

WEATHER:
North and South Caro-
lina—Tuesday, fair
and warmer.

THE WILMINGTON DISPATCH

TODAY'S NEWS
TODAY

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HUN THREAT NO LONGER CONSIDERED

The Much Talked Spring Drive Fails to Impress Americans

WEEKLY REVIEW BY
WAR DEPARTMENT

Believed That if There is Any Early Offensive the Initiative Must Be With the Allied Armies.

Washington, March 18.—Germany's great of a great spring offensive on the Western front no longer impresses American military men.

In its weekly review today the War Department records the conclusion that the enemy, in spite of his vast preparations, will not take the offensive unless forced to. This confirms the opinion many officers have experienced for weeks in the face of official forecasts to the contrary from both sides of the Atlantic.

"While hostile preparations for an offensive in the West are not slackening," the review says, "it is becoming more evident that the enemy will launch the offensive only if compelled to do so by the exigencies of the general strategic situation."

The nature of the information upon which this opinion is based is not disclosed. It is noted that fresh German divisions have arrived on the Western front and the German lines are said to be approaching the point in depth beyond which it would be impossible to go without choking communicating lines and hampering free movement of reserves. Apparently, however, this concentration has come to be regarded as a defensive, not an offensive movement.

Much of the statement is devoted to the activities of American troops now engaged on five separate fronts, one of the sectors lying close to the Swiss border. The official communication, however, adds nothing to recently published press reports of the raids and trench fighting in which the Americans have been involved.

Elsewhere on the Western front, the experts find no evidence of impending major activities by either side. The period of inactivity, the statement adds, is being prolonged. It notes, however, indications of Austro-German concentrations on the Italian theatre which may forecast assaults on Verona or Brescia, as their objectives.

The statement follows: "The period of inactivity in the West is being prolonged. Though the raids now taking place would in the past have been considered important engagements, nevertheless, owing to the fact that they are merely of minor tactical value, they cannot be held to be major operations."

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A SEVERE GUNFIRE POURED ON GERMANS

With the American Army in France, Friday, March 15.—American artillery last night again bombarded supposed projector northwest of Toul. Photographs taken later showed the complete destructiveness of their gunfire.

There has been no infantry activity except the usual patrol through No Man's Land, and these reported no brushes with the enemy.

The German artillery fire has been decreasing in intensity to a certain extent, indicating that the enemy finds it too costly to keep up with the sustained American fire. A few German snipers were busy during last night and today but they got no victims.

RUSSIA'S ACCEPTANCE STRONGLY DENOUNCED

Washington, March 18.—Russia's acceptance of the German peace terms was denounced here today by Boris Bakmeteff, the Russian ambassador, who last November formally repudiated the Bolshevik government.

The conditions imposed by Germany, the ambassador says, threaten the existence and independence of the country. The embassy, he declared, will continue to advocate cooperation with the Allies in the war against Germany.

HOLLAND NEWSPAPERS ON SHIPPING SEIZURE

Some Bitterly Oppose the Allied Proposition, Others Acquiesce

The Hague, Saturday, March 16.—It is impossible for Holland to give an affirmative answer to the Entente's proposals concerning Dutch ships, says the Nieuwe Courant. "It is an act of violence," it adds, "to which we are subjected by the rulers of the ocean and nothing makes us so bitter as the attempt being made to base it on the so-called rule of international law—the antiquated Angary law—which is in no wise applicable here."

Will Have to Acquiesce. Amsterdam, March 16.—Discussing the Dutch shipping question the Tuijd says: "We shall have to acquiesce, but such rough misuse of power will not be forgotten by our people."

In an article denouncing the Allies the Handelsblad says: "We cannot think what our government will do. Will it publish a protest refusing to give its approval to piracy and leave the matter as it is, or will it make the best of a bad job and make an exchange for what will be taken away? If it is not exchanged will it request the ministers of these piratical powers to pack their trunks and depart. We should not lose much thereby. We do not know what the government will do and would not wish to advise it. At such a moment it must be left to the government's discretion to take that decision which is least harmful to the country and the people."

In the same article, however, the Handelsblad admits that it is unfortunately true that Holland is the only northern neutral which has done nothing to combat German submarine methods. It attributed the country's present position to the spirit which has dictated such an attitude.

The Telegraaf advocates acceptance of the offer of the Entente governments, adding: "Holland's existence as a free and independent nation and the possession of its colonies are at stake. By choosing the right path the government has it in its power to maintain the liberty of the nation, or irrevocably deliver it to the mercy of Germany, which, in its bid for world domination, has long had envious eyes on Holland. The Dutch nation will not permit itself to be delivered over to the German junkers."

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GERMANY THREATENING AMERICAN PROPERTY

Berlin Sends Message by the Swiss and Spanish Diplomats

London, March 18.—The Spanish and Swiss ambassadors at Berlin have been directed by the German foreign office to notify the American government that Germany will proceed with measures against American property in Germany in the same proportion that action is taken against German property in the United States, Reuter's Amsterdam correspondent reports.

Hitherto, it is stated in the Berlin advices announcing this action, the German government has restricted itself to measures "absolutely necessary to prevent enemy property in Germany being taken out of Germany during the war, and thereby possibly benefiting Germany's enemies."

There is a hundred times as much German property in the United States as there is American property in Germany, according to estimates presented recently to a Senate committee by A. Mitchell Palmer, alien property custodian.

The greater part of American property in Germany is represented in Standard Oil Company interests. The German law now enables the German government to do with American property exactly what Congress is being asked to do with German property in America.

War Finance Bill. Washington, March 18.—The administration's bill to establish a war finance corporation, already passed by the Senate, was before the House again today with leaders confident of a final vote early this week.



A distinctly military air was lent to this year's celebration of Washington's birthday in Paris by the presence of representatives of our army and navy and a guard of honor composed of American troops at the commemorative exercises at General Washington's statue in the Place d'Jena. Wreaths were placed about the statue and in the morning both Ambassador Sharp and Foreign Minister Pichon addressed the assemblage about the statue.

TWO EXPLOSIONS IN FRENCH PLANT TOOK HEAVY TOLL

Sixteen Persons Were Killed and a Large Number Injured

VALIANT WORK WAS DONE BY AMERICANS

American Soldiers and Red Cross First to Scene of Disaster—Windows All Over Paris Shattered

Paris, March 15.—Two violent explosions today in a factory at La Courneuve, north of Paris, caused the death of 16 persons and the injury of a large number, mostly slightly, according to an official announcement made tonight. The causes of the explosions have not yet been definitely determined. La Courneuve is seven kilometres from the cathedral of Notre Dame, in the direction of St. Denis. American Red Cross and Army ambulances were among the first at the scene of the explosion. American soldiers approached to within a few hundred yards of the burning buildings and carried the injured across fields to vehicles waiting to move the victims to hospitals in Paris and the suburbs.

An American army officer dressed the wounds of a child cut by flying glass nearly a mile from the scene of the disaster. The child was one of several scores in a school in which every window was shattered.

Firemen were unable to approach the burning factory nearer than 800 yards.

Survivors declared the accident was due to a man dropping a box of percussion fuses, which set off a box of grenades. Most of the workmen, realizing the danger, escaped.

All roofs and windows within a circumference of miles of the building were demolished, while buildings collapsed from the violence of the explosion. In every quarter of Paris windows were shattered and furniture overturned.

In a public school at Aubervilliers there was a panic and four girls died from fright.

Nearly 1,000 persons are sheltered as the result of damage to their homes.

Regarding the assistance given by Red Cross and American soldiers the municipal councillor of Bourget near where the explosion occurred said: "We must pay homage to the manner in which the American Red Cross organized assistance. American soldiers showed devotion not to be forgotten, in finding the injured, giving first aid, moving the unfortunates to safe localities and transporting those who had escaped to a hotel set aside for them."

NEW ENGLAND TROOPS.

With the American Army in France, Sunday, March 17.—The American troops who have been in action along the Chemin Des Dames are a division composed exclusively of New England units. The division contains units from all the New England States, troops from Massachusetts having been especially active.

SHIPYARD PLANS LOOKING BETTER FOR WILMINGTON

Arrangements for Constructing Fabricated Ships Here Progressing Nicely.

GENERAL MANAGER PIEZ IMPRESSED

The Plans for Work Here Have Been Gone Into With the Emergency Fleet Corporation Officials.

(By George H. Manning.) Washington, D. C., March 18.—The plans for establishing a shipbuilding yard at Wilmington to construct fabricated merchant ships for the United States Shipping Board is progressing satisfactorily to Washington officials who are in touch with the arrangements.

Fred Cox, a lawyer of Wadesboro, who has obtained the necessary financial backing for the yard, held a most satisfactory conference with Charles Piez, general manager of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, last week, at which plans for establishing the shipyard at Wilmington were discussed.

When Wilmington business men first took up with the Shipping Board the proposition of establishing a shipbuilding yard at Wilmington some months ago they were told by Chairman Hurley that the government was not building shipyards of its own, but was awarding contracts to private concerns to build the ships.

Not everybody who wanted a contract was given one, Chairman Hurley said, but only those who could furnish sufficient proof that they had the necessary financial backing, the men of experience in their organization capable of building the ships quickly, economically and efficiently, and those who could give assurance they could assemble the necessary skilled and unskilled workmen.

Several attempts were made by Wilmington men to comply with the requirements of the Shipping Board, but so far little or no progress has been made, it is understood.

The only alternative was to design a ship that could be built by men unskilled in shipbuilding and the parts of which could be made by plants not already engaged in making shipbuilding material.

It was an enormous undertaking, but Yankee grit and ingenuity mastered it. Today the American International Shipbuilding Corporation has almost completed construction of a \$24,000,000 shipyard at Hog Island, 12 miles from Philadelphia, where 26,000 men are employed, and where 50 building ways are being constructed on which 50 ships will be built at one time.

Unskilled laborers by the thousands have been brought into the Hog Island plant and after a short time sent to other shipbuilding yards and put through a schooling in such work as will fit them to return to Hog Island and build the fabricated ships.

Parts of these ships are being built at any number of steel mills in the United States and Canada and will be shipped to Hog Island and assembled. The parts will come all punched and numbered, much in the style of a knocked-down house, and

ACTIVITY ALONG AMERICAN FRONT GROWS LIVELIER

A Spy Within the American Lines is Suspected by Officials

RAIDING PARTIES BECOME FREQUENT

Americans Rambling over No Man's Land and Often Dropping Into Enemy Trenches

With the American Army in France, Sunday, March 17.—American intelligence officers report evidence leading to the conclusion that possibly a spy may be at work within the American lines northwest of Toul. Early this morning an American sentry saw flashes of a signal light from a window facing in the direction of the enemy lines. He fired through the window and dashed into the house, but failed to find anyone.

Four hours earlier some important telephone wires within the American lines were found to have been cut.

An American patrol last night entered the enemy trenches at one end of the sector and penetrated them for some distance without difficulty. Much valuable information was gathered. As they were about ready to return they established contact with the enemy, who opened fire with a machine gun. The Americans jumped to a safe position and hurled grenades, silencing the gun.

Returning to the American side of No Man's Land, the raiders brought back with them a German rifle breech, protected by a metallic cover over the muzzle and a snap clip cover, both of which operate quickly and efficiently. Officers declared it was the best thing of the kind they had ever seen for protection of rifles. The mechanism was turned over to the intelligence department, with a recommendation that the attachment be furnished American troops.

Another patrol on the other end of the sector reported that the enemy first line was held strongly. While the raiders were inspecting the German positions the enemy fired upon them several times with rifles and machine guns which are unusual at that point.

Our artillery bombarded effectively billets, troops and new enemy works at Lahayville, St. Baussant.

(Continued on Page Eight.)

will be rivetted together at Hog Island. Two styles of ships are being built there, one style of 7,500 tons to go 11-12 knots an hour, and one of 8,000 tons to go 15 knots an hour. They are somewhat different in every particular from the old-styled ship. They have no curves, are straight and square from one end to the other except for a short distance at each end, to make the bow and stern. They have been described as "skyscrapers lying on their sides."

This is the sort of ship it is proposed to build at Wilmington. The number that will be built there, the size of the yard, or whether any will be built there, will, of course, depend on developments.

FRENCH ARE GIVING HUNS HARD WORK

ARRANGING TO TAKE OVER DUTCH SHIPPING

Plans Formulating for Action As Soon as Holland Replies

Washington, March 18.—Plans for operation of the Dutch shipping which will be acquired by the United States and Great Britain either through voluntary agreement or by requisition were going forward steadily today while the governments awaited the reply of Holland to the demand that she accede to the terms of the contract which Germany blocked or suffer seizure of all her tonnage in American and British waters.

Holland's reply, which has been dispatched to London, is expected by officials, to conclude the negotiations there today. Seizure of the ships in American waters will be delayed, however, until the reply is received, here, which may not be until tomorrow.

Operation of the ships will be under control of the shipping board. Announcement of the trade to which they will be put has been withheld, but it is understood that most of them will be used, under the American flag and adequately armed to carry food through the war zone to the Allies.

As soon as word is received here of Holland's decision the Navy Department will put men on board the vessels to take formal possession. It is understood that the Navy Department will provide sufficient American sailors, possibly from the naval reserve, to comply with the American laws, the remainder of the crews to be made up of Dutch sailors.

About 50 Dutch ships probably 600,000 tons will be taken over by the American government. Some of them already are in the American service under a 90-day agreement with Holland two months ago.

MORE RUSSIAN TOWNS OCCUPIED

London, March 18.—German troops have occupied Bakmach and Konep (in the province of Tchernigov, about 350 miles southwest of Moscow) but were forced to retire from Briansk (in the province of Orel, 200 miles southwest of Moscow), toward the main base, according to an Exchange Telegraph dispatch from Moscow dated Saturday. Austro-German troops are moving on Voroshba and Kharkov (capital of the province of the same name, and about 400 miles south of Moscow). Orders have been given to evacuate Khakov.

MAJOR PETERSON'S TRIAL STARTED TODAY

Jury Secured This Morning and Witnesses Put on the Stand

Raleigh, N. C., March 18.—The trial of Major George L. Peterson, charged with embezzlement of \$7,600 of State funds during the time he was paymaster general of the North Carolina Guard, started in Wake County Superior Court here this morning. The selection of a jury was completed shortly after 11 o'clock and the taking of testimony was begun. Two witnesses had been called when court adjourned at 1 o'clock for dinner. The opening session was devoid of interesting features.

The first witness introduced by the State was Treasury B. R. Lacy, who exhibited vouchers which he declared covered the entire amount of State funds turned over to Major Peterson while the latter was in office. Mr. Lacy also testified that Major Peterson had paid into the State treasury last January \$7,600 to cover the amount of the alleged shortage.

Major Baxter Durham, of the State auditor's office, took the stand. He told of making four audits of the books and records kept by Major Peterson while Peterson was paymaster general. He said he checked the cash by means of adding machine slips prepared by Major Peterson, and the totals appeared to be correct. He swore he did not add the items, but trusted to Peterson's "adding machine" addition.

With Major Durham still on the stand, court recessed for dinner.

Heavy Fighting is Reported Along Big Part of the Front

FRENCH MAKE A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK

Enemy Lines Penetrated for Good Distance—A German Attack Along Wide Front Was Repused.

French and German troops have been engaged in heavy fighting on both sides of the Meuse in the Verdun sector. West of the river, the French have gained the enemy positions on a front of about 1,400 yards to a depth of 800 yards, while east of the river the Germans were unsuccessful in strong attacks on a six-mile front.

Sunday the Germans sent heavy forces against the French positions at Samogneux, north of the Bois De Caubieres and near Bezonvaux. They entered the French line at various points. Violent French artillery fire inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers and were unable to hold onto the trenches they had gained. The front east of the Meuse had been the scene of much violent artillery fire during the last month.

The French success west of the river was made at Malancourt, west of Dead Mans' Hill. At the Cheppy wood, immediately west of Malancourt, the French late Friday penetrated German trenches on a front of 800 metres to a depth of 300 metres. After destroying the positions the French returned with 80 prisoners of war and several machine guns. The artillery here and in the Cambrai area, however, is intense. British airmen persist in their bombing raids against military targets and have accounted for 23 more German machines.

On the American sectors at Toul and Luneville there has been no change in the situation. American patrol parties are still visiting the enemy lines and returning with valuable information. On the Toul front the American artillery fire has been very heavy, the gunners shelling billets and works over an area approximately six miles wide and two miles deep. East of Luneville also the artillery bombardment has been heavy.

Having occupied Odessa and Nikolayev, important naval and grain ports, the Germans in Southern Russia continue their advance northward from the Black Sea toward Kherson, an important commercial center and capital of the province of the same name.

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets has declared Moscow to be the Russian capital and it is said that all government and military effects have been removed from Petrograd. The Bolshevik leaders, although they urged and obtained ratification of the German peace treaty, are said to have little hope that the treaty will bring peace and are calling upon the local Soviets to form military organizations with which to combat the Germans should their invasion continue further into the heart of Russia.

SWISS DEMAND PAYMENT FOR SHIP

Berne, Friday, March 15.—The Swiss government has sent a note to the German government demanding the payment of an indemnity for the destruction of the grain steamer Sardinero. The note also requests a careful investigation of the circumstances by the German authorities.

The Spanish steamer Sardinero, under charter by the Swiss government, was torpedoed February 26. She was conveying 3,000 tons of wheat from the United States. The sinking aroused strong feeling in Switzerland and pro-ally newspapers urged that the bread rations of the German colony in Switzerland be cut as a reprisal.

Southern Traffic Director.

Nashville, Tenn., March 18.—It was announced here today that Charles Barham, of Nashville, general freight agent of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis railway, has been appointed by the National Food Administration as traffic director for the Southern District. His headquarters will be at Atlanta.