

Commerce raiders continued from page 9
 same way," he announced.

His executive officer, Lt. Warneke, had less kind words for the reporters. Warneke had learned through intercepted wireless messages why *Odenwald* failed to show up in Puerto Rico. American authorities had held up *Odenwald* in Puerto Rico for no particular reason. "It was the worse thing America could have done. You simply held that ship up in Puerto Rico until the British ships could come and try to catch us," he angrily remarked.

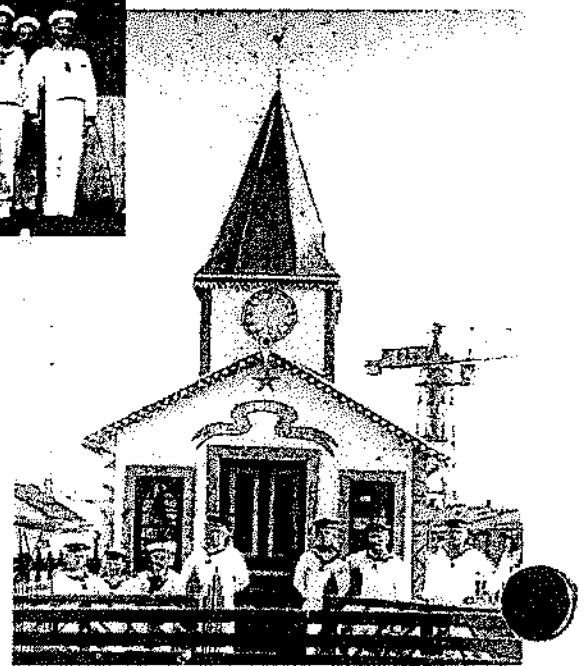
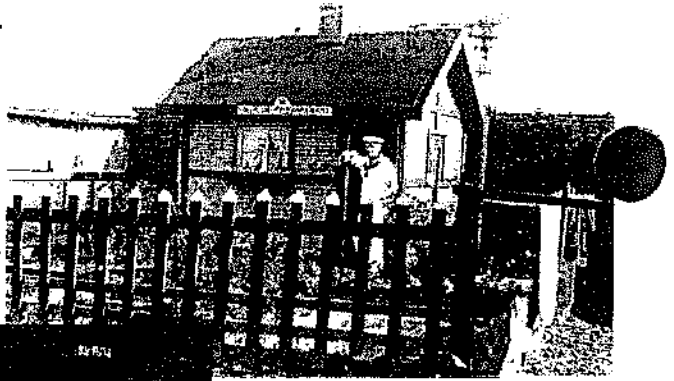
Unknown to him at the time, a second supply ship, the German steamer *Macedonia*, was within visual range of *Wilhelm*, but was captured by two British cruisers. The sight of the two cruisers caused *Wilhelm* to flee the scene before the identity of the steamer could be determined.

U.S. authorities geared up again for a possible showdown. In Washington, the State Department asked the German ambassador for *Wilhelm's* intentions. American diplomats informed both the ambassador and Capt. Thierfelder that the Germans had 24-hours to leave unless repairs were needed. The ambassador dispatched his naval attaché to Newport News to consult with Thierfelder. Even though 110 of his sailors suffered from beri-beri, the ship's boilers were lined with lead, and the Allied cruisers had returned, Thierfelder continued to insist that his ship would sail again.

In his second news conference, Thierfelder slammed his fist on his desk and announced "We must get out! The fact that ships might

handed down a series of directives and guidelines on what Naval and Customs officers should do when a belligerent ship arrived in an American port.

The guidelines led to a series of official inspections of *Wilhelm*, led by Atlantic Fleet



Greetings from "Eitel Wilhelm," VA. With little else to do, the crews of the two German cruisers received scrap materials from the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and built their own village. (Post cards courtesy of Harrell Forrest)

"We must get out! The fact that ships might sink us, that has no fear for us! Who am I? I am as nothing, nil. These men are nil [unless] we can do anything to help our country!"-Kronprinz Wilhelm's commanding officer Captain-Lieutenant Paul Thierfelder

sink us, that has no fear for us! Who am I? I am as nothing, nil. These men are nil [unless] we can do anything to help our country!" He claimed that his ship, however, would need at least three weeks of repairs.

While *Wilhelm's* arrival was not exactly a pleasant situation, it was much easier for American authorities to handle than when *Friedrich* arrived. Keeping the Allied cruiser force and the Germans apart was not a problem as the entire Atlantic Fleet was in the area. Additionally, since the *Friedrich* crisis, Secretary Daniels and his counterparts at the Treasury and State Departments had

commander Adm. Beatty, to determine if Capt. Thierfelder's repair claims were true. Beatty's inspection team found several inches of water in *Wilhelm's* hold and evidence that at least one British shell from the Bermuda cruiser battle had struck *Wilhelm's* port side. After looking at *Wilhelm's* boiler tubes, they confirmed Thierfelder's claims and endorsed his timetable of three weeks. The report cleared the way for Newport News Shipbuilding to take the ship into their largest dry-dock for repairs. However, Collector of Customs Hamilton warned Thierfelder to either commit to repairs and leave Hampton

Roads or accept internment for the duration of the war by the end of the week.

Despite Thierfelder's public defiance-he held three more news conferences after the fist-pounding interview- the German captain had reasons to be concerned. Adm. Beatty's inspection team reported that the number of beri-beri cases was increasing at an alarming rate. Thirty-four more cases were reported since the German ship arrived.

This report deeply discouraged the German captain who cared very much for his crew. "You newspapers have said I was a smart fellow. Not I myself, but my crew-my men and my officers-every one of them, they are the heroes," he commented to the papers.

With great reluctance, Thierfelder changed his mind and decided to turn his ship over to American authorities. He cited the number of beri-beri cases as the primary reason for his decision. The arrival of Britain's fast-

Commerce raiders continued on page 15