

PLANS FOR SCAPA SCUTTling.

VON REUTER'S SIGNAL

"MOST SECRET" LETTER FROM BERLIN.

New light is thrown on the scuttling of the German Fleet at Scapa, on June 21, by an Admiralty statement issued yesterday.

The statement includes the text of a "most secret" letter sent in May by Admiral von Trotha, Chief of the German Admiralty, to Admiral von Reuter, the commander-in-chief of the interned ships; and the text of von Reuter's letter to the German commanding officers giving detailed instructions for preparatory measures for the sinking, and explaining how the signal would be given.

The letter from Admiral von Trotha was salvaged from the Emden, von Reuter's flagship, early in July. The letter and the copy of von Reuter's order to sink the ships at Scapa were found in the safe in the admiral's cabin. All communications coming through the regular channels for the officers and men of the German fleet at Scapa were sent to London for censorship; but the letter from the Chief of the German Admiralty evaded the British Censor. The German Fleet at Scapa was fed and clothed from Germany. In May the Dollart came from Germany to Scapa, and, as the Admiralty point out, on June 17, the date of Admiral von Reuter's instructions to sink the ships, two German transports, the *Bardenia* and the *Schlesvig*, arrived with provisions and to repatriate surplus crews. The coincidence is significant.

It has been stated that Admiral von Reuter supposed at the critical period that the armistice expired at midday on June 21, and based his decision to scuttle his ships on articles which appeared in *The Times* on June 16 and 17, the first of which he read on June 20 and the second on June 21, the day of the scuttling. *The Times* of June 16 contained the official summary of the German reply to the proposed Treaty of Peace, in which was the sentence:—

Under the proviso of a financial arrangement, Germany is prepared to surrender not only the surface warships demanded, but all ships of the line.

The Times of June 17 contained the official summary of the Allies' reply to the German counter-proposals, which included under the heading "Naval":—

The German proposals cannot be entertained. The naval articles have been carefully framed and must be accepted unconditionally. No negotiations are necessary on this subject.

Admiral Trotha's typewritten letter is to be photographed for widespread distribution. Attached to it at present is a rough translation made at Scapa immediately after it was discovered in the Emden.

Admiral von Reuter is still detained in this country, and is one of the prisoners at Donington Hall.