

# GERMAN PLOT TO CRIPPLE

## Interned Liners in United States Ports.

### THE PLANS SUGGESTED

SHOULD A DIPLOMATIC BREAK  
TAKE PLACE.

Secret Conference in New York To  
Discuss Methods For Putting Teu-  
tonic Ships Out of Business.

Providence, R.I., May 3.—The  
Journal says:

If diplomatic relations between  
the United States and Germany are  
severed in the near future the repre-  
sentatives of the German and Aus-  
tro-Hungarian Governments in this  
country are determined that neither  
the United States nor the Allies shall  
benefit in the slightest degree by the  
accident of fortune that has kept  
many of the finest liners of the  
Hamburg-American Line, the North  
German Lloyd and the Austro-Amer-  
icana Steamship Company tied up in  
American ports.

There is a plot on foot which, if  
not frustrated by extraordinary vigi-  
lance of the American authorities,  
will result in the simultaneous de-  
struction of certain portions of the  
engine room machinery of these  
ships, which will make it impossible  
to put them into commission without  
many months of hard work.

Last Wednesday afternoon there  
was a secret conference at the Ger-  
mania Club on Central Park South,  
New York, at which there were pres-  
ent representatives of the German  
Consul General's office in New York  
and of the German Embassy, and in  
addition at least seven captains of  
German and Austrian liners which  
are now tied up in the Hudson river.  
The purpose of this conference was  
to decide on the best method of put-  
ting all the self-interned ships own-  
ed by the Teutonic allies' steamship  
corporations out of business imme-  
diately after the giving out of an or-  
der from the various German and  
Austrian consulates in every port in  
the United States where such ships  
are being held.

The discussion was a very frank  
one, and the Journal's information  
comes from a person who was pres-  
ent during most of the period of  
this conference. Every person pres-  
ent agreed that a break was immi-  
nent, and they all appeared to be  
equally positive that a rupture of  
friendly relations would mean war  
within a very short time afterward.  
The captain of one of the largest of  
the German ships in New York har-  
bor suggested that the best and  
most practical method of making it  
certain that the vessels would never

fall into the hands of the United States or the Allies would be to prepare small bombs which could be fired by electrical contact at any given moment, and so placed as to destroy essential parts of the machinery. Another captain disagreed with this suggestion because, as he said, he felt anything in the nature of an explosion should be avoided, first, because it would be very hard to simulate a natural explosion in such a way, and, second, because it might be just as well not to run the risk of calling attention to what had been done until concealment was no longer possible.

This man declared that the use of a number of bags of coarse carborundum sand and a few turns of certain parts of the machinery in the engine rooms, together with the dropping overboard of some portions of this machinery, would be just as effective and make the plot far less liable to discovery until such time as the ships were actually about to be taken over and an attempt made to put them into service.

One of the German consular officials suggested that the better plan might be to attempt a concerted dash to the open ocean from all Atlantic ports after first placing on board some fairly heavy armament, which with proper use might create tremendous consternation in transatlantic traffic even if only a small number of the boats got by the patrol.

Three or four of the officers of the various ships at once declared that this scheme was impracticable, and would only meet with disaster if carried out. One of the captains went so far as to say that the physical condition of the ships was such that it would be utterly impossible to make any speed such as raiders would require in order to be effective, and that before the ships could be brought to the proper condition for such purpose they would have to be completely overhauled, both internally and externally. Most of the other captains agreed with this view and said that the ships were practically making steam now only by having their engines turned over by hand; and that disuse and the impossibility of proper care under present conditions were disastrous.

On the *Bulow*, with a tonnage of 8,965 tons, all the fire bars in the after group of boilers were thrown overboard. The slide valves were taken out of the main engine and the starting engines were taken away bodily. The flanges of the cylinders were destroyed.

On the other ships the destruction was varied and thorough. The document read at the conference showed that the starting gear of the engines had been smashed, pistons of cylinders removed, thrust blocks of main engines abstracted, connecting pieces uniting main steam pipes from boilers to main engines broken off, steering engines taken down, rods of bilge and feed pumps smashed with sledge hammers, main stop valve chests smashed, steam passages of auxiliary starting valves broken, eccentric sheaves wrecked, cross-heads of fan engines broken, cross-heads of valve gears thrown overboard, air pumps smashed, and hundreds of feet of connection piping of

the main stop valves twisted into knots.

The conference adjourned after about one and one-half hours' discussion, to meet again later on, but before breaking up it was decided unanimously that some scheme should be devised which would absolutely destroy the usefulness of all the Teutonic vessels in American ports for a long time to come, provided the United States and Germany cease to maintain friendly relations.