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THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM
OF JANUARY 16, 1917
AND ITS
CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

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CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED	
Fast Day Message	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Day Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Night Message	<input type="checkbox"/>
Night Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>

Patrons should check on & operate the class of service desired; OTHERWISE THE TELEGRAM WILL BE TRANSMITTED AS A FAST DAY MESSAGE.



WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

Check	5300
Time Filed	

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

via Galveston

JAN 19 1917

GERMAN LEGATION
MEXICO CITY

130 13042 13401 8501 115 3528 416 17214 6491 11310
 18147 18222 21580 10247 11518 23677 13605 3494 14938
 98092 5905 11311 10392 10371 0302 21290 5161 39695
 23571 17504 11209 18276 18101 0317 0228 17694 4473
 22224 22200 19452 21589 67893 5569 13918 8958 12137
 1333 4725 4458 5905 17168 13851 4458 17149 14471 6708
 13850 12224 0929 14991 7382 15857 67893 14218 36477
 5870 17553 07003 5870 5454 16102 15217 22801 17138
 21001 17388 7446 23638 18222 6719 14331 15021 23845
 3158 23552 22098 21604 4797 9497 22464 20855 4377
 23610 18140 22260 5905 13347 20420 39689 13732 20067
 5929 5276 18507 52262 1340 22049 13339 11265 22295
 10439 14814 4178 6992 8764 7032 7357 6926 52262 11267
 21100 21272 9340 9559 22464 15874 18502 18500 15857
 2188 5376 7381 98092 16127 13486 9350 9220 76036 14219
 5144 2831 17920 11347 17142 11264 7667 7762 15099 9110
 10482 97556 3509 3670

BERNSTORFF.

Charge German Embassy.

Photograph of the Zimmermann telegram as filed in Washington by Ambassador Bernstorff for transmission to Mexico City (cf. pages 5, 16, 22).

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THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM OF JANUARY 16, 1917, AND ITS CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Among the official cryptograms which have been intercepted and translated by governmental authorities other than those for whom they were intended, the most important of all time, either in war or peace, is undoubtedly the one deciphered by the British Naval Intelligence which is known to historians as the *Zimmermann telegram*. In German literature it is referred to as the Mexico dispatch. This message, in cryptographic form, was sent on January 16, 1917, by Arthur Zimmermann, then German Minister of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, to Ambassador von Bernstorff, at Washington, to be forwarded to German Minister von Eckhardt at Mexico City. It read, translated into English, as follows: ¹

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.

No account of the stirring episodes leading up to our entry into the World War can be considered complete without at least a reference to the one in which the Zimmermann telegram played the leading role. Even those who adhere to the theory that it was the bankers who pushed us into the conflict on the side of the Allies must mention it; while those who incline toward the theory that it was the German policy of "frightfulness" on sea and land which dragged us in against them give this message even more attention. Although today it would certainly be too much to say that this cryptogram, through its interception and solution by the British, and its forwarding by them to President Wilson, was the *direct* means of bringing us into the war, nevertheless many an informed person whose memory goes back to the exciting days when the contents of this sensational message were disclosed in the newspapers of March 1, 1917, would certainly say that had he been asked *at that time* he would have said at least that it was the straw which broke the camel's back. The importance of this incident is evidenced by the lengthy comments of prominent officials who were at that time in a position to judge its significance. The Secretary of State, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Colonel House, our Ambassador to Great Britain, and many others, give this telegram a prominent place in their writings on the World War. For example:

While the Armed Ship Bill was under discussion in Congress another event occurred which caused the greatest excitement throughout the country and aroused the people against the German Government even more, I believe, than the announced policy of the submarine ruthlessness. That event was the publication of the so-called "Zimmermann telegram" * * *. Thus the Zimmermann telegram resulted in unifying public sentiment throughout the United States against Germany, in putting the people solidly behind the Government and in making war inevitable, if not popular, because the

¹ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917. Supplement 1, The World War, p. 147. U. S. Government Printing Office Washington, 1931. This book will hereinafter be referred to as Foreign Relations Series, abbreviated FRS.*

German Government's sinister intent toward the United States could no longer be doubted. The "cold-blooded proposition" of Germany's Secretary of Foreign Affairs in one day accomplished a change in sentiment and public opinion which would otherwise have required months to accomplish. From the time that the telegram was published, or at least from the time that its authenticity was admitted by its author, the United States' entry into the war was assured, since it could no longer be doubted that it was desired by the American people from Maine to California and from Michigan to Texas.²

* * * * *
It [the Zimmermann telegram] roused a great deal of indignation in the States and strongly reinforced the popular backing for strong measures by the President.³

* * * * *
Wilson was waiting for what he called the "overt act" before he took further steps against Germany, but the possibility of avoiding hostilities daily diminished. * * *

Misguided German diplomacy did its utmost to strengthen the growing feeling in the United States that war with Germany could not be avoided. On February 26, Colonel House was called to the telephone by Frank Polk and informed that the British Naval Intelligence had received and deciphered a sensational telegram from the German Foreign Office to von Eckhardt, the German Minister in Mexico City. Signed by Zimmermann himself and dated January 16, the telegram announced the imminence of unrestricted submarine warfare, and instructed the German Minister, in case of war with the United States, to attempt to arrange a German-Mexican alliance, on the understanding that Mexico would be assisted to reconquer New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. Zimmermann further suggested that Carranza should approach Japan.

Mr. Polk fully realized that the publication of this telegram would blow American resentment to a white heat; it would strengthen immensely popular support of the President in any action he might take against Germany in defense of American rights on the sea. The same thought may have led the British to pass the deciphered telegram on to Washington. Wilson himself was disturbed and in doubt as to whether the publication of the telegram would not bring on a crisis he could not control. House urged immediate publication. * * *

The effect of publication was exactly what had been anticipated. Many persons naturally raised doubts as to the authenticity of the telegram; but Lansing formally assured Congress, and Zimmermann himself confessed, that it was genuine. Speculation was uncontrolled as to how it had been intercepted: it was rumored that the messenger had been caught by American guardsmen on the Mexican border; that a copy had been taken from von Bernstorff at Halifax; that it was in a mysterious box seized by the British on the ship which Bernstorff sailed on.⁴

Hendrick,⁵ the biographer of the war-time American Ambassador to Great Britain, Walter H. Page, says:

The most sensational episode of this period, however, was the publication on March 1 of a telegram from Dr. Alfred Zimmermann, German Foreign Secretary, to the German Minister in Mexico, outlining a scheme for an alliance of Germany, Japan, and Mexico against the United States, and for the cession in case of victory, of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico.

[Page's diary dated March 2, 1917.] The Zimmermann (Berlin) Mexico-Japan bomb burst today, the Zimmermann telegram to the German Minister in Mexico being in the morning papers. They gave it out in Washington (apparently) to cause Congress to give the President authority to arm merchant ships, etc., etc., as he should see fit, and to use the armed forces of the Nation to protect commerce and life. It had that effect. An enormous majority in the House last night (nearly 500 to 13!) voted in favor of the resolution. I am curious to see the effect on the country. I have never abandoned the belief that if the President were really to lead, all the people would follow. Whether he will even now lead remains to be seen. Yesterday I talked to Chinda, the Japanese Ambassador, about this Zimmermann telegram. He thought it a huge joke at first. Today Yeates Thompson confessed that it seemed to him a newspaper hoax! Nobody (few people surely) yet thoroughly understand the German. This telegram will go some distance surely to instruct the people of the U. S. A.⁶

² Lansing, Robert, *War Memoirs*, Bobbs, Merrill & Co., Indianapolis, 1935, pp. 225 and 232.

³ Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs*, p. 534.

⁴ *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, 1920, p. 451.

⁵ Hendrick, Burton J., *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, Doubleday Page & Co., New York, 1920. Hereinafter this work will be referred to merely as *Hendrick*.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 321, 324.

The acrimonious discussions which the Zimmermann telegram aroused in Congress take up 22 pages in the Congressional Record. Most of the debate deals with a resolution calling upon the President to furnish a formal statement declaring whether or not the telegram as published in the newspapers was authentic. Space forbids extensive quotation, and the following two statements made in the course of the debate must suffice:⁷

Mr. THOMAS. * * * Does not the Senator [referring to Senator Hitchcock] realize that the public mind is already inflamed, that it has been inflamed by this publication [the Zimmermann telegram] like a bolt? Because of that excited condition, which we share, inasmuch as the information must have proceeded from Executive sources, directly or indirectly, it is very essential that we should have such information as may be necessary to enable us to meet and, if necessary, to end that public excitement which is now sweeping all over the country.

* * * * *
Mr. SMITH. * * * Mr. President, I say that the situation thus created is far-reaching and delicate, fraught with very great danger to the peace of the American people. * * *

It was of course natural that question should be raised as to the authenticity of the Zimmermann telegram. Senator Tillman [p. 4605] gave voice to his doubts in no uncertain terms:

Mr. President, I want to say one thing before this debate closes. I think we have wasted a great deal of valuable time here in discussing a lie—a forgery. I agreed with the Senator from Michigan [Mr. Smith] this morning when he said it was a forgery. The reason I think it is a forgery is this: Who can conceive of the Japanese consorting with Mexico and the Germans to attack the United States? Why, Japan hates Germany worse than the devil is said to hate holy water. Japan took possession of Kiaochow and she is going to hold it. Is it possible to conceive that Japan will go to war with the United States in conjunction with Mexico and Germany? I think such a proposition is beneath our notice.

The New York Times *Current History* for the period February 20 to May 15, 1917, deals thus with the Zimmermann telegram:

An important phase growing out of our rupture with Germany and the subsequent drift toward war was the uncovering of an anti-American alliance proposed by Germany with Mexico and Japan in the event the threatened war ensued. * * * The revelation created a profound impression throughout the country. The immediate effect on Congress was the elimination of practically all opposition to the proposal then pending to authorize the President to proceed at once to arm American merchantmen against German submarines; it also crystalized the conviction throughout the country that the German submarine blockade must be sternly resisted, even though it resulted in a declaration of war by Germany.

Ambassador von Bernstorff says:⁸

It has frequently been asserted that the notorious Mexico telegram led to the war with the United States. I do not believe this is correct. The telegram was used with great success as propaganda against us; but the rupture of diplomatic relations—as I have already pointed out—was, in view of the situation, equivalent in all circumstances to war. I had nothing to do with the Mexico telegram, which took me completely by surprise. It was addressed, in the usual way, direct to the legation in Mexico, and passed through the Embassy at Washington on the same day on which I received notification that the unrestricted U-boat war was to be declared. I had neither the right, nor was it my duty, to hold up the telegram although I disapproved of its contents.

On December 13, 1927, Sir Alfred Ewing, who throughout the war was civilian head of the cryptographic bureau (popularly referred to as "Room 40") of the British Naval Intelligence Service, delivered an address before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, telling of the

⁷ *Congressional Record*, 64th Congress, 2nd Session, vol. LIV, pp. 4695 and 4698, Mar. 1, 1917.

⁸ von Bernstorff, Count Johann, *My Three Years in America*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1920, p. 380. This work will hereinafter be referred to as *Bernstorff*.

work of the Bureau. That portion of the published account of his address with which we are concerned is as follows:⁹

Besides intercepting naval signals, the cryptographers of Room 40 dealt successfully with much political cipher. The isolated position of Germany forced her to resort to wireless, and prevented frequent changes of the code books for confidential communication with correspondents abroad. There was a voluminous stream of cipher correspondence with German agents in Madrid, and a good deal with North and South America as well as Constantinople, Athens, Sofia, and other places. One group of deciphered messages threw useful light in advance on the Easter Revolution in Ireland, another group on the intrigues of the Germans in Persia.

Among the many political messages read by his staff was the notorious Zimmermann telegram, which was intercepted in the manner described in the third volume of the Page Letters. President Wilson was then hesitating on the brink of war, reluctant to plunge, clinging painfully to the idea of neutrality which seemed to be almost a part of his religion. The Zimmermann message, which made a conditional offer to Mexico of an alliance against the United States, was deciphered in Room 40. It was then communicated very confidentially by Lord Balfour to Mr. Page and through Page to Wilson, and was given by him to the American Press. Its publication was decisive in converting American opinion to the necessity of war. But the curtain which hid Room 40 remained undisturbed.

And finally in his famous message (which is now known as the "war message") delivered in person before the Congress in joint session on April 2, 1917, President Wilson said:¹⁰

That it (the German Government) means to stir up enemies against us at our very doors the intercepted note to the German Minister at Mexico is eloquent evidence.

More than enough has been quoted to give an indication of the importance with which the publication of the Zimmermann telegram must be regarded in connection with a study of the causes leading to our entry into the war. Indirectly, because the United States is the leading power on the American Continent, it also helped to bring Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, and Panama into the arms of the Allies.

So important a cryptographic incident, therefore, warrants a most careful study by historians as well as by cryptographers, for the story of the incident is replete with suggestions for making the most of a cryptographic opportunity.

Twenty years have passed since the Zimmermann telegram was blazoned on the front pages of newspapers throughout the world except, of course, in Germany and Austria. But the British Government, which was the principal actor in the incident, has still not lifted the impenetrable curtain of mystery behind which her able cryptographers work, so that we shall have to draw conclusions from accounts from other sources if we are to study the facts concerning her interception and solution of the famous message. We shall pass over several purely apochryphal accounts which appeared at the time.¹¹

It is amusing to note, in passing, that one of the reasons why the Kaiser was extremely cool to Ambassador Bernstorff, who was received by the Kaiser only 6 or 7 weeks subsequent to Bernstorff's return to Berlin after the rupture of relations, was the monarch's belief that the Zimmermann telegram had been taken from among the papers which Bernstorff carried with him on his return home on the *Friedrich VIII* in February 1917. The ship was detained at Halifax for 12 days and every nook and cranny was searched. A box of dispatches which had been placed aboard the vessel by the Swedish Minister was found by the British authorities and

⁹ As reported in *The (Edinburgh) Scotsman* and *The (London) Times* for December 14, 1927. Incidentally, the Editor of *The Scotsman*, in lauding Sir Alfred, said of the Zimmermann telegram that it "was instrumental in bringing America into the war."

¹⁰ FRS, pp. 195-203. Also, in his *Flag Day Address* on June 14, 1917, in citing the numerous provocations which, he explained, forced us into the war, the President said: "They tried to incite Mexico to take up arms against us and to draw Japan into a hostile alliance with her—and that not by indirection but by direct suggestion from the Foreign Office in Berlin."

¹¹ The most far-fetched of these was to the effect that the message was found by four soldiers of Company G, First Infantry, on the person of a spy whom they had captured while he was attempting to cross the southern border into Mexico, near the town of Progress on February 21, 1917. See *The New York Times Current History*, period April 1917-June 1917, vol. XI. Even so recent a work as Gunther's *Inside Europe* (1936), pp. 92-93, contains a wholly erroneous version of the episode.

the contents of some of them were published. The English papers represented the case as if a box of dispatches had been taken from Bernstorff. But the Zimmermann note was not among them.¹²

The first lifting of the veil of secrecy surrounding the interception and solution of the Zimmermann telegram occurred in 1925, when the November issue of *World's Work* brought the final installment of Hendrick's *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*. This account, from which a passage has already been cited, still forms the principal source of our information on the subject. A second account, not so detailed as the first, but containing important data, was published in 1933 in Lansing's *War Memoirs*, also already mentioned. Another account appears in a book¹³ by a professed German ex-spy. But since it is based almost entirely upon the Hendrick version, and because there are cogent reasons for discounting much of the contents of the book as a whole, it will be largely disregarded in this paper. In addition to all sources mentioned, reference will be made to official records of the Department of State.

The first links in the story may be seen in the following two telegrams:¹⁴

(1)

LONDON, February 24, 1917.
Rec'd 9 a. m.

SECRETARY OF STATE, Washington.
5746, February 24.

In about three hours I shall send a telegram of great importance to the President and Secretary of State.

PAGE.

* * * * *

(2)

The Ambassador in Great Britain (Page) to the Secretary of State

[Telegram]

LONDON, February 24, 1917—1 p. m.
Rec'd 8:30 p. m.

5747. My 5746, February 24, 8 a. m. For the President and the Secretary of State.

Balfour has handed me the text of a cipher telegram from Zimmermann, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the German Minister to Mexico, which was sent via Washington and relayed by Bernstorff on January 19. You can probably obtain a copy of the text relayed by Bernstorff from the cable office in Washington. The first group is the number of the telegram^{14a}, 130, and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which is Zimmermann's signature. I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German and meanwhile I give you the English translation as follows: (Then follows the English text of the telegram as given above, p. 1.)

The receipt of this information has so greatly exercised the British Government that they have lost no time in communicating it to me to transmit to you, in order that our Government may be able without delay to make such disposition as may be necessary in view of the threatened invasion of our territory.

Early in the war, the British Government obtained possession of a copy of the German cipher code used in the above message and have made it their business to obtain copies of Bernstorff's cipher telegrams to Mexico, amongst others, which are sent back to London and deciphered here. This accounts for their being able to decipher this telegram from the German Government to their repre-

¹² *Nationalversammlung, 1919. Untersuchungsausschuss über die Weltkriegsverantwortlichkeit.* In a series of 15 sessions, from October 21, 1919, to April 14, 1920, a committee appointed by the German National Constituent Assembly to inquire into the responsibility for the war held hearings in Berlin. The reports of two subcommittees together with the stenographic minutes of one of these subcommittees and supplements thereto have been translated and published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as vols. 1 and 2 of *Official German Documents Relating to the World War*. These two volumes are a veritable mine of important information. They will hereafter be referred to as *German Hearings*. The statement above is taken from p. 311.

¹³ von Rintelen, Capt. Franz, *The Dark Invader*. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1933.

¹⁴ The first is taken from *Hendrick*, vol. III, p. 332; the second, from *FRS*, p. 147.

^{14a} This is not the number of the telegram, but the code equivalent of the number (8).

representative in Mexico and also for the delay from January 19 until now in their receiving the information. This system has hitherto been a jealously guarded secret and is only divulged now to you by the British Government in view of the extraordinary circumstances and their friendly feeling toward the United States. They earnestly request that you will keep the source of your information and the British Government's method of obtaining it profoundly secret, but they put no prohibition on the publication of Zimmermann's telegram itself.

The copies of this and other telegrams were not obtained in Washington but were bought in Mexico. I have thanked Balfour for the service his Government has rendered us and suggest that a private official message of thanks from our Government to him would be beneficial.

I am informed that this information has not yet been given to the Japanese Government, but I think it not unlikely that when it reaches them they may make a public statement on it in order to clear up their position regarding the United States and prove their good faith to their Allies.

PAGE.

We shall not concern ourselves with the steps taken by the President and Secretary of State Lansing, culminating in the publication by the Associated Press of the text of the telegram. Our interest will be concentrated upon the minute details of the manner in which the message was intercepted and solved by the British.

The Hendrick account, immediately after the preceding two telegrams quoted above, continues:

The manner in which the British had acquired this message is disclosed in Page's telegram. It was "bought in Mexico." That is, the British Secret Service had obtained it evidently from some approachable person in the Mexican capital—a practice which, it appears from Page's communication, had been going on for some time. An interesting additional fact is that this is not the only way in which the British obtained this priceless treasure. The German Government was so determined to make this Mexican alliance that it did not depend upon a single route for transmitting the Zimmermann message to von Eckhardt. It dispatched it in several other ways. For one it used the wireless route from Nauen, Germany, to Sayville, Long Island.

In the early days of the war, the American Government prohibited the use of this Sayville line except under American supervision; how little this prohibition interfered with the Germans is shown by the use they made of the Long Island station for this, the most fateful message sent to America during the war. * * * In the British Admiralty this Nauen-Sayville thoroughfare was known as the "main line"; it was the most direct and consequently the one most used for sending German dispatches to the United States.

Hendrick cites no authority for the statement that the Zimmermann telegram was transmitted by radio from Nauen to Sayville and there is reason to doubt that this was the case, as will become apparent when the matter is carefully considered in the light of other evidence.

A few hours after the outbreak of the war the British, who have always recognized the importance of controlling communication channels as well as sea lanes, took immediate steps to isolate Germany from the rest of the world that lay beyond the oceans, by cutting and diverting to her own service the two German cables across the Atlantic Ocean. This left Germany only indirect channels of communication with her Ambassador at Washington. These channels were four in number. The first, by radio between a station in Germany and two stations in the United States, was known to and supervised by our Government; the second, by cable from Germany via Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Washington, was secret, and though there is positive evidence that from the very first days of its use it was known to the British, it was unsuspected and unknown to our Government until long after we had entered the war; the third, via Berlin, Copenhagen, Washington, was a very special method used only occasionally, with the knowledge and cooperation of the American State Department; the fourth, involving the insertion of secret text in ordinary news dispatches, was a channel which was of course unknown to our Government, until long after the war was over, when it was disclosed by Bern-

storff himself.¹⁶ Since we are not concerned with this channel of communication we shall have no more to say about it than is given in footnote 15.

We shall consider first the communications passing by radio between the German station at Nauen and one or the other of two radio stations on United States territory, at Sayville, Long Island, and Tuckerton, N. J. These stations had been erected by German enterprise for direct communication with Europe; they were, however, partly financed by French capital, and the legal objections which the French raised immediately upon the outbreak of the war soon resulted in closing both of them. Later our Government, after long negotiations with the German Government, took over the stations and exercised a censorship over them. The steps leading to the imposition of that censorship need not concern us; the fact is that the Germans were unable to use the stations until April 1915¹⁶ and then only under supervision, in that messages sent by Bernstorff to Nauen had to be submitted to our censor before they could be transmitted and messages received from Nauen, addressed to Bernstorff, were carefully scrutinized before they were handed over to him. The purpose of this censorship was, of course, to preserve our neutrality. Messages exchanged via these radio stations were, as a rule, sent in a code known as "Englischer Chiffre Nr. 9972", two copies of which had been deposited with our censor. This is established by the following letter:¹⁷

KAISERLICHE DEUTSCHE BOTSCHAFT,
German Embassy, Washington.

APRIL 20, 1915.

The Imperial German Embassy presents its compliments and has the honor, with reference to the correspondence with Honorable Robert Lansing in regard to the sending of wireless messages in cipher by means of the radio stations at Tuckerton and Sayville, to transmit to the United States Department of State herewith, in two copies, the key to that cipher against kind acquittance for making further directions.

(Signed) J. BERNSTORFF.

As stated above, all messages forwarded by radio by Bernstorff had to be sent to our censor through the State Department and these messages were regularly accompanied by a formal letter couched in the following terms:

The Imperial German Embassy presents its compliments to the United States Department of State and has the honor to enclose herewith a wireless cipher message, in duplicate, to the Foreign Office at Berlin for kind transmission to the Tuckerton station. Duplicate copies of the (plain text) message are likewise enclosed.

¹⁶ Bernstorff, p. 154: "My reports as a matter of fact were somewhat infrequent and always short, as we had to put all our messages into cipher, and this was not always possible. In explanation of the inevitable incompleteness of my communication with the Foreign Office, I may remark that the telegrams of the Wolf and Trans-Ocean Bureaus were regarded as the main sources of information for either side, and that I made use of various arrangements of words, to which the Foreign Office alone had the key, for the purpose of making my own views easily distinguishable in these telegrams." Another interesting corroboration of the use of this method is to be found in the Hall affidavit. (See footnote 20.) Among the telegrams accompanying the affidavit is one (p. 122) dated April 3, 1916, from Bernstorff to the Foreign Office. It contains the following paragraph:

"For this reason I suggest that the Wolf Bureau should be instructed for the present to forward immediately all Klaessig's telegrams to the Foreign Office. It is advisable that all should be sent, because telegrams going from here are in code, and therefore the recognition signal agreed on by us for telegrams intended for you might easily be lost. For motives of economy Klaessig uses the Ritzsanche Bureau in (an American town) for such telegrams, as in this way it is possible to use code with regard to the English censorship."

¹⁷ P. 480, German Hearings.

¹⁸ The letter is in the files of the State Department. In handwriting on its lower left hand corner appears the following: "Two cipher books handed to Lieutenant Noyes, U. S. Navy, April 20, 1915." In telegram 79 dated April 20, 1915, Bernstorff informed the Foreign Office that two copies of Code 9972 were delivered to the State Department. He says (Bernstorff, p. 66): "In these negotiations we had to content ourselves with pointing out that whereas our enemies could pass on military information to their Governments by means of coded cablegrams, we should be confined to the use of the wireless stations. Finally we came to an agreement with the American Government that they should have a copy of the code which we used for the wireless telegrams. In this way their contents were kept secret from the enemy but not from the Washington Government. This course we only agreed to as a last resource as it was not suitable for handling negotiations in which the American Government was concerned." How naive Bernstorff was in respect to his idea that the messages in Code 9972 were thus kept secret from the enemy will be seen in a short time.

Thus not only did the United States have the code in which the messages were prepared, but messages in that code, when sent by Bernstorff to the State Department for transmission, were accompanied by their plain texts so that the censor could verify the latter if he desired.¹⁸

That the scrutiny of these messages was not a mere formality is attested by the fact that the files of the State Department show several cases in which the Department held up and refused to transmit telegrams which, on being examined, were not perfectly clear, or which were even in slight degree questionable as regards our neutrality. In this connection Bernstorff says:¹⁹

As has already been mentioned, all our wireless messages were read by the American Government departments and it had often occurred that objection had been raised.

On one occasion, upon the very urgent request of the German Ambassador, the Secretary of State agreed to permit Bernstorff to receive a radio message from Berlin to Tuckerton prepared, not in Code 9972, but in a code of which no copy had been deposited. This special circumstance caused Bernstorff to address a letter on January 28, 1917, to William Phillips, then Under Secretary of State. This letter, found in the files of the State Department, contains the following paragraph:

I presume that the wireless was addressed and forwarded direct to the Imperial Foreign Office. As I have asked for an immediate wireless reply, my Government may answer in the same way and in a code not decipherable by the Censor at Tuckerton. In a former somewhat similar case when by mistake the wrong code was used, the telegram reached me only after several days' delay. Therefore, and as the answer to my yesterday's message will be extremely urgent, I should be particularly grateful to you, if you could, at your earliest convenience, have the Censor at Tuckerton and at the Navy Department instructed to let, in this exceptional case, the reply to my message pass as quickly as possible.

It is obvious that if scrutiny of messages had been a mere formality Bernstorff would hardly have gone to the trouble of begging so humbly for the permission to which reference is made. Parenthetically it may be stated that if the Germans' purpose in using a code for these radio messages was to keep their contents from their enemies, they might well have saved themselves all the trouble they took, for Code 9972 was extremely simple in construction and was solved by the British without difficulty. This is proved by a telegram that appears in a public record which is replete with valuable information, namely, the documents published by the German-American Mixed Claims Commission, which was established in 1922. Among these documents is an affidavit dated December 28, 1926, by Admiral Sir W. Reginald Hall, wartime chief of the intelligence department of the British Admiralty.²⁰ This affidavit is accompanied by a large number of messages which were intercepted and read by the cryptographic bureau of the British Admiralty. Among these decoded messages is a translation of one of these Nauen-Sayville messages accompanied by the following footnote:²¹

[British] DEPARTMENTAL NOTE.—This is the first message in cipher 9972 which has been read. This cipher is employed in messages passing between Berlin and the German Embassy, Washington.

In view of the strict supervision that was exercised over this Nauen-Sayville radio route it appears strange that the Zimmermann telegram should have been transmitted in this way.

We come now to the second communication channel that was used by the German Government to communicate with Bernstorff, the route via Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Washington. This channel was made available by the good offices of the Swedish Foreign Office and its representatives abroad. Hints as to the use of this channel may be found in Bernstorff. For

¹⁸ Of course the convenience of our censor had a part in the selection of a code in the English language. The code, however, was not compiled for that purpose. It was already on hand and had been used for the purpose of transmitting English material.

¹⁹ Bernstorff, p. 230.

²⁰ Hereafter the Hall affidavit will be referred to as *Hall*. It appears as Claimants' Exhibit 320 of the documents published by the Mixed Claims Commission, and is reprinted as Appendix 1 to this paper.

²¹ Hall, p. 95.

example, on page 65: "We had to fall back exclusively on the wireless stations, when, as frequently happened, we were unable to make use of the *circuitous routes via neutral countries.*"^{22a} Again on page 149: "Telegraphic communication between the German Government and the Embassy at Washington was carried out by a circuitous route, which made it extremely slow."

There is in the State Department files a telegram dated September 10, 1917, from American Ambassador Morris, at Stockholm, to the Secretary of State, which reads:

Today had conference with British Minister who informs me as follows: In the summer of 1915 when Great Britain sent a commission to Sweden to negotiate regarding importation into Sweden the Swedish Government protested against Great Britain delaying in London official telegrams addressed by Swedish Government to Swedish Legation, Washington. British Minister received cable instructions to inform Swedish Government that delay was due to the fact that the British Government was in possession of *positive knowledge*^{22b} that the Swedish Legation, Washington, had transmitted to the German Government through the Foreign Office Stockholm, message from Count Bernstorff. Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs admitted that such message had been sent so transmitted but gave British Minister formal assurance that this would not occur again.

What was the nature of the "positive knowledge" that the British Government possessed? Undoubtedly it was based upon decoded German telegrams, as is evidenced by the following telegram which appears among those in Admiral Hall's affidavit:²³

From BUENOS AIRES
To BERLIN

B. A. 67
(transmitted) 19th June 1915
(5950) and (13040)^{22c}

- I. Telegram No. 72 is missing.
- II. Please send cypher telegrams for WASHINGTON in such a way that they can be recyphered here, otherwise the Swedish facilities for wiring will be compromised and presumably withdrawn from us. LUXBURG.

Note the date of this message. It is good evidence that the British knew of this method, but there is also sufficient additional evidence in Admiral Hall's affidavit, if one studies the points between which the telegrams included in the affidavit were sent. The fact that a large number of the messages in the Hall affidavit were sent via Stockholm-Buenos Aires, is clear proof that the British were carefully watching this route and reading the telegrams transmitted over it.

It is quite clear from this evidence and from the quotations cited above that Hendrick places too much emphasis upon the variety of routes which he says the Zimmermann telegram traveled, as though only this telegram had received special treatment. It is apparent that the transmission of important messages by more than one route was a usual procedure with Bernstorff. For example, he states:²⁴ "With the utmost possible speed I sent the following telegrams about my interview with Mr. House, by three different routes to Berlin."

Hendrick says:²⁵

The fact seems to be that the Swedish Court was openly pro-German; that popular opinion in Sweden similarly inclined to the German side; and, by January, 1917, the Swedish Foreign Office had become almost an integral part of the German organization. In many capitals German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers in other countries and by them delivered to their German colleagues. Herr Zimmermann, in his desire to make certain that his Mexi-

^{22a} Italics ours.

^{22b} Italics in original.

^{22c} Hall, p. 68.

²³ "(5950) and (13040)" is the British designation of the code used by the Germans in sending the message. Code 5950 was an encipherment of 13040, and a message sent in that code had, accordingly, to be transposed into code 13040 before it was read. (See pp. 4-14 of Mendelsohn, Charles J., *Studies in German Diplomatic Codes Employed During the World War*. Technical Paper of the Signal Intelligence Service, Washington, 1937.)

²⁴ Bernstorff, p. 373.

²⁵ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 338.

can telegram should reach Washington, again fell back upon the assistance of his Swedish confreres. He handed his message to the Swedish Minister to Berlin; this functionary sent it to Stockholm, Sweden; from this point it was cabled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and from that city cabled in turn to Washington. The journey was a roundabout one, covering about ten thousand miles. Yet nothing that was sent through the air or under the sea seemed to escape the watchful attention of the British Naval Intelligence, and this Swedish message was captured almost at the same moment as that one which was going by the "main line."

It is to be noted that according to Hendrick "German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers * * *" and he implies that the British read the Swedish code.

Now it would be easy to believe that the British obtained and read messages in Swedish code, for their intercept service pretty well covered the earth. It is, however, intrinsically unlikely that the Germans would give the Swedes the text of a message to be put into Swedish code for transmission. Why reveal their secrets to the Swedish Government? It was so much easier merely to ask Stockholm to forward a message in German code—precisely as they asked the Americans to do it, as we shall soon see. Not only, however, do probabilities point away from any idea that a Swedish code was used, but we have two pieces of evidence on this matter the authenticity of which cannot be questioned.

On September 8, 1917, the State Department published the text of three code messages sent by the German *chargé d'Affaires* at Buenos Aires to the Foreign Office at Berlin. These telegrams became notorious as the Luxburg or "sink without trace" messages. They were furnished by the British, for the American cryptographic bureau had as yet hardly been organized at that time. The files of the State Department contain several messages in connection with this episode. Among them is one dated September 18, 1917, to Bell (Secretary, American Embassy, London) from Harrison (Secretary in the Diplomatic Service, assigned to the Department, later—1922—Assistant Secretary of State), in which Harrison transmitted the dates and initial groups of 22 messages sent from the Swedish Foreign Office, Stockholm, to the Swedish Legation, Buenos Aires and asked: "Please let me know as soon as possible if British authorities have copies of all these messages, if they have been successfully treated, and if so telegraph contents at earliest possible moment." On September 19, Bell replied as follows: "Numbers 4, 5, 11, 16, 17, 18, and 22 are in Swedish code and undecipherable here."

Moreover, we have a direct statement of the war-time British Cryptographic Bureau on this point. After America's entry into the war, the British gave the American Government a partial copy of the German code known as Code 13040, with directions for its use. These directions contain the express statements that German messages sent by Swedish officials were in *enciphered* German code, i. e., the original code groups were subjected to a process of systematic alteration, and that the transfer, or retransfer, from Swedish to German hands was made at Buenos Aires. The method of encipherment employed to disguise the messages upon their transfer was of such nature as not completely to remove certain resemblances to German Code 13040. These resemblances aroused the suspicions of the British cryptographers, and detailed study followed. Once the nature of the disguise was learned, its usefulness was lost, and the Germans might have spared themselves the trouble of disguising the code when they gave their messages to Swedish officials for forwarding.

We have seen that the British Government once informed the Swedish Government that it was "in possession of positive knowledge that the Swedish Legation, Washington, had transmitted to the German Government through the Foreign Office, Stockholm, message from Count Bernstorff." That was "in the summer of 1915." The fact that the practice was not stopped for 2 years or more, though the British must have been fully aware of it, speaks for itself. The British authorities must have realized soon after this protest, which was no doubt made early in

the cryptographic war, that the information they were gleaning from the study of these messages was too valuable to lose, even taking into account the fact that the messages were of considerable use to their enemies. It is more than likely that the information was at least as useful to the British as it was to the Germans themselves. In some cases there is no doubt that it was even more useful.

Finally, there is another important telegram in the files of the State Department on this subject. It is dated September 17, 1917, and was sent by Bell to Harrison. The first paragraph is of great interest. It reads as follows:

I am now able to inform you Zimmerman's telegram to Eckhardt instructing him to induce Mexico to attack us was forwarded through Swedish channels. It had to be sent through Bernstorff for his information, but as Sweden had given up transmitting German telegrams direct to the United States after the British protest in 1915, it was sent through Swedish channels to Buenos Aires and there turned over to Luxburg who repeated it to Bernstorff. The latter retransmitted it to Eckhardt. From Berlin to Bernstorff it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering and of which Eckhardt had no copy. Bernstorff had to repeat it to Mexico therefore in another code known to the German Minister there and incidentally to the British and it is of this message that we obtained a copy.

Of certain portions of this telegram we shall have more to say later, as they are of extreme interest from the cryptographic viewpoint. At this point we shall merely indicate that there is good reason to believe that the British authorities did not tell Bell the whole story when they gave him the information which is contained in the foregoing telegram. Who can blame them for withholding their most precious secrets?

We come now to the third and most interesting of the several channels available to the German Foreign Office in communicating with Bernstorff in Washington—the Berlin-Copenhagen-Washington route used with the cooperation of the American State Department. We shall quote from the Hendrick narrative:²⁶

The German Government forwarded this dispatch to Washington in still another way. Indeed, the most remarkable incident in this remarkable transaction remains to be told. Evidently the German Foreign Office feared that transmission by wireless and cable transmission to Buenos Aires—by grace of the Swedish Government—might fail them. The prohibition the American Government had placed upon the use of wireless from Nauen to Sayville, Long Island, might naturally cause apprehension as to the delivery of messages sent by this route. The cable line from Stockholm to Buenos Aires and thence to Washington and Mexico was a roundabout one, and a message transmitted that way might conceivably fail to reach its destination.

The dispatch of this telegram, however, was at that moment the most important business before the German Foreign Office and its safe arrival in the city of Mexico must be assured at any cost. There was one method that was absolutely sure, though the fact that this should have occurred to Zimmermann must be regarded as one of the most audacious and even reckless strokes of the war. Humor of any kind the Germans seldom displayed at crises of this sort, yet the mechanism adopted to make certain that this plot against the American people would safely land on Bernstorff's desk convinces an unmistakable gift—even though an unconscious one—for the sardonic.

The transaction reflects so seriously upon the methods of the State Department that it would probably never have seen the light had the Germans not made it public themselves. In 1919-20 the German Constituent Assembly held an elaborate investigation into the responsibility for the war. In this the Zimmermann telegram played its part. Among its published documents is a note which reveals one route by which this document found its way across the Atlantic.²⁷ It says:

"Instructions to Minister von Eckhardt were to be taken by letter by way of Washington by U-boat on the 15th of January; since the U-boat *Deutschland* did not start on her outward trip, these instructions were attached on January 16th to telegram No. 157, and through the offices of the American Embassy in Berlin telegraphed to Count Bernstorff by way of the State Department in Washington."

²⁶ Hendrick, vol. III, pp. 338-341.

²⁷ Hendrick's footnote: See Vol. II, p. 1337: "Official German Documents Relating to the World War." Translated under the supervision of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. [This work is referred to in the present paper as *German Hearings*.]

What this means is that the German Foreign Office used the American Government as an errand boy for the transmission of a document that contained a plot against its own territorial integrity. * * *

The German Government, many times in the course of the war, used the good offices of the American State Department for transmitting messages to Ambassador Bernstorff. Germany had no cable communication with the United States; the wireless was unreliable and not always available; occasionally, therefore, the Germans would request Washington to serve in this capacity. As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favor could be performed. That the British graciously permitted the Germans to use their cable facilities may possibly have seemed, at the time, an act savoring of the magnanimous; the fact, however, that the British possessed the German cipher and read all these messages as they sped through England creates the suspicion that they may have regarded this as a way of obtaining valuable information.

Hendrick makes it appear that obtaining permission to use the American State Department facilities was a rather simple matter and that many messages were sent by the State Department for the Germans in this way, without realization on the part of State Department officialdom of the possibly serious consequences that might ensue. That this is far from the truth will appear later. His statement, too, that "As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favor could be performed" is meaningless when one considers the matter. It is obvious first of all that had the American Government been so naive as to ask the British Government's consent to such a procedure the latter would certainly have refused. It is likewise obvious that when Bernstorff wanted to send a code message to the Foreign Office in Berlin, the State Department could not simply address a telegram to the American Ambassador, Gerard, in plain language asking him to "Forward the following code message to the German Foreign Office." The British would naturally not pass such messages even though the greatest neutral country asked such a favor. Such a procedure is not a diplomatic possibility in time of war. If not in plain language, the forwarding by the State Department of German code messages had to be done through the intermediacy of State Department code. Assuming that official messages of the American Government to her ambassadors and ministers in Europe were not subjected to any study whatsoever by the British Cryptographic Bureau (which is difficult to believe), it is possible that this practice might not have been detected immediately by the British. But the manner in which the messages were actually drawn up was such that the discovery of the practice should and must have been particularly easy if American messages were even hastily scanned. Here is an example of the plain text of such a message, copied from the files of the State Department:

Amlegation
Copenhagen
Forward Berlin
3803

Deliver to German Foreign Office the following message from Ambassador Bernstorff.
(Add German Cipher.)

LANSING.

Lacking a copy of the telegram as actually filed for transmission, the form the code message took when filed cannot here be indicated; but we have on this point the positive statement of Mr. David A. Salmon, then as now Chief of the Division of Communications and Records of the State Department, to the effect that the code groups of the German code message were *not* reencoded in State Department code, or changed in any way whatever: they were merely added to the preamble requesting the forwarding of the message. This preamble was in code—American State Department code. Now the code groups of the American code were most commonly in letters, while those of the German code were in figures.²⁸ Furthermore, the

²⁸ In a few cases State Department code messages consisted of figure-groups but the latter were invariably 5-digit groups, while the German code messages, as stated further on, consisted of 3, 4, and 5-digit groups.

code groups of the German code were characterized by being composed of three, four, and five digits, whereas in most codes of even those days all of the code groups uniformly contained five letters, or five figures. Hence the subterfuge was sure to be detected almost immediately by the British. Still they made no protest. Why? The answer must surely be obvious: they were glad to have access to this leakage of valuable information, and to lodge a protest would at once dry it up at the source.

Whereas Hendrick makes it appear that our State Department handled many messages for the Germans, Lansing in his account of the matter makes it appear as though the transmission of the Zimmerman telegram via State Department channels was an isolated incident, or at least that this method of communication was placed at the disposal of Bernstorff only toward the end of the period of strained relations. Quoting Lansing:²⁹

At eleven-thirty I went to the White House and for an hour discussed with the President the substance of the [Zimmermann] telegram and the way to use it. The President said that he had been wondering how Bernstorff got the message from Berlin, and that the closing of secret lines of communication with his government made him a little uncertain as to its authenticity.

I told him that I thought it could be easily explained, my opinion being that it was done in the following manner: During the early part of January Count von Bernstorff, at the instance of Colonel House, had been laboring with his government to obtain concrete terms of peace. The Ambassador had complained of his inability to communicate secretly and therefore freely with Berlin, which he considered essential in order to accomplish his purpose. In view of this reasonable statement we had consented very reluctantly to send [that is, in a cipher, of which the Department did not have the key] messages for him through our Embassy.³⁰ This we did several times, permitting the German Foreign Office to reply in the same way. On January seventeenth an exceptionally long message (some one thousand groups) came through from Berlin. On the eighteenth this message was delivered to the Ambassador. On the nineteenth the telegram from Bernstorff to Mexico was filed. From these facts I drew the conclusion that in the long secret message delivered to him on the eighteenth was the message for the German Minister besides other orders as to what to do in case of a severance of diplomatic relations.³¹

The President two or three times during the recital of the foregoing exclaimed "Good Lord!" and when I had finished said he believed that the deduction as to how Bernstorff received his orders was correct. He showed much resentment at the German Government for having imposed upon our kindness in this way and for having made us the innocent agents to advance a conspiracy against this country.

Careful study of available records shows that while this channel of communication was used on more than a single occasion, it was used not nearly so frequently as Hendrick implies, and that its employment was confined to periods of strained relations. The first was on June 2, 1915, shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which occurred on May 7, 1915. Of this period Bernstorff says:³²

It is certain that if I had not at this stage of the *Lusitania* crisis had my interview with the President, relations would have been broken off and war between the United States and Germany must inevitably have followed. * * * During our conversation, however, the President offered for the first time to permit me to dispatch a cipher telegram through the State Department, to be sent on by the American Embassy in Berlin.³³

²⁹ Lansing, p. 227.

³⁰ Bracketed matter so in original.

³¹ A footnote at this point contains substantially the same matter as is given in our extract from Hendrick given on p. 11, regarding the way in which the Zimmermann telegram was to have been sent by the submarine *Deutschland*.

³² Bernstorff, p. 151 and p. 154.

³³ This statement is not strictly correct, for there exists in the files of the State Department a letter dated November 12, 1914, from Bernstorff to Secretary Bryan enclosing a message which Bernstorff asked Bryan to send to the German Foreign Office. This message was in the German code, 13040, and, as Bernstorff told Secretary Bryan, asked "instructions from my Government for the purpose of publicly indorsing the Belgian relief plan." Attached to the letter is the text of the code message which we have decoded and find to be as described by Bernstorff. This message, incidentally, was in the same code (13040) as the Zimmermann telegram in the form in which the latter was forwarded by Bernstorff to Mexico City.

This initial instance apparently paved the way for several more during the same crisis, as is evidenced by Bernstorff:³⁴

From this time onwards [that is about July 21, 1915] Mr. Lansing agreed with me that, as a regular thing, I should be permitted, whatever negotiations were going on, to send cipher dispatches to my Government through the channels of the State Department and the American Embassy in Berlin. It will be remembered that a similar privilege had been granted me at the time of the *Lusitania* incident.

But, lest one jump to the conclusion that the State Department was careless in placing its facilities at the disposal of the Germans and regarded the matter as being without possibility of serious repercussions, let it be noted that Mr. Lansing not only realized the full implications of the unusual procedure but also refused to transmit a message on at least one occasion on the ground that there appeared "to be no particular urgency for the transmission of the message on account of either of the subjects mentioned."³⁵ It must also be noted that the State Department transmitted messages not only for the German Government, but also for the Austrian, as is proved by a telegram dated February 4, 1917, from Lansing to Ambassador Penfield at Vienna.³⁶

Despite the questionable propriety of this procedure on the part of our diplomatic officials, it is easy to understand why President Wilson and Mr. Lansing made the State Department route available in the circumstances that then existed. For, with their complete control of cable facilities, the Allies were able to transmit any information they pleased without censorship of any sort by any other Government, while the Central Powers, having no cables, were forced to use radio, and even then had to submit their messages to a censorship exercised by foreign powers.

It may possibly be supposed that the Zimmermann telegram was transmitted by radio from Nauen direct to Mexico, inasmuch as there was a powerful station at Chapultepec. But the evidence is fairly clear against such an hypothesis. The Chapultepec station was hardly in working order by October 1918 as can be seen from the following message:³⁷

From: Madrid
To: Berlin
No. 1220
Oct. 8, 1918

JAHNKE reports from Mexico without date: Cipher telegrams 6 and 7 cannot be deciphered. Please send thrice each time. A wireless station has been erected. I am now trying to get into communication with Nauen. * * *

Jahnke was a secret agent of the German Admiralty who worked in the United States and Mexico. His telegrams were sent by von Eckhardt, the German Minister at Mexico City, to Buenos Aires for relay to Berlin. While the foregoing message states that "Jahnke reports from Mexico without date" we can fix the date of the report as not earlier than June 9, 1918, because cipher telegram No. 7, mentioned in that report as being indecipherable, was sent on June 9.³⁸ While it is possible to imagine that messages might have been transmitted from Nauen in the hope that they could be heard in Mexico City, yet the fact that as late as the middle of 1918 Jahnke was evidently having a great deal of trouble in receiving signals (note that he asks that signals be sent thrice each time) makes it extremely unlikely that a year and a half before then the Germans would have tried to get the Zimmermann telegram to Mexico City by such an uncertain route.

³⁴ Bernstorff, p. 166.

³⁵ FR'S, pp. 83 and 87.

³⁶ FR'S, p. 112, contains the following message: "He [Austrian Ambassador] presented two messages to be sent through you to his Government, which were forwarded last night in department's 1519, February 3, 7 p. m., and 1520, February 3, 8 p. m. One more message, our 1523, February 4, 4 p. m., was sent at his request this morning."

³⁷ Hall Affidavit, p. 254.

³⁸ Hall Affidavit, p. 244.

We come now to a study of the code used for the Zimmermann telegram itself. The telegram carried the number 158 and was appended to telegram No. 157 which was sent through State Department channels.³⁹ If, therefore, lacking telegram 158, we could ascertain what code was used for telegram No. 157 we would have at least a clue as to what code was used for the Zimmermann telegram. But even this clue is lacking, for, despite most diligent search, in which there was full cooperation from the Chief of the Division of Communications and Records in the State Department, we have thus far been unable to locate the original of telegram No. 157 in the files of the State Department. However, telegram No. 157 was only one of a series exchanged between the German Foreign Office and Bernstorff via the State Department, and fortunately there do exist at least several other messages belonging to this latter series in those files.⁴⁰

All these messages are of vital importance in a study of the strained relations immediately preceding the break between Germany and the United States which formally took place on February 3, 1917, when Bernstorff was handed his passport. They are all in a code which is known as 7500, as was ascertained by a study of the messages in question in connection with their plain texts, as published in the official report of the German hearings.^{40a}

Since the Bernstorff messages just mentioned were sent in Code 7500, the probabilities are very high that telegrams Nos. 157 and 158 were also in Code 7500. But the Zimmermann telegram as given to Ambassador Page by the British was the decoded version of a message not in Code 7500 but in Code 13040. This code, 7500, is what is known to cryptographers as a "two-part" or "cross-referenced" code. The two parts comprise (1) a set of 10,000 phrases in alphabetical order and numbered from 0000 to 9999, the numbers being entirely disarranged, i. e., without any numerical sequence; (2) the same phrases fitted with the same numbers as before, but this time with the numbers in sequence and the phrases disarranged. The first part, with the phrases in alphabetical order, is used for encoding—for sending a message; the second part, with the numbers in sequence, is used for reading a message which has been sent by means of the numbers. The advantage of a code of this nature is that the identification of any code group by an outsider will yield no alphabetical clue to the meaning of any other code group which is numerically in its neighborhood. Thus, 1256 might, in an English code of the kind described, signify "day," 1257, "book," and 1258, "shoe." The reconstruction of a code of this nature by analysis is necessarily a much slower process than the building up of a code book in which the alphabetical order of the phrases corresponds to the numerical sequence of their code group equivalents—wherein, for example, 1256 signifies "date," 1257 "day," 1258 "daze," etc.

Code 7500, which as stated was a two-part code, was one of a series of such codes which the Germans employed. The code indicator for one of these codes uniformly consists of two significant digits followed by two 0's. The two significant digits always show an arithmetical difference of 2. A skeleton reconstruction of Code 9700 and one of 5300 are in the Government files. Code 8600 was used by German officials in South America during the war. Code 6400 also was in use during the war. The existence of a code known as 4200 was predicted because of the existence of the others, and was later confirmed from a French source.^{40b}

Code 13040 was an old German diplomatic code of the partially disarranged type: The alphabetic vocabulary is broken up into fractions and these again into smaller fractions before the numeral code groups are attached. By this process the original alphabetical sequence of

³⁹ German Hearings, p. 1337.

⁴⁰ Some of these messages are Bernstorff's Nos. 154 and 156 of November 21; 164 of December 1; 169 of December 4, 1916; 212 of January 16; 222 of January 21; 228 and 229 of January 23; and 239 of January 27, 1917.

^{40a} See Mendelsohn, Charles J., *An Encipherment of the German Diplomatic Code 7500*, Technical Paper of the Signal Intelligence Service, 1938.

^{40b} See Boucard, Robert. Article in *Gringoire*, Paris, Feb. 5, 1937.

the words and phrases is only partially destroyed. In the case of 13040 the method of dividing the vocabulary into fractions was such as to leave very generous traces of the alphabetical arrangement and proportionally to facilitate the process of decipherment. Once begun, the decipherment of such a code becomes progressively easier as more groups are identified.

When Ambassador Page sent his telegram containing the English text of the Zimmermann message, he said:⁴¹

I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German

These were sent from London on March 2, but of course could not have reached Washington in less than a week. In the meantime, still worried about the authenticity of the telegram, Washington asked for a copy of the German code, as is evidenced by the following telegram:⁴²

WASHINGTON, February 28, 1917—8 p. m.

4493. Your 5747, February 24—1 p. m. Please endeavor to obtain copy of German code from Mr. Balfour, decode following messages and telegraph translations. All three messages are dated January 17, signed Bernstorff, and addressed to the German Legations at Bogota, Port-au-Prince, and Santiago, Chile, respectively.

[Here follow code messages.]

Effort will be made to secure copies of all German cipher messages as far back as possible and if the Department were in possession of the code there would be a great saving of time and expense. Contents of messages decoded here would of course be communicated to the British Government.

Publication of Z[immermann]'s telegram to Mexico tomorrow.

LANSING.

Page replied:⁴³

LONDON, March 1, 1917—11 p. m.

[Received March 2, 12:30 a. m.]

Your 4493, February 28—8 p. m. The three messages were deciphered to-day and are practically identical. They contain instructions to the three legations to use a certain variation of the cipher code when communicating with Berlin. The one to Santiago was to be repeated to other missions in South America. The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but there appear to be serious difficulties. I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it was never used straight; but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here. They can not be spared to go to America. If you will send me copies of B[ernstorff]'s cipher telegrams, the British authorities will gladly decipher them as quickly as possible giving me copies as fast as deciphered. I could telegraph texts or summaries in matters of importance and send the others by pouch. Neither Spring Rice nor Gaunt know anything about this matter.

PAGE.

Mr. Page's informant was misinformed or was misleading Mr. Page. The code used is described by Mr. Page in his original announcement concerning the Zimmermann telegram:⁴⁴

The first group is the number of the telegram, 130, [sc. in the German numbering and dating code, in which the group 130 means "Number 3"; the Zimmermann telegram was therefore message No. 3 from Washington to Mexico City], and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which is Zimmermann's signature.

This description tallies exactly with the copy of the telegram as secured by Mr. Polk from the Washington telegraph office. (See frontispiece.) The message was in straight unenciphered German code, and could be read by any one in possession of both the telegram and the code book. Not only was the Zimmermann telegram as sent from Washington to Mexico City in this unenciphered 13040 code, but a whole multitude of messages between Washington and Berlin were sent in the same way.

⁴¹ See message quoted on p. 5.

⁴² FRB, p. 152.

⁴³ FRB, pp. 157-158.

⁴⁴ See message quoted on p. 5.

Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, in his affidavit before the Mixed Claims Commission, said of this code (Claimant's Exhibit 320, p. 776):

The German cipher book covering this system of ciphering is in our possession, it having been captured by the British authorities in the baggage of a German consul named Wasmuss who was stationed at Shiraz while Wasmuss was engaged in an endeavor to cut a British oil pipe line.

It seems unlikely that a German consul engaged in an expedition to cut a pipe line should carry a diplomatic code book in his baggage. Moreover, the British copy of 13040 is fragmentary, and gives every evidence of having been gradually reconstructed in a cryptographic bureau through the decipherment of messages. A glance at the copy given by the British to the United States after America's entrance into the war will demonstrate this fact. This copy contains about half the vocabulary, but is not a transcript of part of the code book, since it comprises some words and phrases from all the pages. Some of the identifications, too, are marked doubtful. An actual copy of a code book would certainly not exhibit missing and doubtful sections.

On the other hand Admiral Hall's recollection was probably only partly at fault. The British may very well have found in Wasmuss' baggage not a copy of a code book but a copy of one or more telegrams with the code text accompanied by the corresponding clear. From this start they would then proceed to build up the code book. As already indicated, the nature of the structure of Code 13040 is such that a comparatively small amount of decoded material together with a number of telegrams in code will enable skilled cryptographers to reconstruct the book.

How did the British obtain the 13040 version of the Zimmermann Telegram? Page was told that it was "* * * bought in Mexico." While the British, for obvious reasons, insisted upon the Mexican source of the message, we may have our own opinion as to whether or not they procured another copy from the files of the Western Union Telegraph Office in Washington.

The following questions now may be raised with the hope of finding accurate answers: Why was the Zimmermann telegram originally sent from Berlin to Washington in Code 7500 and not in Code 13040? What routes were really used for its transmission? If several routes were really used, when did the telegram first reach Bernstorff? Why did Bernstorff forward it in another code? When did the British first intercept the message, if it was sent by more than one route? Were they able to decode it at once, and if so, why did they wait more than a month before communicating its contents to Ambassador Page for forwarding to Washington? And which version did the British Government hand Page, the one in Code 7500 or the one in Code 13040? The answers to these questions are vital points in this study.

The Zimmermann telegram was prepared originally in German code 7500 because that was the code employed for these special communications between the German Foreign Office and Bernstorff for direct communication via State Department channels at the time in question. The German hearings contain extremely interesting testimony on this point, for the Zimmermann telegram episode was discussed with some detail at those hearings, and the printed record contains sufficiently interesting testimony on the circumstances surrounding the disclosure of the text of the telegram to warrant quotation.⁴⁵

Delegate Dr. SCHÜCKING. Was there—and this is a much more important matter—an investigation into the fate of the Mexican dispatches?

Witness COUNT V. BERNSTORFF. Yes, an investigation did take place in that instance.

Delegate Dr. SCHÜCKING. And what was the result of this investigation; so far as your activities came into question?

⁴⁵ German Hearings, pp. 312-315; 478-481.

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. So far as I know, no result was accomplished by the investigation. But subsequently I came to have no doubt upon the point that all our dispatches were decoded by the British and placed at the disposal of the Americans.

Expert Dr. BONN. By this, you mean to say that this dispatch was caught between Germany and the United States, and that the decoding was not the result of transmitting the message to Mexico from the United States by land?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. According to what I learned later, I assume that the British decoded all the telegrams which came over the English cables.

Expert Dr. BONN. We shall have to go into this matter more carefully later on.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, but for the present we will close the matter here with this.

Delegate Dr. SPAHN. Secretary of State Zimmermann will give us information later concerning the question of the box.⁴⁶ The statement which we have received from him on the point differs from yours, your Excellency. But he will tell us about it himself.

So far as concerns the dispatch to Carranza, the complaint has been made that there was no change of code, and that the old cipher was used, which had been known for a long while; that it was in this way possible for the dispatch to be decoded. How about this?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. Naturally, the code was changed much less during war time than was otherwise the case, but that was due to the fact that it was impossible to send us new ciphers.⁴⁶ The last time I received new ciphers was by way of the U-boat *Deutschland*. * * * Twice, on both the trips of the U-boat *Deutschland* I was sent new ciphers.⁴⁷

* * * * *
Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. May I be permitted at this point to ask a question concerning the ciphers and cipher keys?

The CHAIRMAN. That would seem to be connected with the point at issue, and in any event we shall hardly have an opportunity later on to go into it.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. I would like to ask Count Bernstorff to make us a brief statement covering the use of the ciphers, the key to the ciphers, etc. It is well known that complaints have been made in respect to the use of the cipher. The Count said something with regard to the matter during the first session.

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. It is readily understood that, under the conditions which I have described, the ciphers were not changed as often as would have been the case under normal conditions. In all probability, if communications had not been interrupted, we would have received new ciphers every month or every other month, so that they could not have been compromised so easily. To the extent that my memory serves me, the only occasions upon which we received new ciphers were on the two trips of the *Deutschland*. To the extent that it was possible to do so, we operated the available ciphers by means of keys; but I learned later, as I already stated in giving my first testimony, that the British deciphered all our telegrams.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. How do you explain the fact that the English were able to get such a knowledge of them?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. I am no cipher expert, but the cipher experts now state that there is absolutely no cipher which they cannot decipher. I do not know how right they are in this, but, in any event, the experts say that there is absolutely no cipher which they cannot decipher, provided they have before them a sufficient number of telegrams. And this result, particularly in the case of the United States, was probably due to the fact that circumstances were such as to force us to make use of an extraordinarily large number of ciphered messages, and we often sent our reports and telegrams in double or triple form, in the hope that in some way they should reach Germany. Consequently, the British must have had an enormous amount of material in the way of cipher dispatches of ours, and in this way it was possible for them to break down our various ciphers.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. So that, according to your conviction, the question of treachery or carelessness is not involved in the matter?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. I can state under oath that I do not believe that there was any treachery or negligence.

⁴⁶ The word "box" has reference to the dispatch box which the British found and seized on the boat on which Bernstorff returned to Germany after severance of diplomatic relations. (See p. 4.)
⁴⁷ Bernstorff's last voyage is distinguished. The question is about the code used from Washington to Mexico City; the answer is about the code from Berlin to Washington. Why the German Government did not change the code from Washington to Mexico City remains a puzzle. The border was not carefully guarded even after we entered the war.
⁴⁸ On its first voyage, the *Deutschland* docked at Norfolk on July 9, 1916, on its second voyage, at New London on November 1, 1916.

A study of available messages, exchanged between Bernstorff and the Foreign Office in Berlin during the period of strained relations indicates that Code 7500 was one of the two received by Bernstorff via the *Deutschland*, and this code was apparently reserved for messages of the highest importance. Code 13040 was nevertheless used concurrently with Code 7500 as well as with other codes. Code 13040 was very old; in fact it used the old German orthography and whereas it contained words like "velociped" it failed to list such a word as "U-Boot," except in a supplement, and was not sufficiently up-to-date for foreign communications.

As to the routes really used for the transmission of the Zimmermann telegram, all the evidence thus far cited indicates that two routes were certainly employed, even if the wireless was not used. The first was the State Department route, and it is clear that the telegram was sent on January 16, 1917, via that channel. The second route, according to the statement contained in the cablegram from Bell to Harrison quoted above (p. 11), was via Swedish channels, and since Bell told Harrison that the British had succeeded only partially in decoding the message, it may be assumed that it too was in Code 7500. If the wireless was used, the same code was almost certainly used. The British in the fall of 1917 apparently saw no harm in telling Bell that the Germans had employed Swedish channels for the Zimmermann message because the subject of the moment was the famous Luxburg "sink without trace" message which had been sent via those same channels. However, Bell was not told that the British had intercepted the Zimmermann telegram sent via State Department channels for reasons which will presently become clear.

The British undoubtedly intercepted the State Department message which served, so to speak, as the envelope for the Zimmermann telegram, on January 16, 1917, or, at the latest, the next day. Were they able to decode the German code text contained within the State Department's message? The answer to this question is of great cryptographic interest. They were able to read it—but only partially. The evidence for this is fairly clear cut. Not only have we the Bell to Harrison cablegram referred to above, which specifically states that "from Berlin to Bernstorff it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering," but we may also note some corroborative evidence for this statement in Hendrick's version reading as follows:⁴⁸

On the 16th of January 1917, the ever-watchful ears of the British wireless operators detected the characteristic spluttering which informed them that another German message was speeding through the air. When decoded, the British found that they possessed this somewhat disjointed but still extremely valuable document:

"Zimmermann to Bernstorff for Eckhardt W. 158."⁴⁹

"16TH JANUARY, 1917.

"Most secret for your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister in ? Mexico with Tel. No. 1 * * * by a safe route.

"We purpose to begin on the 1st February unrestricted submarine warfare. In doing so, however, we shall endeavor to keep America neutral. * * * ? If we should not (succeed in doing so) we propose to (? Mexico) an alliance upon the following basis:

"(joint) conduct of the war

"(joint) conclusion of peace.

"Your Excellency should for the present inform the President secretly (that we expect) war with the U. S. A. (possibly) (* * * Japan) and at the same time to negotiate between us and Japan * * * (Indecipherable sentence meaning please tell the President) that * * * our submarines * * * will compel England to peace in a few months. Acknowledge receipt.

ZIMMERMANN."

⁴⁸ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 336.

⁴⁹ In Admiral Hall's affidavit it is explained that in the British files a letter followed by a number indicated the point of origin and serial number of the message. "B 120," for example, means Berlin's message No. 120 to a given destination. While the number "158" is correct as the serial number of the Zimmermann telegram the "W" [i. e., Washington] preceding it is an error, and should read "B" [i. e., Berlin].

This somewhat confused message gives an idea of the difficulty of picking up wireless symbols sent across the Atlantic—at that time—in midwinter. But there is a conspicuous discrepancy between this telegram and the more complete and finished one sent to Bernstorff by way of the Washington cable office and by him relayed to the city of Mexico. The plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a free gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona does not appear in it. Whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation is not yet clear.

We have reason to doubt that the Zimmermann telegram was sent by radio. When one examines the text of the message as given by Hendrick and compares it with the German text of the original Zimmermann telegram as published in the German hearings one sees immediately that this partially decoded text quoted by Hendrick is that of the original Zimmermann telegram as prepared in Code 7500 and transmitted via State Department channels. The "give away" is contained in the opening sentence to the message: "Most secret; for Your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister * * *." This forms the preamble to the actual Zimmermann telegram as it left the German Foreign Office. It is naturally not contained in the version which Bernstorff sent to von Eckhardt in German Code 13040 and which the British obtained in Mexico. The lacunae in the first solution obtained by the British are there because the British had only partially succeeded in reconstructing Code 7500. Hendrick, specifically calling attention to the omission of the plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, raises the question as to whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation. Does he wish us to infer that Bernstorff added this interesting feature to the message? How absurd!

The real explanation is cryptographic in nature. Such names as Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona would not be included in making up a small code like 7500. In fact, the name of only one of these States—Texas—is included in the much larger code 13040. These names, if they occurred in a message, would have to be built up syllable by syllable by the use of several code groups; and unless these code groups were used frequently in other messages a cryptanalyst who was solving the messages by analysis would have no way of establishing the meaning of these groups in the Zimmermann telegram. Code 13040, as has been pointed out, retained decided traces of its original alphabetical arrangement, and had, moreover, been in use for a long time. Code 7500, on the other hand, had no trace of alphabetical arrangement, and had been used between Berlin and Washington for a short time only. It had been brought to America (cf. note 47) by the submarine *Deutschland* on either July 9 or November 1, 1916, and the earliest 7500 message which the present authors have been able to find is dated November 16. In these circumstances the British reconstruction of 7500 had not reached the point where it was equal to the complete decipherment of the Zimmermann telegram. When, however, the 13040 version was obtained, the entire message was read without difficulty.

When all is said and done, the decipherment of the 7500 version of the Zimmermann telegram, even to the degree given in the Hendrick version, approaches the unbelievable. This statement is not to be understood as in any way questioning the skill of the British cryptographers. With the greatest skill in the world, however, cryptography is a science assisted by art, and is not in any sense clairvoyance. There are only about a dozen 7500 messages in the American files. If we assume that the British had twice that number to work with their feat remains astonishing; for it must always be kept in view that 7500 is a code in which one identification gives no alphabetical clue whatever to another, and that this complete absence of alphabetization likewise makes it impossible in many cases, even where the general meaning of a code group is apparent, to choose among a number of synonyms any one of which will fit equally well. A lacuna of five or six code groups, not to mention longer ones, renders decipher-

ment not merely extremely difficult, but literally impossible, for the simple reason that there are an infinite number of ways in which such a lacuna may be filled.

It may be that Code 7500 was in use by the Germans for other traffic than the German-American, and that the British, as a consequence, had access to a very large number of messages. The employment of a code in different parts of the world is not unknown in German practice; we know that Codes 13040 and 18470 were so used. In this way the British may have made considerable progress in the solution of the code before the Zimmermann telegram was sent.^{49a}

Nevertheless, the information which the British obtained from this partially solved message was apparently clear enough and of sufficient importance to warrant their disclosing it to the American Government *at once*—if they wished to. Still, they did not do so. Why? Why did they wait from the middle of January until February 24? One astute student⁵⁰ raises the pertinent question as to the motives of the British in handing Ambassador Page a month-old telegram:

There is no doubt that President Wilson was profoundly shocked by this revelation of the fact that one could not go to war with Germany without having the Germans fight back. It did not even occur to him to question the authenticity of the document or the motive for the production of a month-old telegram at just that moment.⁵¹ At once the President cabled back his thanks for "information of such inestimable value" and his "very great appreciation of so marked an act of friendliness on the part of the British Government." No suspicions crossed his mind. The cable arrived on Saturday evening. It was some time on Sunday that President Wilson abruptly concluded that an appeal to Congress for authority at least to arm American merchant ships was unavoidable. On Monday he went again before the joint Houses of Congress. "Since," he told them, "it has unhappily proved impossible to safeguard our neutral rights by diplomatic means * * * there may be no recourse but to armed neutrality."

Millis is, of course, quite correct in stating that "It did not even occur to him to question the authenticity of the document * * *." The evidence on this point, based on a study not only of Lansing's *Memoirs*⁵² but also of the communications which were exchanged between Lansing and Page before the text of the Zimmermann telegram was made public, on March 1, 1917, is most conclusive.

Let us briefly review the chronology of the case:

January 16, 1917: The telegram is transmitted in Code 7500 (via State Department channels) from the German Foreign Office in Berlin to Bernstorff in Washington and is to be forwarded by Bernstorff to the German Minister in Mexico City. On January 17 it is received by the State Department, and on the 18th it is delivered to Bernstorff. (*Lansing*, p. 227.)

January 19: Bernstorff forwards the message to Mexico in Code 13040.⁵³

^{49a} Failing some such explanation the whole situation calls to mind a war-time incident that occurred in the American Military Intelligence Code and Cipher Section (M. I. 8). Those entrusted with the decipherment of cryptographic documents of one country in that section usually kept their own counsel and did not communicate overmuch with those who were busy with the messages of another country. One day it was learned that a certain group was reading messages in a code that had been a sealed book a day or so before. Later it was definitely ascertained that a copy of the code in a somewhat different encipherment had been procured from outside. At the time of the feat this was surmised by some of those not in the secret, and one cryptographer in discussing the situation said emphatically, "They're not doing any miracles around here."

⁵⁰ Millis, Walter, *Road to War: America 1914-1917*, New York, 1935, pp. 403-404.

⁵¹ Millis' footnote: Mr. Balfour, it is true, had been careful to tell Page that the telegram had only just been received. Actually, if one may believe Mr. Page's biographer, the British intelligence service had intercepted and deciphered the document even before it had reached Mexico City, and had been holding it since then for the time when it would have the maximum effect.

⁵² *Op. Cit.*, p. 227: "About ten o'clock [morning of February 27, 1917] Polk came into my office and we talked over the substance of the telegram. He told me that on its arrival [8:30 p. m., Saturday, February 24; apparently it was not decoded and handed to Polk until Monday, February 26] he had at once taken it to the President, who had shown much indignation and was disposed to make the text public without delay. Polk advised him to await my return, which he had agreed to do." * * * (p. 228). "I told the President that I thought it would be unwise for the Department to give out the telegram officially at this time as it would be charged that it was done to influence opinion on the bill for arming merchant vessels, but I thought it might indirectly be made public after we had confirmed the sending of the message by Bernstorff. To this the President agreed."

⁵³ This date is certain from the copy of the telegram. Bernstorff says (p. 380) that "the Zimmermann telegram passed through the Embassy at Washington on the same day on which I received the notification that the unrestricted U-boat war was to be declared"; and in another place (p. 358) he says: "On the 19th of January I received the official notice that the unrestricted U-boat campaign would begin on February 1st * * *." Of course, Bernstorff's phrase "passed through" is ambiguous, and does not categorically say the message was forwarded on the very day it was received—it may only have been started on its way, for it required reencoding, and that would take some time.

February 24: Ambassador Page cables the President and the Secretary of State the English text of the message as received by him in London from Balfour. The message is received at 8:30 p. m. on that date.

February 27: In Lansing's absence, Polk brings the message to the attention of the President, who wishes to publish it at once, but is persuaded by Polk to await Lansing's return.

February 28: (1) Polk obtains a copy of the original message filed by Bernstorff at Washington to the German Minister in Mexico City. The code text was *not* cabled to London for verification but the texts of three other code messages sent by Bernstorff to German Legations in South America (apparently obtained from the Washington telegraph office at the same time the copy of the Zimmermann telegram was obtained) were sent for decipherment. The message forwarding these texts has already been quoted (p. 16).

(2) Lansing communicates a paraphrased version of the text of the Zimmermann telegram to the Associated Press at 6 p. m., for release after 10 p. m.

March 1: (1) The English text is published in the morning papers in the United States and the message is discussed in Congress, where doubts are expressed as to its authenticity.^{53a}

(2) Lansing cables Page, in telegram No. 4494, at 8 p. m., as follows:⁵⁴

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1917—8 p. m.

4494. Some members of Congress are attempting to discredit Zimmermann message charging that message was furnished to this Government by one of the belligerents. This Government has not the slightest doubt as to its authenticity, but it would be of the greatest service if the British Government would permit you or someone in the Embassy to personally decode the original message which we secured from the telegraph office in Washington and then cable to Department German text. Assure Mr. Balfour that the Department hesitated to make this request but feels that this course will materially strengthen its position and make it possible for the Department to state that it had secured the Zimmermann note from our own people. Matter most urgent and I hope you can give it your immediate attention. The text of code message secured from telegraph office here is as follows:

[Here follows code message.]

LANSING.

(3) Page replied (11 p. m.) to Lansing's cable of February 28, referred to above, stating⁵⁵ that,

"The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but * * * I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it is never used straight, but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here."

March 2: (1) The telegram is published in the London papers (Hendrick, p. 324), which criticize the British Intelligence Service under the misapprehension that the decipherment has been made in America.

^{53a} The debate on this question takes up 13 full pages of the Congressional Record (pp. 4592-4605), and makes most interesting reading. There were, of course, many questions as to how the letter, telegram, message, note (it was called by various names) came into possession of the United States, and questions as to who turned it over to our authorities, and *what were the motives*. Here are some excerpts from Senator Stone's remarks (p. 4593):

" * * * This alleged letter was made public for some purpose. * * * I cannot and will not undertake to say what that purpose was further than to express the opinion that it was given publicity to affect either public opinion or legislative opinion, or both, in the United States. * * * Mr. President, I want to know the facts about this letter before being swept off my feet, or seeing others swept off their feet, by the clamor of jingoes. * * * I am asking only to be informed, to be advised whether the information in the possession of our State Department was derived from one of the belligerent Governments. For example, did this information come from London? Was it given to us by that Government?"

⁵⁴ FRS, p. 155.

⁵⁵ For complete text, see Page's cable of March 1, 1917 (p. 16 of this paper).

(2) Page, replying to Lansing's telegram No. 4494, states:⁶⁵ "Your 4494 followed with absolutely satisfactory results," and follows this with a long message:

LONDON, March 2, 1917—4 p. m.
[Received 10:45 p. m.]

5789. My 5784 of today. Bell took the cipher text of the German message contained in your 4494 of yesterday to the Admiralty and there, himself, deciphered it from the German code which is in the Admiralty's possession. The first group, 130, indicates Bernstorff's number of telegram. The second group, 13042, indicates the code to be used in deciphering the cipher telegram. From the third group onwards, message reads as follows:

Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16: No. 1. Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uncingeschraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte, schlagen wir Mexico auf folgend Grundlage Buendnis vor. Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren, Friedensschluss. Reichlich finanziell Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexico, in Texas, Neu Mexico, Arizona fruеher verloren Gebiet zurueck erobern. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeborene ueberlassen. Sie wollen vorstehendes dem Praesident streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen Japan von sich aus zu sofortig Beirachtung [*Beitratung?*] einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesident darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichtlose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Zimmermann.

Punctuations are given as in German text. I am sending decode into German, group by group, by tomorrow's pouch.

PAGE.

March 3: Zimmermann acknowledges the authenticity of the telegram.⁶⁷

This chronology proves the accuracy of Millis' comment on the President's trustful nature, for thus far the chronology shows that the President caused the text of the Zimmermann telegram to be given to the press *before* steps were taken to authenticate it. In passing, we may note, however, that the Secretary of State was a bit troubled by the question of authenticity:

The next morning [Friday, March 2] Polk brought me a brief telegram from Page saying our copy of the [Zimmermann] cipher message obtained from the telegraph company had been received, that instructions had been followed with success, and that text of deciphered message would follow. While I had never doubted the authenticity of the translation sent, this corroboration by our own people was a relief.⁶⁸

Returning again to Millis, and especially his footnote raising the question as to British motives in producing a month-old telegram, we find comment on this important matter of delay in a work of authentic nature, as may be seen in the following quotation taken from Blanche Dugdale's biography⁶⁹ of her uncle, Arthur Balfour:

Ever since the middle of January, however, a piece of information had been in the possession of the British Government, which would move, if anything could, the vast populations behind the Atlantic seaboard States, who still read of the European War with as much detachment as if it had been raging in the moon. This was the famous telegram from Zimmermann, the German Foreign Minister, to the German Minister in Mexico, instructing him, if and when the United States should enter the war on the Allied side, to propose to Mexico an alliance which would restore to her, when peace came, her "lost territories in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico."

The method by which this information had reached the British Intelligence Service made it impossible for some time to communicate it to the United States Government. Therefore for over a

⁶⁵ FRS, p. 158. The Zimmermann telegram as it appears in FRS contains some errors which we have not corrected. For example, the word *Beitratung* is followed by *Beitratung* in brackets with a query. Of course, neither is an authentic word. For the correct rendering see "Version II" on page 25. Incidentally, Bell's consultation of the code book certainly showed him that the statement that the code "is never used straight" (cf. p. 16) was not true. Either he did not inform Page of this fact, or Page failed to mention it.

⁶⁷ New York Times Current History, vol. XI, pp. 66, 236.

⁶⁸ Lansing's *Memoirs*, p. 229.

⁶⁹ Dugdale, Blanche, E. C., *Arthur James Balfour, 1906-1930*, New York, 1937, pp. 137-138.

month Balfour read in his despatches from Washington of the slow wakening of the American will to war, but could do nothing to hasten the process. Till—at last—information about the Mexican plot reached London through channels which enabled the Intelligence Service to cover up the traces of how it had first been got.

Joy was unbounded in Whitehall, and the Foreign Secretary himself was unusually excited. "As dramatic a moment as I remember in all my life," he once said, referring to the scene in his room at the Foreign Office on February 24, 1917, when he handed to the American Ambassador the sheet of paper containing the decoded message. By the ceremony of this act the British Government gave its pledge that the communication was authentic. Nevertheless the American Nation not unnaturally took a little while to satisfy itself that the telegram was not part of some gigantic hoax. It might have taken longer, had not the German Foreign Office, within a few days of the publication, admitted the message to be genuine.

Note the very significant remark: "The method by which this information had reached the British Intelligence Service made it impossible for some time to communicate it to the United States Government. * * * Till—at last—information about the Mexican plot reached London through channels which enabled the Intelligence Service to cover up the traces of how it had first been got."

We cannot suppose that the British Government was merely desirous of hiding from the United States Government the fact that its Intelligence Service was able to decode German code messages, and that this was the reason for the delay. Their action in providing a decode of the Zimmermann telegram as sent by Bernstorff to von Eckhardt negatives that hypothesis. The reason for the delay must have involved a much more important secret than that, or at least there must have been other, more weighty considerations.

Moreover, whenever it is found that there is much beating around the bush in making an explanation, there is room for wondering whether there is not something in a situation not apparent on the surface. For instance, let us note how Admiral Hall attempts to evade the answer. In November 1925 the *World's Work* published Hendrick's article on the Zimmermann telegram. In the April 1926 issue of this magazine⁶⁰ appears an interesting editorial comment on the story, from which the following is extracted:

It was only natural that Mr. Hendrick's chapter on the real story of the seizure of the famous Zimmermann telegram, which appeared in the November issue, should have created a sensation in all countries which had a part in the war.

* * * * *

The London correspondents of the metropolitan American dailies reported that he [i. e., Admiral Hall] would say nothing, but a week after the *World's Work* printed the chapter of revelations the *Daily Mail* of London did manage to squeeze an interview out of him.

* * * * *

The British Admiralty, he explained, knew all the movements of the famous German submarines *Deutschland* and *Bremen*, and the British Government allowed German messages to be sent over British cables. What the Germans did not know was that the British possessed the German secret code and deciphered every message as it was sent across.

"This one thing shows the difference between the British and German mentality," he remarked. "I am sure, if the position had been reversed, the British would never have been so stupid as not to have suspected that the messages were being deciphered. If I had disclosed the actual wording of the Zimmermann telegram the Germans would have suspected something at once. I had to wait until we got a copy of the telegram actually sent, which was differently worded from the one from Berlin.

"It was Bernstorff's telegram that I exposed. The Germans actually thought that there had been a leakage between Bernstorff and Mexico, which was what I wanted. Right until the end of the war I do not think that the Germans suspected that we knew as much as we did of their intelligence service."

⁶⁰ Pp. 578-579.

Here we have, presumably, Admiral Hall's explanation for the delay in communicating the contents of the Zimmermann telegram to the United States Government. He says: "If I had disclosed the actual wording of the Zimmermann telegram the Germans would have suspected something at once. I had to wait until we got a copy of the telegram actually sent, which was differently worded from the one from Berlin." To put it charitably, this is hardly an adequate statement, as can be seen by comparing the text of the telegram as sent from Berlin to Washington (as cited in the official German documents) with that sent from Washington to Mexico City (the latter being the one that the British furnished Page) ^{60a}:

VERSION I

Telegramm Nr. 158
Ganz geheim

Zu Euerer Exzellenz ausschliesslich perso-
lichen Information und Weitergabe an Kaiser-
lichen Gesandten Mexiko auf sicherem Wege:
"Telegramm Nr. 1 Ganz geheim Selbst entziffern.

Wir beabsichtigen, am 1. Februar uneinge-
schraenkten U-Boot-Krieg zu beginnen. Es
wird versucht werden, Amerika trotzdem neu-
tral zu erhalten.

Fuer den Fall, dass dies nicht gelingen sollte,
schlagen wir Mexiko auf folgender Grundlage
Buendnis vor: Gemeinsame Kriegfuehrung. Ge-
meinsamer Friedensschluss. Reichliche finanzia-
elle Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis un-
sererseits, dass Mexiko in Texas, Neu-Mexiko,
Arizona frueher verlorenes Gebiet zurueckero-
bert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohl-
geboren ueberlassen.

Euer Hochwohlgeboren wollen vorstehendes
Praesidenten streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald
Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten fest-
steht, und Anregung hinzufuegen, Japan von
sich aus zu sofortigem Beitritt einzuladen und
gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu ver-
mitteln.

Bitte Praesidenten darauf hinzuweisen, dass
ruecksichtslose Anwendung unserer U-Boote
jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Mona-
ten zum Frieden zu zwingen.

Empfang bestaetigen.

ZIMMERMANN"

VERSION II

Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16:
No. 1. Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir
beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uneinge-
schraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird
versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Ame-
rika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den
Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte schlagen wir
Mexico auf folgend Grundlage Buendnis vor;
Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren. Friedensschluss.
Reichlich finanzielle Unterstuetzung und Ein-
verstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexico in Texas,
New Mexico, Arizona frueher verlorenes Gebiet
zurueck erobert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer
Hochwohlgeboren ueberlassen. Sie wollen vor-
stehendes dem Praesidenten streng geheim er-
oeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten
Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen
Japan von sich aus zu sofortiger Betrachtung
einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und
Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesidenten
darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichtenlose An-
wendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet,
England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu
zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Schluss der
Depesche. Zimmermann.

^{60a} Most of the slight variations between the London version (marked "Version II" and taken from *Hendrick*, vol. III, pp. 345-6) and that given out by the German Government (marked "Version I," taken from pp. 355-6 of vol. II of the German original of *German Hearings*) are due to the fact that in the former grammatical terminations such as connected text requires are not inserted. A few others are due to carelessness or lack of knowledge of the German language, e. g., the final e on Hochwohlgeborene. The word *gemeinsam* or *gemeinsamer* is omitted before *Friedensschluss*. No one can possibly doubt that the Berlin and the London versions represent an identical text.

No, that is not the reason for the delay. Probably the reader has already guessed the reason or, rather, the reasons, for undoubtedly there were several. To our mind they may be listed as follows:

1. To disclose the Berlin-Washington version of the Zimmermann telegram, which it will be recalled was sent via State Department channels, would have necessitated revealing the fact that the British Intelligence Service was intercepting and solving not only German code messages but also intercepting and perhaps solving diplomatic messages of the American Government—a power whose aid they were desperately seeking at the time.

2. Even had the foregoing not served as a powerful argument against a prompt disclosure of the message, the fact that the solution presented several lacunae and doubtful spots would have detracted a great deal from the diplomatic and military value of the document. Undoubtedly, frantic efforts were made by the British cryptographers to fill in the lacunae—but the solution of a code of the two-part type, such as Code 7500, is always a slow, difficult process unless there is a large volume of text on which to corroborate hypotheses. This requisite volume was lacking. Proof that the British had not succeeded in reading entire messages in Code 7500 is neatly shown by the phrase “at that time” (referring to January 16, 1917, the date of the Zimmermann telegram) in the Bell to Harrison cablegram of September 17, 1917, quoted above on page 11.

Of course, the British might have furnished the translation of the version which, according to Bell's cablegram of September 17, 1917, was sent via Swedish channels. But we have, in the same cablegram, Bell's statement that “it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering and of which Eckhardt had no copy.” In all probability the code used for the message transmitted via Swedish channels was Code 7500. Possibly it was some other code. The sending of a message in more than one code is a capital crime in cryptography. True, it was a crime that we know the Germans to have committed, but in the present case every reason for supposing such a transgression, whether by accident or design, is lacking. Even if, by some remote chance, the telegram was sent from Berlin in some other code, that code was certainly not 13040, and hence this point is immaterial. The fact remains that the British could not offer a partly solved message of such vital importance regardless of which version was available.

3. In a note dated April 18, 1916, following the sinking of the American vessel *Sussex*, the American Government had presented an ultimatum to the German Government couched in the following unmistakable language:⁴¹

If it is still the purpose of the Imperial Government to prosecute an indiscriminate warfare against vessels of commerce by the use of submarines without regard to what the Government of the United States must consider the sacred and indisputable rules of international law and the universally recognized dictates of humanity, the Government of the United States is at last forced to the conclusion that there is but one course to pursue. Unless the Imperial Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and freight-carrying vessels, the Government of the United States can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the German Empire altogether. This action the Government of the United States contemplates with the greatest reluctance, but feels constrained to take in behalf of humanity and the rights of neutral nations.

On January 9, 1917, Kaiser Wilhelm held a council at Pless, at which the irrevocable decision was taken to stake everything on another trial of unrestricted submarine warfare, to commence on February 1. On January 16, Bernstorff was notified of this decision (in telegram No.

⁴¹ FRS, p. 106.

157) but was directed not to inform the American Government until the evening of January 31. Bernstorff's words are interesting:⁶²

On January 31st, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, I handed Mr. Lansing the official communication about the U-boat war. This was my last political interview in America. We both knew that the end had come, but we did not admit the fact to each other. The Secretary of State contented himself with replying that he would submit my communication to the President. I cherished no illusions regarding the expected outcome of this interview, for the ultimatum of April 18, 1916, no longer allowed of any chance of preventing the rupture of diplomatic relations.

If on January 31 this news came as a profound shock to President Wilson, who was then engaged in his second and most promising attempt toward mediation, it could hardly have taken the British unawares, for they must have had definite knowledge of the Pless decision from at least two sources. One was undoubtedly their partial solution of telegram 157, in which Bernstorff was instructed to inform the American Government of the reopening of unrestricted submarine warfare; the other was their solution of the Zimmermann telegram of January 19, which we have seen was telegram 158, and was tacked on to telegram 157. (See p. 15.) *Consequently, the British must have felt quite sure as early as the third week of January 1917, that the United States would soon join the Allies, if our ultimatum of April 18, 1916, meant anything at all.*⁶³ All they now had to do was to hold on for a few days or weeks longer and the United States would be on their side. Sure enough, on February 3, diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany were severed.⁶⁴ But as the weeks went by there was no declaration of war, for the President, in an address to Congress on February 3, stated:⁶⁵

Notwithstanding this unexpected action of the German Government, this sudden and deeply deplorable renunciation of its assurances given this Government at one of the most critical moments of tension in the relations of the two Governments, I refuse to believe that it is the intention of the German authorities to do in fact what they have warned us they will feel at liberty to do. I cannot bring myself to believe that they will indeed pay no regard to the ancient friendship between their people and our own or to the solemn obligations which have been exchanged between them and destroy American ships and take the lives of American citizens in the willful prosecution of the ruthless naval programme they have announced their intention to adopt. Only actual overt acts on their part can make me believe it even now.

How much this waiting for some "actual overt acts" must have irked the British may be imagined if they irritated Page sufficiently to make him write:⁶⁶

The danger is that with all the authority he wants (short of a formal declaration of war) the President will again wait, wait, wait—till an American liner be torpedoed! Or till an attack is made on our coast by a German submarine!

Something had to be done to stir up the President and the people of the hinterland beyond the Mississippi.

In the country at large the situation, as Spring Rice reported that day, was "much that of a soda-water bottle with the wires cut but the cork unexploded." The failure of shipping to sail had produced "a stoppage of trade, a congestion in the ports, widespread discomfort and even misery on the coast and inland, even bread riots and a coal famine." All this, nevertheless, was not "spectacular enough;" the West was still against war and the President was still fighting for peace. But on Saturday, the 24th, the British themselves were able to supply something "spectacular." Mr. Balfour deftly gave the unexploded cork a push.⁶⁷

⁶² P. 379.

⁶³ Even Bernstorff, immediately on receipt of telegram 157, replied (German Hearings, p. 1021): "War unavoidable if we proceed as contemplated." A few days later, in his desperate attempts to stave off a rupture in diplomatic relations, he cabled the Foreign Office again (German Hearings, p. 1047): "If the U-boat war is commenced forthwith the President will look upon this as a slap in the face, and war with the United States will be unavoidable." Bernstorff's telegrams to the Foreign Office are most interesting. No one who reads them can remain unconvinced of his absolutely sincere desire for peace between the United States and Germany.

⁶⁴ FR8, p. 106.

⁶⁵ FR8, p. 111.

⁶⁶ Hendrick, pp. 324-325, quoting from Page's diary.

⁶⁷ Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

The "push" was, of course, the communication to Page of the contents of the Zimmermann telegram. By this time the British Intelligence Service had the full text, which had been "bought in Mexico," and they must have felt that the time had come to make the most of their opportunity. They were not wrong.

But Mr. Polk at the State Department knew of the waiting bombshell so kindly supplied by Mr. Balfour. The Zimmermann telegram, he believed, would produce a blast of popular emotion that would sweep the armed ship bill through against everything. So did Colonel House, who had now seen the text, and who was urging the President to "publish it tomorrow." So, no doubt, did the President—to whom it must have been plain enough that the first effect of Senator La Follette's pacifism would be to deliver Mr. Wilson himself into the hands of the intransigents. On Thursday, March 1, the headlines were shouting from the morning papers:

**GERMANY SEEKS AN ALLIANCE AGAINST US;
ASKS JAPAN AND MEXICO TO JOIN HER;
FULL TEXT OF PROPOSALS MADE PUBLIC**

It was a stupendous sensation. The headlines, it is to be observed, were not always precisely accurate. Germany had not actually sought an alliance as yet; the text of the telegram expressly instructed the Minister in Mexico to initiate the move only in the event that the United States should declare war, which the German Government would itself endeavour to prevent. It was not a proposal for an aggression against the United States, but merely a conventional, though rather blundering, diplomatic preparation against a probable American attack upon Germany. This, however, was far too fine a point for the hot passions of the moment; and the telegram was everywhere seized upon as final proof of the complete and fathomless treachery of the German.

What made it particularly shocking, of course, was the suggestion that the Japanese (with whom we were about to become allied) should be invited into the American Continent, or that the principle upon which many Americans had demanded the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine (because they had been acquired by force) should be applied to California and Texas, which we had forcibly detached from Mexico. Informed Americans understood perfectly well that the Allies had bribed Japan, Italy, and Rumania into the war with the promise of slices from the enemy carcass; but they were sincerely and profoundly horrified by the thought that Germany could be so base as to bribe Mexico and Japan with the promise of slices from the flanks of the United States. The Zimmermann telegram became a major German disaster. Not its least useful aspect, moreover, was the fact that it gave the Northeastern fire-eaters their first direct lever upon the pacific sentiment of the Southwest. If a German triumph threatened the annexation of California and Texas to Mexico—! The German Foreign Secretary's innocent cablegram had exploded with its maximum effect at precisely the point where it would do the Allies the greatest good.^{67a}

It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Millis mistakenly speaks of the projected restoration to Mexico of "California and Texas." The Zimmermann telegram makes no mention of California, but says that Mexico was to "reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona." Is it possible that the Germans were reserving California as bait for Japan?

If what Millis says is valid, if the facts which we have presented in the foregoing pages really constituted the motives which caused the British to withhold from the United States Government so weighty a secret as was contained in the Zimmermann telegram, we can take a charitable view and say that the circumstances justified their course of action. Certainly we must give them credit for knowing *when* to play their cryptographic trump cards. Which brings us to the additional compliment that they not only knew *when* to play a trump card, but also *how*. Note the dextrous manner in which they got the maximum benefit from the play *without disclosing* to their adversary where or how they had obtained the trump! Not only that, but in order to make sure that the source of their information should not be disclosed, they even took pains to insure that so far as the world outside was concerned, the credit for excellent intelligence work should go to another country—the United States! And to do that, they were not content to let natural inference take its course, but contrived with the help of British newspapers to

^{67a} Millis, W. C.

throw blame on their own intelligence service for letting those mere novices in intelligence work—the Americans—beat them at a game in which they themselves (i. e., the British) were generally supposed to be preëminent! For in the interview already referred to (p. 24) Admiral Hall said:

Of course; our whole object was to prevent the Germans from giving us very much credit for intelligence. When President Wilson published the famous Zimmermann telegram containing the German overtures to Mexico, I was very anxious that there should be no suspicion in the German mind that we had anything to do with it.

It was then that the *Daily Mail*, at my request, published a stinging leader passing severe reflections on the British Intelligence Service.

In a letter dated December 1, 1927, addressed to the secretary of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, giving his regrets for not being able to be present at the meeting on December 13, already referred to, Lord Balfour, Wartime Foreign Minister of the British Government said: ⁶⁸

* * * To "Room 40," where he [i. e. Ewing] was the leading spirit, the country owes an immense debt of gratitude—a debt which, at the time at least, could never be paid. Secrecy was of the very essence of the work, and never was secrecy more successfully observed.

Only one link remains still to be found before the story of the Zimmermann telegram can be regarded as complete: the original version as filed in Berlin. As already indicated, diligent search has failed to locate it, and we fear that it is now too late. The State Department files in Washington, in Berlin, and in Copenhagen have been scoured, without success. There remains only one more place where it most certainly can still be assumed to be peacefully reposing: the World War files of the British "Room 40 O. B."

In a letter ⁶⁹ to President Wilson, dated March 17, 1918, Ambassador Page, referring to Admiral Hall, wrote as follows:

* * * Hall is one genius that the war has developed. Neither in fiction nor in fact can you find any such man to match him. * * * He locks up certain documents "not to be opened till 20 years after this date." I've made up my mind to live 20 years more. I shall be present at the opening of that safe * * *.

The "20 years" are up. Admiral Hall is now a retired officer, but he still has the papers, if we are to believe the statements contained in a book by a recent author.⁷⁰ Relating the details of the efforts on the part of the representatives of certain American claimants to establish the validity of their claims, Landau tells how Mr. Amos J. Peaslee, leader of the American claimants, visited Admiral Hall on August 27, 1925, at Hall's London residence:

* * * He found Hall in full sympathy with the American claimants, and so commendatory was Admiral Sims's letter that he ended up their conference by saying: "Copies of the decoded German cables are stored away in several tin boxes in the basement. I sealed up these boxes with instructions that they were not to be opened up for 20 years. You have caused me to change my mind, however. I will open up the boxes for you. Copy such of the cables as you think will be useful to you. Make yourself at home. The servants will look after you." His rapid and sweeping decision was typical of the man. Fortunately he was retired from the Navy and was, therefore, his own master.

Hall took Peaslee down to the basement, spread the cables before him, and took his leave to catch the train for Scotland. Peaslee found over 10,000 cables, radio messages, and letters which Hall had intercepted and decoded. Twenty-six different codes had been used in sending these messages. Attached to the originale was a translation in clear, also the "recognition group," or number of the code used.

So Admiral Hall can, if he will, tell the whole story. It will be interesting to see if he does. The time for its telling has arrived. Ambassador Page unfortunately did not live out the 20 years as he promised himself to do, in order to be present when Admiral Hall finally opened his safe. The present authors are curious and anxious, too. Let the safe be opened!

⁶⁸ The (Edinburgh) Scotsman, Dec. 14, 1927.

⁶⁹ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 361.

⁷⁰ Landau, Capt. Henry. *The Enemy Within*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1937, p. 166.

APPENDIX I

Exhibit 320.—AFFIDAVIT OF ADMIRAL SIR W. REGINALD HALL, K. C. M. G., C. B., D. C. L., L. L. D., FORMERLY CHIEF OF THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT OF THE BRITISH ADMIRALTY, VERIFIED DECEMBER 28, 1926, WITH ANNEXED COPIES OF GERMAN CABLEGRAMS, WIRELESS AND OTHER MESSAGES INTERCEPTED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DURING THE WAR

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
LONDON, ENGLAND,
CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE U. S. OF AMERICA } ss:

Admiral, Sir W. Reginald Hall, K. C. M. G., C. B., D. C. L., L. L. D., being duly sworn, deposes and says:
1. I reside at No. 63, Cadogan Gardens, London, and am at present a retired officer of the British Navy and am a member of the British Parliament.

2. During the recent war with Germany and her Allies I was Director of the British Naval Intelligence Service for the entire period from October 1914, until the Armistice in November 1919.

3. In that capacity it was my duty and the duty of my staff to intercept and decipher, as far as possible, cable and wireless messages and other communications sent between German officials in Berlin and German officials at Embassies and Legations and elsewhere in various parts of the world.

4. During the period from the commencement of the war in August 1914, until the Armistice in November 1919, we intercepted a large number of such cable and wireless messages and other communications. This was done by tapping the cables over which the messages were being sent, by picking up the wireless messages, and through the capture of written communications and documents in the post and in the possession of German officials and agents who were apprehended by our authorities.

5. Almost all of these communications, insofar as they were cablegrams and wireless messages, were sent in cipher, a number of different German ciphers being employed for that purpose. We were able to read substantially all of the cipher messages which were intercepted, partially by reason of the fact that we succeeded in capturing from German submarines and other sources some of the original German cipher books, and partially by reason of the fact that our cipher experts were able to decipher the German ciphers wherever, as was the case here, a large number of different messages in the same cipher were available for study and comparison, and in many instances the same message was sent through different channels in two or more different German ciphers.

6. The annexed file of cablegrams and wireless messages and despatches marked "Exhibit A," set forth on pages numbered consecutively from No. 2 to No. 267, are true and correct deciphered copies of cablegrams and wireless messages and other despatches which were intercepted and deciphered by the Intelligence Department of the British Admiralty through officers working under my immediate supervision. The work was considered of a most highly confidential character and I exercised the closest personal contact with all its details. It was my sole duty and responsibility and I watched and checked the work with the greatest care to make certain that we were recording the true import and meaning of the German communications. Many of the original German ciphers in which the communications were transmitted are still in our possession.

7. The numbers which appear in parentheses near the tops of some of the pages on which the messages are copied (exhibit A) are numbers of a particular system of German cipher, which numbers usually appeared in the body of the cables or wireless communications themselves, and were known to us as the "recognition groups." For example, No. "(89734)" at page 2, No. "(5950)" at pages 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 32, 37, 38, 39, 42, 45, 49, 53, 57, 58, 65, 68, 70, 72, No. "(13040)" at pages 7, 11, 13, 16, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 41, 43, 44, 50, 52, 54, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 71, No. "(0064)" at pages 40, 47, 80, 114, 122, No. "(6400)" at pages 48, 55, 56, 59, No. "(0640)" at page 60, No. "(9972)" at pages 61, 73, 95, No. "(5954)" at page 67, No. "V. B. 718" at page 75, No. "S. B." at page 92, No. "(98176)" at page 112, No. "(S7962)" at page 113, and No. "(19177)" at page 172, all refer to different German cipher systems.

8. The word "Nauen," appearing at the tops of pages 69, 76, 130, 135, 217, 223, 244, 245, and 259, of exhibit A, refers to the German wireless station located at Nauen, Germany, from which many communications were despatched. Many of the other communications of which copies appear in exhibit A were also sent by wireless. The communications passing between Madrid and Berlin were, practically in all instances, by wireless. In

making copies of some of the messages, particularly during the latter part of the war, and in cases where the same cipher system was being employed in a series of messages, as, for example, a series of communications to Washington and the wireless communications between Madrid and Berlin, the "recognition groups" were sometimes omitted from our file copies. This accounts for the absence of cipher numbers at pages 24, 26, 52, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 98, 104, 105, 108, 110, 115, 121, 124, 126, 128, 131, to 171, inclusive, 173 to 216, inclusive, 218 to 222, inclusive, 224 to 243, inclusive, 246 to 256, inclusive, 260 to 266, inclusive. The "recognition groups," however, appear in the original German cipher messages in every instance. The wireless messages which passed between Madrid and Berlin were sent in almost every case in cipher No. "0064" or some combinations or modifications of that German cipher system.

9. The dates appearing at the tops of the pages of exhibit A represent the dates when the messages were intercepted, which were coincident with the dates of the sending of the messages, although in a number of instances it will be noted that the message which we picked up was one which was being relayed from one point to another. In such cases the date will be the date of the relay of the message, but not necessarily the date when it was sent from its original point of origin. These dates are indicated either by a complete statement of the month, day and year, or by figures such as "26.6.16.", which means the twenty-sixth day of June, 1916.

10. The sources and destinations of the cables are indicated by the words "From" and "To." For example, on page 2 the words "From Berlin" mean that the cable or wireless message was sent from Berlin. The signature indicates the name of the official or department which sent the cable, wireless message or communication, as such signature was actually contained in the message. The words "To Washington" on page 2 mean that the message was sent to the German Embassy in Washington. The communications between Berlin and America, insofar as we intercepted them, were limited almost exclusively to communications with the German Embassy.

11. The letters and figures appearing at the tops of some of the pages in exhibit A, such as "B. No. 24" at page 2, "W. 146" at page 3, have reference to a particular series of German numbers as they appeared in the contents of the communications. "B" means a series of communications from Berlin; "W" means a series of communications from Washington.

12. The message set forth at page 35 of exhibit A, numbered "B. No. 103," dated January 26, 1915, and signed "Representative of General Staff Zimmerman" was a message sent from Berlin to Washington by cable via the Swedish Foreign Office. It was intercepted by us en route to Washington. We considered this cable of particular importance at the time and we furnished a copy of it in the original cipher, together with the English translation of it, to the American State Department through the American Embassy in London.

13. This message, it will be observed, was sent in cipher No. "(13040)." The German cipher book covering this system of ciphering is in our possession, it having been captured by the British authorities in the luggage of a German consul named Wasmuss who was stationed at Shiraz while Wasmuss was engaged in an endeavor to cut a British oil pipe line.

14. These German communications were intercepted and deciphered by the British Admiralty through the same system which we employed in the interception and deciphering of the well-known "Zimmermann" cablegram of January 16, 1917, from Herr Zimmerman to Count von Bernstorff for transmission to the German Legation in Mexico, advising it of the plan to commence unrestricted warfare and proposing an alliance with Mexico in the event that the United States should enter the war, which cablegram we called to the attention of the American State Department, and which was published by the United States Government, and which Herr Zimmermann in a statement made in the German Reichstag admitted to be correct and authentic. Some further history of that cablegram will be found in the third volume of "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" by Burton J. Hendricks, at pages 331 to 364.

15. The German cables, wireless messages and other communications set forth in exhibit A are a comparatively small portion of a much larger collection of such messages which we intercepted during the war and which are still in our possession. Owing to the paramount importance of our having for the use of the British Navy the information contained in the messages regarding the movement of German ships it was imperative that we should avoid if possible, disclosing to the Germans the fact that we were reading their communications to this extent. Hence it was impossible for us at the time to make full use of all the information which was before us. The American Ambassador in London, Mr. Page, was in our constant confidence, however, regarding the German communications affecting America during the war, but it was necessary for all of us to exercise the greatest caution regarding the messages.

16. As head of the British Naval Intelligence I also had charge of the detention and examination of Captain Franz von Papan, the former Military Attache at Washington upon his arrival at Falmouth about the first of January, 1916. We took from Captain von Papan at that time a number of documents which were found upon his person and among his luggage, and which in our judgment were being carried in violation of his rights under the safe conduct which he had been given. Copies of some of these papers were published at the British Government Stationery Office and presented to both Houses of Parliament as a "British White Paper," Misc. No. 6,

1916, entitled: "Selections From Papers Found in the Possession of Captain von Papen, Late German Military Attache at Washington, Falmouth, January 2 and 3, 1916." A photostatic copy of that British White Paper is attached to the exhibits in this case as exhibit No. 46. I personally saw at the time and examined the originals of these documents and know of my own knowledge that the documents of which copies appear in that British White Paper, of which exhibit No. 46 is a photostatic copy, are true, correct and authentic, including the records from Captain Von Papen's check books.

17. I also personally interrogated Horst von der Goltz at the time of his arrest by the British authorities. Von der Goltz was examined by the officials at Scotland Yard under my direction and at my request. He made certain affidavits before those officials of which copies are set forth as exhibit 53 of the exhibits of this case. I have examined this exhibit 53 and it accords with my recollection of the contents of the original affidavits though I have not examined recently those affidavits which are presumably in the records at Scotland Yard unless they were sent to the American Government in Washington.

18. I also had charge of the arrest and imprisonment of Franz von Rintelen by the British authorities. He was apprehended by us at Ramsgate on the steamer Noordam in August 1915, while he was apparently trying to return to Germany from the United States. He was traveling on a Swiss passport under the name of "Gasche." We put him in Donnington Hall, which is the British prison for enemy officers and he remained there until shortly after the United States entered the war, when we sent him to America under guard at the request of the American authorities and turned him over to the United States Government.

(sd) W. R. HALL.

APPENDIX 2

GROUP-BY-GROUP DECODEMENT OF THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM AS SENT BY AMBASSADOR
BERNSTORFF TO GERMAN MINISTER VON ECKHARDT IN MEXICO ON JANUARY 19, 1917

130	Nr. 3	13851	stop	18507	hinzufuegen
13042		4458	gemeinsamen	52262	Japan
13401	Auswaertiges Amt	17149	Friedensschluss	1340	von
8501	telegraphiert	14471	stop	22049	sich
115	vom 16ten Januar	6706	reichliche	13339	aus
3528	colon	13850	finanzielle	11265	zu
416	Nr. 1	12224	Unterstuetzung	22295	sofortiger
17214	Ganz geheim	6929	und	10439	Beitretung
6491	Selbst	14991	Einverstaendnis	14814	einladen
11310	zu	7382	unsererseits	4178	infinitive with zu
18147	entziffern	15857	dass	6992	und
18222	stop	67893	Mexiko	8784	gleichzeitig
21560	Wir	14218	in	7632	zwischen
10247	beabsichtigen	36477	Texas	7357	uns
11518	am	5870	comma	6926	und
23677	ersten	17553	Neu	52262	Japan
13605	Februar	67893	Mexiko	11267	zu
3494	un	5870	comma	21100	vermitteln
14936	ingeschraenkten	5454	Ar	21272	stop
98092	U-boot	16102	iz	9346	Bitte
5905	krieg	15217	on	9550	den
11311	zu	22801	a	22464	Praesidenten
10392	beginnen	17138	frueher	15874	darauf
10371	stop	21001	verlorenes	18502	hinweisen
0302	Es wird	17388	Gebiet	18500	comma
21290	versucht	7446	zurueck	15857	dass
5161	werden	23638	erobert	2188	ruecksichtslose
39695	Vereinigte Staaten von	18222	stop	5376	Anwendung
	Amerika	6719	Regclung	7381	urserer
23571	trotzdem	14331	im	98092	U-boote
17504	neutral	15021	einzelnen	16127	jctzt
11269	zu	23845	Euer Hochwohlgeboren	13486	Avssicht
18276	erhalten	3156	ueberlassen	9350	bietet
18101	stop	23552	stop	9220	comma
0317	Fuer den Fall	22096	Sie	76036	England
0228	dass dies	21604	wollen	14219	in
17694	nicht	4797	Vorstehendes	5144	wenigen
4473	gelingen	9497	dem	2831	Monat
22284	sollte	22464	Praesidenten	17920	en
22200	stop	20855	streng	11347	zum
19452	schlagen	4377	geheim	17142	Frieden
21589	wir	23610	eroeffnen	11264	zu
67893	Mexiko	18140	comma	7667	zwingen
5569	auf	22260	sobald	7762	stop
13918	folgender	5905	Kriegs	15099	Empfang
8598	Grundlage	13347	ausbruch	9110	bestaetigen
12137	Bucndnis	20420	mit	10482	stop
1333	vor	39689	Vereinigten Staaten	97556	Zimmermann
4725	stop	13732	fest	3569	stop
4458	Gemeinsame	20667	steht	3670	Schluss der Depesche
5905	Kriegs	6929	und		
17166	fuehrung	5275	Anregung		

22

This copy contains Friedman's marginalia made ~~with it~~ when he indicated excisions evidently in order to provide excerpts for Tuchman.



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WASHINGTON

THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM
OF JANUARY 16, 1917
AND ITS
CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

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THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM OF JANUARY 16, 1917, AND ITS CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Among the official cryptograms which have been intercepted and translated by governmental authorities other than those for whom they were intended, the most important of all time, either in war or peace, is undoubtedly the one deciphered by the British Naval Intelligence which is known to historians as the *Zimmermann telegram*. In German literature it is referred to as the Mexico dispatch. This message, in cryptographic form, was sent on January 16, 1917, by Arthur Zimmermann, then German Minister of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, to Ambassador von Bernstorff, at Washington, to be forwarded to German Minister von Eckhardt at Mexico City. It read, translated into English, as follows: ¹

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.

quote — No account of the stirring episodes leading up to our entry into the World War can be considered complete without at least a reference to the one in which the Zimmermann telegram played the leading role. Even those who adhere to the theory that it was the bankers who pushed us into the conflict on the side of the Allies must mention it; while those who incline toward the theory that it was the German policy of "frightfulness" on sea and land which dragged us in against them give this message even more attention. Although today it would certainly be too much to say that this cryptogram, through its interception and solution by the British, and its forwarding by them to President Wilson, was the *direct* means of bringing us into the war, nevertheless many an informed person whose memory goes back to the exciting days when the contents of this sensational message were disclosed in the newspapers of March 1, 1917, would certainly say that had he been asked *at that time* he would have said at least that it was the straw which broke the camel's back. The importance of this incident is evidenced by the lengthy comments of prominent officials who were at that time in a position to judge its significance. The Secretary of State, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Colonel House, our Ambassador to Great Britain, and many others, give this telegram a prominent place in their writings on the World War. For example:

While the Armed Ship Bill was under discussion in Congress another event occurred which caused the greatest excitement throughout the country and aroused the people against the German Government even more, I believe, than the announced policy of the submarine ruthlessness. That event was the publication of the so-called "Zimmermann telegram" * * *. Thus the Zimmermann telegram resulted in unifying public sentiment throughout the United States against Germany, in putting the people solidly behind the Government and in making war inevitable, if not popular, because the

¹ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917. Supplement 1, The World War, p. 147. U. S. Government Printing Office Washington, 1931. This book will hereinafter be referred to as Foreign Relations Series, abbreviated FRS.*

German Government's sinister intent toward the United States could no longer be doubted. The "cold-blooded proposition" of Germany's Secretary of Foreign Affairs in one day accomplished a change in sentiment and public opinion which would otherwise have required months to accomplish. From the time that the telegram was published, or at least from the time that its authenticity was admitted by its author, the United States' entry into the war was assured, since it could no longer be doubted that it was desired by the American people from Maine to California and from Michigan to Texas.¹

It [the Zimmermann telegram] roused a great deal of indignation in the States and strongly reinforced the popular backing for strong measures by the President.²

Wilson was waiting for what he called the "overt act" before he took further steps against Germany; but the possibility of avoiding hostilities daily diminished. * * *

Misguided German diplomacy did its utmost to strengthen the growing feeling in the United States that war with Germany could not be avoided. On February 26, Colonel House was called to the telephone by Frank Polk and informed that the British Naval Intelligence had received and deciphered a sensational telegram from the German Foreign Office to von Eckhardt, the German Minister in Mexico City. Signed in Zimmerman's hand and dated January 16, the telegram announced the imminence of unrestricted submarine warfare and instructed the German Minister, in case of war with the United States, to attempt to arrange a German-Mexican alliance, on the understanding that Mexico would be assisted to reconquer New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. Zimmermann further suggested that Carranza should approach Japan.

Mr. Polk fully realized that the publication of this telegram would blow American resentment to a white heat; it would strengthen immensely popular support of the President in any action he might take against Germany in defense of American rights on the sea. The same thought may have led the British to pass the deciphered telegram on to Washington. Wilson himself was disturbed and in doubt as to whether the publication of the telegram would not bring on a crisis he could not control. House urged immediate publication. * * *

The effect of publication was exactly what had been anticipated. Many persons naturally raised doubts as to the authenticity of the telegram; but Lansing formally assured Congress, and Zimmermann himself confessed, that it was genuine. Speculation was uncontrolled as to how it had been intercepted: it was rumored that the messenger had been caught by American guardsmen on the Mexican border; that a copy had been taken from von Bernstorff at Halifax; that it was in a mysterious box seized by the British on the ship which Bernstorff sailed on.⁴

Hendrick,⁵ the biographer of the war-time American Ambassador to Great Britain, Walter H. Page, says:

The most sensational episode of this period, however, was the publication on March 1 of a telegram from Dr. Alfred Zimmermann, German Foreign Secretary, to the German Minister in Mexico, outlining a scheme for an alliance of Germany, Japan, and Mexico against the United States, and for the cession in case of victory, of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico.

[Page's diary dated March 2, 1917.] The Zimmermann (Berlin) Mexico-Japan bomb burst today, the Zimmermann telegram to the German Minister in Mexico being in the morning papers. They gave it out in Washington (apparently) to cause Congress to give the President authority to arm merchant ships, etc., etc., as he should see fit, and to use the armed forces of the Nation to protect commerce and life. It had that effect. An enormous majority in the House last night (nearly 500 to 13!) voted in favor of the resolution. I am curious to see the effect on the country. I have never abandoned the belief that if the President were really to lead, all the people would follow. Whether he will even now lead remains to be seen. Yesterday I talked to Chinda, the Japanese Ambassador, about this Zimmermann telegram. He thought it a huge joke at first. Today Yeates Thompson confessed that it seemed to him a newspaper hoax! Nobody (few people surely) yet thoroughly understand the German. This telegram will go some distance surely to instruct the people of the U. S. A.⁶

¹ Lansing, Robert, *War Memoirs*, Bobbs, Merrill & Co., Indianapolis, 1933, pp. 226 and 232.

² Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs*, p. 134.

³ *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, 1926, p. 451.

⁴ Hendrick, Burton J., *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, Doubleday Page & Co., New York, 1928. Hereinafter this work will be referred to merely as *Hendrick*.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 331, 324.

wow
(some arithmetic)

The acrimonious discussions which the Zimmermann telegram aroused in Congress take up 22 pages in the Congressional Record. [Most of the debate deals with a resolution calling upon the President to furnish a formal statement declaring whether or not the telegram as published in the newspapers was authentic.] Space forbids extensive quotation, and the following two statements made in the course of the debate must suffice:⁷

Mr. THOMAS. * * * Does not the Senator [referring to Senator Hitchcock] realize that the public mind is already inflamed, that it has been inflamed by this publication [the Zimmermann telegram] like a bolt? Because of that excited condition, which we share, inasmuch as the information must have proceeded from Executive sources, directly or indirectly, it is very essential that we should have such information as may be necessary to enable us to meet and, if necessary, to end that public excitement which is now sweeping all over the country.

Mr. SMITH. * * * Mr. President, I say that the situation thus created is far-reaching and delicate, fraught with very great danger to the peace of the American people. * * *

It was of course natural that question should be raised as to the authenticity of the Zimmermann telegram. Senator Tillman [p. 4605] gave voice to his doubts in no uncertain terms:

Mr. President, I want to say one thing before this debate closes. I think we have wasted a great deal of valuable time here in discussing a lie—a forgery. I agreed with the Senator from Michigan [Mr. Smith] this morning when he said it was a forgery. [The reason I think it is a forgery is this: Who can conceive of the Japanese consorting with Mexico and the Germans to attack the United States? Why, Japan hates Germany worse than the devil is said to hate holy water. Japan took possession of Kiaochow and she is going to hold it. Is it possible to conceive that Japan will go to war with the United States in conjunction with Mexico and Germany? I think such a proposition is beneath our notice.]

The New York Times *Current History* for the period February 20 to May 15, 1917, deals thus with the Zimmermann telegram:

An important phase growing out of our rupture with Germany and the subsequent drift toward war was the uncovering of an anti-American alliance proposed by Germany with Mexico and Japan in the event the threatened war ensued. * * * The revelation created a profound impression throughout the country. The immediate effect on Congress was the elimination of practically all opposition to the proposal then pending to authorize the President to proceed at once to arm American merchantmen against German submarines; it also crystalized the conviction throughout the country that the German submarine blockade must be sternly resisted, even though it resulted in a declaration of war by Germany.

Ambassador von Bernstorff says:⁸

It has frequently been asserted that the notorious Mexico telegram led to the war with the United States. I do not believe this is correct. The telegram was used with great success as propaganda against us; but the rupture of diplomatic relations—as I have already pointed out—was, in view of the situation, equivalent in all circumstances to war. I had nothing to do with the Mexico telegram, which took me completely by surprise. It was addressed, in the usual way, direct to the legation in Mexico, and passed through the Embassy at Washington on the same day on which I received notification that the unrestricted U-boat war was to be declared. I had neither the right, nor was it my duty, to hold up the telegram although I disapproved of its contents.

On December 13, 1927, Sir Alfred Ewing, who throughout the war was civilian head of the cryptographic bureau (popularly referred to as "Room 40") of the British Naval Intelligence Service, delivered an address before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, telling of the

⁷ Congressional Record, 64th Congress, 2nd Session, vol. LIV, pp. 4598 and 4598, Mar. 1, 1917.

⁸ von Bernstorff, Count Johann, *My Three Years in America*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1920, p. 280. This work will hereinafter be referred to as *Bernstorff*.

work of the Bureau. That portion of the published account of his address with which we are concerned is as follows:⁹

Besides intercepting naval signals, the cryptographers of Room 40 dealt successfully with much political cipher. The isolated position of Germany forced her to resort to wireless, and prevented frequent changes of the code books for confidential communication with correspondents abroad. There was a voluminous stream of cipher correspondence with German agents in Madrid, and a good deal with North and South America as well as Constantinople, Athens, Sofia, and other places. One group of deciphered messages threw useful light in advance on the Easter Revolution in Ireland, another group on the intrigues of the Germans in Persia.

Among the many political messages read by his staff was the notorious Zimmermann telegram, which was intercepted in the manner described in the third volume of the Page Letters. President Wilson was then hesitating on the brink of war, reluctant to plunge, clinging vainly to the idea of neutrality which seemed to be almost a part of his religion. The Zimmermann message, which made a conditional offer to Mexico of an alliance against the United States, was deciphered in Room 40. It was then communicated very confidentially by Lord Balfour to Mr. Page and through Page to Wilson, and was given by him to the American Press. Its publication was decisive in converting American opinion to the necessity of war. But the curtain which hid Room 40 remained undisturbed.

And finally in his famous message (which is now known as the "war message") delivered in person before the Congress in joint session on April 2, 1917, President Wilson said:¹⁰

That it (the German Government) means to stir up enemies against us at our very doors the intercepted note to the German Minister at Mexico is eloquent evidence.

More than enough has been quoted to give an indication of the importance with which the publication of the Zimmermann telegram must be regarded in connection with a study of the causes leading to our entry into the war. Indirectly, because the United States is the leading power on the American Continent, it also helped to bring Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, and Panama into the arms of the Allies.

So important a cryptographic incident, therefore, warrants a most careful study by historians as well as by cryptographers, for the story of the incident is replete with suggestions for making the most of a cryptographic opportunity.

Twenty years have passed since the Zimmermann telegram was blazoned on the front pages of newspapers throughout the world except, of course, in Germany and Austria. But the British Government, which was the principal actor in the incident, has still not lifted the impenetrable curtain of mystery behind which her able cryptographers work, so that we shall have to draw conclusions from accounts from other sources if we are to study the facts concerning her interception and solution of the famous message. We shall pass over several purely apocryphal accounts which appeared at the time.¹¹

It is amusing to note, in passing, that one of the reasons why the Kaiser was extremely cool to Ambassador Bernstorff, who was received by the Kaiser only 6 or 7 weeks subsequent to Bernstorff's return to Berlin after the rupture of relations, was the monarch's belief that the Zimmermann telegram had been taken from among the papers which Bernstorff carried with him on his return home on the *Friedrich VIII* in February 1917. The ship was detained at Halifax for 12 days and every nook and cranny was searched. A box of dispatches which had been placed aboard the vessel by the Swedish Minister was found by the British authorities and

⁹ As reported in *The (Edinburgh) Scotsman* and *The (London) Times* for December 14, 1927. Incidentally, the Editor of *The Scotsman*, in landing Sir Alfred, said of the Zimmermann telegram that it "was instrumental in bringing America into the war."

¹⁰ FRB, pp. 195-203. Also, in his *Flag Day Address* on June 14, 1917, in citing the numerous provocations which, he explained, forced us into the war, the President said: "They tried to incite Mexico to take up arms against us and to draw Japan into a hostile alliance with her—and that not by indirection but by direct suggestion from the Foreign Office in Berlin."

¹¹ The most far-fetched of these was to the effect that the message was found by four soldiers of Company G, First Infantry, on the person of a spy whom they had captured while he was attempting to cross the southern border into Mexico, near the town of Progreso on February 21, 1917. See *The New York Times Current History*, period April 1917-June 1917, vol. XI. Even so recent a work as *Gunter's Inside Europe* (1936), pp. 92-93, contains a wholly erroneous version of the episode.

the contents of some of them were published. The English papers represented the case as if a box of dispatches had been taken from Bernstorff. But the Zimmermann note was not among them.¹³

The first lifting of the veil of secrecy surrounding the interception and solution of the Zimmermann telegram occurred in 1925, when the November issue of *World's Work* brought the final installment of Hendrick's *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*. This account, from which a passage has already been cited, still forms the principal source of our information on the subject. A second account, not so detailed as the first, but containing important data, was published in 1933 in Lansing's *War Memoirs*, also already mentioned. Another account appears in a book¹⁴ by a professed German ex-spy. But since it is based almost entirely upon the Hendrick version, and because there are cogent reasons for discounting much of the contents of the book as a whole, it will be largely disregarded in this paper. In addition to all sources mentioned, reference will be made to official records of the Department of State.

The first links in the story may be seen in the following two telegrams:¹⁴

(1)

LONDON, February 24, 1917.
Rec'd 9 a. m.

SECRETARY OF STATE, Washington.
5746, February 24.

In about three hours I shall send a telegram of great importance to the President and Secretary of State.

PAGE.

(2)

The Ambassador in Great Britain (Page) to the Secretary of State

[Telegram]

LONDON, February 24, 1917—1 p. m.
Rec'd 8:30 p. m.

5747. My 5746, February 24, 8 a. m. For the President and the Secretary of State.

Balfour has handed me the text of a cipher telegram from Zimmermann, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the German Minister to Mexico, which was sent via Washington and relayed by Bernstorff on January 19. You can probably obtain a copy of the text relayed by Bernstorff from the cable office in Washington. The first group is the number of the telegram^{14a}, 130, and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which is Zimmermann's signature. I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German and meanwhile I give you the English translation as follows: (Then follows the English text of the telegram as given above, p. 1.)

The receipt of this information has so greatly exercised the British Government that they have lost no time in communicating it to me to transmit to you, in order that our Government may be able without delay to make such disposition as may be necessary in view of the threatened invasion of our territory.

Early in the war, the British Government obtained possession of a copy of the German cipher code used in the above message and have made it their business to obtain copies of Bernstorff's cipher telegrams to Mexico, amongst others, which are sent back to London and deciphered here. This accounts for their being able to decipher this telegram from the German Government to their repre-

¹³ *Nationalversammlung, 1919. Untersuchungsausschuss über die Weltkriegsverantwortlichkeit.* In a series of 15 sessions, from October 21, 1919, to April 14, 1920, a committee appointed by the German National Constituent Assembly to inquire into the responsibility for the war held hearings in Berlin. The reports of two subcommittees together with the stenographic minutes of one of these subcommittees and supplements thereto have been translated and published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as vols. 1 and 2 of *Official German Documents Relating to the World War.* These two volumes are a veritable mine of important information. They will hereafter be referred to as *German Hearings.* The statement above is taken from p. 311.

¹⁴ von Rintelen, Capt. Franz, *The Dark Invader.* The Macmillan Co., New York, 1928.

^{14a} The first is taken from Hendrick, vol. III, p. 332; the second, from FRB, p. 147.

^{14b} This is not the number of the telegram, but the code equivalent of the number (3).

representative in Mexico and also for the delay from January 19 until now in their receiving the information. This system has hitherto been a jealously guarded secret and is only divulged now to you by the British Government in view of the extraordinary circumstances and their friendly feeling toward the United States. They earnestly request that you will keep the source of your information and the British Government's method of obtaining it profoundly secret, but they put no prohibition on the publication of Zimmermann's telegram itself.

The copies of this and other telegrams were not obtained in Washington but were bought in Mexico. I have thanked Balfour for the service his Government has rendered us and suggest that a private official message of thanks from our Government to him would be beneficial.

I am informed that this information has not yet been given to the Japanese Government, but I think it not unlikely that when it reaches them they may make a public statement on it in order to clear up their position regarding the United States and prove their good faith to their Allies.

PAGE.

We shall not concern ourselves with the steps taken by the President and Secretary of State Lansing, culminating in the publication by the Associated Press of the text of the telegram. Our interest will be concentrated upon the minute details of the manner in which the message was intercepted and solved by the British.

The Hendrick account, immediately after the preceding two telegrams quoted above, continues:

The manner in which the British had acquired this message is disclosed in Page's telegram. It was "bought in Mexico." That is, the British Secret Service had obtained it evidently from some approachable person in the Mexican capital—a practice which, it appears from Page's communication, had been going on for some time. An interesting additional fact is that this is not the only way in which the British obtained this priceless treasure. The German Government was so determined to make this Mexican alliance that it did not depend upon a single route for transmitting the Zimmermann message to von Eckhardt. It dispatched it in several other ways. For one it used the wireless route from Nauen, Germany, to Sayville, Long Island.

In the early days of the war, the American Government prohibited the use of this Sayville line except under American supervision; how little this prohibition interfered with the Germans is shown by the use they made of the Long Island station for this, the most fateful message sent to America during the war. * * * In the British Admiralty this Nauen-Sayville thoroughfare was known as the "main line"; it was the most direct and consequently the one most used for sending German dispatches to the United States.

Hendrick cites no authority for the statement that the Zimmermann telegram was transmitted by radio from Nauen to Sayville and there is reason to doubt that this was the case, as will become apparent when the matter is carefully considered in the light of other evidence.

A few hours after the outbreak of the war the British, who have always recognized the importance of controlling communication channels as well as sea lanes, took immediate steps to isolate Germany from the rest of the world that lay beyond the oceans, by cutting and diverting to her own service the two German cables across the Atlantic Ocean. This left Germany only indirect channels of communication with her Ambassador at Washington. These channels were four in number. The first, by radio between a station in Germany and two stations in the United States, was known to and supervised by our Government; the second, by cable from Germany via Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Washington, was secret, and though there is positive evidence that from the very first days of its use it was known to the British, it was unsuspected and unknown to our Government until long after we had entered the war; the third, via Berlin, Copenhagen, Washington, was a very special method used only occasionally, with the knowledge and cooperation of the American State Department; the fourth, involving the insertion of secret text in ordinary news dispatches, was a channel which was of course unknown to our Government, until long after the war was over, when it was disclosed by Bern-

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storff himself.¹⁵ Since we are not concerned with this channel of communication we shall have no more to say about it than is given in footnote 15.

We shall consider first the communications passing by radio between the German station at Nauen and one or the other of two radio stations on United States territory, at Sayville, Long Island, and Tuckerton, N. J. These stations had been erected by German enterprise for direct communication with Europe; they were, however, partly financed by French capital; and the legal objections which the French raised immediately upon the outbreak of the war soon resulted in closing both of them. Later our Government, after long negotiations with the German Government, took over the stations and exercised a censorship over them. The steps leading to the imposition of that censorship need not concern us; the fact is that the Germans were unable to use the stations until April 1915¹⁶ and then only under supervision, in that messages sent by Bernstorff to Nauen had to be submitted to our censor before they could be transmitted and messages received from Nauen, addressed to Bernstorff, were carefully scrutinized before they were handed over to him. The purpose of this censorship was, of course, to preserve our neutrality. Messages exchanged via these radio stations were, as a rule, sent in a code known as "Englischer Chiffre Nr. 9972", two copies of which had been deposited with our censor. This is established by the following letter:¹⁷

KAISERLICHE DEUTSCHE BOTSCHAFT,
German Embassy, Washington.

APRIL 20, 1915.

The Imperial German Embassy presents its compliments and has the honor, with reference to the correspondence with Honorable Robert Lansing in regard to the sending of wireless messages in cipher by means of the radio stations at Tuckerton and Sayville, to transmit to the United States Department of State herewith, in two copies, the key to that cipher against kind acquittance for making further directions.

(Signed) J. BERNSTORFF.

As stated above, all messages forwarded by radio by Bernstorff had to be sent to our censor through the State Department and these messages were regularly accompanied by a formal letter couched in the following terms:

The Imperial German Embassy presents its compliments to the United States Department of State and has the honor to enclose herewith a wireless cipher message, in duplicate, to the Foreign Office at Berlin for kind transmission to the Tuckerton station. Duplicate copies of the (plain text) message are likewise enclosed.

¹⁵ Bernstorff, p. 154: "My reports as a matter of fact were somewhat infrequent and always short, as we had to put all our messages into cipher, and this was not always possible. In explanation of the inevitable incompleteness of my communication with the Foreign Office, I may remark that the telegrams of the Wolf and Trans-Ocean Bureaus were regarded as the main sources of information for either side, and that I made use of various arrangements of words, to which the Foreign Office alone had the key, for the purpose of making my own views easily distinguishable in these telegrams." Another interesting corroboration of the use of this method is to be found in the Hall affidavit. (See footnote 20.) Among the telegrams accompanying the affidavit is one (p. 122) dated April 8, 1916, from Bernstorff to the Foreign Office. It contains the following paragraph:

"For this reason I suggest that the Wolf Bureau should be instructed for the present to forward immediately all Klaessig's telegrams to the Foreign Office. It is advisable that all should be sent, because telegrams going from here are in code, and therefore the recognition signal agreed on by us for telegrams intended for you might easily be lost. For motives of economy Klaessig uses the Ritzsche Bureau in (an American town) for such telegrams, as in this way it is possible to use code with regard to the English censorship."

¹⁶ P. 480, German Hearings.

¹⁷ The letter is in the files of the State Department. In handwriting on its lower left hand corner appears the following: "Two cipher books handed to Lieutenant Noyes, U. S. Navy, April 20, 1915." In telegram 79 dated April 20, 1915, Bernstorff informed the Foreign Office that two copies of Code 9972 were delivered to the State Department. He says (Bernstorff, p. 66): "In these negotiations we had to content ourselves with pointing out that whereas our enemies could pass on military information to their Governments by means of coded cablegrams, we should be confined to the use of the wireless stations. Finally we came to an agreement with the American Government that they should have a copy of the code which we used for the wireless telegrams. In this way their contents were kept secret from the enemy but not from the Washington Government. This course we only agreed to as a last resource as it was not suitable for handling negotiations in which the American Government was concerned." How naive Bernstorff was in respect to his idea that the messages in Code 9972 were thus kept secret from the enemy will be seen in a short time.

Thus not only did the United States have the code in which the messages were prepared, but messages in that code, when sent by Bernstorff to the State Department for transmission, were accompanied by their plain texts so that the censor could verify the latter if he desired.¹⁸

That the scrutiny of these messages was not a mere formality is attested by the fact that the files of the State Department show several cases in which the Department held up and refused to transmit telegrams which, on being examined, were not perfectly clear, or which were even to a slight degree questionable as regards our neutrality. In this connection Bernstorff says:¹⁹

As has already been mentioned, all our wireless messages were read by the American Government departments and it had often occurred that objection had been raised.

On one occasion, upon the very urgent request of the German Ambassador, the Secretary of State agreed to permit Bernstorff to receive a radio message from Berlin to Tuckerton prepared, not in Code 9972, but in a code of which no copy had been deposited. This special circumstance caused Bernstorff to address a letter on January 28, 1917, to William Phillips, then Under Secretary of State. This letter, found in the files of the State Department, contains the following paragraph:

I presume that the wireless was addressed and forwarded direct to the Imperial Foreign Office. As I have asked for an immediate wireless reply, my Government may answer in the same way and in a code not decipherable by the Censor at Tuckerton. In a former somewhat similar case when by mistake the wrong code was used, the telegram reached me only after several days' delay. Therefore, and as the answer to my yesterday's message will be extremely urgent, I should be particularly grateful to you, if you could, at your earliest convenience, have the Censor at Tuckerton and at the Navy Department instructed to let, in this exceptional case, the reply to my message pass as quickly as possible.

It is obvious that if scrutiny of messages had been a mere formality Bernstorff would hardly have gone to the trouble of begging so humbly for the permission to which reference is made. Parenthetically it may be stated that if the Germans' purpose in using a code for these radio messages was to keep their contents from their enemies, they might well have saved themselves all the trouble they took, for Code 9972 was extremely simple in construction and was solved by the British without difficulty. This is proved by a telegram that appears in a public record which is replete with valuable information, namely, the documents published by the German-American Mixed Claims Commission, which was established in 1922. Among these documents is an affidavit dated December 28, 1926, by Admiral Sir W. Reginald Hall, wartime chief of the intelligence department of the British Admiralty.²⁰ This affidavit is accompanied by a large number of messages which were intercepted and read by the cryptographic bureau of the British Admiralty. Among these decoded messages is a translation of one of these Nauen-Sayville messages accompanied by the following footnote:²¹

[British] DEPARTMENTAL NOTE.—This is the first message in cipher 9972 which has been read. This cipher is employed in messages passing between Berlin and the German Embassy, Washington.

In view of the strict supervision that was exercised over this Nauen-Sayville radio route it appears strange that the Zimmermann telegram should have been transmitted in this way.

We come now to the second communication channel that was used by the German Government to communicate with Bernstorff, the route via Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Washington. This channel was made available by the good offices of the Swedish Foreign Office and its representatives abroad. Hints as to the use of this channel may be found in Bernstorff. For

¹⁸ Of course the convenience of our censor had a part in the selection of a code in the English language. The code, however, was not compiled for that purpose. It was already on hand and had been used for the purpose of transmitting English material.

¹⁹ Bernstorff, p. 230.

²⁰ Hereafter the Hall affidavit will be referred to as *Hall*. It appears as Claimants' Exhibit 320 of the documents published by the Mixed Claims Commission, and is reprinted as Appendix 1 to this paper.

²¹ Hall, p. 95.

example, on page 65: "We had to fall back exclusively on the wireless stations, when, as frequently happened, we were unable to make use of the *circuitous routes via neutral countries.*"^{22c} Again on page 149: "Telegraphic communication between the German Government and the Embassy at Washington was carried out by a circuitous route, which made it extremely slow."

There is in the State Department files a telegram dated September 10, 1917, from American Ambassador Morris, at Stockholm, to the Secretary of State, which reads:

Today had conference with British Minister who informs me as follows: In the summer of 1915 when Great Britain sent a commission to Sweden to negotiate regarding importation into Sweden the Swedish Government protested against Great Britain delaying in London official telegrams addressed by Swedish Government to Swedish Legation, Washington. British Minister received cable instructions to inform Swedish Government that delay was due to the fact that the British Government was in possession of *positive knowledge*^{22b} that the Swedish Legation, Washington, had transmitted to the German Government through the Foreign Office Stockholm, message from Count Bernstorff. Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs admitted that such message had been sent so transmitted but gave British Minister formal assurance that this would not occur again.

What was the nature of the "positive knowledge" that the British Government possessed? Undoubtedly it was based upon decoded German telegrams, as is evidenced by the following telegram which appears among those in Admiral Hall's affidavit:²³

From BUENOS AIRES
To BERLIN

B. A. 67
(transmitted) 19th June 1915
(5950) and (13040)^{22a}

I. Telegram No. 72 is missing.

II. Please send cypher telegrams for WASHINGTON in such a way that they can be re-cyphered here, otherwise the Swedish facilities for wiring will be compromised and presumably withdrawn from us.
LUXBURG.

Note the date of this message. It is good evidence that the British knew of this method, but there is also sufficient additional evidence in Admiral Hall's affidavit, if one studies the points between which the telegrams included in the affidavit were sent. The fact that a large number of the messages in the Hall affidavit were sent via Stockholm-Buenos Aires, is clear proof that the British were carefully watching this route and reading the telegrams transmitted over it.

It is quite clear from this evidence and from the quotations cited above that Hendrick places too much emphasis upon the variety of routes which he says the Zimmermann telegram traveled, as though only this telegram had received special treatment. It is apparent that the transmission of important messages by more than one route was a usual procedure with Bernstorff. For example, he states:²⁴ "With the utmost possible speed I sent the following telegrams about my interview with Mr. House, by three different routes to Berlin."

Hendrick says:²⁵

The fact seems to be that the Swedish Court was openly pro-German; that popular opinion in Sweden similarly inclined to the German side; and, by January, 1917, the Swedish Foreign Office had become almost an integral part of the German organization. In many capitals German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers in other countries and by them delivered to their German colleagues. Herr Zimmermann, in his desire to make certain that his Mexi-

^{22a} Italics ours.

^{22b} Italics in original.

^{22c} Hall, p. 68.

^{22d} "(5950) and (13040)" is the British designation of the code used by the Germans in sending the message. Code 5950 was an encipherment of 13040, and a message sent in that code had, accordingly, to be transposed into code 13040 before it was read. (See pp. 4-14 of Mendelsohn, Charles J., *Studies in German Diplomatic Codes Employed During the World War*. Technical Paper of the Signal Intelligence Service, Washington, 1937.)

²³ Bernstorff, p. 373.

²⁴ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 338.

can telegram should reach Washington, again fell back upon the assistance of his Swedish confidant. He handed his message to the Swedish Minister to Berlin; this functionary sent it to Stockholm, Sweden; from this point it was cabled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and from that city cabled in turn to Washington. The journey was a roundabout one, covering about ten thousand miles. Yet nothing was sent through the air or under the sea seemed to escape the watchful attention of the British Naval Intelligence, and this Swedish message was captured almost at the same moment as that one which was going by the "main line."

It is to be noted that according to Hendrick "German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers * * *" and he implies that the British read the Swedish code.

Now it would be easy to believe that the British obtained and read messages in Swedish code, for their intercept service pretty well covered the earth. It is, however, intrinsically unlikely that the Germans would give the Swedes the text of a message to be put into Swedish code for transmission. Why reveal their secrets to the Swedish Government? It was so much easier merely to ask Stockholm to forward a message in German code—precisely as they asked the Americans to do, as we shall soon see. Not only, however, do probabilities point away from any idea that a Swedish code was used, but we have two pieces of evidence on this matter the authenticity of which cannot be questioned.

On September 8, 1917, the State Department published the text of three code messages sent by the German *chargé d'Affaires* at Buenos Aires to the Foreign Office at Berlin. These telegrams became notorious as the Luxburg or "sink without trace" messages. They were furnished by the British, for the American cryptographic bureau had as yet hardly been organized at that time. The files of the State Department contain several messages in connection with this episode. Among them is one dated September 18, 1917, to Bell (Secretary, American Embassy, London) from Harrison (Secretary in the Diplomatic Service, assigned to the Department, later—1922—Assistant Secretary of State), in which Harrison transmitted the dates and initial groups of 22 messages sent from the Swedish Foreign Office, Stockholm, to the Swedish Legation, Buenos Aires and asked: "Please let me know as soon as possible if British authorities have copies of all these messages, if they have been successfully treated, and if so telegraph contents at earliest possible moment." On September 19, Bell replied as follows: "Numbers 4, 5, 11, 16, 17, 18, and 22 are in Swedish code and undecipherable here."

Moreover, we have a direct statement of the war-time British Cryptographic Bureau on this point. After America's entry into the war, the British gave the American Government a partial copy of the German code known as Code 13040, with directions for its use. These directions contain the express statements that German messages sent by Swedish officials were in enciphered German code, i. e., the original code groups were subjected to a process of systematic alteration, and that the transfer, or retransfer, from Swedish to German hands was made at Buenos Aires. The method of encipherment employed to disguise the messages upon their transfer was of such nature as not completely to remove certain resemblances to German Code 13040. These resemblances aroused the suspicions of the British cryptographers, and detailed study followed. Once the nature of the disguise was learned, its usefulness was lost, and the Germans might have spared themselves the trouble of disguising the code when they gave their messages to Swedish officials for forwarding.

We have seen that the British Government once informed the Swedish Government that it was "in possession of positive knowledge that the Swedish Legation, Washington, had transmitted to the German Government through the Foreign Office, Stockholm, message from Count Bernstorff." That was "in the summer of 1915." The fact that the practice was not stopped for 2 years or more, though the British must have been fully aware of it, speaks for itself. The British authorities must have realized soon after this protest, which was no doubt made early in

Swedish create at the time of the 27 episode, certain cryptologic details from U.S.
 *We shall see presently that the British had certain cryptologic details from U.S.
 In this case the British told the truth? Why tell him anything about Swedish Codes if they could indeed read them?

the cryptographic war, that the information they were gleaming from the study of these messages was too valuable to lose, even taking into account the fact that the messages were of considerable use to their enemies. It is more than likely that the information was at least as useful to the British as it was to the Germans themselves. In some cases there is no doubt that it was even more useful.

Finally, there is another important telegram in the files of the State Department on this subject. It is dated September 17, 1917, and was sent by Bell to Harrison. The first paragraph is of great interest. It reads as follows:

I am now able to inform you Zimmerman's telegram to Eckhardt instructing him to induce Mexico to attack us was forwarded through Swedish channels. It had to be sent through Bernstorff for his information, but as Sweden had given up transmitting German telegrams direct to the United States after the British protest in 1915, it was sent through Swedish channels to Buenos Aires and there turned over to Luxburg who repeated it to Bernstorff. The latter retransmitted it to Eckhardt. From Berlin to Bernstorff it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering and of which Eckhardt had no copy. Bernstorff had to repeat it to Mexico therefore in another code known to the German Minister there and incidentally to the British and it is of this message that we obtained a copy.

Of certain portions of this telegram we shall have more to say later, as they are of extreme interest from the cryptographic viewpoint. At this point we shall merely indicate that there is good reason to believe that the British authorities did not tell Bell the whole story when they gave him the information which is contained in the foregoing telegram. Who can blame them for withholding their most precious secrets?

We come now to the third and most interesting of the several channels available to the German Foreign Office in communicating with Bernstorff in Washington—the Berlin-Copenhagen-Washington route used with the cooperation of the American State Department. We shall quote from the Hendrick narrative:²⁶

The German Government forwarded this dispatch to Washington in still another way. Indeed, the most remarkable incident in this remarkable transaction remains to be told. Evidently the German Foreign Office feared that transmission by wireless and cable transmission to Buenos Aires—by grace of the Swedish Government—might fail them. The prohibition the American Government had placed upon the use of wireless from Nauen to Sayville, Long Island, might naturally cause apprehension as to the delivery of messages sent by this route. The cable line from Stockholm to Buenos Aires and thence to Washington and Mexico was a roundabout one, and a message transmitted that way might conceivably fail to reach its destination.

The dispatch of this telegram, however, was at that moment the most important business before the German Foreign Office and its safe arrival in the city of Mexico must be assured at any cost. There was one method that was absolutely sure, though the fact that this should have occurred to Zimmermann must be regarded as one of the most audacious and even reckless strokes of the war. Humor of any kind the Germans seldom displayed at crises of this sort, yet the mechanism adopted to make certain that this plot against the American people would safely land on Bernstorff's desk evinces an unmistakable gift—even though an unconscious one—for the sardonic.

The transaction reflects so seriously upon the methods of the State Department that it would probably never have seen the light had the Germans not made it public themselves. In 1919-20 the German Constituent Assembly held an elaborate investigation into the responsibility for the war. In this the Zimmermann telegram played its part. Among its published documents is a note which reveals one route by which this document found its way across the Atlantic. It says:

"Instructions to Minister von Eckhardt were to be taken by letter by way of Washington by U-boat on the 15th of January; since the U-boat *Deutschland* did not start on her outward trip, these instructions were attached on January 16th to telegram No. 157, and through the offices of the American Embassy in Berlin telegraphed to Count Bernstorff by way of the State Department in Washington."

²⁶ Hendrick, vol. III, pp. 338-341.

²⁷ Hendrick's footnote: See Vol. II, p. 1337: "Official German Documents Relating to the World War." Translated under the supervision of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. [This work is referred to in the present paper as *German Hearings*.]

British
told Bell
abt 1900

Stop

Why couldn't
Luxburg have
repeated to
Bernstorff?

Begin

What this means is that the German Foreign Office used the American Government as an errand boy for the transmission of a document that contained a plot against its own territorial integrity. * * *

The German Government, many times in the course of the war, used the good offices of the American State Department for transmitting messages to Ambassador Bernstorff. Germany had no cable communication with the United States; the wireless was unreliable and not always available; occasionally, therefore, the Germans would request Washington to serve in this capacity. As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favor could be performed. That the British graciously permitted the Germans to use their cable facilities may possibly have seemed, at the time, an act favoring the Germans; the fact, however, that the British possessed the German cipher and read all these messages as they sped through England creates the suspicion that they may have regarded this as a way of obtaining valuable information.

Hendrick makes it appear that obtaining permission to use the American State Department facilities was a rather simple matter and that many messages were sent by the State Department for the Germans in this way, without realization on the part of State Department officialdom of the possibly serious consequences that might ensue. That this is far from the truth will appear later. His statement, too, that "As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favor could be performed" is meaningless when one considers the matter. It is obvious first of all that had the American Government been so naive as to ask the British Government's consent to such a procedure the latter would certainly have refused. It is likewise obvious that when Bernstorff wanted to send a code message to the Foreign Office in Berlin, the State Department could not simply address a telegram to the American Ambassador, Gerard, in plain language asking him to "Forward the following code message to the German Foreign Office." The British would naturally not pass such messages even though the greatest neutral country asked such a favor. Such a procedure is not a diplomatic possibility in time of war. If not in plain language, the forwarding by the State Department of German code messages had to be done through the intermediacy of State Department code. Assuming that official messages of the American Government to her ambassadors and ministers in Europe were not subjected to any study whatsoever by the British Cryptographic Bureau (which is difficult to believe), it is possible that this practice might not have been detected immediately by the British. But the manner in which the messages were actually drawn up was such that the discovery of the practice should and must have been particularly easy if American messages were even hastily scanned. Here is an example of the plain text of such a message, copied from the files of the State Department:

Amlegation
Copenhagen
Forward Berlin
3803

Deliver to German Foreign Office the following message from Ambassador Bernstorff.
(Add German Cipher.)

LANSING.

Lacking a copy of the telegram as actually filed for transmission, the form the code message took when filed cannot here be indicated; but we have on this point the positive statement of Mr. David A. Salmon, then as now Chief of the Division of Communications and Records of the State Department, to the effect that the code groups of the German code message were not reencoded in State Department code, or changed in any way whatever: they were merely added to the preamble requesting the forwarding of the message. This preamble was in code—American State Department code. Now the code groups of the American code were most commonly in letters, while those of the German code were in figures.²² Furthermore, the

²² In a few cases State Department code messages consisted of figure-groups but the latter were invariably 5-digit groups, while the German code messages, as stated further on, consisted of 3, 4, and 5-digit groups.

code groups of the German code were characterized by being composed of three, four, and five digits, whereas in most codes of even those days all of the code groups uniformly contained five letters, or five figures. Hence the subterfuge was sure to be detected almost immediately by the British. Still they made no protest. Why? The answer must surely be obvious: they were glad to have access to this leakage of valuable information, and to lodge a protest would at once dry it up at the source.

Whereas Hendrick makes it appear that our State Department handled many messages for the Germans, Lansing in his account of the matter makes it appear as though the transmission of the Zimmerman telegram via State Department channels was an isolated incident, or at least that this method of communication was placed at the disposal of Bernstorff only toward the end of the period of strained relations. Quoting Lansing: ²⁹

At eleven-thirty I went to the White House and for an hour discussed with the President the substance of the [Zimmermann] telegram and the way to use it. The President said that he had been wondering how Bernstorff got the message from Berlin, and that the closing of secret lines of communication with his government made him a little uncertain as to its authenticity.

I told him that I thought it could be easily explained, my opinion being that it was done in the following manner: During the early part of January Count von Bernstorff, at the instance of Colonel House, had been laboring with his government to obtain concrete terms of peace. The Ambassador had complained of his inability to communicate secretly and therefore freely with Berlin, which he considered essential in order to accomplish his purpose. In view of this reasonable statement we had consented very reluctantly to send [that is, in a cipher, of which the Department did not have the key] messages for him through our Embassy. ³⁰ This we did several times, permitting the German Foreign Office to reply in the same way. On January seventeenth an exceptionally long message (some one thousand groups) came through from Berlin. On the eighteenth this message was delivered to the Ambassador. On the nineteenth the telegram from Bernstorff to Mexico was filed. From these facts I drew the conclusion that in the long secret message delivered to him on the eighteenth was the message for the German Minister besides other orders as to what to do in case of a severance of diplomatic relations. ³¹

The President two or three times during the recital of the foregoing exclaimed "Good Lord!" and when I had finished said he believed that the deduction as to how Bernstorff received his orders was correct. He showed much resentment at the German Government for having imposed upon our kindness in this way and for having made us the innocent agents to advance a conspiracy against this country.

Careful study of available records shows that while this channel of communication was used on more than a single occasion, it was used not nearly so frequently as Hendrick implies, and that its employment was confined to periods of strained relations. The first was on June 2, 1915, shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which occurred on May 7, 1915. Of this period Bernstorff says: ³²

It is certain that if I had not at this stage of the *Lusitania* crisis had my interview with the President, relations would have been broken off and war between the United States and Germany must inevitably have followed. * * * During our conversation, however, the President offered for the first time to permit me to dispatch a cipher telegram through the State Department, to be sent on by the American Embassy in Berlin. ³³

²⁹ Lansing, p. 227.

³⁰ Bracketed matter so in original.

³¹ A footnote at this point contains substantially the same matter as is given in our extract from Hendrick given on p. 11, regarding the way in which the Zimmermann telegram was to have been sent by the submarine *Deutschland*.

³² Bernstorff, p. 151 and p. 154.

³³ This statement is not strictly correct, for there exists in the files of the State Department a letter dated November 12, 1914, from Bernstorff to Secretary Bryan enclosing a message which Bernstorff asked Bryan to send to the German Foreign Office. This message was in the German code, 13040, and, as Bernstorff told Secretary Bryan, asked "instructions from my Government for the purpose of publicly endorsing the Belgian relief plan." Attached to the letter is the text of the code message which we have decoded and find to be as described by Bernstorff. This message, incidentally, was in the same code (13040) as the Zimmermann telegram in the form in which the latter was forwarded by Bernstorff to Mexico City.

Not so *

*

Stop here

This initial instance apparently paved the way for several more during the same crisis, as is evidenced by Bernstorff:⁶⁶

From this time onwards [that is about July 21, 1915] Mr. Lansing agreed with me that, as a regular thing, I should be permitted, whatever negotiations were going on, to send cipher dispatches to my Government through the channels of the State Department and the American Embassy in Berlin. It will be remembered that a similar privilege had been granted me at the time of the *Lusitania* incident.

But, lest one jump to the conclusion that the State Department was careless in placing its facilities at the disposal of the Germans and regarded the matter as being without possibility of serious repercussions, let it be noted that Mr. Lansing not only realized the full implications of the unusual procedure but also refused to transmit a message on at least one occasion on the ground that there appeared "to be no particular urgency for the transmission of the message on account of either of the subjects mentioned."⁶⁷ It must also be noted that the State Department transmitted messages not only for the German Government, but also for the Austrian, as is proved by a telegram dated February 4, 1917, from Lansing to Ambassador Penfield at Vienna.

Despite the questionable propriety of this procedure on the part of our diplomatic officials, it is easy to understand why President Wilson and Mr. Lansing made the State Department route available in the circumstances that then existed. For, with their complete control of cable facilities, the Allies were able to transmit any information they pleased without censorship of any sort by any other Government, while the Central Powers, having no cables, were forced to use radio, and even then had to submit their messages to a censorship exercised by foreign powers.

It may possibly be supposed that the Zimmermann telegram was transmitted by radio from Nauen direct to Mexico, inasmuch as there was a powerful station at Chapultepec. But the evidence is fairly clear against such an hypothesis. The Chapultepec station was hardly in working order by October 1918 as can be seen from the following message:⁶⁷

From: Madrid

To: Berlin

No. 1220

Oct. 8, 1918

JAHNKE reports from Mexico without date: Cipher telegrams 6 and 7 cannot be deciphered. Please send thrice each time. A wireless station has been erected. I am now trying to get into communication with Nauen. * * *

Jahnke was a secret agent of the German Admiralty who worked in the United States and Mexico. His telegrams were sent by von Eckhardt, the German Minister at Mexico City, to Buenos Aires for relay to Berlin. While the foregoing message states that "Jahnke reports from Mexico without date" we can fix the date of the report as not earlier than June 9, 1918, because cipher telegram No. 7, mentioned in that report as being indecipherable, was sent on June 9.⁶⁸ While it is possible to imagine that messages might have been transmitted from Nauen in the hope that they could be heard in Mexico City, yet the fact that as late as the middle of 1918 Jahnke was evidently having a great deal of trouble in receiving signals (note that he asks that signals be sent thrice each time) makes it extremely unlikely that a year and a half before then the Germans would have tried to get the Zimmermann telegram to Mexico City by such an uncertain route.

⁶⁶ Bernstorff, p. 166.

⁶⁷ FRB, pp. 83 and 87.

⁶⁸ FRB, p. 112, contains the following message: "He [Austrian Ambassador] presented two messages to be sent through you to his Government, which were forwarded last night in department's 1519, February 3, 7 p. m., and 1520, February 3, 9 p. m. One more message, our 1523, February 4, 4 p. m., was sent at his request this morning."

⁶⁹ Hall Affidavit, p. 234.

⁷⁰ Hall Affidavit, p. 244.

Here

to here

So there was a Mexico - BA link in this thing used for some of the if not for Zim Tel

We come now to a study of the code used for the Zimmermann telegram itself. The telegram carried the number 158 and was appended to telegram No. 157 which was sent through State Department channels.³⁹ If, therefore, lacking telegram 158, we could ascertain what code was used for telegram No. 157 we would have at least a clue as to what code was used for the Zimmermann telegram. But even this clue is lacking, for, despite most diligent search, in which there was full cooperation from the Chief of the Division of Communications and Records in the State Department, we have thus far been unable to locate the original of telegram No. 157 in the files of the State Department. However, telegram No. 157 was only one of a series exchanged between the German Foreign Office and Bernstorff via the State Department, and fortunately there do exist at least several other messages belonging to this latter series in those files.⁴⁰

All these messages are of vital importance in a study of the strained relations immediately preceding the break between Germany and the United States which formally took place on February 3, 1917, when Bernstorff was handed his passport. They are all in a code which is known as 7500, as was ascertained by a study of the messages in question in connection with their plain texts, as published in the official report of the German hearings.^{40a}

Since the Bernstorff messages just mentioned were sent in Code 7500, the probabilities are very high that telegrams Nos. 157 and 158 were also in Code 7500. But the Zimmermann telegram as given to Ambassador Page by the British was the decoded version of a message not in Code 7500 but in Code 13040. This code, 7500, is what is known to cryptographers as a "two-part" or "cross-referenced" code. The two parts comprise (1) a set of 10,000 phrases in alphabetical order and numbered from 0000 to 9999, the numbers being entirely disarranged, i. e., without any numerical sequence; (2) the same phrases fitted with the same numbers as before, but this time with the numbers in sequence and the phrases disarranged. The first part, with the phrases in alphabetical order, is used for encoding—for sending a message; the second part, with the numbers in sequence, is used for reading a message which has been sent by means of the numbers. The advantage of a code of this nature is that the identification of any code group by an outsider will yield no alphabetical clue to the meaning of any other code group which is numerically in its neighborhood. Thus, 1256 might, in an English code of the kind described, signify "day," 1257, "book," and 1258, "shoe." The reconstruction of a code of this nature by analysis is necessarily a much slower process than the building up of a code book in which the alphabetical order of the phrases corresponds to the numerical sequence of their code group equivalents—wherein, for example, 1256 signifies "date," 1257 "day," 1258 "daze," etc.

Code 7500, which as stated was a two-part code, was one of a series of such codes which the Germans employed. The code indicator for one of these codes uniformly consists of two significant digits followed by two 0's. The two significant digits always show an arithmetical difference of 2. A skeleton reconstruction of Code 9700 and one of 5300 are in the Government files. Code 8600 was used by German officials in South America during the war. Code 6400 also was in use during the war. The existence of a code known as 4200 was predicted because of the existence of the others, and was later confirmed from a French source.^{40b}

Code 13040 was an old German diplomatic code of the partially disarranged type. The alphabetic vocabulary is broken up into fractions and these again into smaller fractions before the numeral code groups are attached. By this process the original alphabetical sequence of

³⁹ German Hearings, p. 1337.

⁴⁰ Some of these messages are Bernstorff's Nos. 154 and 156 of November 21; 164 of December 1; 169 of December 4, 1916; 212 of January 16; 222 of January 21; 228 and 229 of January 23; and 239 of January 27, 1917.

^{40a} See Mendelsohn, Charles J., *An Encipherment of the German Diplomatic Code 7500*, Technical Paper of the Signal Intelligence Service, 1938.

^{40b} See Bourcard, Robert. Article in *Gringoire*, Paris, Feb. 3, 1937.

the words and phrases is only partially destroyed. In the case of 13040 the method of dividing the vocabulary into fractions was such as to leave very generous traces of the alphabetical arrangement and proportionally to facilitate the process of decipherment. Once begun, the decipherment of such a code becomes progressively easier as more groups are identified:

Page
When Ambassador Page sent his telegram containing the English text of the Zimmermann message, he said:⁴

I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German

These were sent from London on March 2, but of course could not have reached Washington in less than a week. In the meantime, still worried about the authenticity of the telegram, Washington asked for a copy of the German code, as is evidenced by the following telegram:

WASHINGTON, February 28, 1917—8 p. m.

4493. Your 5747, February 24—1 p. m. Please endeavor to obtain copy of German code from Mr. Ballou, decode following messages and telegraph translations. All three messages are dated January 17, signed Bernstorff, and addressed to the German Legations at Bogota, Port-au-Prince and Santiago, Chile, respectively.

[Here follow code messages.]

Effort will be made to secure copies of all German cipher messages as far back as possible and if the Department were in possession of the code there would be a great saving of time and expense. Contents of messages decoded here would of course be communicated to the British Government.

Publication of Zimmermann's telegram to Mexico tomorrow.

LANSING:

Page replied:⁵

LONDON, March 1, 1917—11 p. m.

[Received March 2, 12:30 a. m.]

Your 4493, February 28—8 p. m. The three messages were deciphered to-day and are practically identical. They contain instructions to the three legations to use a certain variation of the cipher code when communicating with Berlin. The one to Santiago was to be repeated to other missions in South America. The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but there appear to be serious difficulties. I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it was never used straight, but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here. They can not be spared to go to America. If you will send me copies of Bernstorff's cipher telegrams, the British authorities will gladly decipher them as quickly as possible giving me copies as fast as deciphered. I could telegraph texts or summaries in matters of importance and send the others by pouch. Neither Spring Rice nor Gaunt know anything about this matter.

PAGE.

Mr. Page's informant was misinformed or was misleading Mr. Page. The code used is described by Mr. Page in his original announcement concerning the Zimmermann telegram:

The first group is the number of the telegram, 130, [sic. in the German numbering and dating code, in which the group 130 means "Number 3"; the Zimmermann telegram was therefore message No. 3 from Washington to Mexico City], and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which is Zimmermann's signature.

This description tallies exactly with the copy of the telegram as secured by Mr. Polk from the Washington telegraph office. (See frontispiece.) The message was in straight unenciphered German code, and could be read by any one in possession of both the telegram and the code book. Not only was the Zimmermann telegram as sent from Washington to Mexico City in this unenciphered 13040 code, but a whole multitude of messages between Washington and Berlin were sent in the same way.

end
⁴ See message quoted on p. 5.

⁵ FRB, p. 152.

⁶ FRB, pp. 157-158.

⁷ See message quoted on p. 5.

*Deciphered by
not used by Bernstorff*

Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, in his affidavit before the Mixed Claims Commission, said of this code (Claimant's Exhibit 320, p. 776):

The German cipher book covering this system of ciphering is in our possession, it having been captured by the British authorities in the baggage of a German consul named Wasmuss who was stationed at Shiraz while Wasmuss was engaged in an endeavor to cut a British oil pipe line.

It seems unlikely that a German consul engaged in an expedition to cut a pipe line should carry a diplomatic code book in his baggage. Moreover, the British copy of 13040 is fragmentary, and gives every evidence of having been gradually reconstructed in a cryptographic bureau through the decipherment of messages. A glance at the copy given by the British to the United States after America's entrance into the war will demonstrate this fact. This copy contains about half the vocabulary, but is not a transcript of part of the code book, since it comprises some words and phrases from all the pages. Some of the identifications, too, are marked doubtful. An actual copy of a code book would certainly not exhibit missing and doubtful sections.

On the other hand Admiral Hall's recollection was probably only partly at fault. The British may very well have found in Wasmuss' baggage not a copy of a code book but a copy of one or more telegrams with the code text accompanied by the corresponding clear. From this start they would then proceed to build up the code book. As already indicated, the nature of the structure of Code 13040 is such that a comparatively small amount of decoded material together with a number of telegrams in code will enable skilled cryptographers to reconstruct the book.

How did the British obtain the 13040 version of the Zimmermann Telegram? Page was told that it was " * * * bought in Mexico." While the British, for obvious reasons, insisted upon the Mexican source of the message, we may have our own opinion as to whether or not they procured another copy from the files of the Western Union Telegraph Office in Washington.

The following questions now may be raised with the hope of finding accurate answers: Why was the Zimmermann telegram originally sent from Berlin to Washington in Code 7500 and not in Code 13040? What routes were really used for its transmission? If several routes were really used, when did the telegram first reach Bernstorff? Why did Bernstorff forward it in another code? When did the British first intercept the message, if it was sent by more than one route? Were they able to decode it at once, and if so, why did they wait more than a month before communicating its contents to Ambassador Page for forwarding to Washington? And which version did the British Government hand Page, the one in Code 7500 or the one in Code 13040? The answers to these questions are vital points in this study.

The Zimmermann telegram was prepared originally in German code 7500 because that was the code employed for these special communications between the German Foreign Office and Bernstorff for direct communication via State Department channels at the time in question. The German hearings contain extremely interesting testimony on this point, for the Zimmermann telegram episode was discussed with some detail at those hearings, and the printed record contains sufficiently interesting testimony on the circumstances surrounding the disclosure of the text of the telegram to warrant quotation.⁴⁵

Delegate Dr. SCHÜCKING. Was there—and this is a much more important matter—an investigation into the fate of the Mexican dispatches?

Witness COUNT V. BERNSTORFF. Yes, an investigation did take place in that instance.

Delegate Dr. SCHÜCKING. And what was the result of this investigation, so far as your activities came into question?

⁴⁵ German Hearings, pp. 313-315; 478-481.

Begin

end

But they were reading it before Wasmuss capture

answered and with fairly complete

Begin

held a few days and the work

Bernstorff "learned"
by 1919 or 1920 that
British read his message

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. So far as I know, no result was accomplished by the investigation. But subsequently I came to have no doubt upon the point that all our dispatches were decoded by the British and placed at the disposal of the Americans.

Expert Dr. BORN. By this, you mean to say that this dispatch was caught between Germany and the United States, and that the decoding was not the result of transmitting the message to Mexico from the United States by land?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. According to what I learned later, I assume that the British decoded all the telegrams which came over the English cables.

Expert Dr. BORN. We shall have to go into this matter more carefully later on.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, but for the present we will close the matter here with this.

Delegate Dr. SPANN. Secretary of State Zimmermann will give us information later concerning the question of the box.* The statement which we have received from him on this point differs from yours, your Excellency. But he will tell us about it himself.

So far as concerns the dispatch to Carranza, the complaint has been made that there was no change of code, and that the old cipher was used, which had been known for a long while; that it was in this way possible for the dispatch to be decoded. How about this?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. Naturally, the code was changed much less during war time than was otherwise the case, but that was due to the fact that it was impossible to send us new ciphers.† The last time I received new ciphers was by way of the U-boat *Deutschland*. * * * Twice, on both the trips of the U-boat *Deutschland* I was sent new ciphers.‡

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. May I be permitted at this point to ask a question concerning the ciphers and cipher keys?

The CHAIRMAN. That would seem to be connected with the point at issue, and in any event we shall hardly have an opportunity later on to go into it.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. I would like to ask Count Bernstorff to make us a brief statement covering the use of the ciphers, the key to the ciphers, etc. It is well known that complaints have been made in respect to the use of the cipher. The Count said something with regard to the matter during the first session.

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. It is readily understood that, under the conditions which I have described, the ciphers were not changed as often as would have been the case under normal conditions. In all probability, if communications had not been interrupted, we would have received new ciphers every month or every other month, so that they could not have been compromised so easily. To the extent that my memory serves me, the only occasions upon which we received new ciphers were on the two trips of the *Deutschland*. To the extent that it was possible to do so, we operated the available ciphers by means of keys; but I learned later, as I already stated in giving my first testimony, that the British deciphered all our telegrams.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. How do you explain the fact that the English were able to get such a knowledge of them?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. I am no cipher expert, but the cipher experts now state that there is absolutely no cipher which they cannot decipher. I do not know how right they are in this, but, in any event, the experts say that there is absolutely no cipher which they cannot decipher, provided they have before them a sufficient number of telegrams. And this result, particularly in the case of the United States, was probably due to the fact that circumstances were such as to force us to make use of an extraordinarily large number of ciphered messages, and we often sent our reports and telegrams in double or triple form, in the hope that in some way they should reach Germany. Consequently, the British must have had an enormous amount of material in the way of cipher dispatches of ours, and in this way it was possible for them to break down our various ciphers.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. So that, according to your conviction, the question of treachery or carelessness is not involved in the matter?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. I can state under oath that I do not believe that there was any treachery or negligence.

* The word "box" has reference to the dispatch box which the British found and seized on the boat on which Bernstorff returned to Germany after severance of diplomatic relations. (See p. 4.)

† Bernstorff's last answer is disingenuous. The question is about the code used from Washington to Mexico City, the answer is about the code from Berlin to Washington. Why the German Government did not change the code from Washington to Mexico City remains a riddle. The border was not carefully guarded even after we entered the war.

‡ On its first voyage, the *Deutschland* docked at Norfolk on July 9, 1916, on its second voyage, at New London on November 1, 1916.

What was the "Luxburg
'sink without trace' message"?

19

A study of available messages, exchanged between Bernstorff and the Foreign Office in Berlin during the period of strained relations indicates that Code 7500 was one of the two received by Bernstorff via the *Deutschland*, and this code was apparently reserved for messages of the highest importance. Code 13040 was nevertheless used concurrently with Code 7500 as well as with other codes. Code 13040 was very old; in fact it used the old German orthography and whereas it contained words like "velociped" it failed to list such a word as "U-Boot," except in a supplement, and was not sufficiently up-to-date for foreign communications.

As to the routes really used for the transmission of the Zimmermann telegram, all the evidence thus far cited indicates that two routes were certainly employed, even if the wireless was not used. The first was the State Department route, and it is clear that the telegram was sent on January 16, 1917, via that channel. The second route, according to the statement contained in the cablegram from Bell to Harrison quoted above (p. 11), was via Swedish channels, and since Bell told Harrison that the British had succeeded only partially in decoding the message, it may be assumed that it too was in Code 7500. If the wireless was used, the same code was almost certainly used. The British in the fall of 1917 apparently saw no harm in telling Bell that the Germans had employed Swedish channels for the Zimmermann message because the subject of the moment was the famous Luxburg "sink without trace" message which had been sent via those same channels. However, Bell was not told that the British had intercepted the Zimmermann telegram sent via State Department channels for reasons which will presently become clear.

The British undoubtedly intercepted the State Department message which served, so to speak, as the envelope for the Zimmermann telegram, on January 16, 1917, or, at the latest, the next day. Were they able to decode the German code text contained within the State Department's message? The answer to this question is of great cryptographic interest. They were able to read it—but only partially. The evidence for this is fairly clear out. Not only have we the Bell to Harrison cablegram referred to above, which specifically states that "from Berlin to Bernstorff it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering," but we may also note some corroborative evidence for this statement in Hendrick's version reading as follows:⁴⁸

On the 16th of January 1917, the ever-watchful ears of the British wireless operators detected the characteristic spluttering which informed them that another German message was speeding through the air. When decoded, the British found that they possessed this somewhat disjointed but still extremely valuable document:

"Zimmermann to Bernstorff for Eckhardt W. 158."

"16th JANUARY, 1917."

"Most secret for your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister in ? Mexico with Tel. No. 1 * * * by a safe route."

"We purpose to begin on the 1st February unrestricted submarine warfare. In doing so, however, we shall endeavor to keep America neutral. * * * ? If we should not (succeed in doing so) we propose to (? Mexico) an alliance upon the following basis:

"(joint) conduct of the war

"(joint) conclusion of peace."

"Your Excellency should for the present inform the President secretly (that we expect) war with the U. S. A. (possibly) (* * * Japan) and at the same time to negotiate between us and Japan * * * (Indecipherable sentence meaning, please tell the President) that * * * our submarines * * * will compel England to peace in a few months. Acknowledge receipt."

ZIMMERMANN."

⁴⁸ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 336.

In Admiral Hall's affidavit it is explained that in the British files a letter followed by a number indicated the point of origin and serial number of the message. "B 120," for example, means Berlin's message No. 120 to a given destination. While the number "158" is correct as the serial number of the Zimmermann telegram the "W" (i. e., Washington) preceding it is an error, and should read "B" (i. e., Berlin).

Where the hell
did Hendrick
get this? British
must have given
it to Page

This somewhat confused message gives an idea of the difficulty of picking up wireless symbols sent across the Atlantic—at that time—in midwinter. But there is a conspicuous discrepancy between this telegram and the more complete and finished one sent to Bernstorff by way of the Washington cable office and by him relayed to the city of Mexico. The plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a free gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona does not appear in it. Whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation is not yet clear. na!

We have reason to doubt that the Zimmermann telegram was sent by radio. When one examines the text of the message as given by Hendrick and compares it with the German text of the original Zimmermann telegram as published in the German hearings one sees immediately that this partially decoded text quoted by Hendrick is that of the original Zimmermann telegram as prepared in Code 7500 and transmitted via State Department channels. The "give away" is contained in the opening sentence to the message: "Most secret; for Your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister * * *". This forms the preamble to the actual Zimmermann telegram as it left the German Foreign Office. It is naturally not contained in the version which Bernstorff sent to von Eckhardt in German Code 13040 and which the British obtained in Mexico. The lacunae in the first solution obtained by the British are there because the British had only partially succeeded in reconstructing Code 7500. Hendrick, specifically calling attention to the omission of the plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, raises the question as to whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation. Does he wish us to infer that Bernstorff added this interesting feature to the message? How absurd!

The real explanation is cryptographic in nature. Such names as Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona would not be included in making up a small code like 7500. In fact, the name of only one of these States—Texas—is included in the much larger code 13040. These names, if they occurred in a message, would have to be built up syllable by syllable by the use of several code groups; and unless these code groups were used frequently in other messages a cryptanalyst who was solving the messages by analysis would have no way of establishing the meaning of these groups in the Zimmermann telegram. Code 13040, as has been pointed out, retained decided traces of its original alphabetical arrangement, and had, moreover, been in use for a long time. Code 7500, on the other hand, had no trace of alphabetical arrangement, and had been used between Berlin and Washington for a short time only. It had been brought to America (cf. note 47) by the submarine *Deutschland* on either July 9 or November 1, 1916, and the earliest 7500 message which the present authors have been able to find is dated November 16. In these circumstances the British reconstruction of 7500 had not reached the point where it was equal to the complete decipherment of the Zimmermann telegram. When, however, the 13040 version was obtained, the entire message was read without difficulty.

When all is said and done, the decipherment of the 7500 version of the Zimmermann telegram, even to the degree given in the Hendrick version, approaches the unbelievable. This statement is not to be understood as in any way questioning the skill of the British cryptographers. With the greatest skill in the world, however, cryptography is a science assisted by art, and is not in any sense clairvoyance. There are only about a dozen 7500 messages in the American files. If we assume that the British had twice that number to work with their feat remains astonishing; for it must always be kept in view that 7500 is a code in which one identification gives no alphabetical clue whatever to another, and that this complete absence of alphabetization likewise makes it impossible in many cases, even where the general meaning of a code group is apparent, to choose among a number of synonyms any one of which will fit equally well. A lacuna of five or six code groups, not to mention longer ones, renders decipher-

Partly
James
Mason

U

ment not merely extremely difficult, but literally impossible, for the simple reason that there are an infinite number of ways in which such a lacuna may be filled.

It may be that Code 7500 was in use by the Germans for other traffic than the German-American, and that the British, as a consequence, had access to a very large number of messages. The employment of a code in different parts of the world is not unknown in German practice; we know that Codes 13040 and 18470 were so used. In this way the British may have made considerable progress in the solution of the code before the Zimmermann telegram was sent.^{49c}

Nevertheless, the information which the British obtained from this partially solved message was apparently clear enough and of sufficient importance to warrant their disclosing it to the American Government *at once*—if they wished to. Still, they did not do so. Why? Why did they wait from the middle of January until February 24? One astute student⁵⁰ raises the pertinent question as to the motives of the British in handing Ambassador Page a month-old telegram:

There is no doubt that President Wilson was profoundly shocked by this revelation of the fact that one could not go to war with Germany without having the Germans fight back. It did not even occur to him to question the authenticity of the document or the motive for the production of a month-old telegram at just that moment.⁵¹ At once the President cabled back his thanks for "information of such inestimable value" and his "very great appreciation of so marked an act of friendliness on the part of the British Government." No suspicions crossed his mind. The cable arrived on Saturday evening. It was some time on Sunday that President Wilson abruptly concluded that an appeal to Congress for authority at least to arm American merchant ships was unavoidable. On Monday he went again before the joint Houses of Congress. "Since," he told them, "it has unhappily proved impossible to safeguard our neutral rights by diplomatic means * * * there may be no recourse but to armed neutrality."

28 Feb 17
4 days
after receipt
of 24 Feb message
at 8:30 p.m. but
msg not decoded
and handed to
Polk until Mon-
day, 26th
See footnote 52

Millis is, of course, quite correct in stating that "It did not even occur to him to question the authenticity of the document * * *." The evidence on this point, based on a study not only of Lansing's *Memoirs*⁵² but also of the communications which were exchanged between Lansing and Page before the text of the Zimmermann telegram was made public, on March 1, 1917, is most conclusive.

Let us briefly review the chronology of the case:

January 16, 1917: The telegram is transmitted in Code 7500 (via State Department channels) from the German Foreign Office in Berlin to Bernstorff in Washington and is to be forwarded by Bernstorff to the German Minister in Mexico City. On January 17 it is received by the State Department, and on the 18th it is delivered to Bernstorff. (*Lansing*, p. 227.)

January 19: Bernstorff forwards the message to Mexico in Code 13040.⁵³

^{49c} Failing some such explanation the whole situation calls to mind a war-time incident that occurred in the American Military Intelligence Code and Cipher Section (M. I. 8). Those entrusted with the decipherment of cryptographic documents of one country in that section usually kept their own counsel and did not communicate overmuch with those who were busy with the messages of another country. One day it was learned that a certain group was reading messages in a code that had been a sealed book a day or so before. Later it was definitely ascertained that a copy of the code in a somewhat different encipherment had been procured from outside. At the time of the feat this was surmised by some of those not in the secret, and one cryptographer in discussing the situation said emphatically, "They're not doing any miracles around here."⁵¹

⁵² Millis, Walter, *Road to War: America 1914-1917*, New York, 1935, pp. 403-404.

⁵³ Millis' footnote: Mr. Balfour, it is true, had been careful to tell Page that the telegram had only just been received. Actually, if one may believe Mr. Page's biographer, the British intelligence service had intercepted and deciphered the document even before it had reached Mexico City, and had been holding it since then for the time when it would have the maximum effect.

⁵⁴ *Op. Cit.*, p. 227: "About ten o'clock [morning of February 27, 1917] Polk came into my office and we talked over the substance of the telegram. He told me that on its arrival [8:30 p. m., Saturday, February 24; apparently it was not decoded and handed to Polk until Monday, February 26] he had at once taken it to the President, who had shown much indignation and was disposed to make the text public without delay." Polk advised him to await my return, which he had agreed to do." * * * (p. 228). "I told the President that I thought it would be unwise for the Department to give out the telegram officially at this time as it would be charged that it was done to influence opinion on the bill for arming merchant vessels, but I thought it might indirectly be made public after we had confirmed the sending of the message by Bernstorff. To this the President agreed."

⁵⁵ This date is certain from the copy of the telegram. Bernstorff says (p. 320) that "the Zimmermann telegram passed through the Embassy at Washington on the same day on which I received the notification that the unrestricted U-boat war was to be declared"; and in another place (p. 338) he says: "On the 19th of January I received the official notice that the unrestricted U-boat campaign would begin on February 1st * * *." Of course, Bernstorff's phrase "passed through" is ambiguous, and does not categorically say the message was forwarded on the very day it was received—it may only have been started on its way, for it required reencoding, and that would take some time.

February 24: Ambassador Page cables the President and the Secretary of State the English text of the message as received by him in London from Balfour. The message is received at 8:30 p. m. on that date.

February 27: In Lansing's absence, Polk brings the message to the attention of the President, who wishes to publish it at once, but is persuaded by Polk to await Lansing's return.

February 28: (1) Polk obtains a copy of the original message filed by Bernstorff at Washington to the German Minister in Mexico City. The code text was not cabled to London for verification but the texts of three other code messages sent by Bernstorff to German Legations in South America (apparently obtained from the Washington telegraph office at the same time the copy of the Zimmermann telegram was obtained) were sent for decipherment. The message forwarding these texts has already been quoted (p. 16).

(2) Lansing communicates a paraphrased version of the text of the Zimmermann telegram to the Associated Press at 8 p. m., for release after 10 p. m.

March 1: (1) The English text is published in the morning papers in the United States and the message is discussed in Congress, where doubts are expressed as to its authenticity.⁵²

(2) Lansing cables Page, in telegram No. 4494, at 8 p. m., as follows:⁵⁴

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1917—8 p. m.

4494. Some members of Congress are attempting to discredit Zimmermann message charging that message was furnished to this Government by one of the belligerents. This Government has not the slightest doubt as to its authenticity, but it would be of the greatest service if the British Government would permit you or someone in the Embassy to personally decode the original message which we secured from the telegraph office in Washington and then cable to Department German text. Assure Mr. Balfour that the Department hesitated to make this request but feels that this course will materially strengthen its position and make it possible for the Department to state that it had secured the Zimmermann note from our own people. Matter most urgent and I hope you can give it your immediate attention. The text of code message secured from telegraph office here is as follows:

[Here follows code message.]

LANSING.

(3) Page replied (11 p. m.) to Lansing's cable of February 28, referred to above, stating⁵⁵ that,

"The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but * * * I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it is never used straight, but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here."

March 2: (1) The telegram is published in the London papers (Hendrick, p. 324), which criticize the British Intelligence Service under the misapprehension that the decipherment has been made in America.

⁵² The debate on this question takes up 13 full pages of the Congressional Record (pp. 4592-4605), and makes most interesting reading. There were, of course, many questions as to how the letter, telegram, message, note (it was called by various names) came into possession of the United States, and questions as to who turned it over to our authorities, and what were the motives. Here are some excerpts from Senator Stone's remarks (p. 4593):

"* * * This alleged letter was made public for some purpose. * * * I cannot and will not undertake to say what that purpose was further than to express the opinion that it was given publicity to affect either public opinion or legislative opinion, or both, in the United States.

"* * * Mr. President, I want to know the facts about this letter before being swept off my feet, or seeing others swept off their feet, by the clamor of jingoes. * * * I am asking only to be informed, to be advised whether the information in the possession of our State Department was derived from one of the belligerent Governments. For example, did this information come from London? Was it given to us by that Government?"

⁵⁴ FR8, p. 154.

⁵⁵ For complete text, see Page's cable of March 1, 1917 (p. 16 of this paper).

?
See next page at *

(2) Page, replying to Lansing's telegram No. 4494, states: "Your 4494 followed with absolutely satisfactory results," and follows this with a long message:

LONDON, March 2, 1917—4 p. m.
[Received 10:45 p. m.]

5789. My 5784 of today. Bell took the cipher text of the German message contained in your 4494 of yesterday to the Admiralty and there, himself, deciphered it from the German code which is in the Admiralty's possession. The first group, 130, indicates Bernstorff's number of telegram. The second group, 13042, indicates the code to be used in deciphering the cipher telegram. From the third group onwards, message reads as follows:

Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16: No. 1. Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uneingeschraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte, schlagen wir Mexico auf folgend Grundlage Buendnis vor. Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren, Friedensschluss. Reichlich finanziell Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexico, in Texas, Neu Mexico, Arizona fruher verloren Gebiet zurueck erobern. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeborene ueberlassen. Sie wollen vorstehendes dem Praesident streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen Japan von sich aus zu sofortig Beitrachtung [Beitratung?] einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesident darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichtlose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Zimmermann.

Punctuations are given as in German text. I am sending decode into German; group by group, by tomorrow's pouch.

PAGE.

March 3: Zimmermann acknowledges the authenticity of the telegram.⁵⁷

This chronology proves the accuracy of Millis' comment on the President's trustful nature, for thus far the chronology shows that the President caused the text of the Zimmermann telegram to be given to the press *before* steps were taken to authenticate it. In passing, we may note, however, that the Secretary of State was a bit troubled by the question of authenticity:

The next morning [Friday, March 2] Polk brought me a brief telegram from Page saying our copy of the [Zimmermann] cipher message obtained from the telegraph company had been received, that instructions had been followed with success, and that text of deciphered message would follow. While I had never doubted the authenticity of the translation sent, this corroboration by our own people was a relief.⁵⁸

Returning again to Millis, and especially his footnote raising the question as to British motives in producing a month-old telegram, we find comment on this important matter of delay in a work of authentic nature, as may be seen in the following quotation taken from Blanche Dugdale's biography⁵⁹ of her uncle, Arthur Balfour:

Ever since the middle of January, however, a piece of information had been in the possession of the British Government, which would move, if anything could, the vast populations behind the Atlantic seaboard States, who still read of the European War with as much detachment as if it had been raging in the moon. This was the famous telegram from Zimmermann, the German Foreign Minister, to the German Minister in Mexico, instructing him, if and when the United States should enter the war on the Allied side, to propose to Mexico an alliance which would restore to her, when peace came, her "lost territories in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico."

The method by which this information had reached the British Intelligence Service made it impossible for some time to communicate it to the United States Government. Therefore for over a

⁵⁷ FRS, p. 158. The Zimmermann telegram as it appears in FRS contains some errors which we have not corrected. For example, the word *Beitratung* is followed by *Beitratung* in brackets with a query. Of course, neither is an authentic word. For the correct rendering see "Version II" on page 25. Incidentally, Bell's consultation of the code book certainly showed him that the statement that the code "is never used straight" (cf. p. 16) was not true. Either he did not inform Page of this fact, or Page failed to mention it.

⁵⁸ New York Times Current History, vol. XI, pp. 66, 236.

⁵⁹ Lansing's Memoirs, p. 229.

⁶⁰ Dugdale, Blanche, E. C., Arthur James Balfour, 1906-1930, New York, 1937, pp. 137-138.

month Balfour read in his despatches from Washington of the slow wakening of the American will to war, but could do nothing to hasten the process. Till—at last—information about the Mexican plot reached London through channels which enabled the Intelligence Service to cover up the traces of how it had first been got.

Joy was unbounded in Whitehall, and the Foreign Secretary himself was unusually excited. "As dramatic a moment as I remember in all my life," he once said, referring to the scene in his room at the Foreign Office on February 24, 1917, when he handed to the American Ambassador the sheet of paper containing the decoded message. By the ceremony of this act the British Government gave its pledge that the communication was authentic. Nevertheless the American Nation not unnaturally took a little while to satisfy itself that the telegram was not part of some gigantic hoax. It might have taken longer, had not the German Foreign Office, within a few days of the publication, admitted the message to be genuine.

Note the very significant remark: "The method by which this information had reached the British Intelligence Service made it impossible for some time to communicate it to the United States Government. * * * Till—at last—information about the Mexican plot reached London through channels which enabled the Intelligence Service to cover up the traces of how it had first been got."

We cannot suppose that the British Government was merely desirous of hiding from the United States Government the fact that its Intelligence Service was able to decode German code messages, and that this was the reason for the delay. Their action in providing a decode of the Zimmermann telegram as sent by Bernstorff to von Eckhardt negatives that hypothesis. The reason for the delay must have involved a much more important secret than that, or at least there must have been other, more weighty considerations.

Moreover, whenever it is found that there is much beating around the bush in making an explanation, there is room for wondering whether there is not something in a situation not apparent on the surface. For instance, let us note how Admiral Hall attempts to evade the answer. In November 1925 the *World's Work* published Hendrick's article on the Zimmermann telegram. In the April 1926 issue of this magazine⁶⁰ appears an interesting editorial comment on the story, from which the following is extracted:

It was only natural that Mr. Hendrick's chapter on the real story of the seizure of the famous Zimmermann telegram, which appeared in the November issue, should have created a sensation in all countries which had a part in the war.

The London correspondents of the metropolitan American dailies reported that he [i. e., Admiral Hall] would say nothing, but a week after the *World's Work* printed the chapter of revelations the *Daily Mail* of London did manage to squeeze an interview out of him.

The British Admiralty, he explained, knew all the movements of the famous German submarines *Deutschland* and *Bremen*, and the British Government allowed German messages to be sent over British cables. What the Germans did not know was that the British possessed the German secret code and deciphered every message as it was sent across.

"This one thing shows the difference between the British and German mentality," he remarked. "I am sure, if the position had been reversed, the British would never have been so stupid as not to have suspected that the messages were being deciphered. If I had disclosed the actual wording of the Zimmermann telegram the Germans would have suspected something at once. I had to wait until we got a copy of the telegram actually sent, which was differently worded from the one from Berlin.

"It was Bernstorff's telegram that I exposed. The Germans actually thought that there had been a leakage between Bernstorff and Mexico, which was what I wanted. Right until the end of the war I do not think that the Germans suspected that we knew as much as we did of their intelligence service."

⁶⁰ Pp. 678-679.

Here we have, presumably, Admiral Hall's explanation for the delay in communicating the contents of the Zimmermann telegram to the United States Government. He says: "If I had disclosed the actual wording of the Zimmermann telegram the Germans would have suspected something at once. I had to wait until we got a copy of the telegram actually sent, which was differently worded from the one from Berlin." To put it charitably, this is hardly an adequate statement, as can be seen by comparing the text of the telegram as sent from Berlin to Washington (as cited in the official German documents) with that sent from Washington to Mexico City (the latter being the one that the British furnished Page)^{60a}:

VERSION I

Telegramm Nr. 158
Ganz geheim

Zu Euerer Exzellenz ausschliesslich personlichen Information und Weitergabe an Kaiserlichen Gesandten Mexiko auf sicherem Wege: "Telegramm Nr. 1 Ganz geheim Selbst entziffern.

Wir beabsichtigen, am 1. Februar uneingeschraenkten U-Boot-Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden, Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten.

Fuer den Fall, dass dies nicht gelingen sollte, schlagen wir Mexiko auf folgender Grundlage Buendnis vor: Gemeinsame Kriegfuehrung. Gemeinsamer Friedensschluss. Reichliche finanzielle Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits, dass Mexiko in Texas, Neu-Mexiko, Arizona fruher verlorenes Gebiet zurueckerobert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeborn ueberlassen.

Euer Hochwohlgeborn wollen vorstehendes Praesidenten streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht, und Anregung hinzufuegen, Japan von sich aus zu sofortigem Beitritt einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln.

Bitte Praesidenten darauf hinzuweisen, dass ruecksichtslose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen.

Empfang bestaetigen.

ZIMMERMANN"

^{60a} Most of the slight variations between the London version (marked "Version II" and taken from *Hendrick*, vol. III, pp. 345-6) and that given out by the German Government (marked "Version I," taken from pp. 355-6 of vol. II of the German original of *German Hearings*) are due to the fact that in the former grammatical terminations such as connected text requires are not inserted. A few others are due to carelessness or lack of knowledge of the German language, e. g., the final e on Hochwohlgeborene. The word *gemeinsam* or *gemeinsamer* is omitted before *Friedensschluss*. No one can possibly doubt that the Berlin and the London versions represent an identical text.

VERSION II

Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16:
No. 1. Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uneingeschraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte schlagen wir Mexiko auf folgend Grundlage Buendnis vor; Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren. Friedensschluss. Reichlich finanzielle Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexiko in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona fruher verlorenes Gebiet zurueck erobert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeborn ueberlassen. Sie wollen vorstehendes dem Praesidenten streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen Japan von sich aus zu sofortiger Betrachtung einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesidenten darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichtenlose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Schluss der Depesche. Zimmermann:

Page to Lansing
This is not absolutely identical with the one in Hendrick's 1:29 It may be with Hendrick's 4P3456 check

No, that is not the reason for the delay. Probably the reader has already guessed the reason or, rather, the reasons, for undoubtedly there were several. To our mind they may be listed as follows:

1. To disclose the Berlin-Washington version of the Zimmermann telegram, which it will be recalled was sent via State Department channels, would have necessitated revealing the fact that the British Intelligence Service was intercepting and solving not only German code messages but also intercepting and perhaps solving diplomatic messages of the American Government—a power whose aid they were desperately seeking at the time.

2. Even had the foregoing not served as a powerful argument against a prompt disclosure of the message, the fact that the solution presented several lacunae and doubtful spots would have detracted a great deal from the diplomatic and military value of the document. Undoubtedly, frantic efforts were made by the British cryptographers to fill in the lacunae—but the solution of a code of the two-part type, such as Code 7500, is always a slow, difficult process unless there is a large volume of text on which to corroborate hypotheses. This requisite volume was lacking. Proof that the British had not succeeded in reading entire messages in Code 7500 is neatly shown by the phrase "at that time" (referring to January 16, 1917, the date of the Zimmermann telegram) in the Bell to Harrison cablegram of September 17, 1917, quoted above on page 11.

Of course, the British might have furnished the translation of the version which, according to Bell's cablegram of September 17, 1917, was sent via Swedish channels. But we have, in the same cablegram, Bell's statement that "it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering and of which Eckhardt had no copy." In all probability the code used for the message transmitted via Swedish channels was Code 7500. Possibly it was some other code. The sending of a message in more than one code is a capital crime in cryptography. True; it was a crime that we know the Germans to have committed, but in the present case every reason for supposing such a transgression, whether by accident or design, is lacking. Even if, by some remote chance, the telegram was sent from Berlin in some other code, that code was certainly not 13040, and hence this point is immaterial. The fact remains that the British could not offer a partly solved message of such vital importance regardless of which version was available.

3. In a note dated April 18, 1916, following the sinking of the American vessel *Sussex*, the American Government had presented an ultimatum to the German Government couched in the following unmistakable language:⁶¹

If it is still the purpose of the Imperial Government to prosecute an indiscriminate warfare against vessels of commerce by the use of submarines without regard to what the Government of the United States must consider the sacred and indisputable rules of international law and the universally recognized dictates of humanity, the Government of the United States is at last forced to the conclusion that there is but one course to pursue. Unless the Imperial Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and freight-carrying vessels, the Government of the United States can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the German Empire altogether. This action the Government of the United States contemplates with the greatest reluctance, but feels constrained to take in behalf of humanity and the rights of neutral nations.

On January 9, 1917, Kaiser Wilhelm held a council at Pless, at which the irrevocable decision was taken to stake everything on another trial of unrestricted submarine warfare, to commence on February 1. On January 16, Bernstorff was notified of this decision (in telegram No.

⁶¹ FES, p. 106.

157) but was directed not to inform the American Government until the evening of January 31. Bernstorff's words are interesting.⁶²

On January 31st, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, I handed Mr. Lansing the official communication about the U-boat war. This was my last political interview in America. We both knew that the end had come, but we did not admit the fact to each other. The Secretary of State contented himself with replying that he would submit my communication to the President. I cherished no illusions regarding the expected outcome of this interview, for the ultimatum of April 18, 1916, no longer allowed of any chance of preventing the rupture of diplomatic relations.

If on January 31 this news came as a profound shock to President Wilson, who was then engaged in his second and most promising attempt toward mediation, it could hardly have taken the British unawares, for they must have had definite knowledge of the Pless decision from at least two sources. One was undoubtedly their partial solution of telegram 157, in which Bernstorff was instructed to inform the American Government of the reopening of unrestricted submarine warfare; the other was their solution of the Zimmermann telegram of January 19, which we have seen was telegram 158, and was tacked on to telegram 157. (See p. 15.) Consequently, the British must have felt quite sure as early as the third week of January 1917, that the United States would soon join the Allies, if our ultimatum of April 18, 1916, meant anything at all.⁶³ All they now had to do was to hold on for a few days or weeks longer and the United States would be on their side. Sure enough, on February 3, diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany were severed.⁶⁴ But as the weeks went by there was no declaration of war, for the President, in an address to Congress on February 3, stated:⁶⁵

Notwithstanding this unexpected action of the German Government, this sudden and deeply deplorable renunciation of its assurances given this Government at one of the most critical moments of tension in the relations of the two Governments, I refuse to believe that it is the intention of the German authorities to do in fact what they have warned us they will feel at liberty to do. I cannot bring myself to believe that they will indeed pay no regard to the ancient friendship between their people and our own or to the solemn obligations which have been exchanged between them and destroy American ships and take the lives of American citizens in the willful prosecution of the ruthless naval programme they have announced their intention to adopt. Only actual overt acts on their part can make me believe it even now.

How much this waiting for some "actual overt acts" must have irked the British may be imagined if they irritated Page sufficiently to make him write:⁶⁶

The danger is that with all the authority he wants (short of a formal declaration of war) the President will again wait, wait, wait—till an American liner be torpedoed! Or till an attack is made on our coast by a German submarine!

Something had to be done to stir up the President and the people of the hinterland beyond the Mississippi.

In the country at large the situation, as Spring Rice reported that day, was "much that of a soda-water bottle with the wires cut but the cork unexploded." The failure of shipping to sail had produced "a stoppage of trade, a congestion in the ports, widespread discomfort and even misery on the coast and inland, even bread riots and a coal famine." All this, nevertheless, was not "spectacular enough," the West was still against war and the President was still fighting for peace. But on Saturday, the 24th, the British themselves were able to supply something "spectacular." Mr. Balfour deftly gave the unexploded cork a push.⁶⁷

⁶² P. 279.

⁶³ Even Bernstorff, immediately on receipt of telegraph 157, replied (German Hearings, p. 1021): "War unavoidable if we proceed as contemplated." A few days later, in his desperate attempts to stave off a rupture in diplomatic relations, he cabled the Foreign Office again (German Hearings, p. 1047): "If the U-boat war is commenced forthwith the President will look upon this as a slap in the face, and war with the United States will be unavoidable." Bernstorff's telegrams to the Foreign Office are most interesting. No one who reads them can remain unconvinced of his absolutely sincere desire for peace between the United States and Germany.

⁶⁴ FRB, p. 108.

⁶⁵ FRB, p. 111.

⁶⁶ Hendrick, pp. 324-325, quoting from Page's diary.

⁶⁷ MBIA, op. cit., p. 403.

The "push" was, of course, the communication to Page of the contents of the Zimmermann telegram. By this time the British Intelligence Service had the full text, which had been "bought in Mexico," and they must have felt that the time had come to make the most of their opportunity. They were not wrong.

But Mr. Polk at the State Department knew of the waiting bombshell so kindly supplied by Mr. Balfour. The Zimmermann telegram, he believed, would produce a blast of popular emotion that would sweep the armed ship bill through against everything. So did Colonel House, who had now seen the text, and who was urging the President to "publish it tomorrow." So, no doubt, did the President—to whom it must have been plain enough that the first effect of Senator La Follette's pacifism would be to deliver Mr. Wilson himself into the hands of the intransigents. On Thursday, March 1, the headlines were shouting from the morning papers:

**GERMANY SEEKS AN ALLIANCE AGAINST US;
ASKS JAPAN AND MEXICO TO JOIN HER;
FULL TEXT OF PROPOSALS MADE PUBLIC**

It was a stupendous sensation. The headlines, it is to be observed, were not always precisely accurate. Germany had not actually sought an alliance as yet; the text of the telegram expressly instructed the Minister in Mexico to initiate the move only in the event that the United States should declare war, which the German Government would itself endeavour to prevent. It was not a proposal for an aggression against the United States, but merely a conventional, though rather blundering, diplomatic preparation against a probable American attack upon Germany. This, however, was far too fine a point for the hot passions of the moment; and the telegram was everywhere seized upon as final proof of the complete and fathomless treachery of the German.

What made it particularly shocking, of course, was the suggestion that the Japanese (with whom we were about to become allied) should be invited into the American Continent, or that the principle upon which many Americans had demanded the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine (because they had been acquired by force) should be applied to California and Texas, which we had forcibly detached from Mexico. Informed Americans understood perfectly well that the Allies had bribed Japan, Italy, and Rumania into the war with the promise of slices from the enemy carcass; but they were sincerely and profoundly horrified by the thought that Germany could be so base as to bribe Mexico and Japan with the promise of slices from the flanks of the United States. The Zimmermann telegram became a major German disaster. Not its least useful aspect, moreover, was the fact that it gave the Northeastern fire-eaters their first direct lever upon the pacific sentiment of the Southwest. If a German triumph threatened the annexation of California and Texas to Mexico—! The German Foreign Secretary's innocent cablegram had exploded, with its maximum effect at precisely the point where it would do the Allies the greatest good.⁶⁷

It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Millis mistakenly speaks of the projected restoration to Mexico of "California and Texas." The Zimmermann telegram makes no mention of California, but says that Mexico was to "reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona." Is it possible that the Germans were reserving California as bait for Japan?

If what Millis says is valid, if the facts which we have presented in the foregoing pages really constituted the motives which caused the British to withhold from the United States Government so weighty a secret as was contained in the Zimmermann telegram, we can take a charitable view and say that the circumstances justified their course of action. Certainly we must give them credit for knowing *when* to play their cryptographic trump cards. Which brings us to the additional compliment that they not only knew *when* to play a trump card, but also *how*. Note the dextrous manner in which they got the maximum benefit from the play *without disclosing* to their adversary where or how they had obtained the trump! Not only that, but in order to make sure that the source of their information should not be disclosed, they even took pains to insure that so far as the world outside was concerned, the credit for excellent intelligence work should go to another country—the United States! And to do that, they were not content to let natural inference take its course, but contrived with the help of British newspapers to

⁶⁷• Millis, W. C.

throw blame on their own intelligence service for letting those mere novices in intelligence work—the Americans—beat them at a game in which they themselves (i. e., the British) were generally supposed to be preëminent! For in the interview already referred to (p. 24) Admiral Hall said:

Of course, our whole object was to prevent the Germans from giving us very much credit for intelligence. When President Wilson published the famous Zimmermann telegram containing the German overtures to Mexico, I was very anxious that there should be no suspicion in the German mind that we had anything to do with it.

It was then that the *Daily Mail*, at my request, published a stinging leader passing severe reflections on the British Intelligence Service.

In a letter dated December 1, 1927, addressed to the secretary of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, giving his regrets for not being able to be present at the meeting on December 13, already referred to, Lord Balfour, Wartime Foreign Minister of the British Government said: ⁶⁸

* * * To "Room 40," where he [i. e. Ewing] was the leading spirit, the country owes an immense debt of gratitude—a debt which, at the time at least, could never be paid. Secrecy was of the very essence of the work, and never was secrecy more successfully observed.

Only one link remains still to be found before the story of the Zimmermann telegram can be regarded as complete: the original version as filed in Berlin. As already indicated, diligent search has failed to locate it, and we fear that it is now too late. The State Department files in Washington, in Berlin, and in Copenhagen have been scoured, without success. There remains only one more place where it most certainly can still be assumed to be peacefully reposing: the World War files of the British "Room 40 O. B."

In a letter ⁶⁹ to President Wilson, dated March 17, 1918, Ambassador Page, referring to Admiral Hall, wrote as follows:

* * * Hall is one genius that the war has developed. Neither in fiction nor in fact can you find any such man to match him. * * * He locks up certain documents "not to be opened till 20 years after this date." I've made up my mind to live 20 years more. I shall be present at the opening of that safe * * *

The "20 years" are up. Admiral Hall is now a retired officer, but he still has the papers, if we are to believe the statements contained in a book by a recent author.⁷⁰ Relating the details of the efforts on the part of the representatives of certain American claimants to establish the validity of their claims, Landau tells how Mr. Amos J. Peaslee, leader of the American claimants, visited Admiral Hall on August 27, 1925, at Hall's London residence:

* * * He found Hall in full sympathy with the American claimants, and so commendatory was Admiral Sims's letter that he ended up their conference by saying: "Copies of the decoded German cables are stored away in several tin boxes in the basement. I sealed up these boxes with instructions that they were not to be opened up for 20 years. You have caused me to change my mind, however. I will open up the boxes for you. Copy such of the cables as you think will be useful to you. Make yourself at home. The servants will look after you." His rapid and sweeping decision was typical of the man. Fortunately he was retired from the Navy and was, therefore, his own master.

Hall took Peaslee down to the basement, spread the cables before him, and took his leave to catch the train for Scotland. Peaslee found over 10,000 cables, radio messages, and letters which Hall had intercepted and decoded. Twenty-six different codes had been used in sending these messages. Attached to the originale was a translation in clear, also the "recognition group," or number of the code used.

So Admiral Hall can, if he will, tell the whole story. It will be interesting to see if he does. The time for its telling has arrived. Ambassador Page unfortunately did not live out the 20 years as he promised himself to do, in order to be present when Admiral Hall finally opened his safe. The present authors are curious and anxious, too. Let the safe be opened!

⁶⁸ The (Edinburgh) Scotsman, Dec. 14, 1927.

⁶⁹ Hendrjck, vol. III, p. 361.

⁷⁰ Landau, Capt. Henry. *The Enemy Within*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1937, p. 163.

APPENDIX I

Exhibit 320.—AFFIDAVIT OF ADMIRAL SIR W. REGINALD HALL, K. C. M. G., C. B., D. C. L., L. L. D., FORMERLY CHIEF OF THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT OF THE BRITISH ADMIRALTY, VERIFIED DECEMBER 28, 1926, WITH ANNEKED COPIES OF GERMAN CABLEGRAMS, WIRELESS AND OTHER MESSAGES INTERCEPTED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DURING THE WAR

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
LONDON, ENGLAND,
CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE U. S. OF AMERICA

SE:

Admiral, Sir W. Reginald Hall, K. C. M. G., C. B., D. C. L., L. L. D., being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. I reside at No. 63, Cadogan Gardens, London, and am at present a retired officer of the British Navy and am a member of the British Parliament.
2. During the recent war with Germany and her Allies I was Director of the British Naval Intelligence Service for the entire period from October 1914, until the Armistice in November 1919.
3. In that capacity it was my duty and the duty of my staff to intercept and decipher, as far as possible, cable and wireless messages and other communications sent between German officials in Berlin and German officials at Embassies and Legations and elsewhere in various parts of the world.
4. During the period from the commencement of the war in August 1914, until the Armistice in November 1919, we intercepted a large number of such cable and wireless messages and other communications. This was done by tapping the cables over which the messages were being sent, by picking up the wireless messages, and through the capture of written communications and documents in the post and in the possession of German officials and agents who were apprehended by our authorities.
5. Almost all of these communications, insofar as they were cablegrams and wireless messages, were sent in cipher, a number of different German ciphers being employed for that purpose. We were able to read substantially all of the cipher messages which were intercepted, partially by reason of the fact that we succeeded in capturing from German submarines and other sources some of the original German cipher books, and partially by reason of the fact that our cipher experts were able to decipher the German ciphers ~~wherever~~, as was the case here, a large number of different messages in the same cipher were available for study and comparison, and in many instances the same message was sent through different channels in two or more different German ciphers.
6. The annexed file of cablegrams and wireless messages and despatches marked "Exhibit A," set forth on pages numbered consecutively from No. 2 to No. 267, are true and correct deciphered copies of cablegrams and wireless messages and other despatches which were intercepted and deciphered by the Intelligence Department of the British Admiralty through officers working under my immediate supervision. The work was considered of a most highly confidential character and I exercised the closest personal contact with all its details. It was my sole duty and responsibility and I watched and checked the work with the greatest care to make certain that we were recording the true import and meaning of the German communications. Many of the original German ciphers in which the communications were transmitted are still in our possession.
7. The numbers which appear in parentheses near the tops of some of the pages on which the messages are copied (exhibit A) are numbers of a particular system of German cipher, which numbers usually appeared in the body of the cables or wireless communications themselves, and were known to us as the "recognition groups." For example, No. "(89734)" at page 2, No. "(5950)" at pages 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 32, 37, 38, 39, 42, 45, 49, 53, 57, 58, 65, 68, 70, 72, No. "(13040)" at pages 7, 11, 13, 16, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 41, 43, 44, 50, 52, 54, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 71, No. "(0064)" at pages 40, 47, 80, 114, 122, No. "(6400)" at pages 48, 55, 56, 59, No. "(0640)" at page 60, No. "(9972)" at pages 61, 73, 95, No. "(5954)" at page 67, No. "V. B. 718" at page 75, No. "S. B." at page 92, No. "(98176)" at page 112, No. "(87962)" at page 113, and No. "(19177)" at page 172, all refer to different German cipher systems.
8. The word "Nauen," appearing at the tops of pages 69, 76, 130, 135, 217, 223, 244, 245, and 259, of exhibit A, refers to the German wireless station located at Nauen, Germany, from which many communications were despatched. Many of the other communications of which copies appear in exhibit A were also sent by wireless. The communications passing between Madrid and Berlin were, practically in all instances, by wireless. In

making copies of some of the messages, particularly during the latter part of the war, and in cases where the same cipher system was being employed in a series of messages, as, for example, a series of communications to Washington and the wireless communications between Madrid and Berlin, the "recognition groups" were sometimes omitted from our file copies. This accounts for the absence of cipher numbers at pages 24, 26, 52, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 98, 104, 105, 108, 110, 115, 121, 124, 126, 128, 131, to 171, inclusive, 173 to 218, inclusive, 218 to 222, inclusive, 224 to 243, inclusive, 246 to 256, inclusive, 260 to 266, inclusive. The "recognition groups," however, appear in the original German cipher messages in every instance. The wireless messages which passed between Madrid and Berlin were sent in almost every case in cipher No. "0064" or some combinations or modifications of that German cipher system.

9. The dates appearing at the tops of the pages of exhibit A represent the dates when the messages were intercepted, which were coincident with the dates of the sending of the messages, although in a number of instances it will be noted that the message which we picked up was one which was being relayed from one point to another. In such cases the date will be the date of the relay of the message, but not necessarily the date when it was sent from its original point of origin. These dates are indicated either by a complete statement of the month, day and year, or by figures such as "26.6.16.", which means the twenty-sixth day of June, 1916.

10. The sources and destinations of the cables are indicated by the words "From" and "To." For example, on page 2 the words "From Berlin" mean that the cable or wireless message was sent from Berlin. The signature indicates the name of the official or department which sent the cable, wireless message or communication, as such signature was actually contained in the message. The words "To Washington" on page 2 mean that the message was sent to the German Embassy in Washington. The communications between Berlin and America, insofar as we intercepted them, were limited almost exclusively to communications with the German Embassy.

11. The letters and figures appearing at the tops of some of the pages in exhibit A, such as "B. No. 24" at page 2, "W. 146" at page 3, have reference to a particular series of German numbers as they appeared in the contents of the communications. "B" means a series of communications from Berlin; "W" means a series of communications from Washington.

12. The message set forth at page 35 of exhibit A, numbered "B. No. 103," dated January 26, 1915, and signed "Representative of General Staff Zimmerman" was a message sent from Berlin to Washington by cable via the Swedish Foreign Office. It was intercepted by us en route to Washington. We considered this cable of particular importance at the time and we furnished a copy of it in the original cipher together with the English translation of it to the American State Department through the American Embassy in London.

13. This message, it will be observed, was sent in cipher No. "(13040)." The German cipher book covering this system of ciphering is in our possession, it having been captured by the British authorities in the luggage of a German consul named Wasmuss who was stationed at Shiraz while Wasmuss was engaged in an endeavor to out a British oil pipe line.

14. These German communications were intercepted and deciphered by the British Admiralty through the same system which we employed in the interception and deciphering of the well-known "Zimmermann" cablegram of January 16, 1917, from Herr Zimmerman to Count von Bernstorff for transmission to the German Legation in Mexico, advising it of the plan to commence unrestricted warfare and proposing an alliance with Mexico in the event that the United States should enter the war, which cablegram we called to the attention of the American State Department, and which was published by the United States Government, and which Herr Zimmermann in a statement made in the German Reichstag admitted to be correct and authentic. Some further history of that cablegram will be found in the third volume of "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" by Burton J. Hendricks, at pages 331 to 364.

15. The German cables, wireless messages and other communications set forth in exhibit A are a comparatively small portion of a much larger collection of such messages which we intercepted during the war and which are still in our possession. Owing to the paramount importance of our having for the use of the British Navy the information contained in the messages regarding the movement of German ships it was imperative that we should avoid if possible, disclosing to the Germans the fact that we were reading their communications to this extent. Hence it was impossible for us at the time to make full use of all the information which was before us. The American Ambassador in London, Mr. Page, was in our constant confidence, however, regarding the German communications affecting America during the war, but it was necessary for all of us to exercise the greatest caution regarding the messages.

16. As head of the British Naval Intelligence I also had charge of the detention and examination of Captain Franz von Papen, the former Military Attache at Washington upon his arrival at Falmouth about the first of January, 1916. We took from Captain von Papen at that time a number of documents which were found upon his person and among his luggage, and which in our judgment were being carried in violation of his rights under the safe conduct which he had been given. Copies of some of these papers were published at the British Government Stationery Office and presented to both Houses of Parliament as a "British White Paper," Misc. No. 6,

*before
Wasmuss?*

1916, entitled: "Selections From Papers Found in the Possession of Captain von Papen, Late German Military Attache at Washington, Falmouth, January 2 and 3, 1916." A photostatic copy of that British White Paper is attached to the exhibits in this case as exhibit No. 46. I personally saw at the time and examined the originals of these documents and know of my own knowledge that the documents of which copies appear in that British White Paper, of which exhibit No. 46 is a photostatic copy, are true, correct and authentic, including the records from Captain Von Papen's check books.

17. I also personally interrogated Horst von der Goltz at the time of his arrest by the British authorities. Von der Goltz was examined by the officials at Scotland Yard under my direction and at my request. He made certain affidavits before those officials of which copies are set forth as exhibit 53 of the exhibits of this case. I have examined this exhibit 53 and it accords with my recollection of the contents of the original affidavits though I have not examined recently those affidavits which are presumably in the records at Scotland Yard unless they were sent to the American Government in Washington.

18. I also had charge of the arrest and imprisonment of Franz von Rintelen by the British authorities. He was apprehended by us at Ramsgate on the steamer Noordam in August 1915, while he was apparently trying to return to Germany from the United States. He was traveling on a Swiss passport under the name of "Casche." We put him in Donnington Hall, which is the British prison for enemy officers and he remained there until shortly after the United States entered the war, when we sent him to America under guard at the request of the American authorities and turned him over to the United States Government.

(sd) W. R. HALL.

APPENDIX 2

GROUP-BY-GROUP DECODEMENT OF THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM AS SENT BY AMBASSADOR
BERNSTORFF TO GERMAN MINISTER VON ECKHARDT IN MEXICO ON JANUARY 19, 1917

130	Nr. 3	13851	stop	18507	hinzufuegen
13042		4458	gemeinsamen	52262	Japan
13401	Auswaertiges Amt	17149	Friedensschluss	1340	von
8501	telegraphiert	14471	stop	22049	sich
115	vom 16ten Januar	6706	reichliche	13339	aus
3528	colon	13850	finanzielle	11265	zu
416	Nr. 1	12224	Unterstuetzung	22295	sofortiger
17214	Ganz geheim	6929	und	10439	Beitretung
6491	Selbst	14991	Einverstaendnis	14814	einladen
11310	zu	7382	unsererseits	4178	infinitive with zu
18147	entziffern	15857	dass	6992	und
18222	stop	67893	Mexiko	8784	gleichzeitig
21560	Wir	14218	in	7632	zwischen
10247	beabsichtigen	36477	Texas	7357	uns
11518	am	5870	comma	6926	und
23677	ersten	17553	Neu	52262	Japan
13605	Februar	67893	Mexiko	11267	zu
3494	un	5870	comma	21100	vermitteln.
14936	ingeschraenkten	5454	Ar	21272	stop
98092	U-boot	16102	iz	9346	Bitte
3905	krieg	15217	on	9559	den
11311	zu	22801	a	22464	Praesidenten
10392	beginnen	17138	frueher	15874	darauf
10371	stop	21001	verlorenes	18502	hinweisen
0302	Es wird	17388	Gebiet	18500	comma
21290	versucht	7446	zurueck	15857	dass
5161	werden	23638	erobert	2188	ruecksichtslose
39695	Vereinigte Staaten von	18222	stop	5376	Anwendung
	Amerika	6719	Regelung	7381	unserer
23571	trotzdem	14331	im	98092	U-boote
17504	neutral	15021	einzelnen	16127	jetzt
11269	zu	23845	Euer Hochwohlgeboren	13486	Aussicht
18276	erhalten	3156	ueberlassen	9350	bietet
18101	stop	23552	stop	9220	comma
0317	Fuer den Fall	22096	Sie	76036	England
0228	dass dies	21604	wollen	14219	in
17694	nicht	4797	Vorstehendes	5144	wenigen
4473	gelingen	9497	dem	2831	Monat
22284	sollte	22464	Praesidenten	17920	en
22200	stop	20855	streng	11347	zum
19452	schlagen	4377	geheim	17142	Frieden
21589	wir	23610	eroeffnen	11264	zu
67893	Mexiko	18140	comma	7667	zwingen
5569	auf	22260	sobald	7762	stop
13918	folgender	5905	Kriegs	15099	Empfang
8598	Grundlage	13347	ausbruch	9110	bestaetigen
12137	Buendnis	20420	mit	10482	stop
1333	vor	39689	Vereinigten Staaten	97556	Zimmermann
4725	stop	13732	fest	3569	stop
4458	Gemeinsame	20667	steht	3670	Schluss der Depesche
5905	Kriegs	6929	und		
17166	fuehrung	5275	Anregung		

~~Confidential~~

~~Register No. 38~~

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER
WASHINGTON

THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM
OF JANUARY 16, 1917
AND ITS
CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

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30 April 1959

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Paul S. Willard
Colonel, AGC
Adjutant General

CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED	
Fast Day Message	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Day Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Night Message	<input type="checkbox"/>
Night Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>

Patrons should purchase 2 copies for the class of service desired. OTHERWISE THE TELEGRAM WILL BE TRANSMITTED AS A FAST DAY MESSAGE.



WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM



NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

5507
JAN 19 1917

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

via Galveston

GERMAN LEGATION
MEXICO CITY

130 13042 13401 8501 115 3528 416 17214 6491 11310
 18147 18222 21560 10247 11518 23677 13605 3494 14936
 98092 5905 11311 10392 10371 0302 21290 5161 39695
 23571 17504 11269 18276 18101 0317 0228 17694 4473
 22284 22200 19452 21589 67893 5569 13918 8958 12137
 1333 4725 4458 5905 17166 13851 4458 17149 14471 6706
 13850 12224 6929 14991 7382 15857 67893 14218 36477
 5870 17553 67893 5870 5454 16102 15217 22801 17138
 21001 17388 7446 23638 18222 6719 14331 15021 23845
 3166 23552 22096 21604 4797 9497 22464 20855 4377
 23610 18140 22260 5905 13347 20420 39689 13732 20667
 6929 5275 18507 52262 1340 22049 13339 11265 22295
 10439 14814 4178 6992 8784 7632 7357 6926 52262 11267
 21100 21272 9346 9559 22464 15874 18502 18500 15857
 2188 5376 7381 98092 16127 13486 9350 9220 76036 14219
 5144 2831 17920 11347 17142 11264 7667 7762 15099 9110
 10482 97556 3569 3670

BEPNSTORFF.

Charge German Embassy.

Photograph of the Zimmermann telegram as filed in Washington by Ambassador Bernstorff for transmission to Mexico City (cf. pages 5, 16, 22).

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Register N^o 38

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER
WASHINGTON

THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM
OF JANUARY 16, 1917
AND ITS
CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

By
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Prepared under the direction of the
CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER



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THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM OF JANUARY 16, 1917, AND ITS CRYPTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Among the official cryptograms which have been intercepted and translated by governmental authorities other than those for whom they were intended, the most important of all time, either in war or peace, is undoubtedly the one deciphered by the British Naval Intelligence which is known to historians as the *Zimmermann telegram*. In German literature it is referred to as the Mexico dispatch. This message, in cryptographic form, was sent on January 16, 1917, by Arthur Zimmermann, then German Minister of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, to Ambassador von Bernstorff, at Washington, to be forwarded to German Minister von Eckhardt at Mexico City. It read, translated into English, as follows: ¹

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.

No account of the stirring episodes leading up to our entry into the World War can be considered complete without at least a reference to the one in which the Zimmermann telegram played the leading role. Even those who adhere to the theory that it was the bankers who pushed us into the conflict on the side of the Allies must mention it; while those who incline toward the theory that it was the German policy of "frightfulness" on sea and land which dragged us in against them give this message even more attention. Although today it would certainly be too much to say that this cryptogram, through its interception and solution by the British, and its forwarding by them to President Wilson, was the *direct* means of bringing us into the war, nevertheless many an informed person whose memory goes back to the exciting days when the contents of this sensational message were disclosed in the newspapers of March 1, 1917, would certainly say that had he been asked *at that time* he would have said at least that it was the straw which broke the camel's back. The importance of this incident is evidenced by the lengthy comments of prominent officials who were at that time in a position to judge its significance. The Secretary of State, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Colonel House, our Ambassador to Great Britain, and many others, give this telegram a prominent place in their writings on the World War. For example:

While the Armed Ship Bill was under discussion in Congress another event occurred which caused the greatest excitement throughout the country and aroused the people against the German Government even more, I believe, than the announced policy of the submarine ruthlessness. That event was the publication of the so-called "Zimmermann telegram" * * *. Thus the Zimmermann telegram resulted in unifying public sentiment throughout the United States against Germany, in putting the people solidly behind the Government and in making war inevitable, if not popular, because the

¹ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917*. Supplement 1, The World War, p. 147. U. S. Government Printing Office Washington, 1931. This book will hereinafter be referred to as Foreign Relations Series, abbreviated FRS.

German Government's sinister intent toward the United States could no longer be doubted. The "cold-blooded proposition" of Germany's Secretary of Foreign Affairs in one day accomplished a change in sentiment and public opinion which would otherwise have required months to accomplish. From the time that the telegram was published, or at least from the time that its authenticity was admitted by its author, the United States' entry into the war was assured, since it could no longer be doubted that it was desired by the American people from Maine to California and from Michigan to Texas.²

* * * * *

It [the Zimmermann telegram] roused a great deal of indignation in the States and strongly reinforced the popular backing for strong measures by the President.³

* * * * *

Wilson was waiting for what he called the "overt act" before he took further steps against Germany, but the possibility of avoiding hostilities daily diminished. * * *

Misguided German diplomacy did its utmost to strengthen the growing feeling in the United States that war with Germany could not be avoided. On February 26, Colonel House was called to the telephone by Frank Polk and informed that the British Naval Intelligence had received and deciphered a sensational telegram from the German Foreign Office to von Eckhardt, the German Minister in Mexico City. Signed by Zimmermann himself and dated January 16, the telegram announced the imminence of unrestricted submarine warfare, and instructed the German Minister, in case of war with the United States, to attempt to arrange a German-Mexican alliance, on the understanding that Mexico would be assisted to reconquer New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. Zimmermann further suggested that Carranza should approach Japan.

Mr. Polk fully realized that the publication of this telegram would blow American resentment to a white heat; it would strengthen immensely popular support of the President in any action he might take against Germany in defense of American rights on the sea. The same thought may have led the British to pass the deciphered telegram on to Washington. Wilson himself was disturbed and in doubt as to whether the publication of the telegram would not bring on a crisis he could not control. House urged immediate publication. * * *

The effect of publication was exactly what had been anticipated. Many persons naturally raised doubts as to the authenticity of the telegram; but Lansing formally assured Congress, and Zimmermann himself confessed, that it was genuine. Speculation was uncontrolled as to how it had been intercepted: it was rumored that the messenger had been caught by American guardsmen on the Mexican border; that a copy had been taken from von Bernstorff at Halifax; that it was in a mysterious box seized by the British on the ship which Bernstorff sailed on.⁴

Hendrick,⁵ the biographer of the war-time American Ambassador to Great Britain, Walter H. Page, says:

The most sensational episode of this period, however, was the publication on March 1 of a telegram from Dr. Alfred Zimmermann, German Foreign Secretary, to the German Minister in Mexico, outlining a scheme for an alliance of Germany, Japan, and Mexico against the United States, and for the cession in case of victory, of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico.

[Page's diary dated March 2, 1917.] The Zimmermann (Berlin) Mexico-Japan bomb burst today, the Zimmermann telegram to the German Minister in Mexico being in the morning papers. They gave it out in Washington (apparently) to cause Congress to give the President authority to arm merchant ships, etc., etc., as he should see fit, and to use the armed forces of the Nation to protect commerce and life. It had that effect. An enormous majority in the House last night (nearly 500 to 13!) voted in favor of the resolution. I am curious to see the effect on the country. I have never abandoned the belief that if the President were really to lead, all the people would follow. Whether he will even now lead remains to be seen. Yesterday I talked to Chinda, the Japanese Ambassador, about this Zimmermann telegram. He thought it a huge joke at first. Today Yeates Thompson confessed that it seemed to him a newspaper hoax! Nobody (few people surely) yet thoroughly understand the German. This telegram will go some distance surely to instruct the people of the U. S. A.⁶

² Lansing, Robert, *War Memoirs*, Bobbs, Merrill & Co., Indianapolis, 1935, pp. 225 and 232.

³ Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs*, p. 534.

⁴ *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, 1926, p. 451.

⁵ Hendrick, Burton J., *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, Doubleday Page & Co., New York, 1926. Hereinafter this work will be referred to merely as *Hendrick*.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 321, 324.

The acrimonious discussions which the Zimmermann telegram aroused in Congress take up 22 pages in the Congressional Record. Most of the debate deals with a resolution calling upon the President to furnish a formal statement declaring whether or not the telegram as published in the newspapers was authentic. Space forbids extensive quotation, and the following two statements made in the course of the debate must suffice:⁷

Mr. THOMAS. * * * Does not the Senator [referring to Senator Hitchcock] realize that the public mind is already inflamed, that it has been inflamed by this publication [the Zimmermann telegram] like a bolt? Because of that excited condition, which we share, inasmuch as the information must have proceeded from Executive sources, directly or indirectly, it is very essential that we should have such information as may be necessary to enable us to meet and, if necessary, to end that public excitement which is now sweeping all over the country.

* * * * *
 Mr. SMITH. * * * Mr. President, I say that the situation thus created is far-reaching and delicate, fraught with very great danger to the peace of the American people. * * *

It was of course natural that question should be raised as to the authenticity of the Zimmermann telegram. Senator Tillman [p. 4605] gave voice to his doubts in no uncertain terms:

Mr. President, I want to say one thing before this debate closes. I think we have wasted a great deal of valuable time here in discussing a lie—a forgery. I agreed with the Senator from Michigan [Mr. Smith] this morning when he said it was a forgery. The reason I think it is a forgery is this: Who can conceive of the Japanese consorting with Mexico and the Germans to attack the United States? Why, Japan hates Germany worse than the devil is said to hate holy water. Japan took possession of Kiaochow and she is going to hold it. Is it possible to conceive that Japan will go to war with the United States in conjunction with Mexico and Germany? I think such a proposition is beneath our notice.

The New York Times *Current History* for the period February 20 to May 15, 1917, deals thus with the Zimmermann telegram:

An important phase growing out of our rupture with Germany and the subsequent drift toward war was the uncovering of an anti-American alliance proposed by Germany with Mexico and Japan in the event the threatened war ensued. * * * The revelation created a profound impression throughout the country. The immediate effect on Congress was the elimination of practically all opposition to the proposal then pending to authorize the President to proceed at once to arm American merchantmen against German submarines; it also crystalized the conviction throughout the country that the German submarine blockade must be sternly resisted, even though it resulted in a declaration of war by Germany.

Ambassador von Bernstorff says:⁸

It has frequently been asserted that the notorious Mexico telegram led to the war with the United States. I do not believe this is correct. The telegram was used with great success as propaganda against us; but the rupture of diplomatic relations—as I have already pointed out—was, in view of the situation, equivalent in all circumstances to war. I had nothing to do with the Mexico telegram, which took me completely by surprise. It was addressed, in the usual way, direct to the legation in Mexico, and passed through the Embassy at Washington on the same day on which I received notification that the unrestricted U-boat war was to be declared. I had neither the right, nor was it my duty, to hold up the telegram although I disapproved of its contents.

On December 13, 1927, Sir Alfred Ewing, who throughout the war was civilian head of the cryptographic bureau (popularly referred to as "Room 40") of the British Naval Intelligence Service, delivered an address before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, telling of the

⁷ *Congressional Record*, 64th Congress, 2nd Session, vol. LIV, pp. 4595 and 4598, Mar. 1, 1917.

⁸ von Bernstorff, Count Johann, *My Three Years in America*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1920, p. 380. This work will hereinafter be referred to as *Bernstorff*.

work of the Bureau. That portion of the published account of his address with which we are concerned is as follows:⁹

Besides intercepting naval signals, the cryptographers of Room 40 dealt successfully with much political cipher. The isolated position of Germany forced her to resort to wireless, and prevented frequent changes of the code books for confidential communication with correspondents abroad. There was a voluminous stream of cipher correspondence with German agents in Madrid, and a good deal with North and South America as well as Constantinople, Athens, Sofia, and other places. One group of deciphered messages threw useful light in advance on the Easter Revolution in Ireland, another group on the intrigues of the Germans in Persia.

Among the many political messages read by his staff was the notorious Zimmermann telegram, which was intercepted in the manner described in the third volume of the Page Letters. President Wilson was then hesitating on the brink of war, reluctant to plunge, clinging painfully to the idea of neutrality which seemed to be almost a part of his religion. The Zimmermann message, which made a conditional offer to Mexico of an alliance against the United States, was deciphered in Room 40. It was then communicated very confidentially by Lord Balfour to Mr. Page and through Page to Wilson, and was given by him to the American Press. Its publication was decisive in converting American opinion to the necessity of war. But the curtain which hid Room 40 remained undisturbed.

And finally in his famous message (which is now known as the "war message") delivered in person before the Congress in joint session on April 2, 1917, President Wilson said:¹⁰

That it (the German Government) means to stir up enemies against us at our very doors the intercepted note to the German Minister at Mexico is eloquent evidence.

More than enough has been quoted to give an indication of the importance with which the publication of the Zimmermann telegram must be regarded in connection with a study of the causes leading to our entry into the war. Indirectly, because the United States is the leading power on the American Continent, it also helped to bring Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, and Panama into the arms of the Allies.

So important a cryptographic incident, therefore, warrants a most careful study by historians as well as by cryptographers, for the story of the incident is replete with suggestions for making the most of a cryptographic opportunity.

Twenty years have passed since the Zimmermann telegram was blazoned on the front pages of newspapers throughout the world except, of course, in Germany and Austria. But the British Government, which was the principal actor in the incident, has still not lifted the impenetrable curtain of mystery behind which her able cryptographers work, so that we shall have to draw conclusions from accounts from other sources if we are to study the facts concerning her interception and solution of the famous message. We shall pass over several purely apochryphal accounts which appeared at the time.¹¹

It is amusing to note, in passing, that one of the reasons why the Kaiser was extremely cool to Ambassador Bernstorff, who was received by the Kaiser only 6 or 7 weeks subsequent to Bernstorff's return to Berlin after the rupture of relations, was the monarch's belief that the Zimmermann telegram had been taken from among the papers which Bernstorff carried with him on his return home on the *Friedrich VIII* in February 1917. The ship was detained at Halifax for 12 days and every nook and cranny was searched. A box of dispatches which had been placed aboard the vessel by the Swedish Minister was found by the British authorities and

⁹ As reported in *The (Edinburgh) Scotsman* and *The (London) Times* for December 14, 1927. Incidentally, the Editor of *The Scotsman*, in lauding Sir Alfred, said of the Zimmermann telegram that it "was instrumental in bringing America into the war."

¹⁰ FRS, pp. 195-203. Also, in his *Flag Day Address* on June 14, 1917, in citing the numerous provocations which, he explained, forced us into the war, the President said: "They tried to incite Mexico to take up arms against us and to draw Japan into a hostile alliance with her—and that not by indirection but by direct suggestion from the Foreign Office in Berlin."

¹¹ The most far-fetched of these was to the effect that the message was found by four soldiers of Company G, First Infantry, on the person of a spy whom they had captured while he was attempting to cross the southern border into Mexico, near the town of Progress on February 21, 1917. See *The New York Times Current History*, period April 1917-June 1917, vol. XI. Even so recent a work as Gunther's *Inside Europe* (1936), pp. 92-93, contains a wholly erroneous version of the episode.

the contents of some of them were published. The English papers represented the case as if a box of dispatches had been taken from Bernstorff. But the Zimmermann note was not among them.¹²

The first lifting of the veil of secrecy surrounding the interception and solution of the Zimmermann telegram occurred in 1925, when the November issue of *World's Work* brought the final installment of Hendrick's *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*. This account, from which a passage has already been cited, still forms the principal source of our information on the subject. A second account, not so detailed as the first, but containing important data, was published in 1933 in Lansing's *War Memoirs*, also already mentioned. Another account appears in a book¹³ by a professed German ex-spy. But since it is based almost entirely upon the Hendrick version, and because there are cogent reasons for discounting much of the contents of the book as a whole, it will be largely disregarded in this paper. In addition to all sources mentioned, reference will be made to official records of the Department of State.

The first links in the story may be seen in the following two telegrams:¹⁴

(1)

LONDON, February 24, 1917.
Rec'd 9 a. m.

SECRETARY OF STATE, Washington.
5746, February 24.

In about three hours I shall send a telegram of great importance to the President and Secretary of State.

PAGE.

* * * * *

(2)

The Ambassador in Great Britain (Page) to the Secretary of State

[Telegram]

LONDON, February 24, 1917—1 p. m.
Rec'd 8:30 p. m.

5747. My 5746, February 24, 8 a. m. For the President and the Secretary of State.

Balfour has handed me the text of a cipher telegram from Zimmermann, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the German Minister to Mexico, which was sent via Washington and relayed by Bernstorff on January 19. You can probably obtain a copy of the text relayed by Bernstorff from the cable office in Washington. The first group is the number of the telegram^{14a}, 130, and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which is Zimmermann's signature. I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German and meanwhile I give you the English translation as follows: (Then follows the English text of the telegram as given above, p. 1.)

The receipt of this information has so greatly exercised the British Government that they have lost no time in communicating it to me to transmit to you, in order that our Government may be able without delay to make such disposition as may be necessary in view of the threatened invasion of our territory.

Early in the war, the British Government obtained possession of a copy of the German cipher code used in the above message and have made it their business to obtain copies of Bernstorff's cipher telegrams to Mexico, amongst others, which are sent back to London and deciphered here. This accounts for their being able to decipher this telegram from the German Government to their repre-

¹² *Nationalversammlung, 1919. Untersuchungsausschuss über die Weltkriegsverantwortlichkeit.* In a series of 15 sessions, from October 21, 1919, to April 14, 1920, a committee appointed by the German National Constituent Assembly to inquire into the responsibility for the war held hearings in Berlin. The reports of two subcommittees together with the stenographic minutes of one of these subcommittees and supplements thereto have been translated and published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as vols. 1 and 2 of *Official German Documents Relating to the World War*. These two volumes are a veritable mine of important information. They will hereafter be referred to as *German Hearings*. The statement above is taken from p. 311.

¹³ von Rintelen, Capt. Franz, *The Dark Invader*. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1933.

¹⁴ The first is taken from *Hendrick*, vol. III, p. 332; the second, from FRS, p. 147.

^{14a} This is not the number of the telegram, but the code equivalent of the number (3).

sentative in Mexico and also for the delay from January 19 until now in their receiving the information. This system has hitherto been a jealously guarded secret and is only divulged now to you by the British Government in view of the extraordinary circumstances and their friendly feeling toward the United States. They earnestly request that you will keep the source of your information and the British Government's method of obtaining it profoundly secret, but they put no prohibition on the publication of Zimmermann's telegram itself.

The copies of this and other telegrams were not obtained in Washington but were bought in Mexico.

I have thanked Balfour for the service his Government has rendered us and suggest that a private official message of thanks from our Government to him would be beneficial.

I am informed that this information has not yet been given to the Japanese Government, but I think it not unlikely that when it reaches them they may make a public statement on it in order to clear up their position regarding the United States and prove their good faith to their Allies.

PAGE.

We shall not concern ourselves with the steps taken by the President and Secretary of State Lansing, culminating in the publication by the Associated Press of the text of the telegram. Our interest will be concentrated upon the minute details of the manner in which the message was intercepted and solved by the British.

The Hendrick account, immediately after the preceding two telegrams quoted above, continues:

The manner in which the British had acquired this message is disclosed in Page's telegram. It was "bought in Mexico." That is, the British Secret Service had obtained it evidently from some approachable person in the Mexican capital—a practice which, it appears from Page's communication, had been going on for some time. An interesting additional fact is that this is not the only way in which the British obtained this priceless treasure. The German Government was so determined to make this Mexican alliance that it did not depend upon a single route for transmitting the Zimmermann message to von Eckhardt. It dispatched it in several other ways. For one it used the wireless route from Nauen, Germany, to Sayville, Long Island.

In the early days of the war, the American Government prohibited the use of this Sayville line except under American supervision; how little this prohibition interfered with the Germans is shown by the use they made of the Long Island station for this, the most fateful message sent to America during the war. * * * In the British Admiralty this Nauen-Sayville thoroughfare was known as the "main line"; it was the most direct and consequently the one most used for sending German dispatches to the United States.

Hendrick cites no authority for the statement that the Zimmermann telegram was transmitted by radio from Nauen to Sayville and there is reason to doubt that this was the case, as will become apparent when the matter is carefully considered in the light of other evidence.

A few hours after the outbreak of the war the British, who have always recognized the importance of controlling communication channels as well as sea lanes, took immediate steps to isolate Germany from the rest of the world that lay beyond the oceans, by cutting and diverting to her own service the two German cables across the Atlantic Ocean. This left Germany only indirect channels of communication with her Ambassador at Washington. These channels were four in number. The first, by radio between a station in Germany and two stations in the United States, was known to and supervised by our Government; the second, by cable from Germany via Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Washington, was secret, and though there is positive evidence that from the very first days of its use it was known to the British, it was unsuspected and unknown to our Government until long after we had entered the war; the third, via Berlin, Copenhagen, Washington, was a very special method used only occasionally, with the knowledge and cooperation of the American State Department; the fourth, involving the insertion of secret text in ordinary news dispatches, was a channel which was of course unknown to our Government, until long after the war was over, when it was disclosed by Bern-

storff himself.¹⁵ Since we are not concerned with this channel of communication we shall have no more to say about it than is given in footnote 15.

We shall consider first the communications passing by radio between the German station at Nauen and one or the other of two radio stations on United States territory, at Sayville, Long Island, and Tuckerton, N. J. These stations had been erected by German enterprise for direct communication with Europe; they were, however, partly financed by French capital, and the legal objections which the French raised immediately upon the outbreak of the war soon resulted in closing both of them. Later our Government, after long negotiations with the German Government, took over the stations and exercised a censorship over them. The steps leading to the imposition of that censorship need not concern us; the fact is that the Germans were unable to use the stations until April 1915¹⁶ and then only under supervision, in that messages sent by Bernstorff to Nauen had to be submitted to our censor before they could be transmitted and messages received from Nauen, addressed to Bernstorff, were carefully scrutinized before they were handed over to him. The purpose of this censorship was, of course, to preserve our neutrality. Messages exchanged via these radio stations were, as a rule, sent in a code known as "Englischer Chiffre Nr. 9972", two copies of which had been deposited with our censor. This is established by the following letter:¹⁷

KAISERLICHE DEUTSCHE BOTSCHAFT,
German Embassy, Washington.

APRIL 20, 1915.

The Imperial German Embassy presents its compliments and has the honor, with reference to the correspondence with Honorable Robert Lansing in regard to the sending of wireless messages in cipher by means of the radio stations at Tuckerton and Sayville, to transmit to the United States Department of State herewith, in two copies, the key to that cipher against kind acquittance for making further directions.

(Signed) J. BERNSTORFF.

As stated above, all messages forwarded by radio by Bernstorff had to be sent to our censor through the State Department and these messages were regularly accompanied by a formal letter couched in the following terms:

The Imperial German Embassy presents its compliments to the United States Department of State and has the honor to enclose herewith a wireless cipher message, in duplicate, to the Foreign Office at Berlin for kind transmission to the Tuckerton station. Duplicate copies of the (plain text) message are likewise enclosed.

¹⁵ Bernstorff, p. 154: "My reports as a matter of fact were somewhat infrequent and always short, as we had to put all our messages into cipher, and this was not always possible. In explanation of the inevitable incompleteness of my communication with the Foreign Office, I may remark that the telegrams of the Wolff and Trans-Ocean Bureaus were regarded as the main sources of information for either side, and that I made use of various arrangements of words, to which the Foreign Office alone had the key, for the purpose of making my own views easily distinguishable in these telegrams." Another interesting corroboration of the use of this method is to be found in the Hall affidavit. (See footnote 20.) Among the telegrams accompanying the affidavit is one (p. 122) dated April 3, 1916, from Bernstorff to the Foreign Office. It contains the following paragraph:

"For this reason I suggest that the Wolff Bureau should be instructed for the present to forward immediately all Klaessig's telegrams to the Foreign Office. It is advisable that all should be sent, because telegrams going from here are in code, and therefore the recognition signal agreed on by us for telegrams intended for you might easily be lost. For motives of economy Klaessig uses the Ritzsche Bureau in (an American town) for such telegrams, as in this way it is possible to use code with regard to the English censorship."

¹⁶ P. 480, German Hearings.

¹⁷ The letter is in the files of the State Department. In handwriting on its lower left hand corner appears the following: "Two cipher books handed to Lieutenant Noyes, U. S. Navy, April 20, 1915." In telegram 79 dated April 20, 1915, Bernstorff informed the Foreign Office that two copies of Code 9972 were delivered to the State Department. He says (Bernstorff, p. 68): "In these negotiations we had to content ourselves with pointing out that whereas our enemies could pass on military information to their Governments by means of coded cablegrams, we should be confined to the use of the wireless stations. Finally we came to an agreement with the American Government that they should have a copy of the code which we used for the wireless telegrams. In this way their contents were kept secret from the enemy but not from the Washington Government. This course we only agreed to as a last resource as it was not suitable for handling negotiations in which the American Government was concerned." How naive Bernstorff was in respect to his idea that the messages in Code 9972 were thus kept secret from the enemy will be seen in a short time.

Thus not only did the United States have the code in which the messages were prepared, but messages in that code, when sent by Bernstorff to the State Department for transmission, were accompanied by their plain texts so that the censor could verify the latter if he desired.¹⁸

That the scrutiny of these messages was not a mere formality is attested by the fact that the files of the State Department show several cases in which the Department held up and refused to transmit telegrams which, on being examined, were not perfectly clear, or which were even in slight degree questionable as regards our neutrality. In this connection Bernstorff says:¹⁹

As has already been mentioned, all our wireless messages were read by the American Government departments and it had often occurred that objection had been raised.

On one occasion, upon the very urgent request of the German Ambassador, the Secretary of State agreed to permit Bernstorff to receive a radio message from Berlin to Tuckerton prepared, not in Code 9972, but in a code of which no copy had been deposited. This special circumstance caused Bernstorff to address a letter on January 28, 1917, to William Phillips, then Under Secretary of State. This letter, found in the files of the State Department, contains the following paragraph:

I presume that the wireless was addressed and forwarded direct to the Imperial Foreign Office. As I have asked for an immediate wireless reply, my Government may answer in the same way and in a code not decipherable by the Censor at Tuckerton. In a former somewhat similar case when by mistake the wrong code was used, the telegram reached me only after several days' delay. Therefore, and as the answer to my yesterday's message will be extremely urgent, I should be particularly grateful to you, if you could, at your earliest convenience, have the Censor at Tuckerton and at the Navy Department instructed to let, in this exceptional case, the reply to my message pass as quickly as possible.

It is obvious that if scrutiny of messages had been a mere formality Bernstorff would hardly have gone to the trouble of begging so humbly for the permission to which reference is made. Parenthetically it may be stated that if the Germans' purpose in using a code for these radio messages was to keep their contents from their enemies, they might well have saved themselves all the trouble they took, for Code 9972 was extremely simple in construction and was solved by the British without difficulty. This is proved by a telegram that appears in a public record which is replete with valuable information, namely, the documents published by the German-American Mixed Claims Commission, which was established in 1922. Among these documents is an affidavit dated December 28, 1926, by Admiral Sir W. Reginald Hall, wartime chief of the intelligence department of the British Admiralty.²⁰ This affidavit is accompanied by a large number of messages which were intercepted and read by the cryptographic bureau of the British Admiralty. Among these decoded messages is a translation of one of these Nauen-Sayville messages accompanied by the following footnote:²¹

[British] DEPARTMENTAL NOTE.—This is the first message in cipher 9972 which has been read. This cipher is employed in messages passing between Berlin and the German Embassy, Washington.

In view of the strict supervision that was exercised over this Nauen-Sayville radio route it appears strange that the Zimmermann telegram should have been transmitted in this way.

We come now to the second communication channel that was used by the German Government to communicate with Bernstorff, the route via Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Washington. This channel was made available by the good offices of the Swedish Foreign Office and its representatives abroad. Hints as to the use of this channel may be found in Bernstorff. For

¹⁸ Of course the convenience of our censor had a part in the selection of a code in the English language. The code, however, was not compiled for that purpose. It was already on hand and had been used for the purpose of transmitting English material.

¹⁹ Bernstorff, p. 230.

²⁰ Hereafter the Hall affidavit will be referred to as *Hall*. It appears as Claimants' Exhibit 320 of the documents published by the Mixed Claims Commission, and is reprinted as Appendix 1 to this paper.

²¹ Hall, p. 95.

example, on page 65: "We had to fall back exclusively on the wireless stations, when, as frequently happened, we were unable to make use of the *circuitous routes via neutral countries.*"^{22a} Again on page 149: "Telegraphic communication between the German Government and the Embassy at Washington was carried out by a circuitous route, which made it extremely slow."

There is in the State Department files a telegram dated September 10, 1917, from American Ambassador Morris, at Stockholm, to the Secretary of State, which reads:

Today had conference with British Minister who informs me as follows: In the summer of 1915 when Great Britain sent a commission to Sweden to negotiate regarding importation into Sweden the Swedish Government protested against Great Britain delaying in London official telegrams addressed by Swedish Government to Swedish Legation, Washington. British Minister received cable instructions to inform Swedish Government that delay was due to the fact that the British Government was in possession of *positive knowledge*^{22b} that the Swedish Legation, Washington, had transmitted to the German Government through the Foreign Office Stockholm, message from Count Bernstorff. Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs admitted that such message had been sent so transmitted but gave British Minister formal assurance that this would not occur again.

What was the nature of the "positive knowledge" that the British Government possessed? Undoubtedly it was based upon decoded German telegrams, as is evidenced by the following telegram which appears among those in Admiral Hall's affidavit:²³

From BUENOS AIRES
To BERLIN

B. A. 67
(transmitted) 19th June 1915
(5950) and (13040)^{23a}

I. Telegram No. 72 is missing.

II. Please send cypher telegrams for WASHINGTON in such a way that they can be recyphered here, otherwise the Swedish facilities for wiring will be compromised and presumably withdrawn from us.
LUXBURG.

Note the date of this message. It is good evidence that the British knew of this method, but there is also sufficient additional evidence in Admiral Hall's affidavit, if one studies the points between which the telegrams included in the affidavit were sent. The fact that a large number of the messages in the Hall affidavit were sent via Stockholm-Buenos Aires, is clear proof that the British were carefully watching this route and reading the telegrams transmitted over it.

It is quite clear from this evidence and from the quotations cited above that Hendrick places too much emphasis upon the variety of routes which he says the Zimmermann telegram traveled, as though only this telegram had received special treatment. It is apparent that the transmission of important messages by more than one route was a usual procedure with Bernstorff. For example, he states:²⁴ "With the utmost possible speed I sent the following telegrams about my interview with Mr. House, by three different routes to Berlin."

Hendrick says:²⁵

The fact seems to be that the Swedish Court was openly pro-German; that popular opinion in Sweden similarly inclined to the German side; and, by January, 1917, the Swedish Foreign Office had become almost an integral part of the German organization. In many capitals German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers in other countries and by them delivered to their German colleagues. Herr Zimmermann, in his desire to make certain that his Mexi-

^{22a} Italics ours.

^{22b} Italics in original.

²³ Hall, p. 68.

^{23a} "(5950) and (13040)" is the British designation of the code used by the Germans in sending the message. Code 5950 was an encipherment of 13040, and a message sent in that code had, accordingly, to be transposed into code 13040 before it was read. (See pp. 4-14 of Mendelsohn, Charles J., *Studies in German Diplomatic Codes Employed During the World War*. Technical Paper of the Signal Intelligence Service, Washington, 1937.)

²⁴ Bernstorff, p. 373.

²⁵ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 338.

can telegram should reach Washington, again fell back upon the assistance of his Swedish confreres. He handed his message to the Swedish Minister to Berlin; this functionary sent it to Stockholm, Sweden; from this point it was cabled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and from that city cabled in turn to Washington. The journey was a roundabout one, covering about ten thousand miles. Yet nothing that was sent through the air or under the sea seemed to escape the watchful attention of the British Naval Intelligence, and this Swedish message was captured almost at the same moment as that one which was going by the "main line."

It is to be noted that according to Hendrick "German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers * * *" and he implies that the British read the Swedish code.

Now it would be easy to believe that the British obtained and read messages in Swedish code, for their intercept service pretty well covered the earth. It is, however, intrinsically unlikely that the Germans would give the Swedes the text of a message to be put into Swedish code for transmission. Why reveal their secrets to the Swedish Government? It was so much easier merely to ask Stockholm to forward a message in German code—precisely as they asked the Americans to do it, as we shall soon see. Not only, however, do probabilities point away from any idea that a Swedish code was used, but we have two pieces of evidence on this matter the authenticity of which cannot be questioned.

On September 8, 1917, the State Department published the text of three code messages sent by the German *chargé d'Affaires* at Buenos Aires to the Foreign Office at Berlin. These telegrams became notorious as the Luxburg or "sink without trace" messages. They were furnished by the British, for the American cryptographic bureau had as yet hardly been organized at that time. The files of the State Department contain several messages in connection with this episode. Among them is one dated September 18, 1917, to Bell (Secretary, American Embassy, London) from Harrison (Secretary in the Diplomatic Service, assigned to the Department, later—1922—Assistant Secretary of State), in which Harrison transmitted the dates and initial groups of 22 messages sent from the Swedish Foreign Office, Stockholm, to the Swedish Legation, Buenos Aires and asked: "Please let me know as soon as possible if British authorities have copies of all these messages, if they have been successfully treated, and if so telegraph contents at earliest possible moment." On September 19, Bell replied as follows: "Numbers 4, 5, 11, 16, 17, 18, and 22 are in Swedish code and undecipherable here."

Moreover, we have a direct statement of the war-time British Cryptographic Bureau on this point. After America's entry into the war, the British gave the American Government a partial copy of the German code known as Code 13040, with directions for its use. These directions contain the express statements that German messages sent by Swedish officials were in *enciphered* German code, i. e., the original code groups were subjected to a process of systematic alteration, and that the transfer, or retransfer, from Swedish to German hands was made at Buenos Aires. The method of encipherment employed to disguise the messages upon their transfer was of such nature as not completely to remove certain resemblances to German Code 13040. These resemblances aroused the suspicions of the British cryptographers, and detailed study followed. Once the nature of the disguise was learned, its usefulness was lost, and the Germans might have spared themselves the trouble of disguising the code when they gave their messages to Swedish officials for forwarding.

We have seen that the British Government once informed the Swedish Government that it was "in possession of positive knowledge that the Swedish Legation, Washington, had transmitted to the German Government through the Foreign Office, Stockholm, message from Count Bernstorff." That was "in the summer of 1915." The fact that the practice was not stopped for 2 years or more, though the British must have been fully aware of it, speaks for itself. The British authorities must have realized soon after this protest, which was no doubt made early in

the cryptographic war, that the information they were gleaning from the study of these messages was too valuable to lose, even taking into account the fact that the messages were of considerable use to their enemies. It is more than likely that the information was at least as useful to the British as it was to the Germans themselves. In some cases there is no doubt that it was even more useful.

Finally, there is another important telegram in the files of the State Department on this subject. It is dated September 17, 1917, and was sent by Bell to Harrison. The first paragraph is of great interest. It reads as follows:

I am now able to inform you Zimmerman's telegram to Eckhardt instructing him to induce Mexico to attack us was forwarded through Swedish channels. It had to be sent through Bernstorff for his information, but as Sweden had given up transmitting German telegrams direct to the United States after the British protest in 1915, it was sent through Swedish channels to Buenos Aires and there turned over to Luxburg who repeated it to Bernstorff. The latter retransmitted it to Eckhardt. From Berlin to Bernstorff it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering and of which Eckhardt had no copy. Bernstorff had to repeat it to Mexico therefore in another code known to the German Minister there and incidentally to the British and it is of this message that we obtained a copy.

Of certain portions of this telegram we shall have more to say later, as they are of extreme interest from the cryptographic viewpoint. At this point we shall merely indicate that there is good reason to believe that the British authorities did not tell Bell the whole story when they gave him the information which is contained in the foregoing telegram. Who can blame them for withholding their most precious secrets?

We come now to the third and most interesting of the several channels available to the German Foreign Office in communicating with Bernstorff in Washington—the Berlin-Copenhagen-Washington route used with the cooperation of the American State Department. We shall quote from the Hendrick narrative: ²⁶

The German Government forwarded this dispatch to Washington in still another way. Indeed, the most remarkable incident in this remarkable transaction remains to be told. Evidently the German Foreign Office feared that transmission by wireless and cable transmission to Buenos Aires—by grace of the Swedish Government—might fail them. The prohibition the American Government had placed upon the use of wireless from Nauen to Sayville, Long Island, might naturally cause apprehension as to the delivery of messages sent by this route. The cable line from Stockholm to Buenos Aires and thence to Washington and Mexico was a roundabout one, and a message transmitted that way might conceivably fail to reach its destination.

The dispatch of this telegram, however, was at that moment the most important business before the German Foreign Office and its safe arrival in the city of Mexico must be assured at any cost. There was one method that was absolutely sure, though the fact that this should have occurred to Zimmermann must be regarded as one of the most audacious and even reckless strokes of the war. Humor of any kind the Germans seldom displayed at crises of this sort, yet the mechanism adopted to make certain that this plot against the American people would safely land on Bernstorff's desk evinces an unmistakable gift—even though an unconscious one—for the sardonic.

The transaction reflects so seriously upon the methods of the State Department that it would probably never have seen the light had the Germans not made it public themselves. In 1919-20 the German Constituent Assembly held an elaborate investigation into the responsibility for the war. In this the Zimmermann telegram played its part. Among its published documents is a note which reveals one route by which this document found its way across the Atlantic.²⁷ It says:

"Instructions to Minister von Eckhardt were to be taken by letter by way of Washington by U-boat on the 15th of January; since the U-boat *Deutschland* did not start on her outward trip, these instructions were attached on January 16th to telegram No. 157, and through the offices of the American Embassy in Berlin telegraphed to Count Bernstorff by way of the State Department in Washington."

²⁶ Hendrick, vol. III, pp. 338-341.

²⁷ Hendrick's footnote: See Vol. II, p. 1337: "Official German Documents Relating to the World War." Translated under the supervision of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. [This work is referred to in the present paper as *German Hearings*.]

What this means is that the German Foreign Office used the American Government as an errand boy for the transmission of a document that contained a plot against its own territorial integrity. * * *

The German Government, many times in the course of the war, used the good offices of the American State Department for transmitting messages to Ambassador Bernstorff. Germany had no cable communication with the United States; the wireless was unreliable and not always available; occasionally, therefore, the Germans would request Washington to serve in this capacity. As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favor could be performed. That the British graciously permitted the Germans to use their cable facilities may possibly have seemed, at the time, an act savoring of the magnanimous; the fact, however, that the British possessed the German cipher and read all these messages as they sped through England creates the suspicion that they may have regarded this as a way of obtaining valuable information.

Hendrick makes it appear that obtaining permission to use the American State Department facilities was a rather simple matter and that many messages were sent by the State Department for the Germans in this way, without realization on the part of State Department officialdom of the possibly serious consequences that might ensue. That this is far from the truth will appear later. His statement, too, that "As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favor could be performed" is meaningless when one considers the matter. It is obvious first of all that had the American Government been so naive as to ask the British Government's consent to such a procedure the latter would certainly have refused. It is likewise obvious that when Bernstorff wanted to send a code message to the Foreign Office in Berlin, the State Department could not simply address a telegram to the American Ambassador, Gerard, in plain language asking him to "Forward the following code message to the German Foreign Office." The British would naturally not pass such messages even though the greatest neutral country asked such a favor. Such a procedure is not a diplomatic possibility in time of war. If not in plain language, the forwarding by the State Department of German code messages had to be done through the intermediacy of State Department code. Assuming that official messages of the American Government to her ambassadors and ministers in Europe were not subjected to any study whatsoever by the British Cryptographic Bureau (which is difficult to believe), it is possible that this practice might not have been detected immediately by the British. But the manner in which the messages were actually drawn up was such that the discovery of the practice should and must have been particularly easy if American messages were even hastily scanned. Here is an example of the plain text of such a message, copied from the files of the State Department:

Amlegation
Copenhagen
Forward Berlin
3803

Deliver to German Foreign Office the following message from Ambassador Bernstorff.
(Add German Cipher.)

LANSING.

Lacking a copy of the telegram as actually filed for transmission, the form the code message took when filed cannot here be indicated; but we have on this point the positive statement of Mr. David A. Salmon, then as now Chief of the Division of Communications and Records of the State Department, to the effect that the code groups of the German code message were *not* reencoded in State Department code, or changed in any way whatever: they were merely added to the preamble requesting the forwarding of the message. This preamble was in code—American State Department code. Now the code groups of the American code were most commonly in letters, while those of the German code were in figures.²⁸ Furthermore, the

²⁸ In a few cases State Department code messages consisted of figure-groups but the latter were invariably 5-digit groups, while the German code messages, as stated further on, consisted of 3, 4, and 5-digit groups.

code groups of the German code were characterized by being composed of three, four, and five digits, whereas in most codes of even those days all of the code groups uniformly contained five letters, or five figures. Hence the subterfuge was sure to be detected almost immediately by the British. Still they made no protest. Why? The answer must surely be obvious: they were glad to have access to this leakage of valuable information, and to lodge a protest would at once dry it up at the source.

Whereas Hendrick makes it appear that our State Department handled many messages for the Germans, Lansing in his account of the matter makes it appear as though the transmission of the Zimmermann telegram via State Department channels was an isolated incident, or at least that this method of communication was placed at the disposal of Bernstorff only toward the end of the period of strained relations. Quoting Lansing: ²⁹

At eleven-thirty I went to the White House and for an hour discussed with the President the substance of the [Zimmermann] telegram and the way to use it. The President said that he had been wondering how Bernstorff got the message from Berlin, and that the closing of secret lines of communication with his government made him a little uncertain as to its authenticity.

I told him that I thought it could be easily explained, my opinion being that it was done in the following manner: During the early part of January Count von Bernstorff, at the instance of Colonel House, had been laboring with his government to obtain concrete terms of peace. The Ambassador had complained of his inability to communicate secretly and therefore freely with Berlin, which he considered essential in order to accomplish his purpose. In view of this reasonable statement we had consented very reluctantly to send [that is, in a cipher, of which the Department did not have the key] messages for him through our Embassy.³⁰ This we did several times, permitting the German Foreign Office to reply in the same way. On January seventeenth an exceptionally long message (some one thousand groups) came through from Berlin. On the eighteenth this message was delivered to the Ambassador. On the nineteenth the telegram from Bernstorff to Mexico was filed. From these facts I drew the conclusion that in the long secret message delivered to him on the eighteenth was the message for the German Minister besides other orders as to what to do in case of a severance of diplomatic relations.³¹

The President two or three times during the recital of the foregoing exclaimed "Good Lord!" and when I had finished said he believed that the deduction as to how Bernstorff received his orders was correct. He showed much resentment at the German Government for having imposed upon our kindness in this way and for having made us the innocent agents to advance a conspiracy against this country.

Careful study of available records shows that while this channel of communication was used on more than a single occasion, it was used not nearly so frequently as Hendrick implies, and that its employment was confined to periods of strained relations. The first was on June 2, 1915, shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which occurred on May 7, 1915. Of this period Bernstorff says: ³²

It is certain that if I had not at this stage of the *Lusitania* crisis had my interview with the President, relations would have been broken off and war between the United States and Germany must inevitably have followed. * * * During our conversation, however, the President offered for the first time to permit me to dispatch a cipher telegram through the State Department, to be sent on by the American Embassy in Berlin.³³

²⁹ Lansing, p. 227.

³⁰ Bracketed matter so in original.

³¹ A footnote at this point contains substantially the same matter as is given in our extract from Hendrick given on p. 11, regarding the way in which the Zimmermann telegram was to have been sent by the submarine *Deutschland*.

³² Bernstorff, p. 151 and p. 154.

³³ This statement is not strictly correct, for there exists in the files of the State Department a letter dated November 12, 1914, from Bernstorff to Secretary Bryan enclosing a message which Bernstorff asked Bryan to send to the German Foreign Office. This message was in the German code, 13040, and, as Bernstorff told Secretary Bryan, asked "instructions from my Government for the purpose of publicly indorsing the Belgian relief plan." Attached to the letter is the text of the code message which we have decoded and find to be as described by Bernstorff. This message, incidentally, was in the same code (13040) as the Zimmermann telegram in the form in which the latter was forwarded by Bernstorff to Mexico City.

This initial instance apparently paved the way for several more during the same crisis, as is evidenced by Bernstorff:³⁴

From this time onwards [that is about July 21, 1915] Mr. Lansing agreed with me that, as a regular thing, I should be permitted, whatever negotiations were going on, to send cipher dispatches to my Government through the channels of the State Department and the American Embassy in Berlin. It will be remembered that a similar privilege had been granted me at the time of the *Lusitania* incident.

But, lest one jump to the conclusion that the State Department was careless in placing its facilities at the disposal of the Germans and regarded the matter as being without possibility of serious repercussions, let it be noted that Mr. Lansing not only realized the full implications of the unusual procedure but also refused to transmit a message on at least one occasion on the ground that there appeared "to be no particular urgency for the transmission of the message on account of either of the subjects mentioned."³⁵ It must also be noted that the State Department transmitted messages not only for the German Government, but also for the Austrian, as is proved by a telegram dated February 4, 1917, from Lansing to Ambassador Penfield at Vienna.³⁶

Despite the questionable propriety of this procedure on the part of our diplomatic officials, it is easy to understand why President Wilson and Mr. Lansing made the State Department route available in the circumstances that then existed. For, with their complete control of cable facilities, the Allies were able to transmit any information they pleased without censorship of any sort by any other Government, while the Central Powers, having no cables, were forced to use radio, and even then had to submit their messages to a censorship exercised by foreign powers.

It may possibly be supposed that the Zimmermann telegram was transmitted by radio from Nauen direct to Mexico, inasmuch as there was a powerful station at Chapultepec. But the evidence is fairly clear against such an hypothesis. The Chapultepec station was hardly in working order by October 1918 as can be seen from the following message:³⁷

From: Madrid
To: Berlin
No. 1220
Oct. 8, 1918

JAHNKE reports from Mexico without date: Cipher telegrams 6 and 7 cannot be deciphered. Please send thrice each time. A wireless station has been erected. I am now trying to get into communication with Nauen. * * *

Jahnke was a secret agent of the German Admiralty who worked in the United States and Mexico. His telegrams were sent by von Eckhardt, the German Minister at Mexico City, to Buenos Aires for relay to Berlin. While the foregoing message states that "Jahnke reports from Mexico without date" we can fix the date of the report as not earlier than June 9, 1918, because cipher telegram No. 7, mentioned in that report as being indecipherable, was sent on June 9.³⁸ While it is possible to imagine that messages might have been transmitted from Nauen in the hope that they could be heard in Mexico City, yet the fact that as late as the middle of 1918 Jahnke was evidently having a great deal of trouble in receiving signals (note that he asks that signals be sent thrice each time) makes it extremely unlikely that a year and a half before then the Germans would have tried to get the Zimmermann telegram to Mexico City by such an uncertain route.

³⁴ Bernstorff, p. 166.

³⁵ FRS, pp. 83 and 87.

³⁶ FRS, p. 112, contains the following message: "He [Austrian Ambassador] presented two messages to be sent through you to his Government, which were forwarded last night in department's 1519, February 3, 7 p. m., and 1520, February 3, 8 p. m. One more message, our 1523, February 4, 4 p. m., was sent at his request this morning."

³⁷ Hall Affidavit, p. 254.

³⁸ Hall Affidavit, p. 244.

We come now to a study of the code used for the Zimmermann telegram itself. The telegram carried the number 158 and was appended to telegram No. 157 which was sent through State Department channels.³⁹ If, therefore, lacking telegram 158, we could ascertain what code was used for telegram No. 157 we would have at least a clue as to what code was used for the Zimmermann telegram. But even this clue is lacking, for, despite most diligent search, in which there was full cooperation from the Chief of the Division of Communications and Records in the State Department, we have thus far been unable to locate the original of telegram No. 157 in the files of the State Department. However, telegram No. 157 was only one of a series exchanged between the German Foreign Office and Bernstorff via the State Department, and fortunately there do exist at least several other messages belonging to this latter series in those files.⁴⁰

All these messages are of vital importance in a study of the strained relations immediately preceding the break between Germany and the United States which formally took place on February 3, 1917, when Bernstorff was handed his passport. They are all in a code which is known as 7500, as was ascertained by a study of the messages in question in connection with their plain texts, as published in the official report of the German hearings.^{40a}

Since the Bernstorff messages just mentioned were sent in Code 7500, the probabilities are very high that telegrams Nos. 157 and 158 were also in Code 7500. But the Zimmermann telegram as given to Ambassador Page by the British was the decoded version of a message not in Code 7500 but in Code 13040. This code, 7500, is what is known to cryptographers as a "two-part" or "cross-referenced" code. The two parts comprise (1) a set of 10,000 phrases in alphabetical order and numbered from 0000 to 9999, the numbers being entirely disarranged, i. e., without any numerical sequence; (2) the same phrases fitted with the same numbers as before, but this time with the numbers in sequence and the phrases disarranged. The first part, with the phrases in alphabetical order, is used for encoding—for sending a message; the second part, with the numbers in sequence, is used for reading a message which has been sent by means of the numbers. The advantage of a code of this nature is that the identification of any code group by an outsider will yield no alphabetical clue to the meaning of any other code group which is numerically in its neighborhood. Thus, 1256 might, in an English code of the kind described, signify "day," 1257, "book," and 1258, "shoe." The reconstruction of a code of this nature by analysis is necessarily a much slower process than the building up of a code book in which the alphabetical order of the phrases corresponds to the numerical sequence of their code group equivalents—wherein, for example, 1256 signifies "date," 1257 "day," 1258 "daze," etc.

Code 7500, which as stated was a two-part code, was one of a series of such codes which the Germans employed. The code indicator for one of these codes uniformly consists of two significant digits followed by two 0's. The two significant digits always show an arithmetical difference of 2. A skeleton reconstruction of Code 9700 and one of 5300 are in the Government files. Code 8600 was used by German officials in South America during the war. Code 6400 also was in use during the war. The existence of a code known as 4200 was predicted because of the existence of the others, and was later confirmed from a French source.^{40b}

Code 13040 was an old German diplomatic code of the partially disarranged type: The alphabetic vocabulary is broken up into fractions and these again into smaller fractions before the numeral code groups are attached. By this process the original alphabetical sequence of

³⁹ German Hearings, p. 1337.

⁴⁰ Some of these messages are Bernstorff's Nos. 154 and 156 of November 21; 164 of December 1; 169 of December 4, 1916; 212 of January 16; 222 of January 21; 228 and 229 of January 23; and 239 of January 27, 1917.

^{40a} See Mendelsohn, Charles J., *An Encipherment of the German Diplomatic Code 7500*, Technical Paper of the Signal Intelligence Service, 1938.

^{40b} See Boucard, Robert. Article in *Gringoire*, Paris, Feb. 5, 1937.

the words and phrases is only partially destroyed. In the case of 13040 the method of dividing the vocabulary into fractions was such as to leave very generous traces of the alphabetical arrangement and proportionally to facilitate the process of decipherment. Once begun, the decipherment of such a code becomes progressively easier as more groups are identified.

When Ambassador Page sent his telegram containing the English text of the Zimmermann message, he said:⁴¹

I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German

These were sent from London on March 2, but of course could not have reached Washington in less than a week. In the meantime, still worried about the authenticity of the telegram, Washington asked for a copy of the German code, as is evidenced by the following telegram:⁴²

WASHINGTON, February 28, 1917—8 p. m.

4493. Your 5747, February 24—1 p. m. Please endeavor to obtain copy of German code from Mr. Balfour, decode following messages and telegraph translations. All three messages are dated January 17, signed Bernstorff, and addressed to the German Legations at Bogota, Port-au-Prince, and Santiago, Chile, respectively.

[Here follow code messages.]

Effort will be made to secure copies of all German cipher messages as far back as possible and if the Department were in possession of the code there would be a great saving of time and expense. Contents of messages decoded here would of course be communicated to the British Government.

Publication of Z[immermann]'s telegram to Mexico tomorrow.

LANSING.

Page replied:⁴³

LONDON, March 1, 1917—11 p. m.

[Received March 2, 12:30 a. m.]

Your 4493, February 28—8 p. m. The three messages were deciphered to-day and are practically identical. They contain instructions to the three legations to use a certain variation of the cipher code when communicating with Berlin. The one to Santiago was to be repeated to other missions in South America. The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but there appear to be serious difficulties. I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it was never used straight, but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here. They can not be spared to go to America. If you will send me copies of B[ernstorff]'s cipher telegrams, the British authorities will gladly decipher them as quickly as possible giving me copies as fast as deciphered. I could telegraph texts or summaries in matters of importance and send the others by pouch. Neither Spring Rice nor Gaunt know anything about this matter.

PAGE.

Mr. Page's informant was misinformed or was misleading Mr. Page. The code used is described by Mr. Page in his original announcement concerning the Zimmermann telegram:⁴⁴

The first group is the number of the telegram, 130, [sc. in the German numbering and dating code, in which the group 130 means "Number 3"; the Zimmermann telegram was therefore message No. 3 from Washington to Mexico City], and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which is Zimmermann's signature.

This description tallies exactly with the copy of the telegram as secured by Mr. Polk from the Washington telegraph office. (See frontispiece.) The message was in straight unenciphered German code, and could be read by any one in possession of both the telegram and the code book. Not only was the Zimmermann telegram as sent from Washington to Mexico City in this unenciphered 13040 code, but a whole multitude of messages between Washington and Berlin were sent in the same way.

⁴¹ See message quoted on p. 5.

⁴² FRS, p. 152.

⁴³ FRS, pp. 157-158.

⁴⁴ See message quoted on p. 5.

Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, in his affidavit before the Mixed Claims Commission, said of this code (Claimant's Exhibit 320, p. 776):

The German cipher book covering this system of ciphering is in our possession, it having been captured by the British authorities in the baggage of a German consul named Wasmuss who was stationed at Shiraz while Wasmuss was engaged in an endeavor to cut a British oil pipe line.

It seems unlikely that a German consul engaged in an expedition to cut a pipe line should carry a diplomatic code book in his baggage. Moreover, the British copy of 13040 is fragmentary, and gives every evidence of having been gradually reconstructed in a cryptographic bureau through the decipherment of messages. A glance at the copy given by the British to the United States after America's entrance into the war will demonstrate this fact. This copy contains about half the vocabulary, but is not a transcript of part of the code book, since it comprises some words and phrases from all the pages. Some of the identifications, too, are marked doubtful. An actual copy of a code book would certainly not exhibit missing and doubtful sections.

On the other hand Admiral Hall's recollection was probably only partly at fault. The British may very well have found in Wasmuss' baggage not a copy of a code book but a copy of one or more telegrams with the code text accompanied by the corresponding clear. From this start they would then proceed to build up the code book. As already indicated, the nature of the structure of Code 13040 is such that a comparatively small amount of decoded material together with a number of telegrams in code will enable skilled cryptographers to reconstruct the book.

How did the British obtain the 13040 version of the Zimmermann Telegram? Page was told that it was "* * * bought in Mexico." While the British, for obvious reasons, insisted upon the Mexican source of the message, we may have our own opinion as to whether or not they procured another copy from the files of the Western Union Telegraph Office in Washington.

The following questions now may be raised with the hope of finding accurate answers: Why was the Zimmermann telegram originally sent from Berlin to Washington in Code 7500 and not in Code 13040? What routes were really used for its transmission? If several routes were really used, when did the telegram first reach Bernstorff? Why did Bernstorff forward it in another code? When did the British first intercept the message, if it was sent by more than one route? Were they able to decode it at once, and if so, why did they wait more than a month before communicating its contents to Ambassador Page for forwarding to Washington? And which version did the British Government hand Page, the one in Code 7500 or the one in Code 13040? The answers to these questions are vital points in this study.

The Zimmermann telegram was prepared originally in German code 7500 because that was the code employed for these special communications between the German Foreign Office and Bernstorff for direct communication via State Department channels at the time in question. The German hearings contain extremely interesting testimony on this point, for the Zimmermann telegram episode was discussed with some detail at those hearings, and the printed record contains sufficiently interesting testimony on the circumstances surrounding the disclosure of the text of the telegram to warrant quotation.⁴⁵

Delegate Dr. SCHÜCKING. Was there—and this is a much more important matter—an investigation into the fate of the Mexican dispatches?

Witness COUNT V. BERNSTORFF. Yes, an investigation did take place in that instance.

Delegate Dr. SCHÜCKING. And what was the result of this investigation, so far as your activities came into question?

⁴⁵ *German Hearings*, pp. 313-315; 478-481.

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. So far as I know, no result was accomplished by the investigation. But subsequently I came to have no doubt upon the point that all our dispatches were decoded by the British and placed at the disposal of the Americans.

Expert Dr. BONN. By this, you mean to say that this dispatch was caught between Germany and the United States, and that the decoding was not the result of transmitting the message to Mexico from the United States by land?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. According to what I learned later, I assume that the British decoded all the telegrams which came over the English cables.

Expert Dr. BONN. We shall have to go into this matter more carefully later on.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, but for the present we will close the matter here with this.

Delegate Dr. SPAHN. Secretary of State Zimmermann will give us information later concerning the question of the box.^{45a} The statement which we have received from him on the point differs from yours, your Excellency. But he will tell us about it himself.

So far as concerns the dispatch to Carranza, the complaint has been made that there was no change of code, and that the old cipher was used, which had been known for a long while; that it was in this way possible for the dispatch to be decoded. How about this?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. Naturally, the code was changed much less during war time than was otherwise the case, but that was due to the fact that it was impossible to send us new ciphers.⁴⁶ The last time I received new ciphers was by way of the U-boat *Deutschland*. * * * Twice, on both the trips of the U-boat *Deutschland* I was sent new ciphers.⁴⁷

* * * * *

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. May I be permitted at this point to ask a question concerning the ciphers and cipher keys?

The CHAIRMAN. That would seem to be connected with the point at issue, and in any event we shall hardly have an opportunity later on to go into it.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. I would like to ask Count Bernstorff to make us a brief statement covering the use of the ciphers, the key to the ciphers, etc. It is well known that complaints have been made in respect to the use of the cipher. The Count said something with regard to the matter during the first session.

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. It is readily understood that, under the conditions which I have described, the ciphers were not changed as often as would have been the case under normal conditions. In all probability, if communications had not been interrupted, we would have received new ciphers every month or every other month, so that they could not have been compromised so easily. To the extent that my memory serves me, the only occasions upon which we received new ciphers were on the two trips of the *Deutschland*. To the extent that it was possible to do so, we operated the available ciphers by means of keys; but I learned later, as I already stated in giving my first testimony, that the British deciphered all our telegrams.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. How do you explain the fact that the English were able to get such a knowledge of them?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. I am no cipher expert, but the cipher experts now state that there is absolutely no cipher which they cannot decipher. I do not know how right they are in this, but, in any event, the experts say that there is absolutely no cipher which they cannot decipher, provided they have before them a sufficient number of telegrams. And this result, particularly in the case of the United States, was probably due to the fact that circumstances were such as to force us to make use of an extraordinarily large number of ciphered messages, and we often sent our reports and telegrams in double or triple form, in the hope that in some way they should reach Germany. Consequently, the British must have had an enormous amount of material in the way of cipher dispatches of ours, and in this way it was possible for them to break down our various ciphers.

Expert Dr. HOETZSCH. So that, according to your conviction, the question of treachery or carelessness is not involved in the matter?

Witness Count V. BERNSTORFF. I can state under oath that I do not believe that there was any treachery or negligence.

^{45a} The word "box" has reference to the dispatch box which the British found and seized on the boat on which Bernstorff returned to Germany after severance of diplomatic relations. (See p. 4.)

⁴⁶ Bernstorff's last answer is disingenuous. The question is about the code used from Washington to Mexico City; the answer is about the code from Berlin to Washington. Why the German Government did not change the code from Washington to Mexico City remains a riddle. The border was not carefully guarded even after we entered the war.

⁴⁷ On its first voyage, the *Deutschland* docked at Norfolk on July 9, 1916, on its second voyage, at New London on November 1, 1916.

A study of available messages, exchanged between Bernstorff and the Foreign Office in Berlin during the period of strained relations indicates that Code 7500 was one of the two received by Bernstorff via the *Deutschland*, and this code was apparently reserved for messages of the highest importance. Code 13040 was nevertheless used concurrently with Code 7500 as well as with other codes. Code 13040 was very old; in fact it used the old German orthography and whereas it contained words like "velociped" it failed to list such a word as "U-Boot," except in a supplement, and was not sufficiently up-to-date for foreign communications.

As to the routes really used for the transmission of the Zimmermann telegram, all the evidence thus far cited indicates that two routes were certainly employed, even if the wireless was not used. The first was the State Department route, and it is clear that the telegram was sent on January 16, 1917, via that channel. The second route, according to the statement contained in the cablegram from Bell to Harrison quoted above (p. 11), was via Swedish channels, and since Bell told Harrison that the British had succeeded only partially in decoding the message, it may be assumed that it too was in Code 7500. If the wireless was used, the same code was almost certainly used. The British in the fall of 1917 apparently saw no harm in telling Bell that the Germans had employed Swedish channels for the Zimmermann message because the subject of the moment was the famous Luxburg "sink without trace" message which had been sent via those same channels. However, Bell was not told that the British had intercepted the Zimmermann telegram sent via State Department channels for reasons which will presently become clear.

The British undoubtedly intercepted the State Department message which served, so to speak, as the envelope for the Zimmermann telegram, on January 16, 1917, or, at the latest, the next day. Were they able to decode the German code text contained within the State Department's message? The answer to this question is of great cryptographic interest. They were able to read it—but only partially. The evidence for this is fairly clear cut. Not only have we the Bell to Harrison cablegram referred to above, which specifically states that "from Berlin to Bernstorff it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering," but we may also note some corroborative evidence for this statement in Hendrick's version reading as follows:⁴⁸

On the 16th of January 1917, the ever-watchful ears of the British wireless operators detected the characteristic spluttering which informed them that another German message was speeding through the air. When decoded, the British found that they possessed this somewhat disjointed but still extremely valuable document:

"Zimmermann to Bernstorff for Eckhardt W. 158.⁴⁹

"16TH JANUARY, 1917.

"Most secret for your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister in ? Mexico with Tel. No. 1 * * * by a safe route.

"We purpose to begin on the 1st February unrestricted submarine warfare. In doing so, however, we shall endeavor to keep America neutral. * * * ? If we should not (succeed in doing so) we propose to (? Mexico) an alliance upon the following basis:

"(joint) conduct of the war

"(joint) conclusion of peace.

"Your Excellency should for the present inform the President secretly (that we expect) war with the U. S. A. (possibly) (* * * Japan) and at the same time to negotiate between us and Japan * * * (Indecipherable sentence meaning please tell the President) that * * * our submarines * * * will compel England to peace in a few months. Acknowledge receipt.

ZIMMERMANN."

⁴⁸ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 336.

⁴⁹ In Admiral Hall's affidavit it is explained that in the British files a letter followed by a number indicated the point of origin and serial number of the message. "B 120," for example, means Berlin's message No. 120 to a given destination. While the number "158" is correct as the serial number of the Zimmermann telegram the "W" [i. e., Washington] preceding it is an error, and should read "B" [i. e., Berlin.]

This somewhat confused message gives an idea of the difficulty of picking up wireless symbols sent across the Atlantic—at that time—in midwinter. But there is a conspicuous discrepancy between this telegram and the more complete and finished one sent to Bernstorff by way of the Washington cable office and by him relayed to the city of Mexico. The plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a free gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona does not appear in it. Whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation is not yet clear.

We have reason to doubt that the Zimmermann telegram was sent by radio. When one examines the text of the message as given by Hendrick and compares it with the German text of the original Zimmermann telegram as published in the German hearings one sees immediately that this partially decoded text quoted by Hendrick is that of the original Zimmermann telegram as prepared in Code 7500 and transmitted via State Department channels. The "give away" is contained in the opening sentence to the message: "Most secret; for Your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister * * *." This forms the preamble to the actual Zimmermann telegram as it left the German Foreign Office. It is naturally not contained in the version which Bernstorff sent to von Eckhardt in German Code 13040 and which the British obtained in Mexico. The lacunae in the first solution obtained by the British are there because the British had only partially succeeded in reconstructing Code 7500. Hendrick, specifically calling attention to the omission of the plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, raises the question as to whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation. Does he wish us to infer that Bernstorff added this interesting feature to the message? How absurd!

The real explanation is cryptographic in nature. Such names as Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona would not be included in making up a small code like 7500. In fact, the name of only one of these States—Texas—is included in the much larger code 13040. These names, if they occurred in a message, would have to be built up syllable by syllable by the use of several code groups; and unless these code groups were used frequently in other messages a cryptanalyst who was solving the messages by analysis would have no way of establishing the meaning of these groups in the Zimmermann telegram. Code 13040, as has been pointed out, retained decided traces of its original alphabetical arrangement, and had, moreover, been in use for a long time. Code 7500, on the other hand, had no trace of alphabetical arrangement, and had been used between Berlin and Washington for a short time only. It had been brought to America (cf. note 47) by the submarine *Deutschland* on either July 9 or November 1, 1916, and the earliest 7500 message which the present authors have been able to find is dated November 16. In these circumstances the British reconstruction of 7500 had not reached the point where it was equal to the complete decipherment of the Zimmermann telegram. When, however, the 13040 version was obtained, the entire message was read without difficulty.

When all is said and done, the decipherment of the 7500 version of the Zimmermann telegram, even to the degree given in the Hendrick version, approaches the unbelievable. This statement is not to be understood as in any way questioning the skill of the British cryptographers. With the greatest skill in the world, however, cryptography is a science assisted by art, and is not in any sense clairvoyance. There are only about a dozen 7500 messages in the American files. If we assume that the British had twice that number to work with their feat remains astonishing; for it must always be kept in view that 7500 is a code in which one identification gives no alphabetical clue whatever to another, and that this complete absence of alphabetization likewise makes it impossible in many cases, even where the general meaning of a code group is apparent, to choose among a number of synonyms any one of which will fit equally well. A lacuna of five or six code groups, not to mention longer ones, renders decipher-

ment not merely extremely difficult, but literally impossible, for the simple reason that there are an infinite number of ways in which such a lacuna may be filled.

It may be that Code 7500 was in use by the Germans for other traffic than the German-American, and that the British, as a consequence, had access to a very large number of messages. The employment of a code in different parts of the world is not unknown in German practice; we know that Codes 13040 and 18470 were so used. In this way the British may have made considerable progress in the solution of the code before the Zimmermann telegram was sent.^{49a}

Nevertheless, the information which the British obtained from this partially solved message was apparently clear enough and of sufficient importance to warrant their disclosing it to the American Government *at once*—if they wished to. Still, they did not do so. Why? Why did they wait from the middle of January until February 24? One astute student⁵⁰ raises the pertinent question as to the motives of the British in handing Ambassador Page a month-old telegram:

There is no doubt that President Wilson was profoundly shocked by this revelation of the fact that one could not go to war with Germany without having the Germans fight back. It did not even occur to him to question the authenticity of the document or the motive for the production of a month-old telegram at just that moment.⁵¹ At once the President cabled back his thanks for "information of such inestimable value" and his "very great appreciation of so marked an act of friendliness on the part of the British Government." No suspicions crossed his mind. The cable arrived on Saturday evening. It was some time on Sunday that President Wilson abruptly concluded that an appeal to Congress for authority at least to arm American merchant ships was unavoidable. On Monday he went again before the joint Houses of Congress. "Since," he told them, "it has unhappily proved impossible to safeguard our neutral rights by diplomatic means * * * there may be no recourse but to armed neutrality."

Millis is, of course, quite correct in stating that "It did not even occur to him to question the authenticity of the document * * *." The evidence on this point, based on a study not only of Lansing's *Memoirs*⁵² but also of the communications which were exchanged between Lansing and Page before the text of the Zimmermann telegram was made public, on March 1, 1917, is most conclusive.

Let us briefly review the chronology of the case:

January 16, 1917: The telegram is transmitted in Code 7500 (via State Department channels) from the German Foreign Office in Berlin to Bernstorff in Washington and is to be forwarded by Bernstorff to the German Minister in Mexico City. On January 17 it is received by the State Department, and on the 18th it is delivered to Bernstorff. (*Lansing*, p. 227.)

January 19: Bernstorff forwards the message to Mexico in Code 13040.⁵³

^{49a} Failing some such explanation the whole situation calls to mind a war-time incident that occurred in the American Military Intelligence Code and Cipher Section (M. I. 8). Those entrusted with the decipherment of cryptographic documents of one country in that section usually kept their own counsel and did not communicate overmuch with those who were busy with the messages of another country. One day it was learned that a certain group was reading messages in a code that had been a sealed book a day or so before. Later it was definitely ascertained that a copy of the code in a somewhat different encipherment had been procured from outside. At the time of the feat this was surmised by some of those not in the secret, and one cryptographer in discussing the situation said emphatically, "They're not doing any miracles around here."

⁵⁰ Millis, Walter, *Road to War: America 1914-1917*, New York, 1935, pp. 403-404.

⁵¹ Millis' footnote: Mr. Balfour, it is true, had been careful to tell Page that the telegram had only just been received. Actually, if one may believe Mr. Page's biographer, the British intelligence service had intercepted and deciphered the document even before it had reached Mexico City, and had been holding it since then for the time when it would have the maximum effect.

⁵² *Op. Cit.*, p. 227: "About ten o'clock [morning of February 27, 1917] Polk came into my office and we talked over the substance of the telegram. He told me that on its arrival [8:30 p. m., Saturday, February 24; apparently it was not decoded and handed to Polk until Monday, February 26] he had at once taken it to the President, who had shown much indignation and was disposed to make the text public without delay. Polk advised him to await my return, which he had agreed to do." * * * (p. 228). "I told the President that I thought it would be unwise for the Department to give out the telegram officially at this time as it would be charged that it was done to influence opinion on the bill for arming merchant vessels, but I thought it might indirectly be made public after we had confirmed the sending of the message by Bernstorff. To this the President agreed."

⁵³ This date is certain from the copy of the telegram. Bernstorff says (p. 380) that "the Zimmermann telegram passed through the Embassy at Washington on the same day on which I received the notification that the unrestricted U-boat war was to be declared"; and in another place (p. 358) he says: "On the 19th of January I received the official notice that the unrestricted U-boat campaign would begin on February 1st * * *." Of course, Bernstorff's phrase "passed through" is ambiguous, and does not categorically say the message was forwarded on the very day it was received—it may only have been started on its way, for it required reencoding, and that would take some time.

February 24: Ambassador Page cables the President and the Secretary of State the English text of the message as received by him in London from Balfour. The message is received at 8:30 p. m. on that date.

February 27: In Lansing's absence, Polk brings the message to the attention of the President, who wishes to publish it at once, but is persuaded by Polk to await Lansing's return.

February 28: (1) Polk obtains a copy of the original message filed by Bernstorff at Washington to the German Minister in Mexico City. The code text was *not* cabled to London for verification but the texts of three other code messages sent by Bernstorff to German Legations in South America (apparently obtained from the Washington telegraph office at the same time the copy of the Zimmermann telegram was obtained) were sent for decipherment. The message forwarding these texts has already been quoted (p. 16).

(2) Lansing communicates a paraphrased version of the text of the Zimmermann telegram to the Associated Press at 6 p. m., for release after 10 p. m.

March 1: (1) The English text is published in the morning papers in the United States and the message is discussed in Congress, where doubts are expressed as to its authenticity.^{53a}

(2) Lansing cables Page, in telegram No. 4494, at 8 p. m., as follows:⁵⁴

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1917—8 p. m.

4494. Some members of Congress are attempting to discredit Zimmermann message charging that message was furnished to this Government by one of the belligerents. This Government has not the slightest doubt as to its authenticity, but it would be of the greatest service if the British Government would permit you or someone in the Embassy to personally decode the original message which we secured from the telegraph office in Washington and then cable to Department German text. Assure Mr. Balfour that the Department hesitated to make this request but feels that this course will materially strengthen its position and make it possible for the Department to state that it had secured the Zimmermann note from our own people. Matter most urgent and I hope you can give it your immediate attention. The text of code message secured from telegraph office here is as follows:

[Here follows code message.]

LANSING.

(3) Page replied (11 p. m.) to Lansing's cable of February 28, referred to above, stating⁵⁵ that,

"The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but * * * I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it is never used straight, but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here."

March 2: (1) The telegram is published in the London papers (Hendrick, p. 324), which criticize the British Intelligence Service under the misapprehension that the decipherment has been made in America.

^{53a} The debate on this question takes up 13 full pages of the Congressional Record (pp. 4592-4605), and makes most interesting reading.

There were, of course, many questions as to how the letter, telegram, message, note (it was called by various names) came into possession of the United States, and questions as to who turned it over to our authorities, and *what were the motives*. Here are some excerpts from Senator Stone's remarks (p. 4593):

"* * * This alleged letter was made public for some purpose. * * * I cannot and will not undertake to say what that purpose was further than to express the opinion that it was given publicity to affect either public opinion or legislative opinion, or both, in the United States. * * * Mr. President, I want to know the facts about this letter before being swept off my feet, or seeing others swept off their feet, by the clamor of jingoes. * * * I am asking only to be informed, to be advised whether the information in the possession of our State Department was derived from one of the belligerent Governments. For example, did this information come from London? Was it given to us by that Government?"

⁵⁴ FRS, p. 155.

⁵⁵ For complete text, see Page's cable of March 1, 1917 (p. 16 of this paper).

(2) Page, replying to Lansing's telegram No. 4494, states:⁵⁶ "Your 4494 followed with absolutely satisfactory results," and follows this with a long message:

LONDON, March 2, 1917—4 p. m.
[Received 10:45 p. m.]

5789. My 5784 of today. Bell took the cipher text of the German message contained in your 4494 of yesterday to the Admiralty and there, himself, deciphered it from the German code which is in the Admiralty's possession. The first group, 130, indicates Bernstorff's number of telegram. The second group, 13042, indicates the code to be used in deciphering the cipher telegram. From the third group onwards, message reads as follows:

Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16: No. 1. Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uneingeschraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte, schlagen wir Mexico auf folgend Grundlage Buendnis vor. Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren, Friedensschluss. Reichlich finanziell Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexico, in Texas, Neu Mexico, Arizona fruher verloren Gebiet zurueck erobern. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeborene ueberlassen. Sie wollen vorstehendes dem Praesident streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen Japan von sich aus zu sofortig Betrachtung [*Beitratung?*] einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesident darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichtslose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Zimmermann.

Punctuations are given as in German text. I am sending decode into German, group by group, by tomorrow's pouch.

PAGE.

March 3: Zimmermann acknowledges the authenticity of the telegram.⁵⁷

This chronology proves the accuracy of Millis' comment on the President's trustful nature, for thus far the chronology shows that the President caused the text of the Zimmermann telegram to be given to the press *before* steps were taken to authenticate it. In passing, we may note, however, that the Secretary of State was a bit troubled by the question of authenticity:

The next morning [Friday, March 2] Polk brought me a brief telegram from Page saying our copy of the [Zimmermann] cipher message obtained from the telegraph company had been received, that instructions had been followed with success, and that text of deciphered message would follow. While I had never doubted the authenticity of the translation sent, this corroboration by our own people was a relief.⁵⁸

Returning again to Millis, and especially his footnote raising the question as to British motives in producing a month-old telegram, we find comment on this important matter of delay in a work of authentic nature, as may be seen in the following quotation taken from Blanche Dugdale's biography⁵⁹ of her uncle, Arthur Balfour:

Ever since the middle of January, however, a piece of information had been in the possession of the British Government, which would move, if anything could, the vast populations behind the Atlantic seaboard States, who still read of the European War with as much detachment as if it had been raging in the moon. This was the famous telegram from Zimmermann, the German Foreign Minister, to the German Minister in Mexico, instructing him, if and when the United States should enter the war on the Allied side, to propose to Mexico an alliance which would restore to her, when peace came, her "lost territories in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico."

The method by which this information had reached the British Intelligence Service made it impossible for some time to communicate it to the United States Government. Therefore for over a

⁵⁶ FRS, p. 158. The Zimmermann telegram as it appears in FRS contains some errors which we have not corrected. For example, the word *Beitratung* is followed by *Beitratung* in brackets with a query. Of course, neither is an authentic word. For the correct rendering see "Version II" on page 25. Incidentally, Bell's consultation of the code book certainly showed him that the statement that the code "is never used straight" (cf. p. 16) was not true. Either he did not inform Page of this fact, or Page failed to mention it.

⁵⁷ New York Times *Current History*, vol. XI, pp. 66, 236.

⁵⁸ Lansing's *Memoirs*, p. 229.

⁵⁹ Dugdale, Blanche, E. C., *Arthur James Balfour, 1906-1930*, New York, 1937, pp. 137-138.

month Balfour read in his despatches from Washington of the slow wakening of the American will to war, but could do nothing to hasten the process. Till—at last—information about the Mexican plot reached London through channels which enabled the Intelligence Service to cover up the traces of how it had first been got.

Joy was unbounded in Whitehall, and the Foreign Secretary himself was unusually excited. "As dramatic a moment as I remember in all my life," he once said, referring to the scene in his room at the Foreign Office on February 24, 1917, when he handed to the American Ambassador the sheet of paper containing the decoded message. By the ceremony of this act the British Government gave its pledge that the communication was authentic. Nevertheless the American Nation not unnaturally took a little while to satisfy itself that the telegram was not part of some gigantic hoax. It might have taken longer, had not the German Foreign Office, within a few days of the publication, admitted the message to be genuine.

Note the very significant remark: "The method by which this information had reached the British Intelligence Service made it impossible for some time to communicate it to the United States Government. * * * Till—at last—information about the Mexican plot reached London through channels which enabled the Intelligence Service to cover up the traces of how it had first been got."

We cannot suppose that the British Government was merely desirous of hiding from the United States Government the fact that its Intelligence Service was able to decode German code messages, and that this was the reason for the delay. Their action in providing a decode of the Zimmermann telegram as sent by Bernstorff to von Eckhardt negatives that hypothesis. The reason for the delay must have involved a much more important secret than that, or at least there must have been other, more weighty considerations.

Moreover, whenever it is found that there is much beating around the bush in making an explanation, there is room for wondering whether there is not something in a situation not apparent on the surface. For instance, let us note how Admiral Hall attempts to evade the answer. In November 1925 the *World's Work* published Hendrick's article on the Zimmermann telegram. In the April 1926 issue of this magazine⁶⁰ appears an interesting editorial comment on the story, from which the following is extracted:

It was only natural that Mr. Hendrick's chapter on the real story of the seizure of the famous Zimmermann telegram, which appeared in the November issue, should have created a sensation in all countries which had a part in the war.

* * * * *

The London correspondents of the metropolitan American dailies reported that he [i. e., Admiral Hall] would say nothing, but a week after the *World's Work* printed the chapter of revelations the *Daily Mail* of London did manage to squeeze an interview out of him.

* * * * *

The British Admiralty, he explained, knew all the movements of the famous German submarines *Deutschland* and *Bremen*, and the British Government allowed German messages to be sent over British cables. What the Germans did not know was that the British possessed the German secret code and deciphered every message as it was sent across.

"This one thing shows the difference between the British and German mentality," he remarked. "I am sure, if the position had been reversed, the British would never have been so stupid as not to have suspected that the messages were being deciphered. If I had disclosed the actual wording of the Zimmermann telegram the Germans would have suspected something at once. I had to wait until we got a copy of the telegram actually sent, which was differently worded from the one from Berlin.

"It was Bernstorff's telegram that I exposed. The Germans actually thought that there had been a leakage between Bernstorff and Mexico, which was what I wanted. Right until the end of the war I do not think that the Germans suspected that we knew as much as we did of their intelligence service."

⁶⁰ Pp. 578-579.

Here we have, presumably, Admiral Hall's explanation for the delay in communicating the contents of the Zimmermann telegram to the United States Government. He says: "If I had disclosed the actual wording of the Zimmermann telegram the Germans would have suspected something at once. I had to wait until we got a copy of the telegram actually sent, which was differently worded from the one from Berlin." To put it charitably, this is hardly an adequate statement, as can be seen by comparing the text of the telegram as sent from Berlin to Washington (as cited in the official German documents) with that sent from Washington to Mexico City (the latter being the one that the British furnished Page)^{60a}:

VERSION I

Telegramm Nr. 158
Ganz geheim

Zu Euerer Exzellenz ausschliesslich persoelichen Information und Weitergabe an Kaiserlichen Gesandten Mexiko auf sicherem Wege: "Telegramm Nr. 1 Ganz geheim Selbst entziffern.

Wir beabsichtigen, am 1. Februar uneingeschraenkten U-Boot-Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden, Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten.

Fuer den Fall, dass dies nicht gelingen sollte, schlagen wir Mexiko auf folgender Grundlage Buendnis vor: Gemeinsame Kriegfuehrung. Gemeinsamer Friedensschluss. Reichliche finanzielle Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits, dass Mexiko in Texas, Neu-Mexiko, Arizona frueher verlorenes Gebiet zurueckerobert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeboren ueberlassen.

Euer Hochwohlgeboren wollen vorstehendes Praesidenten streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht, und Anregung hinzufuegen, Japan von sich aus zu sofortigem Beitritt einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln.

Bitte Praesidenten darauf hinzuweisen, dass ruecksichtslose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen.

Empfang bestaetigen.

ZIMMERMANN''

VERSION II

Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16: No. 1. Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uneingeschraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte schlagen wir Mexico auf folgend Grundlage Buendnis vor; Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren. Friedensschluss. Reichlich finanzielle Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexico in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona frueher verlorenes Gebiet zurueck erobert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeboren ueberlassen. Sie wollen vorstehendes dem Praesidenten streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen Japan von sich aus zu sofortiger Betrachtung einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesidenten darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichtenlose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Schluss der Depesche. Zimmermann.

^{60a} Most of the slight variations between the London version (marked "Version II" and taken from *Hendrick*, vol. III, pp. 345-6) and that given out by the German Government (marked "Version I," taken from pp. 355-6 of vol. II of the German original of *German Hearings*) are due to the fact that in the former grammatical terminations such as connected text requires are not inserted. A few others are due to carelessness or lack of knowledge of the German language, e. g., the final e on Hochwohlgeborene. The word *gemeinsam* or *gemeinsamer* is omitted before *Friedensschluss*. No one can possibly doubt that the Berlin and the London versions represent an identical text.

No, that is not the reason for the delay. Probably the reader has already guessed the reason or, rather, the reasons, for undoubtedly there were several. To our mind they may be listed as follows:

1. To disclose the Berlin-Washington version of the Zimmermann telegram, which it will be recalled was sent via State Department channels, would have necessitated revealing the fact that the British Intelligence Service was intercepting and solving not only German code messages but also intercepting and perhaps solving diplomatic messages of the American Government—a power whose aid they were desperately seeking at the time.

2. Even had the foregoing not served as a powerful argument against a prompt disclosure of the message, the fact that the solution presented several lacunae and doubtful spots would have detracted a great deal from the diplomatic and military value of the document. Undoubtedly, frantic efforts were made by the British cryptographers to fill in the lacunae—but the solution of a code of the two-part type, such as Code 7500, is always a slow, difficult process unless there is a large volume of text on which to corroborate hypotheses. This requisite volume was lacking. Proof that the British had not succeeded in reading entire messages in Code 7500 is neatly shown by the phrase “at that time” (referring to January 16, 1917, the date of the Zimmermann telegram) in the Bell to Harrison cablegram of September 17, 1917, quoted above on page 11.

Of course, the British might have furnished the translation of the version which, according to Bell's cablegram of September 17, 1917, was sent via Swedish channels. But we have, in the same cablegram, Bell's statement that “it went in a code which the British had at that time only partly succeeded in deciphering and of which Eckhardt had no copy.” In all probability the code used for the message transmitted via Swedish channels was Code 7500. Possibly it was some other code. The sending of a message in more than one code is a capital crime in cryptography. True, it was a crime that we know the Germans to have committed, but in the present case every reason for supposing such a transgression, whether by accident or design, is lacking. Even if, by some remote chance, the telegram was sent from Berlin in some other code, that code was certainly not 13040, and hence this point is immaterial. The fact remains that the British could not offer a partly solved message of such vital importance regardless of which version was available.

3. In a *note* dated April 18, 1916, following the sinking of the American vessel *Sussex*, the American Government had presented an ultimatum to the German Government couched in the following unmistakable language:⁶¹

If it is still the purpose of the Imperial Government to prosecute an indiscriminate warfare against vessels of commerce by the use of submarines without regard to what the Government of the United States must consider the sacred and indisputable rules of international law and the universally recognized dictates of humanity, the Government of the United States is at last forced to the conclusion that there is but one course to pursue. Unless the Imperial Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and freight-carrying vessels, the Government of the United States can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the German Empire altogether. This action the Government of the United States contemplates with the greatest reluctance, but feels constrained to take in behalf of humanity and the rights of neutral nations.

On January 9, 1917, Kaiser Wilhelm held a council at Pless, at which the irrevocable decision was taken to stake everything on another trial of unrestricted submarine warfare, to commence on February 1. On January 16, Bernstorff was notified of this decision (in telegram No.

⁶¹ FRS, p. 106.

157) but was directed not to inform the American Government until the evening of January 31. Bernstorff's words are interesting.⁶²

On January 31st, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, I handed Mr. Lansing the official communication about the U-boat war. This was my last political interview in America. We both knew that the end had come, but we did not admit the fact to each other. The Secretary of State contented himself with replying that he would submit my communication to the President. I cherished no illusions regarding the expected outcome of this interview, for the ultimatum of April 18, 1916, no longer allowed of any chance of preventing the rupture of diplomatic relations.

If on January 31 this news came as a profound shock to President Wilson, who was then engaged in his second and most promising attempt toward mediation, it could hardly have taken the British unawares, for they must have had definite knowledge of the Pless decision from at least two sources. One was undoubtedly their partial solution of telegram 157, in which Bernstorff was instructed to inform the American Government of the reopening of unrestricted submarine warfare; the other was their solution of the Zimmermann telegram of January 19, which we have seen was telegram 158, and was tacked on to telegram 157. (See p. 15.) Consequently, the British must have felt quite sure as early as the third week of January 1917, that the United States would soon join the Allies, if our ultimatum of April 18, 1916, meant anything at all.⁶³ All they now had to do was to hold on for a few days or weeks longer and the United States would be on their side. Sure enough, on February 3, diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany were severed.⁶⁴ But as the weeks went by there was no declaration of war, for the President, in an address to Congress on February 3, stated:⁶⁵

Notwithstanding this unexpected action of the German Government, this sudden and deeply deplorable renunciation of its assurances given this Government at one of the most critical moments of tension in the relations of the two Governments, I refuse to believe that it is the intention of the German authorities to do in fact what they have warned us they will feel at liberty to do. I cannot bring myself to believe that they will indeed pay no regard to the ancient friendship between their people and our own or to the solemn obligations which have been exchanged between them and destroy American ships and take the lives of American citizens in the willful prosecution of the ruthless naval programme they have announced their intention to adopt. Only actual overt acts on their part can make me believe it even now.

How much this waiting for some "actual overt acts" must have irked the British may be imagined if they irritated Page sufficiently to make him write:⁶⁶

The danger is that with all the authority he wants (short of a formal declaration of war) the President will again wait, wait, wait—till an American liner be torpedoed! Or till an attack is made on our coast by a German submarine!

Something had to be done to stir up the President and the people of the hinterland beyond the Mississippi.

In the country at large the situation, as Spring Rice reported that day, was "much that of a soda-water bottle with the wires cut but the cork unexploded." The failure of shipping to sail had produced "a stoppage of trade, a congestion in the ports, widespread discomfort and even misery on the coast and inland, even bread riots and a coal famine." All this, nevertheless, was not "spectacular enough;" the West was still against war and the President was still fighting for peace. But on Saturday, the 24th, the British themselves were able to supply something "spectacular." Mr. Balfour deftly gave the unexploded cork a push.⁶⁷

⁶² P. 379.

⁶³ Even Bernstorff, immediately on receipt of telegraph 157, replied (German Hearings, p. 1021): "War unavoidable if we proceed as contemplated." A few days later, in his desperate attempts to stave off a rupture in diplomatic relations, he cabled the Foreign Office again (German Hearings, p. 1047): "If the U-boat war is commenced forthwith the President will look upon this as a slap in the face, and war with the United States will be unavoidable." Bernstorff's telegrams to the Foreign Office are most interesting. No one who reads them can remain unconvinced of his absolutely sincere desire for peace between the United States and Germany.

⁶⁴ FRS, p. 106.

⁶⁵ FRS, p. 111.

⁶⁶ Hendrick, pp. 324-325, quoting from Page's diary.

⁶⁷ *Mullis, op. cit.*, p. 403.

The "push" was, of course, the communication to Page of the contents of the Zimmermann telegram. By this time the British Intelligence Service had the full text, which had been "bought in Mexico," and they must have felt that the time had come to make the most of their opportunity. They were not wrong.

But Mr. Polk at the State Department knew of the waiting bombshell so kindly supplied by Mr. Balfour. The Zimmermann telegram, he believed, would produce a blast of popular emotion that would sweep the armed ship bill through against everything. So did Colonel House, who had now seen the text, and who was urging the President to "publish it tomorrow." So, no doubt, did the President—to whom it must have been plain enough that the first effect of Senator La Follette's pacifism would be to deliver Mr. Wilson himself into the hands of the intransigents. On Thursday, March 1, the headlines were shouting from the morning papers:

**GERMANY SEEKS AN ALLIANCE AGAINST US;
ASKS JAPAN AND MEXICO TO JOIN HER;
FULL TEXT OF PROPOSALS MADE PUBLIC**

It was a stupendous sensation. The headlines, it is to be observed, were not always precisely accurate. Germany had not actually sought an alliance as yet; the text of the telegram expressly instructed the Minister in Mexico to initiate the move only in the event that the United States should declare war, which the German Government would itself endeavour to prevent. It was not a proposal for an aggression against the United States, but merely a conventional, though rather blundering, diplomatic preparation against a probable American attack upon Germany. This, however, was far too fine a point for the hot passions of the moment; and the telegram was everywhere seized upon as final proof of the complete and fathomless treachery of the German.

What made it particularly shocking, of course, was the suggestion that the Japanese (with whom we were about to become allied) should be invited into the American Continent, or that the principle upon which many Americans had demanded the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine (because they had been acquired by force) should be applied to California and Texas, which we had forcibly detached from Mexico. Informed Americans understood perfectly well that the Allies had bribed Japan, Italy, and Rumania into the war with the promise of slices from the enemy carcass; but they were sincerely and profoundly horrified by the thought that Germany could be so base as to bribe Mexico and Japan with the promise of slices from the flanks of the United States. The Zimmermann telegram became a major German disaster. Not its least useful aspect, moreover, was the fact that it gave the Northeastern fire-eaters their first direct lever upon the pacific sentiment of the Southwest. If a German triumph threatened the annexation of California and Texas to Mexico—! The German Foreign Secretary's innocent cablegram had exploded with its maximum effect at precisely the point where it would do the Allies the greatest good.^{67a}

It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Millis mistakenly speaks of the projected restoration to Mexico of "California and Texas." The Zimmermann telegram makes no mention of California, but says that Mexico was to "reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona." Is it possible that the Germans were reserving California as bait for Japan?

If what Millis says is valid, if the facts which we have presented in the foregoing pages really constituted the motives which caused the British to withhold from the United States Government so weighty a secret as was contained in the Zimmermann telegram, we can take a charitable view and say that the circumstances justified their course of action. Certainly we must give them credit for knowing *when* to play their cryptographic trump cards. Which brings us to the additional compliment that they not only knew *when* to play a trump card, but also *how*. Note the dextrous manner in which they got the maximum benefit from the play *without disclosing* to their adversary where or how they had obtained the trump! Not only that, but in order to make sure that the source of their information should not be disclosed, they even took pains to insure that so far as the world outside was concerned, the credit for excellent intelligence work should go to another country—the United States! And to do that, they were not content to let natural inference take its course, but contrived with the help of British newspapers to

^{67a} Millis, W. C.

throw blame on their own intelligence service for letting those mere novices in intelligence work—the Americans—beat them at a game in which they themselves (i. e., the British) were generally supposed to be preëminent! For in the interview already referred to (p. 24) Admiral Hall said:

Of course, our whole object was to prevent the Germans from giving us very much credit for intelligence. When President Wilson published the famous Zimmermann telegram containing the German overtures to Mexico, I was very anxious that there should be no suspicion in the German mind that we had anything to do with it.

It was then that the *Daily Mail*, at my request, published a stinging leader passing severe reflections on the British Intelligence Service.

In a letter dated December 1, 1927, addressed to the secretary of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, giving his regrets for not being able to be present at the meeting on December 13, already referred to, Lord Balfour, Wartime Foreign Minister of the British Government said: ⁶⁸

* * * To "Room 40," where he [i. e. Ewing] was the leading spirit, the country owes an immense debt of gratitude—a debt which, at the time at least, could never be paid. Secrecy was of the very essence of the work, and never was secrecy more successfully observed.

Only one link remains still to be found before the story of the Zimmermann telegram can be regarded as complete: the original version as filed in Berlin. As already indicated, diligent search has failed to locate it, and we fear that it is now too late. The State Department files in Washington, in Berlin, and in Copenhagen have been scoured, without success. There remains only one more place where it most certainly can still be assumed to be peacefully reposing: the World War files of the British "Room 40 O. B."

In a letter ⁶⁹ to President Wilson, dated March 17, 1918, Ambassador Page, referring to Admiral Hall, wrote as follows:

* * * Hall is one genius that the war has developed. Neither in fiction nor in fact can you find any such man to match him. * * * He locks up certain documents "not to be opened till 20 years after this date." I've made up my mind to live 20 years more. I shall be present at the opening of that safe * * *.

The "20 years" are up. Admiral Hall is now a retired officer, but he still has the papers, if we are to believe the statements contained in a book by a recent author.⁷⁰ Relating the details of the efforts on the part of the representatives of certain American claimants to establish the validity of their claims, Landau tells how Mr. Amos J. Peaslee, leader of the American claimants, visited Admiral Hall on August 27, 1925, at Hall's London residence:

* * * He found Hall in full sympathy with the American claimants, and so commendatory was Admiral Sims's letter that he ended up their conference by saying: "Copies of the decoded German cables are stored away in several tin boxes in the basement. I sealed up these boxes with instructions that they were not to be opened up for 20 years. You have caused me to change my mind, however. I will open up the boxes for you. Copy such of the cables as you think will be useful to you. Make yourself at home. The servants will look after you." His rapid and sweeping decision was typical of the man. Fortunately he was retired from the Navy and was, therefore, his own master.

Hall took Peaslee down to the basement, spread the cables before him, and took his leave to catch the train for Scotland. Peaslee found over 10,000 cables, radio messages, and letters which Hall had intercepted and decoded. Twenty-six different codes had been used in sending these messages. Attached to the originals was a translation in clear, also the "recognition group," or number of the code used.

So Admiral Hall can, if he will, tell the whole story. It will be interesting to see if he does. The time for its telling has arrived. Ambassador Page unfortunately did not live out the 20 years as he promised himself to do, in order to be present when Admiral Hall finally opened his safe. The present authors are curious and anxious, too. Let the safe be opened!

⁶⁸ *The (Edinburgh) Scotsman*, Dec. 14, 1927.

⁶⁹ Hendrick, vol. III, p. 361.

⁷⁰ Landau, Capt. Henry. *The Enemy Within*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1937, p. 166.

APPENDIX I

Exhibit 320.—AFFIDAVIT OF ADMIRAL SIR W. REGINALD HALL, K. C. M. G., C. B., D. C. L., L. L. D., FORMERLY CHIEF OF THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT OF THE BRITISH ADMIRALTY, VERIFIED DECEMBER 28, 1926, WITH ANNEXED COPIES OF GERMAN CABLEGRAMS, WIRELESS AND OTHER MESSAGES INTERCEPTED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DURING THE WAR

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
LONDON, ENGLAND,
CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE U. S. OF AMERICA } ss:

Admiral, Sir W. Reginald Hall, K. C. M. G., C. B., D. C. L., L. L. D., being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. I reside at No. 63, Cadogan Gardens, London, and am at present a retired officer of the British Navy and am a member of the British Parliament.

2. During the recent war with Germany and her Allies I was Director of the British Naval Intelligence Service for the entire period from October 1914, until the Armistice in November 1919.

3. In that capacity it was my duty and the duty of my staff to intercept and decipher, as far as possible, cable and wireless messages and other communications sent between German officials in Berlin and German officials at Embassies and Legations and elsewhere in various parts of the world.

4. During the period from the commencement of the war in August 1914, until the Armistice in November 1919, we intercepted a large number of such cable and wireless messages and other communications. This was done by tapping the cables over which the messages were being sent, by picking up the wireless messages, and through the capture of written communications and documents in the post and in the possession of German officials and agents who were apprehended by our authorities.

5. Almost all of these communications, insofar as they were cablegrams and wireless messages, were sent in cipher, a number of different German ciphers being employed for that purpose. We were able to read substantially all of the cipher messages which were intercepted, partially by reason of the fact that we succeeded in capturing from German submarines and other sources some of the original German cipher books, and partially by reason of the fact that our cipher experts were able to decipher the German ciphers wherever, as was the case here, a large number of different messages in the same cipher were available for study and comparison, and in many instances the same message was sent through different channels in two or more different German ciphers.

6. The annexed file of cablegrams and wireless messages and despatches marked "Exhibit A," set forth on pages numbered consecutively from No. 2 to No. 267, are true and correct deciphered copies of cablegrams and wireless messages and other despatches which were intercepted and deciphered by the Intelligence Department of the British Admiralty through officers working under my immediate supervision. The work was considered of a most highly confidential character and I exercised the closest personal contact with all its details. It was my sole duty and responsibility and I watched and checked the work with the greatest care to make certain that we were recording the true import and meaning of the German communications. Many of the original German ciphers in which the communications were transmitted are still in our possession.

7. The numbers which appear in parentheses near the tops of some of the pages on which the messages are copied (exhibit A) are numbers of a particular system of German cipher, which numbers usually appeared in the body of the cables or wireless communications themselves, and were known to us as the "recognition groups." For example, No. "(89734)" at page 2, No. "(5950)" at pages 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 32, 37, 38, 39, 42, 45, 49, 53, 57, 58, 65, 68, 70, 72, No. "(13040)" at pages 7, 11, 13, 16, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 41, 43, 44, 50, 52, 54, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 71, No. "(0064)" at pages 40, 47, 80, 114, 122, No. "(6400)" at pages 48, 55, 56, 59, No. "(0640)" at page 60, No. "(9972)" at pages 61, 73, 95, No. "(5954)" at page 67, No. "V. B. 718" at page 75, No. "S. B." at page 92, No. "(98176)" at page 112, No. "(87962)" at page 113, and No. "(19177)" at page 172, all refer to different German cipher systems.

8. The word "Nauen," appearing at the tops of pages 69, 76, 130, 135, 217, 223, 244, 245, and 259, of exhibit A, refers to the German wireless station located at Nauen, Germany, from which many communications were despatched. Many of the other communications of which copies appear in exhibit A were also sent by wireless. The communications passing between Madrid and Berlin were, practically in all instances, by wireless. In

making copies of some of the messages, particularly during the latter part of the war, and in cases where the same cipher system was being employed in a series of messages, as, for example, a series of communications to Washington and the wireless communications between Madrid and Berlin, the "recognition groups" were sometimes omitted from our file copies. This accounts for the absence of cipher numbers at pages 24, 26, 52, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 98, 104, 105, 108, 110, 115, 121, 124, 126, 128, 131, to 171, inclusive, 173 to 216, inclusive, 218 to 222, inclusive, 224 to 243, inclusive, 246 to 256, inclusive, 260 to 266, inclusive. The "recognition groups," however, appear in the original German cipher messages in every instance. The wireless messages which passed between Madrid and Berlin were sent in almost every case in cipher No. "0064" or some combinations or modifications of that German cipher system.

9. The dates appearing at the tops of the pages of exhibit A represent the dates when the messages were intercepted, which were coincident with the dates of the sending of the messages, although in a number of instances it will be noted that the message which we picked up was one which was being relayed from one point to another. In such cases the date will be the date of the relay of the message, but not necessarily the date when it was sent from its original point of origin. These dates are indicated either by a complete statement of the month, day and year, or by figures such as "26.6.16.", which means the twenty-sixth day of June, 1916.

10. The sources and destinations of the cables are indicated by the words "From" and "To." For example, on page 2 the words "From Berlin" mean that the cable or wireless message was sent from Berlin. The signature indicates the name of the official or department which sent the cable, wireless message or communication, as such signature was actually contained in the message. The words "To Washington" on page 2 mean that the message was sent to the German Embassy in Washington. The communications between Berlin and America, insofar as we intercepted them, were limited almost exclusively to communications with the German Embassy.

11. The letters and figures appearing at the tops of some of the pages in exhibit A, such as "B. No. 24" at page 2, "W. 146" at page 3, have reference to a particular series of German numbers as they appeared in the contents of the communications. "B" means a series of communications from Berlin; "W" means a series of communications from Washington.

12. The message set forth at page 35 of exhibit A, numbered "B. No. 103," dated January 26, 1915, and signed "Representative of General Staff Zimmerman" was a message sent from Berlin to Washington by cable via the Swedish Foreign Office. It was intercepted by us en route to Washington. We considered this cable of particular importance at the time and we furnished a copy of it in the original cipher, together with the English translation of it, to the American State Department through the American Embassy in London.

13. This message, it will be observed, was sent in cipher No. "(13040)." The German cipher book covering this system of ciphering is in our possession, it having been captured by the British authorities in the luggage of a German consul named Wasmuss who was stationed at Shiraz while Wasmuss was engaged in an endeavor to cut a British oil pipe line. nc
X

14. These German communications were intercepted and deciphered by the British Admiralty through the same system which we employed in the interception and deciphering of the well-known "Zimmermann" cablegram of January 16, 1917, from Herr Zimmerman to Count von Bernstorff for transmission to the German Legation in Mexico, advising it of the plan to commence unrestricted warfare and proposing an alliance with Mexico in the event that the United States should enter the war, which cablegram we called to the attention of the American State Department, and which was published by the United States Government, and which Herr Zimmermann in a statement made in the German Reichstag admitted to be correct and authentic. Some further history of that cablegram will be found in the third volume of "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" by Burton J. Hendricks, at pages 331 to 364.

15. The German cables, wireless messages and other communications set forth in exhibit A are a comparatively small portion of a much larger collection of such messages which we intercepted during the war and which are still in our possession. Owing to the paramount importance of our having for the use of the British Navy the information contained in the messages regarding the movement of German ships it was imperative that we should avoid if possible, disclosing to the Germans the fact that we were reading their communications to this extent. Hence it was impossible for us at the time to make full use of all the information which was before us. The American Ambassador in London, Mr. Page, was in our constant confidence, however, regarding the German communications affecting America during the war, but it was necessary for all of us to exercise the greatest caution regarding the messages.

16. As head of the British Naval Intelligence I also had charge of the detention and examination of Captain Franz von Papen, the former Military Attache at Washington upon his arrival at Falmouth about the first of January, 1916. We took from Captain von Papen at that time a number of documents which were found upon his person and among his luggage, and which in our judgment were being carried in violation of his rights under the safe conduct which he had been given. Copies of some of these papers were published at the British Government Stationery Office and presented to both Houses of Parliament as a "British White Paper," Misc. No. 6,

1916, entitled: "Selections From Papers Found in the Possession of Captain von Papen, Late German Military Attache at Washington, Falmouth, January 2 and 3, 1916." A photostatic copy of that British White Paper is attached to the exhibits in this case as exhibit No. 46. I personally saw at the time and examined the originals of these documents and know of my own knowledge that the documents of which copies appear in that British White Paper, of which exhibit No. 46 is a photostatic copy, are true, correct and authentic, including the records from Captain Von Papen's check books.

17. I also personally interrogated Horst von der Goltz at the time of his arrest by the British authorities. Von der Goltz was examined by the officials at Scotland Yard under my direction and at my request. He made certain affidavits before those officials of which copies are set forth as exhibit 53 of the exhibits of this case. I have examined this exhibit 53 and it accords with my recollection of the contents of the original affidavits though I have not examined recently those affidavits which are presumably in the records at Scotland Yard unless they were sent to the American Government in Washington.

18. I also had charge of the arrest and imprisonment of Franz von Rintelen by the British authorities. He was apprehended by us at Ramsgate on the steamer Noordam in August 1915, while he was apparently trying to return to Germany from the United States. He was traveling on a Swiss passport under the name of "Gasche." We put him in Donnington Hall, which is the British prison for enemy officers and he remained there until shortly after the United States entered the war, when we sent him to America under guard at the request of the American authorities and turned him over to the United States Government.

(sd) W. R. HALL.

APPENDIX 2

GROUP-BY-GROUP DECODEMENT OF THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM AS SENT BY AMBASSADOR
BERNSTORFF TO GERMAN MINISTER VON ECKHARDT IN MEXICO ON JANUARY 19, 1917

130	Nr. 3	13851	stop	18507	hinzufuegen
13042		4458	gemeinsamen	52262	Japan
13401	Auswaertiges Amt	17149	Friedensschluss	1340	von
8501	telegraphiert	14471	stop	22049	sich
115	vom 16ten Januar	6706	reichliche	13339	aus
3528	colon	13850	finanzielle	11265	zu
416	Nr. 1	12224	Unterstuetzung	22295	sofortiger
17214	Ganz geheim	6929	und	10439	Beitretung
6491	Selbst	14991	Einverstaendnis	14814	einladen
11310	zu	7382	unsererseits	4178	infinitive with zu
18147	entziffern	15857	dass	6992	und
18222	stop	67893	Mexiko	8784	gleichzeitig
21560	Wir	14218	in	7632	zwischen
10247	beabsichtigen	36477	Texas	7357	uns
11518	am	5870	comma	6926	und
23677	ersten	17553	Neu	52262	Japan
13605	Februar	67893	Mexiko	11267	zu
3494	un	5870	comma	21100	vermitteln
14936	eingeschraenkten	5454	Ar	21272	stop
98092	U-boot	16102	iz	9346	Bitte
5905	krieg	15217	on	9559	den
11311	zu	22801	a	22464	Praesidenten
10392	beginnen	17138	frueher	15874	darauf
10371	stop	21001	verlorenes	18502	hinweisen
0302	Es wird	17388	Gebiet	18500	comma
21290	versucht	7446	zurueck	15857	dass
5161	werden	23638	erobert	2188	ruecksichtslose
39695	Vereinigte Staaten von	18222	stop	5376	Anwendung
	Amerika	6719	Regelung	7381	unserer
23571	trotzdem	14331	im	98092	U-boote
17504	neutral	15021	einzelnen	16127	jetzt
11269	zu	23845	Euer Hochwohlgeboren	13486	Aussicht
18276	erhalten	3156	ueberlassen	9350	bietet
18101	stop	23552	stop	9220	comma
0317	Fuer den Fall	22096	Sie	76036	England
0228	dass dies	21604	wollen	14219	in
17694	nicht	4797	Vorstehendes	5144	wenigen
4473	gelingen	9497	dem	2831	Monat
22284	sollte	22464	Praesidenten	17920	en
22200	stop	20855	streng	11347	zum
19452	schlagen	4377	geheim	17142	Frieden
21589	wir	23610	eroeffnen	11264	zu
67893	Mexiko	18140	comma	7667	zwingen
5569	auf	22260	sobald	7762	stop
13918	folgender	5905	Kriegs	15099	Empfang
8598	Grundlage	13347	ausbruch	9110	bestaetigen
12137	Buendnis	20420	mit	10482	stop
1333	vor	39689	Vereinigten Staaten	97556	Zimmermann
4725	stop	13732	fest	3569	stop
4458	Gemeinsame	20667	steht	3670	Schluss der Depesche
5905	Kriegs	6929	und		
17166	fuehrung	5275	Anregung		