

*As the last stroke of midnight died away the searchlight of the United States dredge Atlantic, working 24 hours a day in deepening the main channel, swept like a ghostly finger through the inky darkness of the outer harbor.... It would be difficult to imagine the sensations of the man on watch when the white beam fell full on the outlines of a German super-submarine, lying quietly off Southwest ledge.<sup>1</sup>*

It might not be that difficult to imagine. A submarine in open water even now is a strange sight; it is sinister and it is electrifying. So much of it is underwater! It seems to appear from nowhere; which of course is the point and was the point in 1916. Sub-sighting in 2003 New London is commonplace, but seeing one, even now, more often than not will elicit the cry, “look -- a submarine!,” when one is spotted coming or going in the harbor. The appearance of these strange and scary vessels still produces a sensation akin to those perhaps felt by the “man on watch” in 1916. There is another feeling that submarines provoke today in New London; it is recognition of the importance to this place of these weird vessels; here they are built and here they are berthed. The economy today is very much tied to these boats -- casinos notwithstanding. In 1916, there was a similar recognition of the economic significance to the city of the then-unusual boats, and this recognition, along with simple awe and excitement, was partly responsible for the reaction of most residents to the arrival in New London of “the marvelous sub-sea merchantman...the famous *Deutschland*.”<sup>2</sup> Another reason for what seemed generally to be a positive response to the visit of this German vessel was also tied to the city’s economy. This was the recent opening of the Connecticut State Pier at the harbor’s north end. A qualified opinion is that *most residents* were excited about the *Deutschland*, noting that this opinion comes mostly from reading the two local newspapers. Both were heavily invested in the *business* of New London, and in economic development issues. So, their stories may have been more reflective of the opinions of business leaders than of the man on the street. Nonetheless, the newspapers help to illuminate the questions with which this study of the *Deutschland*’s visit is concerned. What was the story behind the *Deutschland*? Why New London and what happened when it came here? Why was this event apparently so thrilling and memorable to New Londoners, even though it happened only a short time before the United States went to war with Germa-

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<sup>1</sup> *The Day*, New London, CT. 11/1/1916, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* P.1

ny, at time when German U-boats were sinking merchant ships and anti-German feeling was already verging on fierce in most of the country? Was it because there was a large German community, or a German newspaper owner? To the latter questions the answer is probably not, or at least not much. The other questions remain.

### What about Germany's Cargo Submarines?

In November of 1916 the European War had been raging for over two years and the end was not visible. For those engaged in international commerce, particularly those in the industrial powerhouse that was the United States, the war was a mixed blessing at best. Opportunities to ship goods formerly carried by the dominant British merchant marine and to sell goods both to warring and neutral powers were abundant, when and if the British and German navies were not prowling the oceans, interfering with merchant shipping.<sup>3</sup> U-boats of the German navy were sinking both British and neutral merchantmen, (although neutral sinking was temporarily not quite as egregious in 1916 as it was prior to the *Lusitania* and *Arabic* incidents in 1915). The dominant British surface navy had an almost impenetrable blockade on Germany, and on neutral nations trans-shipping material to Germany. Although submarine warfare provoked more outrage due to its covert nature,<sup>4</sup> the British blockade was probably causing at least as much distress to US interests and to Germany as was the German U-boat blockade of England. Germany was experiencing significant shortages of both war materiel and food by 1916 and its ability to continue fighting was becoming doubtful.

...Germans were...faced with the fact that the British blockade was very effective, and that Germany was being starved for food and war materials while Britain was being regularly supplied. Either something had to be done to cut Britain's supply lines, or a way through the British blockade had to be found.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In "Over Here," David Kennedy devotes an entire chapter to the question of the economic issues of the war in Europe and a lot of these questions have to do with merchant shipping. This was Chapter 6, which was not assigned in class, but I found had some interesting material relative to this paper.

<sup>4</sup> I found the following notes on a web site devoted to the history of submarines, [www.submarinehistory.com](http://www.submarinehistory.com): "...senior [British] naval leadership ... like many others through the years, believed that covert warfare was, basically, illegal. Gentlemen fought each other face to face...Rear Admiral A.K. Wilson assured himself of a certain immortality by declaring that the submarine was 'underhand, unfair, and damned UnEnglish.' The government, he wrote, should 'treat all submarines as pirates in wartime...and hang all crews.' "

<sup>5</sup> Messimer, Dwight R. "The Merchant U-Boat: Adventures of the *Deutschland* 1916-1918", (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988) P. 9 Messimer is a German American apparently and I think his views are a bit slanted to the German Point of view.

As David Kennedy mentions in “Over Here,” in addition to the country being “starved” for food and other goods, Germany’s significant chemical industry found itself cut off from the important US market.

Probably in no other line of endeavor had German industrial dominance been so pronounced before the war. German scientists had pioneered and perfected organic chemical processes that gave the vast Rhineland dye and pharmaceutical complex undisputed leadership in world markets....Thus before 1914 American production of dyestuffs and medicinals remained tiny, and depended heavily on Germany for supplies of intermediate compounds. When the British fleet interdicted the surface of the Atlantic after the outbreak of the war, those supplies ceased, despite daring German efforts to continue them *by cargo submarine*. [My italics]<sup>6</sup>

While the German government was debating the value or necessity of returning to unrestricted submarine warfare to force the British as quickly as possible to their knees, there were those in the country developing another idea for breaking the blockade – construction of a fleet of merchant submarines that could go under the British blockade. According to Dwight Messimer’s “The Merchant U-Boat: The Adventures of the *Deutschland* 1916-1918, the genesis of these vessels came from a combination of interests. One was the Krupp Company, which as major supplier of Germany’s war materiel was literally down to its last nickel – nickel being a raw material required to build, among other things, submarines – an entire warehouse of which was in New Jersey, apparently bought in Canada *before* the war and spirited away to the United States for processing and storage. Another was the German state secretary who evidently saw cargo submarines as a way to carry civilian supplies to and from the Fatherland and, while they were at it, to carry correspondence to an increasingly isolated German Embassy in the United States. A third interested party, Messimer tells us, was Alfred Lohmann, a “prominent businessman from Bremen” whose brother was an officer in the German navy’s logistics office, and whose family was involved with the North German Lloyd Shipping Company, which operated passenger liners throughout the world before the war.<sup>7</sup> These three interests converged in 1915 when

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<sup>6</sup> Kennedy, David M. “Over Here: The First World War and American Society”, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 312

<sup>7</sup> Messimer. p. 12-15 This entire account is from these pages in Messimer. I find his story compelling and probably accurate. He used German and US Naval records for his research. However, I have to note that some of his comments on the *Deutschland* in New London do not seem to be born out by the facts, or opinions, as I have uncovered them in the local press. This makes me a bit skeptical of his entire thesis, but short of learning to speak German at this late date, I will have to accept his story from the German point of view.

A scheme was hatched wherein large cargo U-boats would be built and sent on regular runs to the United States. They would carry dyestuffs and pharmaceuticals to the United States and return with rubber, copper, and nickel. They would also provide a means for sending secret information between Germany and the German ambassador...Count Johann von Bernstorff. The cargo U-boats would also be a secure way to send agents to the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Two cargo U-boats were ultimately built, the *Bremen* and the *Deutschland*.<sup>9</sup> They would be considerably larger in width and depth than the typical attack submarine of the time and could carry “up to 1000 tons of cargo.”<sup>10</sup> As one can see by her photos, the *Deutschland* was not exactly a sleek vessel – more lumbering than elegant, and apparently she handled that way. “She was an awful sea boat. She rolled like a bottle, was almost impossible to get under in a really heavy sea, and ventilation was almost nil.”<sup>11</sup> The boats, supposedly owned by the civilian German Overseas Navigation Co., a holding company including “representatives of Norddeutsche Lloyd [North German Lloyd] and the Deutsche Bank,” and partly funded by the German government<sup>12</sup> were crewed by supposed civilians and were to be used only to carry civilian cargo.

Messimer points out that although “ostensibly the boats were to be controlled by civilians...in fact, the navy carried the two boats in their files as the U-200 and the U-201, and throughout their relatively short careers, the navy exercised enormous control over the two boats.” However, it was important that this control be kept under wraps due to the neutrality status of the United States. “Any belligerent warship that remained in a United States port longer than twenty-four hours would be interned for the duration of the war. Legitimate commercial vessels had a much longer grace period.”<sup>13</sup> There was also the question of the rights of unarmed merchant vessels transporting civilian cargo on the high seas to consider. The British, as noted earlier, thought all submarines should be “treated as pirates in wartime,” making it even more important to stress the “civilian” character of the *Deutschland*.

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<sup>8</sup> Messimer. p. 12

<sup>9</sup> The *Bremen* was lost at sea on her first attempt to cross to the United States. To this day, apparently, her fate remains a mystery to Germany, the United States and England. A mystery for Dr. Robert Ballard?

<sup>10</sup> Messimer, p. 22

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 114. The comments that the *Deutschland*'s Captain, Paul Koenig, made to the New London press and his account of his crossing to and from Baltimore in his book, bear out that the submarine was not the most maneuverable of boats – although he put a better face on it to the press than was his actual experience.

<sup>12</sup> Messimer, p. 13

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

The control that the German navy exerted over the boats extended to the crews. Captain Paul Koenig, who had commanded passenger lines of the North German Lloyd Company prior to the war (and who spoke English fluently and was married to an English woman!), was the Captain of the *Deutschland*. In his memoir, “Voyage of the *Deutschland*,” Koenig makes much of his lack of work from the time the war broke out until his taking over command of the merchant submarine. He tells of how Lohmann offered him command of the *Deutschland* by asking “me if I was not bored by this uneventful sitting about on land.” And he answers, “What was an old captain of the merchant marine to say to that – an old captain who had to leave his ship at the outbreak of war, and was drifting about the country like a derelict--?”<sup>14</sup> In point of fact, Messimer relates, Koenig had been ordered to active service in the German navy immediately upon leaving his civilian ship at “the outbreak of war” and had served capably for two years, even receiving the Iron Cross, Second Class.<sup>15</sup> His crew and officers too were German navy personnel, “selected from among experienced U-boat crews” and reassigned to the “Merchant” submarine, in spite of the Captain’s assertion in New London that “Yes, all his crew were volunteers...Of his crew only six were seamen, the remainder mechanics.”<sup>16</sup>

The *Deutschland*’s first cruise was to Baltimore, where the locals, particularly the German-American population, welcomed her wildly.<sup>17</sup> “From 13 to 19 July the *Deutschland*’s crew was constantly on the move from one social event to another.”<sup>18</sup> The Captain was even invited to Washington where he met the assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>19</sup> In all this activity there was certainly as much propaganda as there was simply movement of commercial cargoes between countries. Captain Koenig is blunt about that in his memoir when he says straightforwardly that his duty was “to transport our valuable cargo to America ...smoothly, and with as few interruptions as possible, to make a joke of the

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<sup>14</sup> Koenig, Captain Paul. “Voyage of the *Deutschland*,” (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2000) P. 6

<sup>15</sup> Messimer, P. 18

<sup>16</sup> Messimer, P. 23 and *The Day*, New London, 11/2/1916, p. 8

<sup>17</sup> Koenig, P. 149. The web site, US Historical Census Data Browser, <http://fisher.lib.Virginia.edu/Census>, shows that in 1910 Baltimore City had 26,021 German born “white persons” and 48,983 “white persons” with both parents German born. In comparison, New London County only had 125 German born and 29 with both German parents. I find these numbers sort of odd, especially since they were far higher for New London in 1920 (1357 German born), but it’s possible.

<sup>18</sup> Messimer P. 66

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P. 68

*English blockade.*"<sup>20</sup> His duty also was to report on the positive reception given the Germans by the Americans as a morale boost to his countrymen and a thumb in the eye to the British. By the end of August, the *Deutschland* had returned to Bremen where its feat was cheered and its Captain was feted, by no less a personage than the Kaiser himself. Although Messimer says that the homecoming to Germany maintained a "strictly civilian tone,"<sup>21</sup> Koenig subsequently related to the New London press how the Kaiser had entertained him on his returning to Germany in August.

'I saw many notable people in Germany, saw the Reichstag and the Kaiser, who looks very well.... I met the Kaiser...General Von Hindenburg and 21 other prominent soldiers and officials of the Fatherland at the headquarters on the Eastern battle front.... We had soup and no fancy courses. Everyone in Germany lives on simple food. Oh, yes, they seated me next to Kaiser Wilhelm.'<sup>22</sup>

Messimer points out that there were many naysayers in Germany who saw this whole exercise as nothing more than a publicity stunt that could never work on a large scale, but nonetheless, the idea of a cargo U-Boat clearly had struck many imaginations in Germany, as it soon would in New London.

#### Why Choose New London?

On October 8, the *Deutschland* departed Wilhelmshaven on her second and last voyage to, of all places, New London, Connecticut. A primary resource for the history of the *Deutschland* was Messimer's book on her 1916-1918 "adventures" (her entire life story actually). In it he fails to ask the question of why the *Deutschland* came to New London, rather than to Boston, or New York or even back to Baltimore. This question is intriguing, along with what the event meant to New London.

There were reasons to avoid Baltimore. The British who, according to Messimer, had broken the German codes and were following every move of this suspicious boat, were closely watching marine traffic at the narrow entrance of the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>23</sup> Koenig relates in his memoir that the British were not only waiting for him, but were gunning for him, by referring to an article in the July 18 Baltimore (?)

*Morning Post:*

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<sup>20</sup> Koenig, P. x

<sup>21</sup> Messimer, P. 90-92

<sup>22</sup> *The Telegraph*, New London, 11/2/1916, p. 3. Also quoted in *The Day*. This is one of the discrepancies between Messimer and New London press. Koenig may very well have been fabricating this Kaiser story to wow the New London locals, but it was a risky brag if the intent was to maintain his mission was strictly civilian.

<sup>23</sup> Messimer, Pp. 30, 44

‘The *Deutschland*, in consequence of its character as a submarine, is to be regarded as a war vessel and is to be treated as such. The warships of the Allies will, therefore, seek every opportunity to waylay the vessel...and will sink it without warning.’ ...And such were the words which we read for ourselves.... This at least had the advantage of letting us know precisely what we had to expect. *Never had the English point of view, in all its brutality, been more clearly displayed.*<sup>24</sup> [My italics]

More probable a reason was that Baltimore was perhaps too close for comfort to Washington, making a visit there a bit too visible to US and British intelligence, as would one to any larger port. According to Messimer, the United States government and navy (and the British) were monitoring the submarine carefully as they were increasingly worried that the cargo subs might come to be used as sub tenders, given their capacity to carry large amounts of supplies, spare parts and fuel. This fear was disputed by the Germans, but had certain credibility nonetheless.<sup>25</sup> Such a vessel could lay off the United States coast in wartime, and provide attack submarines the ability to stay out to sea farther from home and for longer times, allowing them to wreak more havoc on both British belligerent and American neutral (for now) shipping.<sup>26</sup> In his history, *The Day Paper*, author Greg Stone suggests that the Germans may also have chosen New London because the editor of the influential local paper was German born (although Theodore Bodenwein was by this time as American as one could wish, even having been elected secretary of the State in 1905.)<sup>27</sup> Bodenwein’s German roots no doubt had some effect on the choice, but possibly or probably a far more likely one, and one that is very pertinent to the reception accorded the *Deutschland* was the recently opened Connecticut State Pier in New London. In his history Stone quotes a 1912 article in *International Marine Engineering* that referred to the new pier “as the first attempt in America at comprehensive, scientific harbor marine engineering” and predicted:

The port of New London has the opportunity to place itself far ahead of New York, Boston and every other American port as the proper place for steamships from all parts of the world to discharge their cargoes expeditiously and economically and reload correspondingly.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Koenig, Pp. 160-161

<sup>25</sup> *The Telegraph*, New London, 11/3/1916

<sup>26</sup> Messimer. Pp. 109-110

<sup>27</sup> Stone, Greg, *The Day Paper: The Story of One of America’s Last Independent Newspapers*, (New London, CT, The Day Publishing Company) 2000, P. 120

<sup>28</sup> Stone, p. 90

The comment of this trade publication reflected the hopes of the business community of New London; it also, from the German point of view, may have represented a good opportunity to make use of a new, state-of-the-art and efficient American facility, convenient to the open ocean, and coincidentally to another new marine installation, a submarine base. It is quite conceivable that there was some (casual?) intelligence-gathering intended by the Germans in choosing a city that would be the homeport of any submarine attack fleet that the United States would field in the event of their entering the war. Whatever the reason, or combinations of reasons, that New London was chosen, on the first of November 1916, the “man on watch” of the dredge Atlantic looked across the “inky darkness” and beheld the strange and much anticipated sight.

#### The *Deutschland* in New London

A German American may have owned *The Day* of New London, but his paper was not the first to announce the arrival of the *Deutschland*. This honor went to the rival morning paper, *The Telegraph*:

As he was leaving O’Leary’s saloon late at night, a reporter for the morning newspaper literally stumbled into two government health officers who had just visited the submarine...before the ship berthed. The reporter had the presence of mind to ask why they were out so late and they told him scarcely in time for him to file a story for the morning edition.<sup>29</sup>

Both daily papers, the morning and the afternoon, ran huge headlines: in three-inch type *The Telegraph* shouted “*DEUTSCHLAND ARRIVES FROM BREMEN*,” and in one-inch, but with three lines, *The Day*’s read, “*U-BOAT DEUTSCHLAND IS HERE*.” By morning a crowd had gathered at the State Pier to try to get a closer glimpse of the “wonderful craft,” and apparently for the next 17 days the attempts were nearly constant. Unfortunately for the curious and excited populace, the boat was completely closed at the Pier. An office building at one end, a long warehouse at the other, the interned German Liner *Willehad* (used to house the crew and longshoremen during their New London stay) on the third side, and a floating fence on the water end of the U-boat’s “pen” kept off the prying eyes (and cameras) of sight-seers, boaters and press approaching from land or sea. Since research into the *Deutschland* was precipitated by a photograph showing a large crowd gathered at the Pier to view the boat and another of a festive

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 121



reception for the crew in New London, it is surprising to read Dwight Messimer's version of her stay in the city:

One of the *Deutschland*'s primary roles was to develop American sympathy for Germany's efforts to break the British blockade. Therefore, maintaining good press relations should have been a high-priority item. But fences, armed guards, and open hostility did not accomplish that. *As a result, the Deutschland's second visit to the United States was characterized by bad press.*<sup>30</sup> [My Italics]

It appears that his extensive research did not include any reading of local papers, a guess born out by his bibliography, which mentions only the *New York Times* and *Oakland Tribune* as newspaper sources. Actual reading of the two local papers tells quite a different story. There was at least one story in each paper on each of the 17 days the boat was in port, with the exception of November 5, when there was no mention in *The Telegraph*. There was a story every time the boat did a test submersion at the pier; whenever the crew ventured into town; whenever Captain Koenig was spotted coming or going from the Custom House, or Crocker House [hotel and local bar]. There was, after the first week, much speculation about when the boat would be leaving (in fact no one seemed to know, probably a security precaution so a common theme was ("we believe" or "it is believed") that the *Deutschland* will be ready to sail on ("tomorrow," or "Wednesday" or "soon" or whenever). Some of these stories were a stretch, to be sure. There was speculation about the unloading of cargo [dyes, pharmaceuticals, mail for the German Embassy<sup>31</sup> and securities]; the loading of cargo [raw rubber, (Krupp's) refined nickel, silver, and Embassy mail]; the value of the cargo [anywhere from \$2 to \$10 million according to who was doing the math]; whether the return trip would include passengers [no!]; whether a mail contract was in the works with the US Post Office [maybe but it never happened]. There were blurbs about visitors to Captain Koenig and his boat, including one mysterious lady, the German Ambassador, officers from the Sub base [doing a little snoop-

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<sup>30</sup> Messimer. P. 122

<sup>31</sup> According to Messimer, that Embassy pouch also included a new codebook. This had later ramifications when the German Ambassador sent the notorious "Zimmerman Telegram" to Mexico using the old book, which codes the British had broken in 1915. The Ambassador to the US had the new code, and had received his instructions from Germany in it, but the Mexican Embassy did not. The British were thus able to decode the Telegram and the rest is history as we say. Pp. 111-112 & 154-155

ing for concealed weapons among other things], the mayor, the city council, etc.<sup>32</sup> Two advertisements appeared in *The Day*, one for a butcher [aeroplane quality at ‘submarine’ prices], one for an insurance company [life is uncertain, buy insurance], both using the *Deutschland* as an advertising “hook.” (Insurance ad is attached). The ads show the fascination of businesses, and presumably their customers, with this “wonderful” craft.

Both papers gave great play to an interview with Koenig on, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the day after his arrival. Theodore Bodenwein (the paper’s owner/publisher/editor) himself reported this story for his paper. (His name was on it, something not seen at any other time in reading the papers, although he probably wrote many or most of the editorials anonymously.) Once again, Messimer’s account of this interview is quite different from that reported in the two local papers. He states that the reason for the press conference was to soothe the city’s anger over the arrival of a crew of black stevedores from Baltimore to handle the *Deutschland*’s cargo.

Though the news did not appear in the nation’s newspapers until the next day, it was *the sole topic of conversation in New London that day.... Local white dockworkers, angry that the Germans had given their jobs to a bunch of black outsiders, were threatening violence. And local residents, convinced that their town was on the brink of a crime wave, were demanding to know why the Germans had brought in all those blacks....* Clearly, something had to be done and fast. The answer was a 1600 press conference held in the Mohican Hotel.<sup>33</sup> [My italics]

Neither local paper mentioned a “black” problem, or threatened violence, or resident fears, or any other labor problem in coverage of this press conference. Although several articles refer to the “80 black stevedores” loading and unloading the cargo, there is not a hint of this supposed controversy reported in seventeen days. Once again, it seems the *Deutschland*’s “biographer” did not do his homework on the Connecticut half of his U-boat story. Another possibility of course is that the papers deliberately ignored any problems, just as they downplayed the increasing hostility between Germany and the United States. But such total ignoring seems unlikely given the usual coverage given by the papers to the most insignificant of local incidents.

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<sup>32</sup> So many of the articles re-hashed the same story and the same news and speculations that it all started to run together and to become distracting. My overall impression though, was that this was a story that the press did not want to die, nor did their readers apparently. The issues of *The Telegraph* and *The Day* that I read were from Oct. 30 to November 30, 1916.

<sup>33</sup> Messimer, p. 122

In my opinion, the critical aspect about these stories is the number of them, whatever was their angle. They just kept coming. *The Day*, the “German” owned Republican Paper, gave what appeared to be more editorial play to the event, whereas *The Telegraph*, the Democratic paper, seemed to run news more than editorials, although both letters to the editor relating to the *Deutschland* appeared in the latter paper. The editorials in *The Day* were not German propaganda as one might think, but New London propaganda, as were most of the articles in both papers, as a matter of fact. This propaganda for the city was evident from day one, when Capt. Koenig is quoted on the front page of *The Day*: “Referring to New London harbor Captain Koenig declared that it was the finest rendezvous for submarines he had met in all his experience.”<sup>34</sup>

What was to be the biggest news event of the *Deutschland*’s coming was that of the reception planned by the Chamber of Commerce and the public administration of New London in honor of Captain Koenig and his crew. The picture in Re-inventing New London is of this Big Night. (Attached) For days prior the papers talked about it. Tickets were limited to 250 paying guests at \$3 per person. Not all New Londoners were invited: “this affair will be limited to men,”<sup>35</sup> said one article, although a reception at City Hall prior to the event was open to all. *The Day* reported that 4000 citizens attended the reception and “several patrolmen were required to keep back the crowd which strove to pass into the State Street entrance of the municipal building before the opening of the reception.”<sup>36</sup> Those men unfortunate enough not to get a ticket to the dinner, (and all local women), might find consolation that evening at the Lyceum Theatre, where Irene Fenwick was appearing in “The Child of Destiny,” with second features of “Under the Lion’s Paw: A two-act drama,” a “Metro Travelogue,” and, as a special “Extra Attraction,”

*THE INITIAL PRESENTATION OF THE MOTION PICTURES OF  
THE DEUTSCHLAND, AT THE STATE PIER, NEW LONDON, AND  
MANY OTHER INTERESTING SCENES TAKEN AT THE LOCAL NAVAL BASE.*<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *The Day*, 11/1/16, p. 1

<sup>35</sup> *The Day*, 11/3/16, p. 3

<sup>36</sup> *The Day*, 11/9, p. 7

<sup>37</sup> *The Day*, 11/8/1916, p. 7. All the theatres in town ran this Extra Attraction movie that week. Who filmed it? Where is it now? It would be wonderful to find a copy!

The banquet was quite a success. All tickets were sold. The menu included oysters, chicken Louisiana-style, roast turkey and ice cream shaped like submarines among other courses, including martinis to start and lager to end. It was reported “delicious.” The hall was decorated with floral arrangements in the shape of submarines (designed and provided by Fisher Florists) and with German and American flags. Gifts were given to the captain and crew of the *Deutschland*. The captain received a “best American made watch with the seal of the city of New London on the outside of the back cover [with] the following inscription: ‘Presented to Captain Paul Koenig by the citizens of New London, Conn., November 8, 1916, commemorating the opening of the Connecticut State pier by the arrival of the submarine *Deutschland*’<sup>38</sup> Silver match boxes with the city seal were given to the other officers, and “best American made” fountain pens to the crew. It was the speeches however, that are most useful in understanding the entire episode of the *Deutschland* in New London. *The Day* reported on the date of the party:

The speakers and their subjects will be as follows: Mayor Ernest E. Rogers, *New London, a Maritime City*; Postmaster Bryan F. Mahan, *The State Pier, Its Inception*; F. Valentine Chappell, *The State Pier, Its Completion and Future*.<sup>39</sup>

Here are some of the comments from these gentlemen and others at the banquet as reported in the press:

... it was *one of the most conspicuous events in the history of the city*. The Chamber of Commerce ... for many years identified with the best interests of the community, is the ideal organization to extend a welcome to an *enterprise which means so much to New London*. [Chamber President, Alton T. Miner]

It is *our primary purpose* this evening *to celebrate the opening of the great, state pier* through the coming of the *Deutschland*. In the years to come I trust we shall have a jury of such piers. [Toastmaster, Rev. J. Romeyn Danforth]

Is it not a remarkable commentary upon the wisdom of the pessimists that before it is completed a portion of it is rented for *an enterprise familiar to the whole civilized world and the eyes of all nations are turned toward New London* because of the coming of the *Deutschland*? ... I predict that it is *a brilliant augury for the future*. [F. Valentine Chappell, Chairman of Rivers, Harbors and Bridges Commission]

I am not here as mayor of New London, but *simply as a merchant anxious to pay tribute to the commercial distinction which is ours* through the coming of the undersea freighter. [Mayor Ernest E. Rogers]

I was born in New London and for years went down to the banks of the river and saw nothing but a vacant sea. By the coming of the *Deutschland*, *we see a commercial undersea line between the United States and Germany*. [“Father of the state terminal,” Postmaster Bryan F. Mahan]<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *The Telegram*, 11/9/16. Also reported in *The Day*.

<sup>39</sup> *The Day*, 11/8, p. 7 “Captain Koenig will be Given Reception Tonight”

<sup>40</sup> *The Day*, 11/9/16. p. 7. Last quote is from *The Telegram*, 11/9, p. 6. All italics are mine.

If it seems these men went slightly overboard in their enthusiasm for this German enterprise, without regard to how it might appear outside of New London, at least one voice in town stated the obvious. A November 6 letter to the editor of *The Telegraph*, was headed: “George S. Palmer Declares That Quasi-Official Action by New London is All Wrong – Puts Community in What Will be Taken as Pro-German Attitude – *Local Pride Has Overbalanced National Consciousness.*”<sup>41</sup> [My italics] In truth, George Palmer hit the nail on the head, not just in pointing out that this “action” might appear pro-German, but also in recognizing that local “pride” was superseding the bigger national apprehension of German submarine warfare (he mentions the *Lusitania*), now and in the future:

We certainly should not be giving loving cups to officers of German submarines who at some future time may possibly make their presence known to us by torpedoing without warning American merchant ships in sight of our shores.<sup>42</sup>

Yet even with all the tributes to Koenig and his boat, the remarks still clearly were more Pro-New London than Pro-German,<sup>43</sup> because New London’s business success was simply uppermost in the minds of the citizens who cheered Koenig and crew. No matter that these cheers might be construed differently by out-of-towners, or even some in town like Palmer, whose position was rebutted in an anonymous letter to the editor on November 7. Even as it took issue with Mr. Palmer, the writer ceded the point italicized in the former letter. This second headline read “Only *Pro-New London* in *Deutschland* Banquet.” This writer, “A New Londoner and a Neutral,” even as he questions Mr. Palmer’s politics (as pro-British and anti-Wilson), confirms that local interests were the predominant sentiment, over-riding national issues. That, I think, is the real significance of the coming of the *Deutschland* to New London.

Trying to Make New London “the greatest shipping center of the United States”<sup>44</sup>

The German people needed a victory, one they could see, and one that offered salvation from the horrors of war. They needed to believe that the *Deutschland*’s success meant an end to the hardships caused by the British blockade...The *Deutschland* did that.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *The Telegraph*, 11/6/1916, p. 10

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 11/6/16, p.10

<sup>43</sup> *The Day*, 11/8/16 p. 7

<sup>44</sup> From an 11/22/16 editorial in *The Telegraph*

Dwight Messimer's reflection on the importance to the Germans of the *Deutschland* is apt. But, the Germans were not the only people who needed a "victory" or a morale booster in 1916. The war, the blockades, and the crisis in merchant shipping were all proving a hardship, if only psychological, to the citizens and to the businessmen of New London. The voyage of the *Deutschland* represents an episode in New London history that illustrates a theme that recurs still in the story of the city's commercial life, one of ups and downs, of hopes raised and dashed.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city's once thriving maritime businesses, first coastal trade and then whaling, had been dying and the business community had been struggling to revive the waterfront and to make New London a major port again. In 1877 the Board of Trade, precursor of the Chamber of Commerce, had published a promotional pamphlet selling the "Great Commercial Advantages" of New London, as a port in itself, and as an "Outport" for the supposedly over-crowded and overly expensive wharfs of New York City. The gist of their argument was:

The harbor is the best on the Atlantic coast, easy of access, never freezing, with water to float the largest ship in the world. It has a clear, straight entrance from the ocean, so that the services of a pilot are often dispensed with, even by vessels from foreign ports, the coast survey chart being a sufficient guide.<sup>46</sup>

The refrain continued for years: at their 1891 annual meeting the Board of Trade lamented how far behind New Bedford in business New London had fallen and trusted that times would soon get better.<sup>47</sup> Another article titled "What May Yet Happen: New London Might Become the Port of Foreign Steamers," appeared in a local paper in 1892.<sup>48</sup> Finally, by 1916 commercial interests seemed to be making progress in developing the port. In 1911 the New London Ship and Engine Company took over the site of an aborted 1900 shipbuilding venture of robber baron James Hill, in Groton, and began building heavy engines for submarines. In 1915 the Navy established a base to serve its infant submarine fleet at its abandoned Coal-ing Station in Groton. In 1911 the most promising yet of the Board of Trade's plans became a reality.

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<sup>45</sup> Messimer, P. 90

<sup>46</sup> Bolles, John. R. *New London, A Seaport for the North and West and Outport of New York: its great Commercial Advantages, Convenient, Ample and Cheap Wharf Room, Manufacturing Facilities, Abundant Supply of Pure Water, Healthfulness, etc.* (New London: Power Press of George E. Starr, 1877).

<sup>47</sup> See attached poem read at this banquet and quoted in *The Day*, 1/12/1891

<sup>48</sup> *The Day* or *The Telegram*. 11/23/92. I found a copy of this article in my paper file on the Pequot Colony, but aside from the date, I did not identify the paper on my printed copy.

After years of lobbying efforts, then-Mayor B. F. Mahan succeeded in getting the Connecticut General Assembly to provide one million dollars for construction of a State pier in New London. The city donated a 4500-foot piece of land at the head of the harbor adjacent to the railroad bridge for the purpose. After (the usual in CT) feasibility studies, construction began and was just about completed in 1916.<sup>49</sup>

Alas for New London! By 1916 commercial prospects for an Atlantic port were not optimistic. David Kennedy points out the war represented “an opportunity to capture trade that had previously been jealously held by the now-distracted European combatants,”<sup>50</sup> but that the United States had not much in the way of a merchant fleet, and the fleets of England and Germany were either diverted from trade to war, or were being more or less successfully prevented from trading with the United States -- by each other.

The once-mighty American merchant marine had so decayed by 1914 that American bottoms then carried less than 10 percent of the nation’s ocean-going commerce. When the belligerents, who were also, as it happened, the leading maritime nations, suddenly withdrew their tonnage from much of the world ocean in August, the crippling consequences of America’s maritime dependence were quickly and painfully revealed.<sup>51</sup>

In short, there was no business for the brand-new, long-anticipated pier in New London in 1916. It appeared that the opponents of the project, mostly from Hartford and other cities in the State, had been proven right.<sup>52</sup>

All that appeared to change in the middle of the night of November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1916, when the *Deutschland* arrived in New London, carrying her load of valuable and scarce German dyes and pharmaceuticals. It was not merely the cargo that was welcome in New London but the FACT of a real merchant vessel finally tying up at the city’s major new facility. That the first vessel to make use of the Pier was a submarine made the event even more exciting. That it had run the British blockade probably added additional luster to the whole feat. All three of these circumstances prompted New London to roll out the welcome mat for Captain Koenig and his crew and to talk of little else but the *Deutschland* for three weeks.

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<sup>49</sup> Stone, Greg, P. 89-90

<sup>50</sup> Kennedy. p. 302

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 303

<sup>52</sup> Stone. p. 89

“You may start talking about corsets and toasted marshmallows, but sooner or later you get back to the *Deutschland*.”<sup>53</sup> The circumstances also explain why there seemed to be so little concern (although there was clearly some concern and plenty of awareness)<sup>54</sup> in either the papers or in most of the populace about the German “menace.” In spite of daily doses in both papers of German U-boat depredations in the Atlantic, New London, or at least its business community, simply overlooked the negative aspects of the *Deutschland*’s German origin in their overwhelming excitement over the opening of their Pier, *finally*. In addition, there is little doubt that because the first vessel to arrive at State Pier was a submarine the community was entranced. This vessel was a real marvel to a sea-going community, and a vessel whose type seemed to foretell a bright future for them. And too, there was just a little sympathy in New London, not so much for Germany as against England. These three reactions vary in importance obviously, but all were strong emotions.

The primary reason that New London was so welcoming to the *Deutschland* was clearly related to the stagnation of activity on the new State Pier. The *Deutschland* brought vindication to city leaders who had worked so hard to make the facility both a reality and a profit maker for New London and the State. The economic development efforts of so many people and institutions, including the local newspaper, over so many years, had finally paid off. The editorials in both papers, primarily *The Day*, asides in many of the articles about the *Deutschland*, and most obviously, the speeches already mentioned that were given at the great banquet illustrate most emphatically what was on the minds of the businessmen and the civic leaders of New London. It was their harbor project, their Pier, their great future as a seaport. This obsession with the local econ-

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<sup>53</sup> *The Day*, 11/24/16

<sup>54</sup> An editorial in *The Day* on 11/15 was titled “America Being Driven to fight” and was focused on Germany as a probable future enemy due to her submarine warfare. Specifically mentioned is the recent sinking of a British merchant vessel *Marina* that killed at least six Americans. In fact there were many other mentions over the three weeks of the *Deutschland* stay about submarine sinkings, as well as British brutality, so people were obviously aware of the international political situation. I might add that the stay of the *Deutschland* coincided with the presidential election of 1916, which happened one day before the big banquet given the Germans. On that day the winner, Wilson or Hughes, was still in doubt.



omy and pride in local accomplishment in attracting a foreign ship to their new terminal overrode any national concerns or anti-German patriotism they may or might have felt.

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, *The Day* printed a letter written to the *Providence Journal* that severely criticized New London for its welcome to the Germans: “I suppose some of the people of New London will say, ‘It is merely a business proposition and has brought besides notoriety to New London a few hundred dollars worth of business.’” The letter concluded, “I am hoping that other cities of this glorious United States can boast of better and more patriotic Americans than *little* New London can.” [My italics] The *Day*’s response was consistent with local refusal to see the *Deutschland* as anything but a great commercial venture: “New London has no apologies to make to anybody for having done honor to a little group of brave men who, *in the interests of peaceful commerce*, performed a remarkable deed.” (The writer might have added that New London made no apologies for trying to bring new money to the city.) The editorial goes on to blast the *Journal* as the “leading organ in the United States of the British government.”<sup>55</sup> Apart from the mudslinging as to which city’s citizens were more patriotic and which European belligerent was worse, the letter and rejoinder, both, once again, illustrate that the city’s commercial prospects were more important to New London than the impending war. In hindsight, and even at the time, this attitude may have been parochial, but it existed and was unashamedly if obliquely admitted. *The Day* reported proudly on November 24 that the *New York Times*, “which has been consistently advocating the cause of Great Britain in the European war, very graciously and very unexpectedly approves of New London’s treatment of the *Deutschland*.” The concluding paragraph of the *Times* editorial was actually a polite criticism of both New London and United States business in general for their interest in “a few hundred dollars worth of business,” but apparently those at whom this criticism was aimed, including *The Day*, missed, or overlooked, it:

The conduct of New London in this rather delicate matter was, on the whole beyond reasonable criticism. Seemingly, she did not realize, quite as clearly as she might, the uses to which the *Deutschland*’s cargo, if landed, will be put, but let that go. Having said that the goods on our

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<sup>55</sup> *The Day*, 11/14/16, p. 6, “Patriotism Here and in Providence”

counters were for sale to any customers who would come in and get them, of course we must stand by the announcement.<sup>56</sup>

Did the fact that the *Deutschland* was a submarine explain another perspective on her welcome in New London? Her existence seemed to point to all kinds of new possibilities for merchant shipping in wartime – especially shipping in the face of the surface blockade of the English – and beyond. Several speakers at the banquet had mentioned the probability that underwater shipping would continue after the war. Here was another element in the enthusiasm with which she was welcomed to New London. Kennedy had referred to the “decayed American merchant fleet” and clearly there was a need for a massive building program of merchant vessels. In New London, the *Deutschland's* appearance foretold that submarines might have commercial possibilities, an enticing prospect for the city’s future. Engines for subs were being built in Groton, and hopes were high that at some point whole submarines would be. It does not seem unlikely that businessmen in New London might see in the *Deutschland* the proto type for a whole new kind of merchant fleet, and one that might conceivably be built in their community.

In addition to this exciting prospect, the Navy apparently was considering making the recently opened submarine station in the city a permanent submarine base. Interestingly Navy Secretary Daniels passed through New London during the time the *Deutschland* was in town. The Chamber of Commerce planned a reception in his honor during a three-hour train layover, but he ended up not stopping. There was some talk that this might have been a political move, an assertion of United States neutrality in the face of a questionable German vessel’s presence in New London. Maybe there was some truth to this theory, but local leaders preferred to explain what became his only-a-few-minutes stop as a scheduling conflict, and the press was effusive over his support of the sub base in New London:

Big Development Plans for Submarine Base---Secretary of Navy says Government Knows the Value of New London Station—Is to Spend Thousands of Dollars There—Construct Over 300 Submarines in the Next Three Years—New London Base will get Big Apportionment from Them.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *The Day*, 11/24/16. Quoting the *New York Times*.

<sup>57</sup> *The Telegraph*, 11/6/16, p. 7

This was an exciting moment for the business community of New London, looking to future military and industrial development on the Thames. Clearly the *Deutschland* demonstrated that submarines had applications far beyond their original purposes. And it seemed to signal that, with the subbase and the New London Ship and Engine Company, the city was finally in the right place at the right time.

There was one other reason, in addition to those of economic development on State Pier and enthusiasm for submarines, that New London was primed to welcome the *Deutschland*: a slightly more difficult-to-prove, but not implausible, reason. Connecticut, if not New London County, did have a significant German American population; several German organizations honored the crew of the *Deutschland* with dinners, awards, and parades, including the local German lodges in Mystic and New London. The state chapter of the Sons of Hermann held a large reception in New London and made Captain Koenig an honorary member. Members of the group attended from all over the state.<sup>58</sup> These German Americans were enthusiastic, but not so much necessarily for the German war effort, as for the Old Country and its technological skill in creating this novel boat. But, in addition, the welcome accorded the *Deutschland* by all local ethnicities, especially the “native” Connecticut Yankees, really might have had something to do with a latent anti-British sentiment rather than with the pro-German sentiment of which the *Providence Journal* and George Palmer accused New London. There were several mentions in both local papers about supposed British warships, laying in wait menacingly just outside the three-mile limit, anticipating the *Deutschland*'s departure, and presumably her capture or sinking.<sup>59</sup> Just like in Baltimore. The press reports often on Captain Koenig's dismissal of the British threat and that of British nets, supposedly thrown across European shipping lanes to “catch” his boat. (there are quite a few mentions in both papers of this possibility.)<sup>60</sup> The papers seem to enjoy the Captain's downplaying of the effectiveness of the British blockade. “His definition of the English blockade was as follows: ‘It is a *net* of commercial agents. They know when a ship is bound for Germany. It is a great system. Outside of that no effective

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<sup>58</sup> *The Day*, 11/10/16, p. 10

<sup>59</sup> *The Day*, 11/6/1916, p. 12 contains one of these

<sup>60</sup> *Day* and *Telegraph* both mention this attitude in 11/2 articles on press conference and it crops up, probably as filler in other day's news of the *Deutschland*.

blockade exists.’<sup>61</sup> This was propaganda on Koenig’s part, a goal of his mission, but it probably fell on receptive ears. Old time New Londoners had no great affection for the country of old London. That was clear in the remarks made in *The Day* editorial in response to the *Providence Journal*. The New London writer accused Providence citizens of the “worst kind of tory Anglicism.”<sup>62</sup> In a November 13 article in *The Telegraph*, the writer reminds his readers of two other occasions when the British fleet lurked offshore, neither of which had a happy ending for New London and her neighbors.

With English and French cruisers plying up and down the three-mile limit off this mainland, New London is reminded of 1781 and the war of 1812, when enemy ships visited this port and fired upon the town. Benedict Arnold, the traitor, brought the Red Coat fleet here in 1781 and after storming Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold burned the town and left desolation in his path. Again, the British came here in 1812-1815 and forced American ships far up the Thames. The purpose of *the enemy* off the approaches to this port at this time is ... to capture the *Deutschland*....<sup>63</sup> [My italics]

The reference to the British as “the enemy” in that quote is telling. In both previous cases of the British “enemy” hovering offshore, their main objective had been to bottle up the commerce of New London merchants in the harbor. And in 1781, there was some punitive activity involved; the town was probably burned because the Naval Office of Connecticut was there and the city was notorious as a haven for privateers, harassing the British Fleet. (To say nothing of the role of Benedict Arnold who held some serious grudges against his former neighbors and comrades-in-arms.) Regardless of the why of and of the distant past of these events, memories are long in New London and Groton and [I suspect] there was more than a little gratification to be had in both city and county from the success of the *Deutschland* in foiling the British blockade. It is also probable that many residents had read Koenig’s hastily published memoir of his first voyage.<sup>64</sup> A previous remark of Koenig’s referenced earlier in this paper about the “brutality” of the British surely rang bells in the descendants of the colonials “massacred” on Groton Heights in 1781.

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<sup>61</sup> *The Telegraph*, 11/2/16, p. 3, quoting Capt. Koenig

<sup>62</sup> *The Day*, 11/14/16. “Patriotism here and In Providence”

<sup>63</sup> *The Telegraph*, New London, 11/13/1916, p. 8 Benedict Arnold’s name **still** in New London is coupled almost always with the words: “the traitor” or even “the nefarious traitor.”

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 11/9/16. Banquet speaker Mahan mentions Koenig’s book and “wonderful stories.” Messimer reports on p. 107 of his book that two versions of this memoir were published, one for German and one for US consumption with slightly different slants the latter playing up “British perfidy.” He also says on p. 87, that in fact a ghostwriter, not Koenig, actually wrote the books and practically had it done by the time the *Deutschland* arrived back in Germany from Baltimore. The Librarian at the Submarine Museum in Groton tells me, that in fact they have two versions of the book in the two languages, but that she has not read either so cannot confirm this assertion. In any case, I think having read the American version I can safely say at least one book was clearly written to influence.

In his account of the enthusiasm accorded the *Deutschland* in Germany may be seen other hints of the reasons this enthusiasm was replicated on the shores of Connecticut. Koenig reports the remarks of the founder of the German Overseas Navigation Company and mastermind of the *Deutschland*'s creation, Herr Alfred Lohmann; some of which follow:

America herself, on the contrary, is not even able to secure the immunity of her post [mail] from Europe. *I shall not mention the many other breaches of international and naval law committed against the neutrals ... by our enemies... 'It [the voyage] was a symbol of Freedom,' we Germans think, dreaming of the 'Right of the Nations to the Freedom of the Seas.'*<sup>65</sup> [My Italics]

It may be worthwhile noting not only that President Wilson placed significant emphasis in his war aims on the freedom of the seas to neutral shipping, but also that the motto of New London, waving from a banner over the sailing ship on the city seal, is *Mare Liberum*, or “Freedom of the Seas.” This motto was pointedly referred to on November 8<sup>th</sup> by the Rev. Danforth when he presented Koenig with the gold watch engraved with the city seal.<sup>66</sup> It may have been accidental that Koenig's ghostwriter included this loaded phrase in his book, but it likely did not go unnoticed by American readers, particularly those in New London.

And...?

Does the coming of the *Deutschland* tell us anything about American history or Americans in general in 1916? I think it certainly tells us something about a small New England maritime city's history and pre-occupations. New London and New Londoners, particularly its business interests, in giving a “joyful” welcome to the *Deutschland*, were prepared to overlook national problems in the prospect of profitable local interests. An odd thing about this sentiment is that while New Londoners were unapologetic about their own preoccupation with personal and community prosperity, they did not seem very sympathetic to that of others. On November 15 *The Telegraph* printed a story about the Canadian nickel being loaded on the *Deutschland*. There was some controversy about this as nickel was a contraband material. That it had come from Canada even if via New Jersey and even if purchased before the war, caused

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<sup>65</sup> Koenig, P.

<sup>66</sup> *The Telegraph*, 11/9/16

quite a stir since Canada was a member of the British Commonwealth and therefore at war with Germany.

*The Telegraph* concludes:

Not a day will have passed before hundred of new bullets with the Canadian nickel jackets have been manufactured and rushed to the battle front where the fortunes of war will see English bullets, shot from the guns of Prussians, kill men of England and her allies, *all because some Canadian houses placed money before country.*<sup>67</sup> [My italics]

New Londoners seemed to be well aware of the lust for profit in others even as they failed to see it in themselves. How widespread this attitude was, and is, in the American business community is a question of some significance. Then again, how bad a thing is it for a community and its leaders to look to its own welfare and to overlook the larger “community” of the nation? The coming of the *Deutschland* to New London may provide in microcosm a way to explore these questions, even if the answers are ambiguous.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 11/15/16 “Canadian Nickel Loaded on *Deutschland*---Canadian Government is Investigating Report---Has no Intention of Furnishing Material for War Munitions to Enemy---May Place Rigid Embargo Against Shipments of Nickel from Canada to the United States”

## Story of the sinking of the TA Scott. Story of the Iron Men.

I think that the city would have been more than happy had the United States never entered WWI, as long as ships, whether over or under water, kept on sailing up and down the Thames to load and unload the cargoes of the world. It was not to be. And, like most American communities when the war came, bellicosity and enlistments and unashamed patriotism came with it. In “Re-inventing New London,” pages following the pictures of the *Deutschland* are filled with pictures of WWI parades. The State Pier became an adjunct docking resource for the navy and was used to berth submarines well into the middle of the Cold War. By 1977 there were no longer even subs at the facility, and it was falling into disrepair. More lobbying, more investment, more hopes and in 2003 once again the City of New London is hustling business for the Pier.