

MOMENTOUS PLANS TO GIVE RUSSIA'S TRADE TO U. S.

Practical Monopoly Formerly Enjoyed by Germany Likely to Be Offered to America After the War

Great things concerning American trade in Russia are in the air, according to Michel Botschek, the new commercial attache of Russia in Paris, who was recently interviewed by the writer of the following article.

The interest which American industry has in our markets permits of the hope that in addition to the friendly political relations now existing between the two countries an economic rapprochement may be brought about which would be of the greatest benefit to both nations.

In any case the Russian Government will put forth all its efforts to this end.

I HAVE not been told officially that a Baltic port of Russia is to be made a new bonded warehouse or free harbor district, copied after Hamburg and intended to supersede Hamburg, to give Germany's before the war quasi-monopoly of Russian trade to others.

I have not been told officially that Russia plans to make Odessa such another free harbor district, where Americans can leave their goods indefinitely, and even set up factories, all in bond, free from formalities, to finish off, put together, &c., a kind of no man's land on the threshold of big business.

I have not been told officially that Constantinople is to be the Golden Gate of east and west, where American firms will be invited to set up their receiving and directing offices and enjoy notable facilities for a yet wester territory.

Such things are not announced officially in the midst of war, but those who prepare to act on them will have reason to thank their foresight. Inquiries should be made by letter. Here are the addresses. If the first replies are not complete, write again, say, in two months. Vast new development of trade is shaping and the Russian door has this advantage—they offer America a golden key.

The first address is Constantinople, Mednikovsky, commercial attache of Russia in the United States, care of the Russian Consulate, New York.

The second address is the Russian East Asiatic Company, 29 Rue Moraskina, Petrograd. It is the powerful transport line favored by the Russian Government, which only a year before the war established a direct steamship service between New York and Baltic ports. After the war this service will be resumed and increased, and furthermore a direct Odessa-New York line will be inaugurated via Constantinople. The third address is A. S. Postnikoff,

1133 and 1135 Rookery Building, Chicago. Mr. Postnikoff is an American of Russian antecedents who long represented the International Harvester Company in Russia. At the same address you get in touch with X. B. Kalamatianno, agent of the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company in Russia before the war.

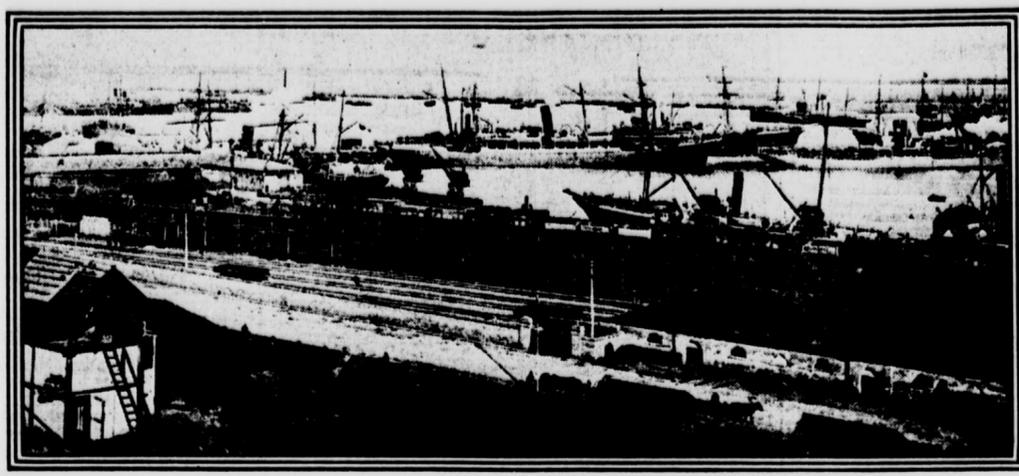
It might also be well to write to the Chicago Association of Commerce and learn the names of several Chicago banks which are studying the question of Russian credits. In New York a powerful syndicate headed by the Guaranty Trust Company is already in relation with six of Russia's strongest banks, and the National City Bank, after undertaking a Russian loan, has made connections reaching out into the great development.

If from Paris I can tell you these things of America, you may imagine the stir which the matter is making. Russia is determined to throw off permanently the quasi-monopoly of supplying her people with all kinds of merchandise which Germany enjoyed before the war—and give it to America.

You ask, why America? What about her allies, France, England and Italy? The answer is that we have the goods, and the sun to fill is greater than great Russia, where German profits were simply enormous. We do not realize the markets they monopolized. In Russia it was partly due to favorable tariff rates which Germany extorted after the Russo-Japanese war and which will never be renewed. Much, however, was due to Germany's way of laying hands on other people's business.

Germany had laid hands on even the French trade with Russia, says Michel Botschek. "There was no line of steamships from northern France to the Baltic, so French merchandise was shipped to Russia via Hamburg."

"Up to a year before the war there was no line from New York to the Baltic, so American merchandise was shipped to Russia via Hamburg. It was a flattering invitation which we made to the United States when the three great lines between New York and the Baltic. They had not been running a year when Germany declared war on us."



Section of the port of Odessa, a new door in Russia to American goods.

"Otherwise your American friend was right about Hamburg. The whole thing was there. We shall obviate all temptation to ship via German free ports."

The friend mentioned is an American manufacturer of photographic supplies, who eight years ago began a successful campaign in Germany, Russia and the Balkans. When the war broke out he was at Czernowitz, en route for Rumania, selling big bills of American goods—half of which were made in Germany. It came to him after eight years of financial success, so he ruefully admits that Germans made use of him.

To ship his goods to Russia this American found only the route via Hamburg, with its wonderful bonded warehouse or free harbor district. At first he was delighted. "Hunting an office and stock room in Hamburg," he told us, "I could be in my American goods, manufactured or half manufactured, without duties or formalities, and I found in the free harbor zone of the Hamburg suburbs a cheap factory building for finishing up."

This procured cheaper entrance of his goods for sale in Germany, while all that he shipped in bond from Hamburg to Russia paid nothing but the Russian duties. The Hamburg worthies even showed him how to profit by German prestige by employing German customs brokers in Russia. They took to him wonderfully.

"Anything American seemed to find favor with German merchants, manufacturers and consumers," he says. "My success was great. They gave my products a preference, but there begins the but) but Germany is great at imitating. She floods her markets with these imitations, which answer nearly every requirement, but at greatly reduced prices. Under these circumstances I saw wherein it would be profitable to devote more attention to other European markets—Scandinavia, Italy, Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia."

In the end we find him led logically to set up an American factory in Frankfurt, employing 1,000 hands—by the American exporter to Europe! He continued to export from New York via Hamburg. The war found him in this situation. Now he is anxious to be among the first to export directly from New York to Russia and beyond.

This American of course knows the trade intimately, and he is willing, under the circumstances, to talk freely. "Any real American product—I may say anything that bears the name American—will sell in all these countries, if properly represented," he says. "The Germans covered the market by personal call of their representatives. In addition they set up stock rooms and offices in the largest cities."

"Their travelers were affable, but aggressive, and to conclude a transaction offered what might seem a marvellous price. I was not a month, nine months and twelve months for payment, but all Russian merchants give accepted bills of exchange, readily discounted by Russian banks, on which the rate of 6 per cent interest prevails. I pay these notes at maturity, and Drexel and Bradstreet give reliable information from Riga to Smyrna. The merchants give long credit and feel they have a right to demand it."

The curious thing is that the German salesman who procured the business was constant in his visits. Not a tenth of them earned about 10,000 marks a year. Most received a guaranteed salary and a small commission.

He told of the representative of an Offenbach-am-Rhein leather firm who tried to close a contract involving 100,000 rubles in Russia. He entertained the Russian customers at his hotel for forty-eight hours, and the bill of expenses was 900 rubles, practically 1 per cent of the amount of business involved. He got the contract, but he might have failed to realize the beauty of it was that the profits justified the risk. It was that "American goods had little to fear from such practices, even in the day of Germany's power in Russia. The proof is that they had to undersell us."

"An American shoe firm, excellently organized, has done a huge trade. The German firm, being ever on the alert, adopted not only the American last but also American names. It appealed to Russian buyers, because most of them were led to believe them really of American origin, while—a pleasing detail—they were cheaper."

The American shoe retails for 13 rubles, easily realized by shopkeepers. The German shoe could be retailed as low as 8, 9 or 10 rubles. At that moment, some three years ago, another American firm opened a number of branch retail shops. Of course their shoes were dearer, from 13 rubles up. It might seem that the German cut prices would have hurt our sale. It was not so. German quality and workmanship became apparent to the wearer after his first experience; so, in buying a second pair, the better class consumer returned to us."

Americans who want this great trade must organize to get it, or at least join a permanent selling corporation never a hindrance and the coming free harbors, imitated from Hamburg, will afford great facilities for Americans—exporting, as they do, from a great distance. In them large stocks of goods can be carried, free of duty, ready to fill orders either for Russia or adjoining territory.

My American suggests the following campaign as inexpensive:

1. To establish a centre, in a free port by preference, consisting of an inexpensive office and moderate stock, ready to fill orders either for Russia or adjoining territory.

2. To establish a selling staff. Six men would be more than ample; but they must be Americans. One might send Russian Americans for Russia proper, Scandinavian Americans for Scandinavia, &c. But if there is any doubt of their Americanism, stick to plain Americans, though ignorant of the languages. They can always find the useful commission agent to accompany them, not only an interpreter, but an agent to secure money deposited in an American bank in advance; but it won't do for the grand trade, any more than our old American tendency to insist on our own methods of packing and shipping the merchandise itself. These are details which count. If the Germans observed them, we can."

As a mitigation, he points out that all goods shipped to Russian merchants are habitually delivered "unfranko," freight and duty paid by the purchaser. As to the tariff, it was

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"True success can be obtained only by establishing branch houses, with men in charge to stay and get the bulk of the business," says my American. "The agent who has a number of other things to sell or even the American manufacturer's own representative sent out on a hasty trip to pick up trade will only skim the ground."

"For war orders, I admit that we may be able to sit at ease and extort money deposited in an American bank in advance; but it won't do for the grand trade, any more than our old American tendency to insist on our own methods of packing and shipping the merchandise itself. These are details which count. If the Germans observed them, we can."

Free Ports on the Baltic and the Black Sea and Direct Steamships Part of Huge Commercial Entente

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HIS MOST THRILLING EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME AT SEA

THE most thrilling experience I ever had during my whole life at sea," said Capt. Urquhart, "happened late in November, 1873, when my ship, the Trimountain, bound from New York to Bristol, England, ran into a dense fog off the banks of Newfoundland."

The captain sat in his Brooklyn home recalling the day when the Trimountain, bound from New York to Bristol, England, ran into a dense fog off the banks of Newfoundland.

"At about 10 o'clock that night," he continued, "the fog cleared and the stars were shining brightly. A little later I took observations by the polar star, computed my latitude, found my longitude by dead reckoning and gave the course, east by south, to the officer on deck and then went below to lie down on a lounge, a compass being over my head. I seldom looked at the general chart, for I had crossed the Atlantic so many times that I knew the way from New York to Bristol as well as I knew the way from the Battery to Harlem."

"Nevertheless I did not sleep soundly and about 1 o'clock in the morning went on deck again. After a brief talk with the chief officer I went back to the lounge and tried again to sleep, but could not. Once more I glanced at the chart and while I was doing so the ship gave a tremendous lurch."

"My God!" I exclaimed, "she's struck a rock!"

"I bounded on deck, only to find that the lurch was caused by a sea larger than the other side had been tumbling into. Much relieved, I told the chief officer to change the course, after which I went back to the lounge for the third time and slept like a child until daylight, when the second officer called me and said there was a disabled sailing ship four points on the starboard bow. I had my coat and my clothes of course that night and was on deck in three jumps. I ordered the yards braced up and kept the Trimountain close to the wind in order to reach the disabled vessel."

"As we drew nearer I saw she was flying the Green flag, distress, union down. Her bowsprit was gone, her bow stove in and above decks everything was in disorder and confusion."

"Evidently there had been a collision; but where was the other ship this one had crashed into? Now I was within hailing distance and I saw she was a large iron ship, also that a large number of people were on board. In answer to my question her captain said that he had run down an ocean steamer, that more than 200 had gone down and could I take fifty passengers?"

"Yes," I replied, "and a hundred if you have them."

"At once I gave to, under her bow, and in three hours eighty-five of his passengers and crew were transferred to my ship. A number had been injured, but the women were soled aboard, while the injured men made their way up the side on a ladder."

"Quickly I learned the brief story of disaster. This sailing vessel, with crew in lower New York, was the Loch Earn, built in a port in Scotland and bound from London for New York. At 1 o'clock that morning she had crashed into a transatlantic mail packet, the Ville du Havre, bound from New York to Havre. She had struck the steamer amidships, knocking two compartments into one, and the French vessel sank within ten minutes."

The Scotch ship, being in ballast and having a collision bulkhead, managed to survive the shock, and her captain instantly had set about the work of rescue. Many were struggling in the water that dark morning, he told me, but he had his boats overboard and managed to pick up those clinging to an overturned boat from the Ville du Havre, as well as others desperately trying to keep afloat with life buoys, spars and debris from the French ship."

"My own work did not end with the transfer of eighty-five survivors to the Trimountain," Capt. Urquhart continued, "and for most of the day I sailed around the melancholy scene with the distressed passengers looking for other survivors, but without much hope. Rain was falling, clouds were low and heavy and gulls were flying low, seeming to conduct a requiem mass over the bodies of 226 departed souls who had gone down in the sea."

Aged Captain of Clipper Ships Tells of the Loss of the French Steamer Ville du Havre, Which Went Down With 226 Lives

ing which represents his ship, the Trimountain, with a Loch Earn, and in the middle background the Loch Earn with her bowsprit gone. Not a life, excepting for sky and sea. "That is a true of the Ville du Havre is to be seen."

"As soon as I could find a competent artist in Liverpool," the captain went on, "I engaged him to make a painting of this experience of mine. I described to him every possible detail, and this picture, as you see it, is a faithful reproduction of what occurred after daylight broke."

"Later on, partly through investigations by Mr. Wells, who afterward wrote a book about the disaster, and partly from rescued passengers, I learned that the night of the collision was a bright starlight night and that a strong breeze was blowing. Lights were distinctly seen from both ships. The captains were below, but reached their decks just as the ships struck."

"The Ville du Havre's officer on deck went down still standing on the bridge and was never heard from again. By his side was the captain, but, fortunately, was saved. Some one had blundered; a few spokes of the wheel, moved in the right direction at the right moment, would have prevented the collision. Both captains were below when the ships' lights were reported and they were exacerbated from blame in their respective courts."

Among the most prized possessions in Capt. Urquhart's home is a gold medal struck to commemorate his work of rescue and presented to him by the Government of France. Equally prized is a large silver plate, beautifully engraved and chased, which was presented to him by the British Government. Not merely did he take aboard his ship the eighty-five survivors, but he also cared for many of them who were mangled and bruised."

"Capt. Urquhart is now 'sprawling near the caulkers," as he expresses it, and he went to sea when a lad for several reasons. His father was a sea captain, and moreover he was born and brought up in Essex, a village near the mouth of the Connecticut river, which from the late '40s to the late '50s seems to have been the birthplace of sailors and the building place of ships. Not long ago Capt. Urquhart published privately a little monograph recording some of the earlier days of the American merchant marine."

"Boys of Essex, from 15 to 16," he says, "could always be found to ship for a voyage in the days of my youth, and being around the vessels under construction in the shipyard many of them learned to splice, make knots, climb masts, and so on, when boys of the same age living inland were learning how to play games. Those of us who could climb the highest and who habitually were the most perfumed with tar were the favorites with the pretty girls for the Essex was famous. Consequently there was more than one reason why the lads should become full decked sailors."

From 1845 to about 1863 the shipping industry grew, and ships as large as 1,400 tons register were launched at Essex, and rigid complete for the north Atlantic trade, carrying passengers as well as freight to and from Europe. The shipping industry during this time had grown all over the seacoast, from Maryland and the craft ranged from 1,000 to 2,000 tons, until we had a tonnage fleet which exceeded that of every other nation, not excepting England."

"The American flag could then be seen on the third ship afloat in every navigable water. The ships were rounded and offered by native Americans who were men of intelligence, courage and seamanship. We should have continued to reign supreme upon the sea up to the present time, and probably would have done so had it not been for many foolish laws that have existed in this country for years, notably one that denied us the privilege other nations enjoyed, of buying a ship where we pleased."

"We began to lose our ships during the civil war, when many of them were placed under a foreign flag to protect them from the ravages of privateers. And this transfer of registry to a foreign flag having once taken place the ships, according to our laws, could never be bought back."

"Following this, England got the start in building iron ships, and could build them much cheaper than we could. The consequence was that when steam took the place of sails, we ranked in third or fourth place, so far as the iron-hulled marine was concerned. The law I refer to did not affect us disadvantageously when wood was the material used for shipbuilding, and if it had been repealed when iron ships came to be used, no doubt we would have retained our ships in the cheapest market, like other nations, and would have remained our own president."

Just now when the need of an American merchant marine is a topic of general discussion, and one to which President Wilson's Administration is devoting much attention, Capt. Urquhart's personal recollections of the trade days gone by are particularly timely. The Black Ball line of sailing packets, organized in 1747, was the oldest line of the Liverpool trade. Capt. Charles H. Marshall, one of the oldest captains at sea, became a managing owner in 1847. He had some thirty years later, and in 1865 the business was continued by his son, Charles H. Marshall, Jr., until the early '80s, when he and his associates sold their ships and retired; this because steam had mastered the wind and controlled the ocean carrying trade."

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"It has been admitted by English ship owners that in modelling, rigging and building ships we had no equal, and I need not tell any reader of American history that the Yankees have always been a success at sea both in the navy and in the merchant marine. But in my opinion, whatever the lawmakers may do now, it is too late to overtake the great foreign fleet which is so far in the lead."

"To realize the way this country handicapped itself, put itself at disadvantage with every other maritime nation, it is only necessary to recall the words once spoken by C. H. Marshall, to whom I have referred. He said: 'The only two things prohibited an entrance into the country are free ships and assent literature.' The latter, being easily smuggled, has no doubt found an entrance free."

In the '60s, Capt. Urquhart says, there were a dozen or more American lines of sailing ships trading to Liverpool, London, Havre and Antwerp, with from eight to twelve ships in each line, ranging in tonnage from 1,000 to 2,000. These ships were not, as generally supposed, of exactly a clipper type, and their best sailing was about eleven knots. The real clipper ships traded more to California and the East, and their best sailing was about fifteen knots."

"It was something of a problem to handle sailors in those days, and much more of a problem to handle emigrants going to the United States, especially in winter months."

"They were the rakings and sermons of all Europe," says Capt. Urquhart, "and when the Yankees went to war we were made to suffer and superiority in equipment and superiority in

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In the '60s, Capt. Urquhart says, there were a dozen or more American lines of sailing ships trading to Liverpool, London, Havre and Antwerp, with from eight to twelve ships in each line, ranging in tonnage from 1,000 to 2,000. These ships were not, as generally supposed, of exactly a clipper type, and their best sailing was about eleven knots. The real clipper ships traded more to California and the East, and their best sailing was about fifteen knots."

"It was something of a problem to handle sailors in those days, and much more of a problem to handle emigrants going to the United States, especially in winter months."

"They were the rakings and sermons of all Europe," says Capt. Urquhart, "and when the Yankees went to war we were made to suffer and superiority in equipment and superiority in

management we would have been able to compete with foreign nations and hold a fair share of the carrying trade of the world."

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