleet has lost some of its best vessels, as the French, Russians and Italians have all been buying whalers and trawlers.

17. In the first instance we should organise a base for submarines and aircraft near the Naze, possibly at Khristiansand, but closer examination and information from Norway may indicate a more suitable place. It will require netting against submarines and also anti-aircraft guns and other additions to its defences. But early establishment of a submarine base near the Naze would hamper Germany in any bombarding raids against Norwegian ports. It would also enable us to watch the Horn Reef exit from the German mine fields easier than from a submarine base on our own coast, and would be of use in denying the passage of the Skagerrak to enemy ships.

18. The drawback to establishing a submarine and aircraft base in the south of Norway is that the submarines and aircraft will have to be taken from the east coast of England which will reduce the power to resist invasion, and will certainly not conduce to the release of troops in England for services abroad.

19. A small base could also be established on the west coast of Norway which would be of use for light cruisers and small craft maintaining the blockade and hunting submarines. When the Norwegian fishing craft became effective as auxiliary patrol vessels, they would afford considerable protection to the Archangel route against submarines.

20. If Norway joined the Allies it would not affect the larger strategy of the North Sea to any appreciable extent,

because there is no suitable place in Southern Norway with sufficient anchorage accommodation for a fleet. If a base could be found in Southern Norway capable of accommodating a fleet superior to the High Sea fleet, it would be possible to place such a fleet there very much nearer to the German Bight than the Northern Base in Scotland, and the chance of intercepting the German fleet when it came out would be much increased. The geographical conditions do not admit, however, of keeping enough capital ships in Southern Norway to be effective. Their absence would weaken the Grand Fleet and there would always be a great risk of their being cut off by a superior force before they could receive support.

21. Generally, we have, from a naval point of view, more to lose than to gain by Norway becoming an Ally. The shortage of small craft to safeguard our own extensive coastline and sea routes would be further accentuated by the necessity of taking vessels to protect bases in Norway and to safeguard the lines of communication to those bases. It is equivalent to taking over more front without having any more troops to do it with.

22. As regards the military aspect, it has already been said that we should derive no advantage from an alliance with Norway, but on the contrary a still further drain would be made on our material and financial resources, and we certainly could not send troops to her assistance.

23. It is therefore held that both naval and military interests would best be served by Norway remaining neutral, and that it would be detrimental to those interests if she became an Ally. If, however, she is forced by Germany into making a choice between war with her and submitting to her demands to prohibit the export of contraband of war to the Entente, it becomes a question of our deciding whether the effect of this prohibition would be such as to justify our incurring the naval and military disadvantages above mentioned in order to have her as our Ally.

(Signed) W. R. Robertson

Chief of the Imperial General Staff

1. Papers of Woodrow Wilson
top, B.C.

2. Bryan's cable of 13 July
2nd November, 1916.

APPENDIX III

sighing for peace even though the war is not over, nobody can find the way. We all have taken active part in the war. The result is in our hands. The final peace we expect will be based on intercourse between nations for the sake of law and justice, not force.

1. August, 1917.

Dear President! I feel it my dear duty to acknowledge the feeling of satisfaction and relief, which your message to our Minister in Washington created with myself and my colleagues [sic].²

Our commercial commission with Mr. Nansen as commander had already left for U.S., or else we might perhaps have stopped them. Anyhow they can do no harm and they are loaded with information which can be relied upon. It would have been heartless and meaningless to refuse imports of grain into my country, in as much as we cannot produce sufficient to feed ourselves and have consequently nothing at all of agricultural products to send to Germany. How matters stand in this respect in Norway, you will readily perceive, when you are aware of the fact, that the whole area of productive soil in Norway is about 11 mill. dekar (1 dekar = 10,000 m²), whereas Norwegian settlers in North Dakota alone own about 35 mill. dekar.

Of course Norway is dependent on other countries for grain. Before the great war we got it from Russia and from Germany, but now we must seek to America and partly Australia.

Our export to Germany is under pressure of the allies shrunk considerably to the offence of Germany, who in return are [sic] sinking our ships and drowning several hundred of our sailors.

It is hard to be a small nation under circumstances as under the present terrible war. To join the war would however be senseless, as the 3 small scandinavian countries would in case partake on opposite sides and the result would probably be a fight among themselves. All the world is

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1. Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
 2. Bryn's cable of 13 July, supra, pp. 361 - 362, and note.

sighing for peace even amongst the belligerent [sic], but nobody can find the key. We all hope, that when U.S. has taken active part in the war, you as president for the coming peace congress in Washington will take the matter in your own hands. The final peace we expect shall be durable and the intercourse between nations for all future shall be based on law and justice, not force.

If this be the result the endless streams of human blood may not have been sacrificed in vain.

I beg to remain, dear president,

Yours very truly,

(signed) Gunnar Knudsen

INDEX

A. Primary Sources

1. Unpublished documents

Survey

(a) Summary of the XVII International Symposium for Russian Studies

Data

These conditions are also valid sources for the work. The arrangement of the material is specific rather than by country or general subject - although some authors give a general subject indication - but for of subjects for the conference, but not the date of publication. The material is arranged in chronological order of the material in which it appeared, but not in chronological order of the material in which it appeared. The material is arranged in chronological order of the material in which it appeared, but not in chronological order of the material in which it appeared. The material is arranged in chronological order of the material in which it appeared, but not in chronological order of the material in which it appeared.

- * 1/24 The War 1914-1916.
- * 10/14 British shipping control. Yearbook of International Law 1914.
- * 11/14 Neutral trade with Germany 1914.
- * 12/14 British war area in the North Sea, 1914.
- * 1/15 German war area around the British coast 1915.
- * 2/15 British administration of the Baltic 1915.
- * 11/15 Violations of neutral territory 1915.
- * 11/15 Ministers' Conference, Stockholm, 1915.
- * 2/17 Germany's blockade of the Baltic, 1917.
- * 22/17 War area in the Arctic sea.

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A. Primary Sources

1. Unpublished documents:

Norway

- (a) Documents of the Royal Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
Oslo.

These constitute the main single source for the present work. The arrangement of the material by specific topics rather than by country and general subject - although the code numbers give a general subject indication - has a number of advantages for the research student, but can be deceptive in that a generally uninteresting dossier may conceal highly important material which has not been bulky enough to constitute a separate dossier. The completeness of the material is usually very satisfactory, including as a rule a rich amount of handwritten notes, minutes, comments and drafts, in addition to relevant newspaper clippings. The following dossiers have been used:

- P 2 B 1/14 The War 1914 - 1918.
P 2 K 12/14 British shipping control. Guarantee against re-export.
" 13/14 Neutral trade talks, Stockholm 1914.
" 14/14 British War Area in the North Sea, November 1914.
" 1/15 German War Area around the British Isles, February 1915.
" 2/15 Entente declaration of 1 March 1915 on the war at sea.
" 13/15 Violations of neutral territory (General).
" 15/16 Ministers' Conference, Kristiania, September 1916.
" 2/17 Germany's blockade of the Entente, February 1917.
(2) " 2c/17 War Areas in the Arctic Sea.

Germany

- (a) P 2 K 5/17 Neutrals' Conference (General).
" 13/17 Convoy (General).
" 2/18 Neutral communications on unlawful belligerency.
P 2 L 2/12 Neutrality declaration and regulations, 1912.
" 1a/14 Norway's neutrality declarations concerning the war.
" 1b/14 Norway's neutrality defence.
" 13/14 The press and Norwegian trade with belligerents.
" 28/15 The Submarine Decree.
" 9/17 Naval questions etc.
" 13/17 British requisitioning of merchant vessels.
" 8/18 Mine Barrage. Secret.
P 12 B 2/14 The Swedish - Norwegian Agreement of August 1914.
P 12 C 3/14 Scandinavian relations 1914 - 1916.
" 4/14 The Kings' Meeting at Malmo, December 1914.
" 1/17 Ministers' Conference, Stockholm, May 1917.
" 2/17 Scandinavian relations 1917 - 1919.
" 3/18 Ministers' Conference, Copenhagen, June 1918.
H 4 D ii 33/15 Copper questions and agreements.
H 4 H ii 5/16 German - Norwegian trade.
H 4 I ii 6/15 British coal exports and embargo.
" 30/15 Branch Agreements.
" 32/15 Talks in London for a general imports agreement.
" 11/16 Fisheries problems and agreements.
H 4 S 4/17 Imports from America after April 1917.

(b) Stortinget, Secret Archives.

The greater part of these manuscript reports of the closed sessions of the Norwegian Parliament unfortunately disappeared during the Second World War. What remains extends only to the first half of 1915. For the remainder of the period there are only the published diaries of the Labour Democrat Representative and sometime Minister, J. Castberg. See below, Section 2, (2).

Germany

(c) Archives of the Auswärtiges Amt, Politische Abteilung, Bonn.

To a large extent these have been consulted on microfilm, partly from the St. Antony's Collection, partly from copies of other collections deposited in the Public Record Office in London. Those specially pertinent to German - Norwegian relations were filmed on behalf of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. It was, however, found necessary to supplement the study of microfilms with a personal visit to the Archives at Bonn. The following items have been consulted:

- (d)
- | | | |
|----------|-----|--|
| Norwegen | 1 | Allgemeine Angelegenheiten. |
| " | 2 | Vertretung Norwegens im Ausland und das diplomatische Korps in Norwegen. |
| " | 3, | No. 1. Personalien: Die Königliche Familie. |
| " | 3, | No. 2. Norwegische Staatsmänner. |
| " | 4 | Beziehungen zu Schweden. |
| " | 5 | Ministerien in Norwegen. |
| " | 7, | <u>Secr.</u> Die norwegische Neutralitätsfrage. |
| " | 9 | Militär- und Marineangelegenheiten. |
| " | 10 | Beziehungen zu Russland. |
| " | 11 | Die Presse in Norwegen. |
| " | 12 | Beziehungen zu England. |
| " | 17 | Beziehungen zu Deutschland. |
| " | 17, | adh. Festnahme des deutschen Kuriers von Rautenfels durch die norwegische Geheimpolizei. |
| " | 18 | Beziehungen zu den Ver. Staaten v. Amerika. |

Akten der Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandtschaft in Kristiania:
Deutsch - Norw. - Amerik. Verhandlungen betreffend Abkommen. 1917 - 1919.

(e) Deutsches Kupfer (Kies) (Stordkies) 1915 - 1917.

Akten der Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandtschaft Kopenhagen:
Skandinavien.

Akten des Auswärtigen Amts im Grossen Hauptquartier:

- 1914 - 1916. No. 10: Norwegens Neutralität.
1915 - 1919. No. 22: Norwegen, Allgemeine Lage.
- " - No. 42: Ubootkrieg.

Der Weltkrieg	(Bd. 230 - 240).
Der Weltkrieg Geh.	(Bd. 33 - 36).
Der Weltkrieg No. 18 Geh.	Unterseebootkrieg gegen England u. andere feindliche Staaten.
Der Weltkrieg No. 27	Druck der Entente auf die skand. Staaten (Tonnagefrage).
Nachlass Michabelles	(Unveröffentlichtes Manuskript).

- (d) Akten des Admiralstabs der Marine, Abteilung B. Freiburg i. Breisgau, Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt.

These proved very useful for policy connected with naval matters, and fill out some of the apparent lacunae in the documents of the AA Archives. The files studied were the following:

- IV, 1-1, Bd. 57 - 71: Völkerrechtliche Angelegenheiten.
IV, 2-1, Bd. 52 - 57: Seerechtliche Angelegenheiten.
IV, 2-1, U.R. 3c, Bd. 3: Seerechtliche Angelegenheiten. Sonderverträge Norwegen.
IV, 2-4b, Bd. 1: Denkschriftensammlung Dezernat B.I.
IV, 2-5, Bd. 48 - 53: Handelskrieg mit U-Booten.
IV, 2-5, Bd. 66: Handelskrieg mit U-Booten. U.M.I. - Norwegen.
IV, 2-5, U.M.I., Bd. 1: Handelskrieg mit U-Booten, Allgemeines, Rechtliches, etc.

- (e) Deutsches Zentralarchiv, Potsdam.

During the brief time at the Author's disposal during this visit, practically nothing could be found that was of interest to the subject. The following items were consulted:

- Auswärtiges Amt, Handelspolitische Abteilung.
(Handel, Norwegen No. 1 (Generalia) Bd. 12. (Reg.no. 5912).
(57) " " No. 5 " " Bd. 2. (" " 5913).
" " No. 10 (Erzausfuhr) Bd. 1 - 2. (" " 5939 - 40).

- (e) Reichsministerium des Innern. Beziehungen zum Ausland.
Handelssachen, Norwegen Adh. 2 Bd. 4 - 5 (Reg.no. 4482 - 83).
Schiffahrtssachen, " " 3 Bd. 3 (" " 4487).
Krieg 1914/5/6/7 " " 7 Bd. 1 - 3 (" " 4493 - 95).

The United States

National Archives, Washington D.C. Foreign Affairs Branch.

(f) Records of the War Trade Board.

This material was found to be complete, well organised, easily accessible and very important, not only for the negotiations between the Board and the Norwegian Trade Mission to the United States, but in general for the trade policy of America as a belligerent and for the policy differences between America and her two main Allies, Great Britain and France. The following files were used (numbers from Preliminary Inventory No. 100):

- (1) Minutes of Meetings of the Exports Council.
- (2) Minutes of Meetings of the Exports Administrative Board.
- (4) Miscellaneous Documents of the Exports Administrative Board.
- (6) Minutes of Meetings of the War Trade Board.
- (11) Executive Country File.
- (14) General Correspondence.
- (16) General Correspondence of Members of the Board.
- (18) Minutes of Meetings of the Committee of Directors.
- (36) Records pertaining to negotiation of Trade Agreements.
- (37) Miscellaneous Correspondence.
- (38) Cables received from U.S. Foreign Service Representatives.
- (39) Cables sent to U.S. Foreign Service Representatives.
- (55) Minutes and Agenda of Meetings of Allied Blockade Committee.
- (56) Minutes of Meetings of Interallied Trade Committees.
- (57) Minutes of Meetings of the British Contraband Committee.

The papers are being re-

(g) Department of State. Political Correspondence.

The Various files and index numbers relevant to Norway were studied. Particularly important were the series 763.72 ...
Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Manuscripts Division.

(h) The Papers of Woodrow Wilson

File I : Executive Office Diaries.
File II : Personal Series.
File VI : Official Correspondence.

(i) The Papers of Robert Lansing

2. Correspondence.
Diary.

(j) The Papers of Josephus Daniels

I : Diary.
III : Correspondence Daniels - Wilson.
IV : Correspondence Daniels - Roosevelt.
VI : Miscellaneous Correspondence.

Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. Historical Manuscripts Collection.

(k) The Papers of E. M. House.

(l) The Papers of Frank L. Polk.

(m) The Papers of Vance O. McCormick.

(n) The Papers of Gordon F. Auchincloss.

Great Britain

Bodleian Library, Oxford. Collection of Western Manuscripts.

(o) The Asquith Papers.

This collection contains a good amount of papers and memoranda relating to the conduct of the war, two of which were found of first-rate importance and therefore included in their entirety as appendices to the thesis. Otherwise, only the "Cabinet Letters to the King" were of any use to the Author. The papers are being re-arranged and catalogued.

Library of New College, Oxford.

(p) The Papers of Lord Milner.

This extremely interesting and important collection is now only accessible subject to signature of an undertaking to the Cabinet Office, against unauthorised use. Particularly important to the Author were various War Cabinet Papers, references to which are given in the footnotes, including copies of certain telegrams exchanged between the Foreign Office and Minister Findlay.

2. Published documents:

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Norway

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Omang, Norge og Stormaktene 1906 - 1914, Vol. I (Oslo, 1957) No. 3 in a series of publications from the archives of the Foreign Ministry. Covers the first part of the period only, concentrated on the Integrity Treaty.

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United States

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Great Britain

State Papers, British and Foreign. Vol. CVIII (1914, II); Vol. CX (1916).

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Vol. X, Part 2 The Last Years of Peace. (London, 1938).

Vol. XI The Outbreak of War. (London, 1926).

Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series.

Accounts and Papers. 1909, Vol. LIV. Cd. 4554 (Misc. No. 4); Cd. 4555 (Misc. No. 5). 1914/1916, Vol. LXXXIV. Cd. 8145.

France

Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents Diplomatiques Français, 1871 - 1914. 3e Série (1911 - 1914), Tome XI. (Paris, 1936).

International

Scott, J.B., ed. Reports to the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907. (Oxford, 1917). Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Ibid., The Declaration of London, February 26, 1909. A Collection of Official Papers and Documents. (Oxford, 1919).

(2) Private Papers

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Castberg, J. Dagboker, Vol. II, 1906 - 1917 (Oslo, 1953). The only account known to exist of the debate on foreign policy that went on behind closed doors in the Storting and among parliamentary leaders, and later in the Commission for Foreign Affairs. Highly valuable, if due regard is taken for the author's strongly pro-Entente views. (See also under unpublished sources, Norway).

Foss, A. I Krigsaarene, 1914 - 1919 (Kobenhavn, 1920). A collection of articles and speeches by a man actively concerned with Danish foreign trade; pp. 67 - 94 give interesting information on Inter-Scandinavian trade during the war.

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Munch, P. Erindringer 1914 - 1918 (København, 1961). Diary, interspersed with memoirs, of Denmark's Defence Minister in the First World War.

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- Roosevelt, E. The Roosevelt Letters, Vol. II, 1905 - 1928.
(London, 1950).
- Seymour, C., ed. The Intimate Papers of E. M. House, Vols. I - IV
(Boston and New York, 1926 - 1928).
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machtspolitik im Weltkriege (Hamburg u.
Berlin, 1926). Gives valuable insight into
German naval policy.
- A. Spindler, Der Krieg im Meer
(Berlin, 1932 - 1934).

3. Newspapers:

Valued Sources

No systematic newspaper study has been attempted, and the Author has mainly contented himself with the relevant newspaper clippings found in the Norwegian, and partly also in the German, Foreign Ministry archives. The following Norwegian newspapers have nevertheless been consulted for large periods of the war:

Aftenposten, an independent conservative paper, which maintained a fairly impartial attitude.

Morgenbladet, also conservative, was marked by the views of its editor, C.J. Hambro, who was very critical towards the British and who in particular loathed Findlay and his Legation.

Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidende was the spokesman of trade and shipping interests and therefore strongly anti-German.

Dagbladet was liberal, but independent of the Government. Its attitude was generally pro-Entente.

Tidens Tegn, politically independent, was very anti-German.

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Norway

Det Kgl. Utenriksdepartement, Oversigt over de vigtigste av Utenriksdepartementet behandlede saker som egner sig for offentliggjorelse (Foreign Ministry, Survey of the most important matters dealt with by the Foreign Ministry during the war and

sulted for publication) Vols. I-II (Kristiania, 1916-1918). The title of this White Book shows its limited scope. It was the Government's reply to criticism of secrecy, and does not reveal more than absolutely necessary.

Germany

- Marine-Archiv, (ed. von Mantey) Der Krieg zur See. O. Groos, Der Krieg in der Nordsee, Vols. I-IV (Berlin, 1920-1924).
A. Spindler, Der Handelskrieg mit U-Booten, Vols. I-III (Berlin, 1932-1934).

(The list is highly selective, and only those found directly useful are included.)

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Navy Department, Office of Naval Intelligence, Historical Section, The American Naval Planning Section London, Publication No. 7 (Washington, D.C., 1923).

Great Britain

Policy of the United States 1917-1918 (Stanford University Press, 1922)

A.C. Bell, The Blockade of the Central Empires, 1914-1918 (London, 1937/1961). This massive volume is an official history of the war, based mainly on Foreign Office documents. It was printed for confidential use in 1937, and de-restricted in 1961. The subject, of course, is enormous, and the author, instead of limiting himself to giving a broad outline, has tried to give the story in detail with his own wide-ranging comments. Failing the accessibility of the documents themselves, this official history becomes doubly important. It is therefore all the more to be regretted that, on several points where it has been possible to check its accuracy, the book has revealed itself rather unreliable.

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France

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Arnold-Forster, W. The Blockade 1914 - 1919. Before the Armistice - and after (Oxford, 1939). A brief pamphlet.

Bailey, T.A. Policy of the United States toward the Neutrals, 1917 - 1918 (Stanford University Press, 1942). An able pioneering work.

Bergsgård, A. Frå 17. mai til 9. april - Norsk historie 1814 - 1940 (Oslo, 1958). A general and fairly brief survey of Norwegian history in the period.

Birnbaum, K.E. Peace Moves and U-boat Warfare. A Study of Imperial Germany's Policy towards the United States April 18, 1916 - January 9, 1917 (Uppsala, 1958). Gives an illuminating account of the background to the decision in favour of unrestricted u-boat warfare.

Brierly, J.L. The Outlook for International Law (Oxford, 1944). A thoughtful reflection on international law, past, present and future prospects.

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- Consett, H.W.W.P. The Triumph of Unarmed Forces (London, 1923). The author was British Naval Attaché to the Scandinavian countries during the war, and devoted all his militant zeal to perfecting the blockade. His subjective book condemns both the Northern Neutrals, for being bases of supplies for the Germans, and the British authorities, for letting this state of affairs continue despite Consett's advice.
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- Pasting, K. Nils Claus Ihlen (Oslo, 1955). A well-drawn sympathetic portrait of the Norwegian Foreign Minister, but somewhat brief and superficial concerning his foreign policy.
- Gihl, T. Den Svenska Utrikespolitikens Historia, Vol. IV. 1914 - 1919 (Stockholm, 1951). An important study of Swedish policy in the war.

- (Gihl, T. cont.) The author had access to the official documents but makes no detailed reference to them, a fact which of course limits the usefulness of the work as a source.
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- Boyer, L. Guichard, L. (and Turner, C.R.) The Naval Blockade (London, 1930). Contains much interesting information from French sources, but also some that is incorrect.
- Hambro, C.J. Under den forste verdenskrig (Oslo, 1958). These memoirs by the editor of Morgenbladet (see under newspapers) provide entertaining reading, but are hardly a reliable source.
- Hjort, J. Utenrikspolitiske Opplevelser under Verdenskrigen (Oslo, 1927). An honest and forthright account of the author's experiences in the events that led up to the Fisheries Agreement of 1916.
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