

*February 12, 1917.*—Lincoln's birthday.

Von der Lancken asked me to come to Political Department at five. Arrived there, with Villalobar, to find Van Vollenhoven, von der Lancken, Reith, Brohn—evidently a session on revictualing. Von der Lancken had Reith read, as usual; he read an outline of the German reply to the English, or Allied, demand as to the route to be taken by C.R.B. ships. The English have conceded the point of compelling the ships to touch, as heretofore, at English ports, but make other demands, that involve passing through the danger zone. These representations are made by Polo at Berlin, and Villalobar was instructed to reply to him. In general it is satisfactory to the C.R.B.

After that conference, von der Lancken explained the plan whereby the C.R.B. delegates will be gradually replaced by other nationalities, and said that the Swiss Government had offered to furnish delegates and that the German Government had accepted. At this Villalobar flared up and said that the Swiss Government and the German Government had nothing to say, that the Ministers were the ones to decide. A great uproar for a moment.

Afterwards von der Lancken asked me to the dining-room, and said: "And now, your position?" He said that he must know my position at once, in order to telegraph his Government. I told him that I could not decide immediately, that I should have an answer for him by tomorrow. We talked at length—at six I got away for tea.

Van Vollenhoven is so anxious to get his hands on the British interests that he can't wait. He asked von der Lancken in my presence if he had any news as to British interests.