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Question of Protection Against Air Raids Gets Ventilated in House of Commons

London, Feb. 17.—Harold J. Tennant, Under Secretary of War, made an important announcement. "From to-day," he said, "the Navy will deal with all hostile aircraft attempting to reach Britain, but the control of the air defences within the country have been transferred from the Admiralty to the War Office."

Balfour said: "The one great difficulty in connection with the enlargement of the air service has been the lack of material. We are still behind in certain directions," he said, "not because the Government is obvious of the necessities of the situation but because the material cannot be obtained."

Arthur Lench, Nationalist member for Westchase, interrupted Balfour, asking what particular material it is you referred to, but the First Lord ignored the question, continuing, he said:

"Every possible resource of Europe and America is being utilized for the provision of air material. One of the difficulties is that nothing can be standardized because the air service constantly is developing and changing. We are deficient in air defence guns," continued Balfour, "but that is due to lack of material. The whole question here has to be considered in relation to the demands of the Army and Navy for competing material."

To-day's debate in the House of Parliament on the air defence of Great Britain was chiefly remarkable for the frank admissions made by the Cabinet spokesmen; present conditions are far from satisfactory.

Andrew Bonar Law, Secretary for the Colonies; Balfour, First Lord of the Admiralty; Tennant, Under Secretary for War; all spoke in this vein. They declared however, the Government was doing all that was humanly possible.

Balfour scored a sensation to-day when he declared that one of England's great mistakes in days prior to the war was her failure to

develop Dirigible airship fleet along the lines similar to that of Germany.

"With regard to Zeppelins," he said, "looking back on events I am sorry we didn't develop that type of vessel."

The Government supporters tonight expressed the hope that Ministerial statements to-day would do much to clarify the atmosphere and reassure the country.

Bonar Law summing up the Cabinet's position on the air defence in a short speech, said as follows: "I make no pretense that the Government is satisfied with this branch of the service, but I assure the House we are trying to effect remedies for all defences."

Mr. Tennant, on behalf of the War Office, after outlying the new scheme for the co-ordination of the Army and Navy munitions department in the work of air defence closed with the statement that while we have made strides in providing the proper equipment and defence for arsenals at vulnerable points in the country, the safety of every part of the United Kingdom against attack by long range aircraft can never be complete.

French Airmen Raid Strumitz

London, Feb. 17.—Thirteen French aeroplanes carried out a raid on the town camps of Strumitz, Bulgaria, yesterday, according to a Reuter's despatch from Saloniki to-day. The machines dropped 158 bombs, causing several fires, it is added.

The despatch states that the machines although subjected to a severe bombardment returned to their base untouched.

NEW YORK, Feb. 16.—A news agency despatch from Paris to-day says that three Teutonic submarines have been sunk in the Adriatic Sea by French cruisers, according to the Echo de Paris.

YPRES SCENE OF HEAVY FIGHTING

London, Feb. 17.—A British official statement of the campaign in Flanders, issued to-night, is as follows:

"An artillery bombardment by both sides and heavy fighting with hand grenades has taken place the past 24 hours between Ypres and Comines Canal and Ypres and Comines railway.

"Fighting continues with the exception of the above passed quietly along the whole British front.

"The capture of 600 yards of our front line trench was reported yesterday, preceded by heavy bombardment, and the explosion of five mines which rendered our front trench untenable. Attacks which were extended over 4000 yards of front were repulsed every where else with considerable loss to the enemy.

"The trench captured by the enemy has frequently changed hands during the last year and for this reason it has been called 'International Trench.'"

Uncle Sam Finds That War Is Good Money Maker

Washington, Feb. 17.—American made war munitions now are pouring into Europe at the rate of nearly two million dollars worth daily with figures swelling rapidly as the production increases.

For a long time after the war began shipments were negligible and not until the middle of 1915 did millions of dollars worth of war materials contracted for begin to move in considerable quantities. Estimates made by the Department of Commerce to-day put the total munitions shipments since the European war began the purchase for present war was close to quarter billion dollars. At the rate shipments are going now the next four months would see this total doubled, even if production remained at a standstill; but production is declared to be growing faster now than at any time since American manufacturers began conversion of their plants into munitions factories.

SAID TO BE THE WORK OF HUN AGENTS

Toronto, Feb. 17.—A fierce fire whose progress was marked by loud explosions broke out here at three a.m. to-day in the American Club on Wellington Street, West, and resulted in the death of P. I. Nairson, mining broker of this city, formerly of Dallas, Texas, and the probable fatal injury to Edward Johnson, nightwatchman; loss estimated at \$50,000.

The club has been active in recruiting the 97th Battalion (American Legion) for overseas service.

Captain Minard, paymaster, stated they have been warned that the American Club would be wrecked.

The chief who fought the flames says he has no doubt of incendiary origin of fire as the roof was nearly blown off. The way the floor hangs, he says, is evidence of an explosion. He himself says he heard three distance explosions while ruins of fire which destroyed building early this morning were cooling.

The directors of the American Club have met and made their own inquiry into the origin of the fire. Their findings was that the fire was without doubt of incendiary malicious origin.

The Fall of Erzerum Causes Great Rejoice-ment in Petrograd

PETROGRAD, Feb. 17.—The fall of Erzerum, which had been confidently awaited since the news of the taking by the Russians of nine of the eight-gate forts guarding the gateway to Asia Minor, is the cause of great elation at Petrograd. Controlling the roads through Armenia with access to Trebizond, Tabriz and Mesopotamia the capture of Erzerum is calculated to have immense strategic importance in the Russian campaign. The Caucasus will indirectly affect the Balkan campaign by relieving the pressure on the Allies.

Why the Russian military observers thought that Erzerum would be forced to capitulate was based on the fact that the remaining nine forts were considered of less importance than those already in Russian hands and could be readily flanked or even ignored in forcing the evacuation of the Turkish stronghold. The taking of the first fort is believed to have destroyed the plan of defence since the impregnability of Erzerum rested on the assumption by the German engineers who constructed the fortifications that the positions was safe from an assault from the south.

Despite the intense cold and deep snow, Russian artillery broke through and flanked other positions which went down like a house of cards. The result was that the Russian onslaught exceeded all expectations.

The Caucasian campaign has derived great benefit from the Russian dominion in the Black Sea, which enabled the army to receive a plentiful supply of provisions and munitions. The number of men in the garrison of the Turkish position before the recent retreat of the Turkish army is estimated at 80,000. These numbers are believed to have been considerably augmented by the falling back of the Turks on this positions.

MUST FACE IT

LONDON, Feb. 17.—Chancellor of the Exchequer, Reginald McKenna, announced to-day the British national debt to the end of the financial year March 31st, £2,200,000,000. Germany's gross war expenditure to the end of 1915 is more than £1,500,000,000. Credits voted by France between the outbreak of the war to end of Dec., 1915, about £1,240,000,000, and for the first quarter of 1916, £300,920,000.

STILL FIGHTING OVER WORDS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16.—Germany is understood to have agreed to the suggestion of the United States that she substitute the words "recognizes liability" for the words "assumes liability" in the tentative draft of the Lusitania case.

The revised draft was received here to-day from Berlin.

BIG FIRE IN BROOKLYN, N.Y. TOTAL LOSS ESTIMATED \$4,000,000

New York, Feb. 17.—No evidence of incendiarism has been found by Chief Fire Marshal Brophy, it is announced to-night in connection with the fire on Brooklyn waterfront early to-day which caused the destruction of 3 British steamships, 37 lighters and barges and a new 900 foot pier belonging to the New York Dock Co., and \$1,000,000 worth of merchandise consigned to the Entente Allies.

The total loss is estimated at \$3,000,000 and \$4,000,000, although nearly 300 persons were imperiled by the flames which raged fiercely for several hours; only one was unaccounted for to-night. The missing man was a member of the crew of one of the steamers. Several persons were injured; however, there were many sensational rescues.

There were reports throughout the day that the fire was started by incendiary, but they probably were based upon the fact that an immense quantity of merchandise was on board the vessels and on the pier which was destined for European Governments now engaged in war.

Rigid investigation is now being conducted by officials of the department who are convinced that defective electric wiring was responsible for the fire.

Couldn't Agree With the Gov't's War Policy

Cockermouth, Eng., Feb. 17.—The constituents of Sir Wilfred Lawson, member of Parliament for this district, have accepted his resignation which was tendered on the ground that he was unable to support the war policy of the Government. Sir Wilfred is one of the small sections of the Liberal party who are called "little Englanders."

BURNED AT PIER

NEW YORK, Feb. 16.—The steamer Bolton Castle and Pacific Pier, belonging to the New York Dock Co., Brooklyn, were destroyed by fire to-day.

OFFICIAL BRITISH

The Governor, Newfoundland: LONDON, Feb. 16.—The following order has been issued:

At the Court at Buckingham Palace, the 15th day of February, 1916.

Present: The Kings Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

Whereas a state of war exists between His Majesty and the German Emperor, the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, the Sultan of Turkey and the King of the Bulgarians; And Whereas His Majesty holds it to be his prerogative duty as well as necessary for the defence and protection of the realm;

And Whereas His Majesty did by Order in Council, dated November 10th, 1915, prohibit the carriage of Cargo by any British steamship exceeding 500 tons gross tonnage, registered in the United Kingdom, from one foreign port to another, unless exempted by license;

And Whereas it has been made to appear to His Majesty that it is essential to the defence and protection of the Realm that in the exercise of his prerogatives aforesaid he should prohibit as from and after the first day of March, 1916, any British steamship registered in the United Kingdom exceeding 500 tons gross tonnage, except steamships engaged in the coasting trade of the United Kingdom, from proceeding on any voyage unless the owner or charterer of such steamship has been granted a license as hereinafter provided;

Now, therefore, His Majesty is pleased, by and with the advice of his privy Council, and in exercise of his prerogatives as aforesaid and of all other powers give him thereunto, enabling to order, and it is hereby ordered, that from and after the first day of March, 1916, no British steamship registered in the United Kingdom exceeding the steamships engaged in the coasting trade of the United Kingdom, shall proceed on any voyage unless a license to do so has been granted to or in favour of the owner or charterer of such steamship by the Licensing Committee appointed by the Board of Trade under the provisions of the aforesaid Order in Council of November 10th, 1915, which license may be made general in reference to classes of ships or their voyages, or special, and the President of the Board of Trade to act and give instructions and directions accordingly. Almeric Fitzroy."

BONAR LAW.

Holland Again Storm Swept

Amsterdam, Feb. 17.—A storm is now raging over Holland causing great anxiety regarding floods and disasters day and night. Hundreds of laborers are working feverishly to prevent fresh ruptures of dykes. The force of the storm is such that all kinds of strengthening material is speedily washed away by giant waves breaking across the dykes. Should the storm continue it is feared two-thirds of the town of Monnikendam, a Province in the North of Holland, a few miles from Amsterdam, will be flooded. In several other towns the waters have washed through the sluices and have reached many houses, the occupants of which have been forced to evacuate. Telegraphic and telephone communication throughout Holland is at a standstill.

BRITISH

The Governor, Newfoundland: LONDON, Feb. 16.—The Viceroy of the Caucasus announces the fall of Erzerum after a five days' unexampled storm and attack.

BONAR LAW.

LONDON, Feb. 15 (official).—Last evening after a heavy bombardment on the whole front of the Ypres salient and to the south of Hooge, the enemy made several infantry attacks.

Between the Ypres-Comines Canal and Ypres-Comines railway, the enemy broke into our front trench on a front of about 600 yards; all his other attacks failed. Heavy bombardment continues on both sides.

RUSSIA.

PETROGRAD, Feb. 15 (official).—On the Caucasus front, in the course of our offensive in the Erzerum region, after artillery preparations were stormed and carried one of the Erzerum forts, capturing more than 20 guns as well as prisoners and munitions.

BELGIAN.

PARIS, Feb. 15.—The following Belgian official communication was made public to-day:

"As reprisals for recent enemy aerial raids, one of our flotillas dropped successfully sixteen heavy bombs on Handzaem aerodrome.

CAPTURE OF ERZERUM WILL ENABLE RUSSIANS TO MARCH TO RELIEF OF BRITISH AT KUT-EL-AMARA

LONDON, Feb. 17.—Erzerum, Turkey's chief city in Armenia, is in the hands of the Russians, the heavy assaults by the Russians against the long line of detached forts protecting the city lasting over a period of five days are described by Grand Duke Nicholas, the Russian Commander-in-Chief as unprecedented and have resulted in the capture of the fortress. Unofficial reports early in the present month said the German Field Marshal Von Der Goltz with 80,000 men was besieged in the city with provisions for only a fortnight. The capture of Erzerum is considered of great strategic importance, from it radiates roads leading in all directions. Over those leading to the south-east and south it will be possible for the Russians to fight their way towards their compatriots operating against the Persians and Turks in the north-west and west of Persia or to proceed south towards Bagdad to the relief of the British bottled up in Kut-el-Amara, on the Tigris, south-east of Bagdad. The immediate effect of the Russian victory on the situation on Persia and Mesopotamia is problematical however, for despite the roads the country is mountainous and there is still much ground to be covered, something over 200 miles before Lake Urumian district in Persia is reached and over 600 miles before a junction with the British at Kut-el-Amara could be formed.

With the advent of stormy weather on the western battle line the heavy fighting the past few days seemingly has simmered again to artillery bombardments and mining operations. Berlin reports, however, the British and French endeavored to recapture the trench positions taken from them by the Germans respectively south-east of Ypres and in Champagne, near Tahure, but their attacks failed. Paris asserts, on the contrary, that near Tahure the French have retaken portions of their former trenches. The British and Germans are still at a

deadly grip for possession of trenches captured from the former south-east of Ypres. Artillery and hand grenades are being employed in the fighting. London reports in the attack in which the British last 600 yards of a front line trench the Germans attacked over a front of 4000 yards, but were everywhere repulsed with considerable losses, except at the point the trench was captured.

On the Russian front a driving snowstorm along the entire line has almost stopped operations.

The usual bombardments interspersed with infantry attacks continue on the Austro-Italian front.

In Albania, the Austrians and Bulgarians are said to have formed a junction and are battling for the capture of the important seaport of Dur-Essad Pasha's forces, consisting of Albanians, Serbians and Montenegrins.

Strumitz, in Bulgaria, has been raided by thirteen French aeroplanes which dropped 158 bombs and returned to their base unscathed. Several fires were started by the bombs.

The Ministers of the Entente Powers have informed the Belgian Government that hostilities against the Germans or their Allies will not be permitted to end without Belgium having re-established its political and economic independence. They added that the Belgian Government would also be called upon to take part in peace negotiations.

The question of submarines still remains an open one by reason of Germany's announcement of her intention to treat as warships all armed merchantmen after Feb. 29. Secretary of State Lansing is making careful study of Germany's latest reply with reference to the Lusitania question to ascertain if there is anything in the German memorandum concerning armed merchantmen which conflicts with assurances given by Germany in the Lusitania negotiations regarding the sinking of liners and the safety of their passengers.



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