

REF ID: A63379
Concluding, Mr. Chestell paid a tribute
to the chairman ^[Mr. F. W. King] for his services in the Admiralty.
The Vice-Chancellor, he said, made a contribu-
tion to the affairs of the Admiralty, and to the
fortunes of the State, which might almost be called
inestimable; if only from the fact that it had
never been recognized. During the war no one
did his bit more thoroughly in the whole of the
vast fielding in Whitchurch than Sir Alfred King.

I quote from the Edinburgh Morning Post of 2 March
1923:

See me

And about four months later Mr. Churchill,
one of those upon whom ~~the~~ Edinburgh University was conferring
~~a grant at a dinner to the honorary graduates~~
~~of granting~~ honorary degrees, said the following, as
reported in The Scotsman of 12 July 1923:

See me

Actually, the first lifting of the curtain of secrecy was very gentle, ^{it was only a veiled hint, in fact.} So far as I have been able to learn from careful research, it occurred in a lecture on 19 July 1921, only ~~for~~ 4 years after the events we are considering happened. The lecture was delivered on the occasion of the granting of an honorary degree to Sir Maurice Hankey, G.C.B., Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, by Edinburgh University on 19 July 1921. I quote from ^{his address on this occasion, as reported in} the Scotsman of Edinburgh, on that date:

There was one other name to which he wished to refer. Sir Maurice said, There were some in the war who at all the time were in the limelight; there were others who worked in obscurity. There was no name which deserved greater honour, and no man did greater service in that category to his country than their Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Sir Alfred Ficing.

This was just a little lifting of the veil. The next ^{lifting of the veil,} so far as I have been able to find, was in a similar part of a lecture about two years later, when Mr. Lloyd George, ^{on the occasion of his address as Lord Mayor} ~~on being honoured by Edin-~~burgh University, ~~on 2 March 1923, said~~ ~~was~~ ~~asked~~ ~~to~~ ~~make~~ ~~the~~ ~~following~~ ~~remarks~~ in responding to a toast ~~to~~ ~~him~~.

Admiral James, too, gives us much more specific and valuable information on this point:

see me

James pp 69-70

But now I can add some information of my own at this point. Last April I was in England and had an opportunity to visit an old friend, Cmdr. A. G. Denniston, who for many years was the head of the British COMINT organization and after the first two years of World War II was in charge of the diplomatic branches thereof in London. He and I had much to ~~talk~~^{reminisce} about regarding our experiences, especially ~~with~~^{with} those connected with World War II but with World War I, a subject I felt I could discuss without violating any security measures. (Maybe I was wrong!) At any rate, from him I've received a couple of letters since then and a little essay, all having to do with the Zimmermann Telegram. Let me read a bit from his letters:

The second piece of evidence is also in the form of a statement by Room 40, ~~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.~~

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~~I should say that the principal idea behind my talk is to account for this 6-weeks~~ ¹⁸ ~~delay.~~

I think it correct to say that history attributes our entry on 6 April 1917 into World War I as a belligerent on the side of the Allied Powers to the disclosure of the contents of the Zimmermann Telegram. Note that this statement is qualified by a date, viz, 6 April 1917. Perhaps that would have come about

without the Zimmermann Telegram, sooner or later and for one reason or another, most probably because of German ruthlessness in the conduct of submarine warfare.

But "later" might have been too late, because after unrestricted submarine warfare started there wasn't much time left to help Britain. And if we had waited until

England had been starved into capitulation, it is of course possible that we might

never have entered the war. Or, if we were later forced to fight because of

German arrogance, we might have had to face a powerful and jubilant Germany all

and agents, but this correspondence never reached official files. On the other hand, all official histories, and nearly all biographies and autobiographies, embracing the 1914-18 war, throw light on his remarkable contribution to the war effort of the Powers ranged against Germany.

"Most of these books are now a little dusty on the shelves. The generation which read Dr. Page's letters, Robert Lansing's Memoirs, Colonel House's papers, Von Papen's Memoirs, Sir Basil Thomson's diaries, so avidly is passing away, and it is the shelves displaying histories, biographies, and autobiographies of the period embracing the Second

~~in the Author's Foreword to Admiral James's book, we can see certain things~~

✓ ~~that illuminate the dark or dubious points in the story. But Admiral James,~~
who in his foreword says that "it was unnecessary for me to obtain official approval or support for publication"

"When, through the publication of a letter in the Press, it became known that I was collecting material for a biography of Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, I received letters from his old friends and colleagues expressing their pleasure that his great services were to be placed on record and their willingness to help with personal recollections of a man whose leadership they had so much admired and whose friendship they had so greatly valued.

"Nearly all my correspondents asked the same two questions. Had the Admiral left any papers useful to a biographer, and was it even now, after forty years, possible to give a full account of his achievements without having access to official papers still kept under lock and key? Hall did not, as was generally believed, destroy all the records of his stewardship as Director of Naval Intelligence. In 1932 he began work on his autobiography, with Ralph Straus as collaborator, but abandoned the project after five of the thirty-five chapters had been completed. I found some useful material in those five chapters, and it is evident from the chapter headings of the thirty unwritten chapters that his autobiography would have been a book of historical importance.

"It is unlikely that there are now any papers in the official archives which would throw any light on his activities. His was not the type of work that could be recorded in reports and letters of proceedings. He had a very large correspondence with Senior Officers afloat, Attaches,

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On September 8, 1917, the State Department published the text of three code messages sent by the German Charge 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."

We shall see presently that at the time of the Zimmermann Telegram episode

the British held back certain cryptologic details from the U.S. In the case of

the Swedish route did the British tell Bell the truth? Why tell him anything

about reading Swedish codes--if they could indeed read them?

address delivered on 6 November 1925 by Lord Balfour who, speaking at a luncheon given at Edinburgh University said, as reported in The Scotsman of 7 November 1925:

"The following afternoon Lord Balfour, as Chancellor, speaking at the Union luncheon in Mr. Baldwin's honour, said that three days previously he would not have ventured to touch upon a topic which, up to that time, had been an inviolable secret. But, in a magazine article, then published for the first time, there had appeared some additional letters of Mr. Walter Page (the American Ambassador in England during the most critical years of the Great War) which told how the Zimmermann telegrams had been discovered through the Intelligence Service of the British Admiralty.

"The machinery," Lord Balfour concluded, "by which that discovery and many others of vital importance to the British Government were made, was due to the admirable organisation of which Sir Alfred Ewing was the author."

Soon we shall learn the part Balfour played in our story of the Zimmermann Telegram. Since then other accounts have appeared, perhaps the best and certainly the latest one being that in Admiral James' book, The Eyes of the Navy, which I've already mentioned. But let's begin with the version given in the Hendrick

account not only because it's pretty accurate, having been based upon certain telegrams exchanged between our ambassador in London and the State Department in Washington, but also because it's quite dramatic.

"One day, in the latter part of February, 1917, Page was requested to call upon Mr. Balfour at the Foreign Office. Mr. Balfour quietly handed the Ambassador a sheet of paper--a document that, in its influence upon American policy, proved to be the most sensational that the European War had so far brought forth. This paper contained the message that will be immortal as the Zimmermann telegram. It disclosed the preparation Germany was making for war with the United States. It was a message from the German Foreign Office in Berlin to Von Eckhardt, the German Minister in the City of Mexico. As Germany had no satisfactory method of communicating with Mexico, this telegram had been sent to Count Bernstorff in Washington, with instructions to forward it by cable to the German Minister in the Mexican Republic. This latter diplomat was directed to enter at once into negotiations

with Venustiano Carranza, President of Mexico, and to make an alliance with Mexico for a joint German and Mexican invasion of the United States.

"In case this invasion succeeded, Mexico was to obtain Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona--territory which she had lost to the United States as a result of the war of 1846, and which was now to be treated as a kind of Mexican Alsace-Lorraine and be "redeemed." The German plan also contemplated an attempt to detach Japan from her European allies and persuade her to join the German-Mexican alliance. President Carranza, who, as subsequent events disclosed, looked not unfavorably upon this ambitious proposal, was the same Carranza whom President Wilson had supported for the Mexican Presidency among a multitude of revolutionary candidates. Carranza was President of Mexico, indeed, as the result of a succession of events that amounted almost to American intervention.

"Page at once transmitted this information to the State Department:

London
Dated 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 to the President

London
Dated February 24, 1917
Rec'd 8:30 P.M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
5747. February 24.
My 5746. February 24.

CONFIDENTIAL 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 19th. 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, one hundred and thirty, and the second is thirteen thousand and forty-two, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is ninety-seven thousand five hundred and fifty-six, which is Zimmermann's signature. I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the de-code into German and meanwhile I give you the English translation as follows:

"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 (that is, President Carranza of Mexico) 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.

"ZIMMERMANN."

"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.

"The following paragraph is strictly confidential:

"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 representative in Mexico, and also for the delay from January 19th 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"

veil of secrecy was lifted a bit by a story in the November issue of a now defunct American magazine called World's Work in which was published the final installment of a book by Burton J. Hendrick entitled The Life and Letters of Walter H.

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me read a bit from his letters: