The St. John Standard

VOL. VIII. NO. 292 | SIXTEEN PAGES. | SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1917. | WEATHER—FAIR. | PRICE TWO CENTS

WILSON, FROM SICK BED, ISSUES ORDER ARMING AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIPS AGAINST GERMAINS

AT THE SAME TIME HE CALLS FOR EXTRA SESSION OF CONGRESS TO TAKE ACTION ON WHOLE SITUATION

United States on Brink of Actual War Against Huns Determined to Fully Protect All Rights of Citizens.

WHAT MAY HAPPEN NEXT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON GERMANY'S ACTION.

Necessary Preparations for Arming of Commerce Carriers Have Been Completed—Washington Will be Absolutely Ready When the Actual Clash Comes.

Washington, March 9.—President Wilson, from a sick bed, today ordered the arming of American merchant ships against Germany's ruthless submarine warfare, and at the same time issued a proclamation calling an extra session of congress to meet April 16. The president's decision came suddenly late this afternoon, following the action on important questions, and the submission of formal opinions by Secretary of State Lansing and Attorney-General Gregory that he has the power to arm merchantmen without action of congress.

Details of the government's armed neutrality plans for defending the merchant marine were withheld to avoid endangering Americans and their ships by permitting the information to reach Germany. The only statement at the White House and the navy department was that the president was determined to fully protect American rights. The decision, coming at the end of a period of tense waiting, was generally hailed as the natural and unavoidable next step in the policy adopted by the president when he broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, and gave warning that the United States could not tolerate attacks on American ships and citizens in violation of international law.

Fraught with the grave possibility of war with Germany, the action was taken by President Wilson only after he was convinced that Germany actually was proceeding with her campaign of ruthlessness, and had made efforts to plot with Mexico and Japan against the territorial integrity of the United States.

Preparations Already Made.

Long before the order was given from the White House all necessary preparations for the arming of merchantmen had been completed at the navy department. Secretary Daniels, however, issued an appeal to the press of the nation to refrain from discussing these preparations. The president's action sent a thrill through the senate, meeting in special session, and through the government departments. Still hoping that war with Germany will be avoided, officials and senators declared that the issue rests entirely with Germany. Formal announcement of the government's policy was given in an announcement from the White House.

The president signed the proclamation calling the extra session of congress and authorized the publication of the explanatory statement with Secretary Tumulty standing at his bedside. A severe cold has kept him from seeing callers for three days, and he was put to bed by his physician yesterday.

Believes Nation Endorses Him.

In deciding that he has the power to arm merchantmen, the president took the position that an old statute passed in 1918, cited in the senate debate as prohibiting such a step without congressional action, has no application to the present situation. He is satisfied that the nation stands behind him, and accepts the overwhelming vote in the house on the armed neutrality bill, and the known opinion of a large majority of the senate, as proof of the attitude of congress.

Although the bill which failed of passage in the senate provided for a bond issue of $100,000,000 to pay the expenses of armed neutrality, the government has sufficient money available for its immediate purposes. Congress may be asked to provide more when the extra session convenes.

Under a bill passed during the last days of last congress the funds at the disposal of the federal war risk bureau to insure American ships was increased to $15,000,000.

The Issue on Germany.

Armed neutrality is expected to remove the practical blockade of American ports, and place the issue of eventual war squarely upon Germany. An attack upon an armed American vessel will precipitate a fight, if the ship gets sight of the submarine, and an unwarned attack will be regarded by the United States as an act of war.

Germany and Austria both have declared armed merchantmen war vessels. These declarations were based largely, however, upon the charge that British merchant ships used their armament offensively, and it remains to be seen whether Germany will so class and treat American craft with defensive arms.

The whole of the German press comment and unofficial utterances since the question was raised in this country has indicated the conviction that any armed vessel should be considered hostile, and sunk in the same way as a belligerent war vesel. There has been no official expression on the subject.

Germany's Position Not Clear.

Germany's exact policy toward American vessels sailing through the war zone since its proclamation Feb 1 has not been quite clear, owing to the fact that less than a dozen such voyages have been made, and it is possible that all the vessels that escaped succeeded in avoiding the submarines entirely. It has been suggested that Germany probably issued instructions to her commanders not to sink American ships without every precaution for those on board, as a last hope of keeping America out of the war. The ruthless destruction of passenger liners like the California and the Laconia, however, is felt here to render this belief improbable.

The effect of America's action on other neutral nations will be awaited with keen interest.

The Proclamation.

The president's proclamation calling the extra session of congress follows:

"Whereas public interest requires that the congress of the United States should be convened in extra session at 12 o'clock noon on the 16th day of April, 1917, to receive such communications as may be made by the executive,

"Now, therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim and declare that an extraordinary occasion requires the congress of the United States to convene in extra sessions at the capitol in the city of Washington on the 16th day of April, 1917, at 12 o'clock noon, of which all persons who shall at that time be entitled to act as members thereof are hereby requested to take notice.

"Given under my hand and the seal of the United States of America, the ninth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and seventeen, and of the independence of the United States the one hundred and forty-first.

"Secretary Tumulty stated in connection with the president's call for an extra session of congress that the president is convinced that he has the power to arm American merchant ships, and is free to exercise it at once, but so much necessary legislation is pressing for consideration that he is convinced that it is for the best interests of the country to have an early session of the sixty-fifth congress, whose support he will also need in all matters collateral to the defense of our merchant marines."

Ask Voluntary Censorship.

Lacking legal authority to establish general censorship, the administration tonight appealed to the patriotism of the country's newspapers and cable companies to suppress publication and transmission of information about the movements of American merchantt craft now to be armed against German submarines.

"The best news that readers can have," the secretary said, in a formal statement to press reporters, "is that the government will protect the rights of Americans to the freedom of the seas.

"The publication of details can serve no good purpose, and might jeopardize human life."

Mr. Daniels has determined not to reveal any of the department's plans for carrying out the policy ordered by President Wilson. He previously has stated, however, that the navy is prepared with guns, ammunition, gun crews and all other necessary equipment or personnel to carry out the instructions.

Navy yard commandants will superintend the actual installation of guns on merchant craft.

Contracts for additional guns of suitable size are being speeded up. It is expected that they can be completed so that weapons will be quickly available for converting merchant craft into naval auxiliaries, if war comes.

WANTS TO CANADIAN BUY WHEAT CROP

British Government Negotiating for Purchase of Entire 1917 Production.

Special to The Standard.

Ottawa, March 9.—Britain is negotiating for the purchase of the netire Canadian wheat crop of 1917. The price to be fixed and lesser details of the purchase are now the subject of correspondence between Ottawa and London. For obvious reasons no statement in respect to the negotiations can be made by the government here, but it is understood that the views of the western farmers were obtained last week when J. A. Mahorg, president of the Western Grain Growers, President Wood of the United Farmers of Alberta, and R. MacKenzie, secretary of the Grain Growers, met Sir Geo. Foster. Sir George Foster explained the British proposals with the farmers' representatives, and it is understood that they will present theri answer before March 10. Canada's wheat crop in 1915 was 350,000,000 bushels; last year owing to drought and rust it was considerably less.

WAR WITH U.S. DEPENDS ON PRESIDENT

So Declared Dr. Alfred Zimmerman, German Foreign Secretary—Submarine Policy to Be Pursued.

London, March 9.—On being asked by a representative of a Budapest newspaper whether war between the United States and Germany was expected the German foreign secretary, Dr. Alfred Zimmermann, as quoted in an Exchange Telegraph despatch from Copenhagen replied:

"I do not know. It depends on President Wilson. Since the severance of diplomatic relations we have been without official information from America, but I can say this much: We shall pursue the submarine warfare with all means at our disposal."

Dr. Zimmermann said he believed there would be no change in Germany's relations with the neutral nations of Europe during the war.

THE DAY IN THE WAR

FRENCH STILL PUSH GERMANS FARTHER BACK

Our Allies Continue to Make Progress on Whole Line.

HEAVY FIGHTING IN CHAMPAGNE.

Bad Weather Hampers Developments— Russians Suffer Minor Reverses in East but Keep up Vigorous Fighting.

Bitter fighting has taken place in Champagne, with the French withstanding German attacks and taking further trenches, says the latest French official communication. Between Butt Du Mesnil and Maisons De Champagne, French troops took prisoners and made further gains north of the road running between the two places. The number of Germans taken by the French in the past two days in this region now totals 170.

Three violent attacks were launched by the Germans in the Maisons De Champagne sector. The German efforts failed, Paris says, and the attackers left many dead on the ground. The French attack Thursday, it is announced, included the blowing up of German works on a front of 1,500 metres to a depth of 600 to 800 metres.

German trenches on Height 185 and Maisons De Champagne, Berlin reports, were entered by the French in their attacks, but the positions later were regained, except for a farm near Height 185. Increased artillery action in the Champagne region is also announced by Berlin. Elsewhere on the western front there have been raids by French, British and German troops. Nine raids, London says, were made by the Germans against British trenches north of Wulverghem, between Armentieres and Ypres. Berlin says 37 prisoners and two machine guns were captured in this region.

London reports the capture of some prisoners from the German raiders and a successful British raid south of Biaches. Colder weather again has returned to the western front, accompanied by gales and snow, and is interfering with operations on a large scale.

Six hundred prisoners were taken by Austro-German forces in an attack on Russian positions between the Trotus and Uzul valleys, in Western Moldavia. Petrograd says that three heights were taken by the attackers and adds that the Russians are making counter-attacks. There has been no marked activity in the other fields. Petrograd reports some Russian activity north of Erzingan, in Armenia, and an advance southwest of Sakkiz, Persia, towards the Turkish border.

BRITISH GUNS BATTER HUNS UNCEASINGLY

Not a Moment's Respite Day or Night on Western Front.

SOMME RETREAT COST MANY LIVES.

Enemy Selected His Best Soldiers and Sent them Out on Hopeless Task of Withstanding Victorious Allies.

From a staff correspondent of the Associated Press, British headquarters in France, Mar. 9, via London—Blizzard conditions have prevailed on the western front for two days, holding the military operations within a very small compass. Coming after a ten days' thaw and the apparent approach of an early spring the renewed cold has been keenly felt. Howling March gales accompanied by heavy falls of snow, have interfered with nearly every phase of modern war activity, except the persistent roar of the British guns, which fire continuously, day and night, and regardless of weather, hurling death, destruction and confusion behind the enemy's lines. They "search out" roads, pound communication lines to cut off supplies, "pay attention" to places where reliefs are likely to take place, and otherwise harass the Germans with scarcely a moment's respite.

It is increasingly evident that carrying out their retirement in the Arras and Somme areas, the Germans sacrificed large numbers of their very best soldiers. Carefully selected from various regiments they were given certain posts with instructions to hold them against all odds, a majority of them having no idea whatever that they were fighting a rearguard action. Prisoners taken represent the highest type of the German army.

A Sacrificial Screen.

It was not until the "S. O. S." rockets for artillery assistance went completely unanswered that these men suspected the position in which they had been placed—that they formed a sacrificial screen, covering the retreat of the main body of their comrades. The prisoners still profess belief in a German victory, frankly saying that they base their confidence largely on German's submarine campaign, which they and the rest of the army, have been told is sure to bring peace within three months.

Letters found on prisoners and dead men also show the extent to which the promise of victory through unrestricted submarine warfare has been disseminated throughout the empire. On the other hand, great pains seem to have been taken to prevent the men at the front learning the details and the possibilities entailed in the break with the United States. The prisoners know virtually nothing of that situation, although one had a letter from home which read: "I hope you are keeping well. One reads of British attacks daily. What say you about America? Our situation is becoming more and more critical. Perhaps the U-boats will bring the war to a speedy finish, or else we shall make more enemies."

The British artillery having made the bringing up of asphyxiating gas cylinders to points of vantage too costly, the Germans have resorted to the unrestricted employment of gas shells, gas bombs and gas jars, the latter being fired from trench mortars. German guns, during the past ten days, have been spraying gas shells about one end of the British front.

THREE N. B. MEN IN CASUALTY LIST

Ottawa, Mar. 9.

Infantry.

Killed in action—A. B. Ross, New Glasgow, N. S. Leo. McNeil, McNeil's Vale, N. S. **Joseph Leger, Rogersville, N. B.** A. R. Spence, Ste. Croix, N. S. **Wm. Malen, Sackville, N. B.**

Died of wounds—J. M. McCormick. Launching Place, P. E. I.

Dangerously wounded, accidentally—E. S. Allan, 7 Victoria street, Amherst, N. S.

Seriously ill and wounded—G. T. Grant, Gaultars, Fortune Bay, Nfld.

Wounded and shell shock—Major John McKenzie, Westville, N. S.

Mounted Rifles.

Corporal K. G. Francis, Dalhousie, N. B.

DUTCH-BELGIAN FRONTIER CLOSED

London, March 9.—The closing of the Dutch-Belgian frontier by the German military authorities is reported in a Central News despatch from Amsterdam.

GERMANY'S SIXTH WAR LOAN.

Berlin, March 9, via Sayville.—The first subscription to the sixth German war loan was for ten million marks, it was announced today by the Overseas News Agency (the official German news bureau.) The subscriber was the Continental Cacutchouc and Gutta Percha Company of Hanover.

A CONCESSION TO HOLLAND.

The Hague, via London, March 9.—The Dutch government has been notified by Germany that from March 15 absolute safety can be assured for shipping through the North Sea channel west of Denmark through which transatlantic traffic must pass.

MORE HUN TRICKERY FOUND WHEN UNITED STATES TOOK POSSESSION OF APPAM

Wireless Apparatus Installed and Operated by Dynamo Which Supplied Electric Lights for the Ship.

British and Russian Troops Repulse German Attacks — French Penetrate Enemy Trenches in Campagne Region Taking a Number of Prisoners.

Norfolk, Va., March 9.—When United States Marshal Saunders took possession of the liner Appam after the break with Germany he found installed there a secret wireless apparatus by which all wireless messages sent in this section of the country were read. A fine wire was found strung beneath the pipe leading to the whistle on the smokestack on the Appam and extending above it, as do the regular antennae of wireless.

The wire led to the interior of the vessel, where dynamos were kept running to make the current for lighting the ship.

Investigation, it is said, led to the discovery that the wire finally ran to the room occupied by Lieut. Hans Berg, where the messages were recorded by flash by an electric light bulb.

Later investigation developed that the dynamo on the boiler room had been used to take the place of that in the wireless room, which was put out of commission when the United States court took charge. Messages could be sent and also received.

German Attacks Repulsed.

London, March 9.—The British official communication issued this evening says:

"Yesterday evening, after a heavy bombardment, the enemy launched five raids against our trenches north attack with four parties early this morning. In each case only one party effected an entrance into our trenches.

"The others were successfully repulsed. The enemy left some prisoners in our hands. We have between 20 and 30 men missing.

Enemy Driven Back.

Petrograd, March 9, via London.—The repulse of a small German attack on the northern end of the Russian front is reported in today's official communication. The Germans captured hill positions on the Roumanian front. The statement follows:

"Western front: Near Olai, in the neighborhood of Mitau, the enemy, in strength of about two companies, assumed the offensive after artillery preparation. He was driven back to his trenches by our fire. Elsewhere on the front scouting reconnaissances and exchanges of fire are proceeding.

"A squadron of our airplanes yesterday bombarded the Soly station, west of Smorgon."

Advance in Persia.

Russian activities in Turkish Armenia, northwest of Erzingan, are reported in today's war office statement, recounting a successful reconnoitering operation.

A Russian advance is also in progress toward the Mesopotamia border from Sakkiz (in Persia, about 150 miles northwest of Hamadan, and about 25 miles from the Mesopotamian frontier.)

French Gain Ground.

Paris, March 9.—The official communication issued this evening says:

"In the region of Crapeaumesnil, to the south of Roye and near Auberive, our detachments at several points penetrated enemy trenches, to which important damage was done. During the course of these actions we took about 20 prisoners.

"In the sector of Maisons de Champagne the Germans launched three violent attacks on the positions we reconquered yesterday. Our barrage fire and the fire of our machine guns broke down the attacks of the enemy, who was obliged to withdraw, leaving a large number of dead on the ground.

"On our side we made prisoners during the course of the day, and took further trenches to the north of the road running from Butte du Mesnil to Maisons de Champagne. The total number of prisoners taken in this region has reached 170, including four officers.

TURKISH OPERATION ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE

Russian Successes in Persia and British Victories in Mesopotamia have Completely Restored Allied Prestige in the East.

London, March 9.—A despatch to Reuter's from Petrograd says: "The Russian legation at Teheran has informed the Persian government that Russian troops have occupied Bijar, Sinnah, Hamadan Kangaver and Danlatabad. The Persian government has been invited to retake possession of these towns, which have been evacuated by the Turks."

London, March 10.—The latest Russian despatches received here reporting the wiehdrawal of the Turks from several far apart points in Western Persia, are regarded as showing that the Ottoman troops are now in general retreat from the invaded territory toward their own border, pursued by Russians, whose government is calling on Persia to re-occupy the towns already evacuated.

The Turkish retirement is attributed here to the British success at Kut-el-Aamara and the rapid advance toward Bagdad, which threatens the Turkish lines of communiction with Persia. The Times describing the Turkish operations as being on the verge of collapse, nevertheless warns the people against exaggerating the prospects of the Russo-British activities.

The general operations against the Turks in Asia the Times says that although the campaign in Armenia, Persia and Mesopotamia are all interrelated, there is no early prospect of bringing them in closer touch. The newspaper points out that Bagdad has not been captured, and that before this is effected it may be necessary to seize advanced positions northward of the city. Moreover, it adds, the flood season is near. Nevertheless the belief is expressed that General Maude's successes have already brilliantly restored British prestige in the middle east.

ARRESTED FOR MURDER.

Dawson, Y. T., Mar. 9—Two Eskimos, charged with murdering Father Jean Baptiste Rouviere and Father Guillaume LeRoux, Catholic missionaries, in the Bear Lake region, east of Fort Norman, in the winter of 1913-14, are prisoners at Herschel Island, and will be brought to Fort McPherson later. News of the murder was brought to Herschel Island two years ago by a big game hunter who found a band of Eskimos wearing the gowns, crucifixes and vestments of Catholic priests. On investigation it was found that the missionaries were missing. The priests were natives of France, and about thirty-five years old. The alleged murderers were arrested by Captain Lenauze, who crossed Coronation Gulf and went to the Bear Lake region.