

## Current Affairs

### The Pope's Proposal and Wilson's Reply

The Pope's peace proposal and President Wilson's reply thereto each present a very clever move in the peace-game now being played as a part of the war-game. As time goes on it becomes increasingly apparent that this war is to be won by civil instead of military strategy. Neither side expects to overwhelm the other by a short and decisive military thrust. The time for that is long since past. The question of winning the war has settled down to a question of endurance. But in a war of endurance the people, as a whole, have considerably more to say than in an old-fashioned military campaign. In a war of endurance it is up to the people to say how long they will endure. The strategy of such a war, therefore, consists in making your own people willing to endure as long as possible, and those of your opponent as little as possible. That side which is sure of the endurance of its own people is sure to win the war. It is the German Government's reliance on the German people's willingness to endure that lies at the foundation of its "Siegesszuversicht." This was well illustrated the other day when the newspapers reported that Germany's scientists have figured out that if Germany can continue the war for two years longer she is sure to win. The argument ran as follows: These scientists have figured out that two years more of war will reduce the entire world to the same shortage of food as now exists in Germany. Then Germany's success will be assured, *"because the countries at war with her will not endure the hardships which the Germans are willing to undergo."*

But even the German Government is not so sure of the willingness of the German people to undergo hardships indefinitely. Hence the "peace" policy of the German Government—the desire to appear willing to conclude peace on "reasonable" terms, thereby throwing the blame for the continuation of the war on the other side. This has the double advantage of increasing the will-to-endure of the German peo-

ple and of weakening this will in the masses of the people in the Allied countries.

But such a policy requires great diplomatic skill. For it is no easy matter to appear to be reasonable without actually committing one's self to being reasonable—and the German Government has no mind to forego "the due reward of sacrifices made" that is the fruits of successful warfare. The German Government's real terms of peace were announced long ago by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. The terms of peace, said the Chancellor in a memorable statement, *will depend on the state of the war-map.* The German Government does not intend to deprive itself of any benefit which the war-map may now or hereafter show in its favor by laying down terms of peace in advance.

Hence, Germany's first direct peace-offer, couched in language which sounded more or less "reasonable," but which bound it to nothing definite. The "moral effect" of this "peace-advance" was sufficient to keep the German people "enduring" for a while. But it could not last forever, particularly with those "traitorous" minority-Socialists doing all in their power to bring the sham of the manoeuvre to the attention of the German people. Some new way had, therefore, to be found—a way of saying something that seemed definite and yet was not binding. And the way *was* found: it consisted in having somebody do the saying under an appearance of authority which could yet be disavowed when necessity arose. The first instrument used for the purpose were the "majority"-Socialists under the leadership of Scheidemann. Accordingly, Scheidemann and his associates went to Stockholm with a peace-program which was reasonable enough for the German Government as an "asking-price." It was known that Scheidemann would not do anything without sanction from his government. The German Government, therefore, got the credit for these peace-terms without actually committing itself to anything. The stupidity of its opponents in not permitting any delegates from their countries to go to Stockholm made