

Ex-kaiser Falsely Accuses England of Trying to Check Naval Program by Suggesting Limitation.

Deposed Monarch Traces Negotiations Between Two Countries to Limit Naval Programs—Von Bethmann's Independence Irritates Emperor's Ease and Poise, Forcing Him to Resign—Opposed Action of Prince of Wied in Assuming Rule Over Albania—Insisted on Increasing Navy in Face of General Opposition in Many Quarters, He Says.

BY WILHELM HOHENZOLLERN

In the first half of 1912 came the sending of Sir Ernest Cassel with a verbal note in which England offered to remain neutral in case of an "unprovoked" attack upon Germany, provided Germany agreed to limit her naval construction program and to drop her new naval bill, the latter being darkly hinted at. Owing to our favorable answer to this Lord Haldane was entrusted with the negotiations and sent to Berlin. The negotiations finally fell through owing to the constantly more uncompromising attitude of England (Sir E. Grey), who finally disavowed Lord Haldane and withdrew his own verbal note, because Grey was afraid to offend the French by a German-English agreement and jeopardize the Anglo-French-Russian understanding.

Here are the details of the case:

On the morning of Jan. 23, 1912, Herr Ballin had himself announced to me at the palace in Berlin and asked for an audience. I assumed that it was a case of a belated birthday greeting, therefore I was not a little astonished when Ballin, after a short speech of congratulation, said that he had come as an emissary of Sir Ernest Cassel, who had just arrived in Berlin on a special mission and wished to be received.

I asked whether it was a political matter, and why, if so, the meeting had not been arranged through the English Ambassador. Ballin's answer was to the effect that, from hints dropped by Cassel, he knew the matter to be of great importance, and the explanation for Cassel's acting without the intervention of the ambassador was because the earnest desire had been expressed in London that the official diplomatic representatives, both the English and the German, should not be apprised of the affair.

I declared that I was ready to receive Cassel at once, but added that, should his mission have to do with political questions, I should immediately summon the Chancellor and not in a position to deal with the representative of a foreign power alone without the Chancellor.

Ballin fetched Cassel, who handed me a document which, he stated, had been prepared with the "approval and knowledge of the English Government." I read the short note through and was not a little surprised to see that I was holding in my hand a formal offer of neutrality in case Germany became involved in future warlike complications, conditioned upon certain limitations in the carrying out of our program of naval construction, which were to be the subject of mutual conferences and agreements. Walking with Ballin into the next room, I handed over the document for him to read. After he had done so both of us exclaimed in the same breath: "A verbal note!"

It was plainly apparent that this "verbal note" was aimed at the forthcoming addition to our naval law and designed in some way to delay or frustrate it. No matter how the matter was interpreted, I found myself confronted with a peculiar situation, which were to be the subject of mutual conferences and agreements. Walking with Ballin into the next room, I handed over the document for him to read. After he had done so both of us exclaimed in the same breath: "A verbal note!"

Now, an intimate business friend of Edward VII appears, without previous announcement through official diplomatic channels, before the German emperor with a "verbal note" inspired by the English government, with explicit instructions to evade all the diplomatic officials of both countries.

He hands over an offer from the English government to maintain neutrality in future warlike complications provided certain agreements regarding limitation of naval construction are made.

And this is done by England, the mother of "Constitutionalism"!

When I pointed this out to Ballin, he exclaimed: "Holy Constitutionalism! What has become of you? That is 'personal politics' with a vengeance!"

I agreed with Ballin to send at once for Herr von Bethmann, in order that he might learn what was transpiring and decide what to do in this peculiar situation.

Ballin was called up on the telephone and soon appeared. At first the situation aroused in him likewise a certain degree of astonishment; it was interesting to watch the play of expression on his face as he was told about the matter. The Chancellor suggested that Grand Admiral von Tirpitz also be summoned, for the proper dispatching of the business, and recommended that an answer be drawn up in English, in the same manner and form as the note delivered by Cassel, and that it be handed to Sir Ernest, who wished to return home that night. (English was chosen because there was fear of obscurity and misunderstanding if the note were translated in London.) The Chancellor asked me to draw up the note, since I knew English best. After some objection I had to make up my mind to be myself the writer of the answer.

And now the following scene took place:

I sat at the writing table in the adjutant's room; the other gentlemen stood around me. I would read a sentence from the note aloud and sketch out an answer, which was, in turn, read aloud. Then criticisms were made from right and left; one thought the sentence too complaisant, another too abrupt; it was thereupon remodeled, recast, improved and polished. The Chancellor particularly subjected my grammar and style to much torture, owing to his habit of probing things philosophically, to his methods of profound thoroughness, which caused him to be most particular with every word, in order that it, having been studied from every angle, should later on afford nobody cause for criticism.

After hours of work the note was finally finished, and, having been passed a couple of times from hand to hand and then read aloud by me half a dozen times more, it was signed.

When our group broke up, the Chancellor asked Sir Ernest who was to be expected from England to conduct the negotiations. Cassel replied that

the Anglo-Saxons had, which fitted them for occupying positions which had no relation to their previous life and training. Furthermore, the interest in England in the navy was generally so intense that almost every educated man was an expert up to a certain point on naval questions.

In the course of the negotiations Haldane proved himself admirably well informed and a skillful, tenacious debater, and his brilliant qualities as a lawyer came to the fore. The conversation lasted several hours, and brought about a general clarifying, as well as a preliminary agreement as to postponement of time limits of ship construction, etc. The details concerning it are deposited in documents at the Imperial Naval Office. Tirpitz was splendid.

Toward the end of March the fight about the bill took on such violence that finally the Chancellor, on the 22d, asked me for his dismissal as I stepped out of the vault in the Charlottenburg Park. After long consultation and after I had told him Dr. Burchard's view, the Chancellor withdrew his request.

When, some time afterward, I paid a visit to Herr von Bethmann in his garden, I found him quite overcome and holding in his hand a message from London. It contained the entire disavowal of the verbal note delivered by Cassel, the withdrawal of the offer of neutrality, as well as of every other offer, and at the end the advice that I should not dismiss Herr von Bethmann from the Imperial Chancellorship since he enjoyed to a marked degree the confidence of the British Government.

"The manuscript as received by the Palladium the words, 'should not' are omitted, and the passage reads that England advised Bethmann's withdrawal from the Chancellorship in which he was in earnest with regard to the agreement, since question followed question and details were sought which had nothing directly to do with the agreement. England withdrew more and more from her promises, and no draft of the agreement came to hand.

In Berlin a big agitation set in against the naval bill. Tirpitz and myself on the part of the foreign office and from other quarters, both qualified and unqualified. The Chancellor also, who hoped to achieve the agreement and affix his name to a document which would free Germany from "encirclement" and bring her into a regular and better relationship with England, came out in favor of dropping the naval bill. But that would simply have meant allowing a foreign power enormous influence in matters of German national defense and jeopardizing thereby the national right of self-determination and our readiness for battle in case of a war being forced upon us. Had we allowed this it would have amounted to our consenting to permit England, Germany's principal foe, to grant us whatever she wished, after consulting her own interests, without receiving ourselves the guarantee of any equivalent concession.

In this confused state of affairs differences of opinion and violent disputes arose, which, especially in those circles which really knew little about the navy, were conducted with much violence and not always in a practical manner. Admiral von Tirpitz, all through that winter, which was so hard a one for him and me, fought his fight like a genuine, patriotic officer, realizing the situation and seeing through his opponents with clear vision and supporting me with complete conviction to the limit of his ability. All the government officials agreed that no foreign country could be allowed any voice in helping decide what we had or had not to do toward insuring our protection.

The hope of bringing about the agreement grew ever fainter. England continually showed lessening interest and kept eliminating important parts of her original verbal note. And so it came about that Admiral von Tirpitz and I realized that the whole proposal was merely a "manoeuvre." The fight over the German Naval Bill grew steadily hotter. I happened at this time to meet at Cuxhaven, Dr. von Burchard, President of the Hamburg Senate, whom I respected greatly, as he was the very model of an aristocratic citizen of a Hanseatic city, and who had often been consulted by me in political matters. I described to him the entire course of the affair and the disputes in Berlin as to the introduction or non-introduction of the bill, and asked him then to tell me, with his usual complete frankness, what he thought the right thing to do in the interest of the national welfare, since I greatly desired to hear an objective opinion, uninfluenced by the rival camps of Berlin.

Dr. Burchard replied in his clear pointed, convincing manner that it was my duty toward the people and the Fatherland to stick to the bill; that whosoever spoke against its introduction was committing a sin against them; that whatever we thought necessary to our defense must be unconsciously brought into being; that, above all else, we must never permit a foreign country to have the presumption to interfere with us; that the English offer was a feint to make us drop the naval bill; that this must, in no circumstances, be allowed; that the German nation would not understand why its right of self-determination had been sacrificed; that the bill must unquestionably be introduced; that he would work in its favor in the Federal Council (as indeed he did in a brilliant, compelling speech) and also otherwise press its acceptance in Berlin; that the English would naturally resort to abuse, but that this made no difference, since they had been doing so for a long time; that they certainly would not get into a war for such a cause; that Admiral von Tirpitz was merely doing his duty and fulfilling his obligations, and that I should support him in every way; that the Chancellor must give up opposing the measure, otherwise he would run the risk of finally forfeiting public esteem on account of being "pro-English."

Thus spoke the representative of the great commercial city, which was threatened before all others in case of war with England. The genuine Hanseatic spirit inspired his words.

Strangely enough, this opinion of Dr. Burchard concerning the English offer has recently been corroborated to me in Holland by a Dutchman who heard from Englishmen at that time the English point of view. I and Tirpitz guessed right—the offer of neutrality in case naval expansion was curbed, was a political manoeuvre.

Countercharges of Cheating

Soon news also came from Berlin that the matter was not going well in England; that, according to information received, a dispute had arisen about the agreement; that there was

nothing in politics, belonging to the press and the general public, that the promising "raprochement" with England through Haldane had been wrecked by the obstinacy of the Emperor and Admiral von Tirpitz and by their clinging to the naval bill against the wishes of all "sensible counselors."

Kingship of Albania

At that time (in 1912) the question of the establishment of an independent Albanian State and the choice by the powers of a head for it, was brought to my attention also. A number of candidates vying for a crown had already presented themselves before the tribunal of the powers, without getting the names accepted; a number of candidates, considered by the powers, were declined by the Albanians. I looked upon the matter in itself with indifference, and was of the opinion that—as in the case of every "creation of a nation"—the greatest possible attention should be paid to historical development, also to geographical peculiarities and customs, the general poverty and backwardness of the land.

He pointed out that a future ruler of the land must in no circumstances reside on the coast, but must show himself to the inhabitants and travel about in the country. Owing to the primitive means of transportation, he went on the land of the land must sit all day on horseback and ride through his domain having at his saddle bow the famous "bag of sequins" mentioned in all Oriental tales and legends, in order to sway public opinion in his favor in the places visited by the expected shower of gold. The ruler must be sure, the author continued, to bind some of the clans of the region closely to himself, so as to have at his back and call an armed force for asserting his will and overcoming any opponents wishing to rebel, since this was the only way to maintain his power, in view of the utter lack of "troops" or an "army" in the European sense at all, or else refuse, when he brought these matters to its attention.

This meant that the ruler of Albania must lead at first a nomadic, horseback life, and, in addition, provide himself with a wandering camp, with tents and other accessories and the necessary horses. Plenty of men adapted to this sort of life might have been found in his squadron of the Third Guard Uhlan Regiment, since many of his Uhlan, who were very fond of the Prince, had declared that they were ready to accompany him as volunteers. Surely, they would have served him better and been more useful to him than what he did in preparing to take over the leadership of Albania, without knowledge of the country.

Up to the time of the Balkan War many Albanians entered the Turkish service, where they rose to high importance, being greatly prized on account of their diligence and keen intelligence, as well as their tenacious energy. They supplied the Turkish Administration with a large number of officials, also with a certain percentage in the diplomatic corps and the army. The young Albanian nobles were proud to serve in a splendid company of palace guards of the Sultan, which scarcely had an equal for size, martial appearance and manly beauty. These were partly relatives of the Sultan, since the latter used to have noble Albanian women of the principal clans in his harem in order that he—protected by blood brotherhood—might be safe from the "vendettas" of the clans, and, also, that he might find out everything that might serve to influence the feelings of the Albanian chieftains. The desires of the Albanians which reached him by this road—for instance, as to supplies of arms and ammunition, school houses, building of highways, etc.—were therupon granted in an inconspicuous manner. Thus the Sultan was enabled to keep the usually turbulent Albanians quiet and loyal by means of "family ties."

Defends Naval Program

For this our naval construction program was absolutely necessary; it was never aimed against the English fleet, four or five times as strong as ours, and assuring England's superiority and security, to equal the strength of which no sensible man in Germany ever dreamed. We needed our fleet for coast defense and the protection of our commerce; for this purpose the lesser means of defense, like U-boats, torpedo boats and mines, were not sufficient. In addition, the coast batteries on the Baltic were so antiquated and miserably equipped that they would have been razed within forty-eight hours by the massed fire of the heavy guns of modern battleships. Thus, our Baltic coast was practically defenseless. To protect it the fleet was necessary.

The Skagerrak (Jutland) battle has proved what the fleet meant and what it was worth. That battle would have meant annihilation for England if the Reichstag had not refused up to 1900 all proposals for strengthening the navy. Those twelve lost years were destined never to be retrieved.

Before we take our leave of Haldane I wish to touch upon another episode in his activities. In 1906 he came with the permission of the German Government to Berlin, to inform himself concerning the Prussian defense conditions, recruiting, general staff, etc. He busied himself at the Ministry of War, where the Minister, General von Einem, personally gave him information. After about two or three weeks' work there he returned, well satisfied, to England.

When, after the outbreak of the World War, the "pro-German" Haldane, the friend of Goethe, was boycotted and treated with such hostility that he could no longer show himself in public, he had a defense written in his name in the Prussian War Ministry in order to clear him of the recently invented "Vindication of Great Britain." Therein his services toward forming a regular general staff and preparing the British Army for the World War are placed in a bright light and emphasis is laid on the skill with which he utilized the permission obtained from the Prussian War Ministry in order to learn in Germany about military matters and to reorganize the British Army and General Staff, to the minutest detail and on the German model, for the coming war against the erstwhile German hosts.

Here we see the sly, adroit lawyer, who, sheltered under the hospitality of a foreign country, studies its military arrangements in order to forge weapons against it out of the material and knowledge thus acquired. Quite characteristic of the book is dedicated to King George VII, whose intimate emissary and tool Haldane was. In those days Berlin saw in Haldane's mission a "raprochement" with England, toward which Germans were always bending their efforts; in reality, however, it was a "reconnoitring expedition" under the very roof of the German cousin. England showed her gratitude by the World War, which Haldane helped to prepare; in this case Haldane "cheated" the Germans.

That is the history of the Haldane mission. Later it was summarily maintained by all sorts of ignorant dab-

lers in politics, belonging to the press and the general public, that the promising "raprochement" with England through Haldane had been wrecked by the obstinacy of the Emperor and Admiral von Tirpitz and by their clinging to the naval bill against the wishes of all "sensible counselors."

Requirements of a Ruler

During that time that the Prince of Wied was making his preparations the excellently written pamphlet of an Austrian General Staff officer, dealing with his travels in Albania, appeared. The officer described in a lively and clear style, the geographical and climatic drawbacks, the population and customs, the general poverty and backwardness of the land.

He pointed out that a future ruler of the land must in no circumstances reside on the coast, but must show himself to the inhabitants and travel about in the country. Owing to the primitive means of transportation, he went on the land of the land must sit all day on horseback and ride through his domain having at his saddle bow the famous "bag of sequins" mentioned in all Oriental tales and legends, in order to sway public opinion in his favor in the places visited by the expected shower of gold. The ruler must be sure, the author continued, to bind some of the clans of the region closely to himself, so as to have at his back and call an armed force for asserting his will and overcoming any opponents wishing to rebel, since this was the only way to maintain his power, in view of the utter lack of "troops" or an "army" in the European sense at all, or else refuse, when he brought these matters to its attention.

With the co-operation and collaboration of the Empress Frederick, projects and plans were made, and finally, a big model was provided by Building Councilor Inne—the "modern Schluter," as the Empress Frederick used to call him—which won unanimous approval. Only the Building Academy opposed wearisome objections, stating that the "White Drawing Room" ought to be preserved "in its old historical beauty," and required no alterations. When the new structure was completed, however, it also met with the approval of the gentlemen who had been formerly so critical.

Herr von Stephan also was at loggerheads with the Academy of Building. He wanted to alter many Post Offices, or build entirely new ones, especially in the big cities, but, in view of the fearful slowness and devotion to red tape of the aforesaid official body, he used to receive no answers at all, or else refusals, when he brought these matters to its attention.

This meant that the ruler of Albania must lead at first a nomadic, horseback life, and, in addition, provide himself with a wandering camp, with tents and other accessories and the necessary horses. Plenty of men adapted to this sort of life might have been found in his squadron of the Third Guard Uhlan Regiment, since many of his Uhlan, who were very fond of the Prince, had declared that they were ready to accompany him as volunteers. Surely, they would have served him better and been more useful to him than what he did in preparing to take over the leadership of Albania, without knowledge of the country.

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Academy of Building

At last there came a rupture with the aforementioned Academy. His Excellency von Stephan lost patience and study this pamphlet and to follow its recommendations, especially with regard to his residence, which should be fixed at some point as far as possible from the warships of the Powers, in order that he might not be forced to act under pressure and arouse suspicion among the Albanians that their ruler needed these ships for protection against his subjects. Did the Prince ever read the pamphlet? In any event, the course adopted by him subsequently was contrary to its advice and the advice given by me.

The Prince and his wife journeyed to Albania, and things turned out as I had foreseen. According to reports describing the arrival of the sovereign Princess, although she was a German, addressed the assembled Albanians from her balcony in French, since they understood no German. The "court" remained at Durazzo under the guns of foreign ships. The Prince did not travel on horseback through the land, nor did he scatter gold sequins about, nor did he return from his balcony on the day of his arrival—nor did he push Essad out of the way. So the adventure ended as one might imagine.

I have gone into some detail in describing my opinion and attitude toward the question of the choice of the ruler of Albania as a foundation to bring my influence to bear toward having a Mohammedan Prince chosen, if possible—perhaps an Egyptian Prince—not forgetting that he should have a well-lined purse which is an absolute necessity in Albania. My advice was not needed by the "Arapagous of the powers," whose members were not bothering themselves with the interests of the Albanians, but seeking first of all, for pretenses and opportunities for fishing in the troubled Albanian waters in such a way as to benefit our own countries.

Opposed Choice of German

Therefore, I was not at all pleased when the choice fell upon Prince Wied. I esteemed him as a distinguished, knightly man of lofty sentiments, but considered him unfit for the post. The Prince knew altogether too little about Balkan affairs to be able to undertake this thorny task with hope of success. It was particularly unpleasant to me that a German Prince should make a fool of himself there, since it was apparent from the start that the Entente would place all sorts of obstacles in his path. Upon being questioned by the Prince, I told my cousin all my doubts, laying stress upon the difficulties awaiting him, and advised him urgently to decline. I could not command him, since the Prince of Wied, as heard of him, had the final word in the family, had the final word in the matter.

After the Prince's acceptance of the candidacy offered him by the powers, I received him in the presence of the Chancellor. A certain irresolution in the bearing of the Prince, who contemplated his new task with anything but enthusiasm, strengthened the resolve in me and the Chancellor to try hard once more to dissuade the young candidate from ascending the recently invented Albanian "throne." But in vain. The ambitious, mystically exalted wife of the Prince saw in Albania the fulfillment of her wishes. And "ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut" (what woman wishes, God wishes.)