



The Navy got to relax after taking care of Prinz Friedrich. Then a week later, the *Virginian-Pilot* took this photograph and announced that the battered and bruised auxiliary cruiser Kronprinz Wilhelm just dropped anchor in Hampton Roads. Before the war, the ship was the pride of the German passenger steam fleet and made runs between Germany and the United States. (April 11, 1915 photograph from the *Virginian-Pilot*)

Commerce raiders continued from page 6

to begin repairs to his vessel. The shipyard agreed and took her into one of her dry-docks. The port call in Hampton Roads was the crew's first since leaving Tsing Tsau, China in September. The *Virginian-Pilot* described the ship as "sea-scarred and rusty" with "thickgrown seaweed on her sides nearly a foot long and with grim rifles forward, amidships and aft." Thierichsen admitted to reporters that his ship was "unseaworthy at the present time." Inspectors from the shipyard looked over the vessel and said it would take at least three weeks to repair it.

Friedrich's arrival in Hampton Roads set off alarm bells in Washington as the State Department knew that Allied governments would either demand that the German raider be denied a chance to commence repairs or that the United States permanently impound her. U.S. officials became further concerned when they received the news that one of *Friedrich's* victims was an American ship, a three masted schooner named *William P. Frye*. While *Frye's* crew was unharmed, President Wilson still condemned the attack on the neutral vessel and publicly demanded that the German government pay reparations. Thierichsen scoffed at this notion as he claimed *Frye* had English cargo.

The crisis was elevated a notch when the Allied cruiser squadron caught up with the German vessel and set up a blockade off the

Virginia Capes. Local papers added to the hysteria by publishing "intercepted" Allied wireless messages. These messages said they would try to sink the German vessel at all costs.

American authorities outwardly tried to act as brave as they could. They reminded both sides that any fighting would have to be done outside American territorial waters. However, there was little to back up the bold statements. The few local forces present amounted to coast defense units at Ft. Monroe, two Coast Guard cutters, and the unfinished giant battleship *Pennsylvania* (BB-38).

The crisis became a political hot potato for Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. The Secretary's critics had publicly attacked the ex-newspaper publisher's policies since the day he took office in 1912. The crisis in Hampton Roads only gave them more ammunition as they claimed the Navy was not prepared to handle the situation. It brewed speculation that the Germans would try to make the situation more complicated by arming their other steamers already in other American ports.

One might wonder where the U.S. Atlantic Fleet was during this crisis. For the Navy Secretary, the situation could not have come at a worse time. The entire U.S. Atlantic Fleet had left Hampton Roads in January for Guantanamo Bay and was currently



The crisis in Hampton Roads could not have come at a worse time for Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. Already under fire for his lack of Naval expertise, there were no Naval ships ready to offer immediate assistance to the situation developing in Hampton Roads. (HRNM photograph of an official Navy painting)

commencing winter exercises. The Navy did not expect them back in Hampton Roads until April.

Daniels responded to his critics by ordering four older battleships out of the Navy's Reserve Fleet in Philadelphia to mobilize and steam for Hampton Roads. Additionally, he also ordered a general mobilization of all available ships at East Coast ports to ensure American neutrality was upheld. The Spanish-American War veteran USS

Commerce raiders continued on page 8