

ment in respect to the unwarranted use of the American flag for the protection of British ships.

BRYAN

File No. 811.0151/33

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

[Telegram]

WASHINGTON, *February 10, 1915.*

1105. The Department has been advised of the declaration of the German Admiralty on February fourth, indicating that the British Government had on January 31 explicitly authorized the use of neutral flags on British merchant vessels presumably for the purpose of avoiding recognition by German naval forces. The Department's attention has also been directed to reports in the press that the captain of the *Lusitania*, acting upon orders or information received from the British authorities, raised the American flag as his vessel approached the British coasts, in order to escape anticipated attacks by German submarines. To-day's press reports also contain an alleged official statement of the Foreign Office defending the use of the flag of a neutral country by a belligerent vessel in order to escape capture or attack by an enemy.

Assuming that the foregoing reports are true, the Government of the United States, reserving for future consideration the legality and propriety of the deceptive use of the flag of a neutral power in any case for the purpose of avoiding capture, desires very respectfully to point out to His Britannic Majesty's Government the serious consequences which may result to American vessels and American citizens if this practice is continued.

The occasional use of the flag of a neutral or an enemy under the stress of immediate pursuit and to deceive an approaching enemy, which appears by the press reports to be represented as the precedent and justification used to support this action, seems to this Government a very different thing from an explicit sanction by a belligerent government for its merchant ships generally to fly the flag of a neutral power within certain portions of the high seas which are presumed to be frequented with hostile warships. The formal declaration of such a policy of general misuse of a neutral's flag jeopardizes the vessels of the neutral visiting those waters in a peculiar degree by raising the presumption that they are of belligerent nationality regardless of the flag which they may carry.

In view of the announced purpose of the German Admiralty to engage in active naval operations in certain delimited sea areas adjacent to the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland, the Government of the United States would view with anxious solicitude any general use of the flag of the United States by British vessels traversing those waters. A policy such as the one which His Majesty's Government is said to intend to adopt, would, if the declaration of the German Admiralty is put in force, it seems clear, afford no protection to British vessels, while it would be a serious and constant menace to the lives and vessels of American citizens.

The Government of the United States, therefore, trusts that His Majesty's Government will do all in their power to restrain vessels

of British nationality from the deceptive use of the flag of the United States in the sea area defined in the German declaration, since such practice would greatly endanger the vessels of a friendly power navigating those waters and would even seem to impose upon the Government of Great Britain a measure of responsibility for the loss of American lives and vessels in case of an attack by a German naval force.

Please present a note to Sir Edward Grey in the sense of the foregoing and impress him with the grave concern which this Government feels in the circumstances in regard to the safety of American vessels and lives in the war zone declared by the German Admiralty.

You may add that this Government is making earnest representations to the German Government in regard to the danger to American vessels and citizens if the declaration of the German Admiralty is put into effect.

BRYAN

File No. 811.0151/41

*The Ambassador in Germany (Gerard) to the Secretary of State*

[Telegram]

BERLIN, February 10, 1915.

[Received February 11, 7.40 p. m.]

1561. The hate campaign here against America has assumed grave proportions. People much excited by published report that *Lusitania* by order of British Admiralty hoisted American flag in Irish Channel and so entered Liverpool. Hope you can authorize me to deny this. If report true and no action is taken by American Government, bitter feeling here will be immeasurably increased.

GERARD

File No. 763.72/1449

*The Minister in Norway (Schmedeman) to the Secretary of State*

[Telegram]

CHRISTIANIA, February 12, 1915.

[Received 4.05 p. m.]

10. The Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that the three Scandinavian countries will send joint note to the German Government protesting against the order of German declaration that seas surrounding United Kingdom and English Channel are military zone and will probably send a note to the English Government protesting against the action of English vessels flying the flag of neutral countries.

SCHMEDEMAN

File No. 811.0151/42

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

[Telegram]

LONDON, February 12, 1915.

[Received 10.25 p. m.]

1631. Your telegram 1106 [1105], February 10, taken up with Sir Edward Grey and a memorandum embodying its request left with