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## ALLIES TAKE SEVEN VILLAGES THREATEN GERMAN RETREAT

### French Drive Wedge Over Two Miles Deep on New Front East of the Oise, Taking 8000 Prisoners—Noyon is Outflanked and German Retreat to Ham May Be Cut Off—British Advance East of Arras Towards Douai.

FROM SOISSONS to the Belgian border the German armies on various important sectors are being put to the test by the French and British. And it is a test that seemingly bodes ill for the Teutonic arms, for nowhere have they been able to sustain the shocks.

Northwest of Soissons, from the Aisne to the Oise, north of the Oise to the region around Roye, in the Arras sector and northward on the famous Lys salient, the Germans everywhere have been compelled to fall back under the pressure of the French and British troops.

In a new offensive launched by the French General Mangin over a front of approximately fifteen and a half miles, from Bally to the Oise to the Aisne, near Soissons, the French in bitter fighting have carried

forward their line to an average depth of two and a half miles, and in the first phases of the battle had returned to French possession numerous enemy-held villages and farms. In addition, more than 8,000 Germans had been herded behind the line, prisoners.

At last reports, Mangin's men were still hard after the enemy, and unofficial accounts placed the French on various sectors well in advance of the positions outlined in the French official communication.

Along the Scarpe River, east of Arras, Field Marshal Haig's forces also have kept up their harassing tactics against the enemy, who has been compelled to fall back eastward along the Scarpe River. The Germans resisted vigorously, but all to no purpose, and the British advanced their lines to the east of the village of Fampoux. Altho Haig claims only a slight forward movement here, particular significance attaches to it

by reason of the fact that the Germans have been driven back until they are virtually upon the old battle-line as it stood in December, 1917.

Northward, the Lys salient again has been narrowed down by the operations of the British, who, north of Merville, have taken the villages of Vierhoek and La Couronne, and also reached the hamlet of L'Epinette. This gain represents a forward movement of about a mile and a half, and places the British astride the road running southeastward to Estaires.

Taken all in all, the new victories of the allied troops are highly important ones. The advance of the French northwest of Soissons, taken in conjunction with the successful manoeuvres on the Lassigny sector and south of Roye, where Beauvraignes has been captured, seemingly means that the enemy forces from the Somme to the Oise soon must give up their positions and retreat eastward. Indeed, it seems not improbable, now that Noyon is well outflanked on the

south and southeast, and the German line is none too well secured north of Soissons, that the enemy will be under the necessity of moving his troops northward from the Vesle toward, if not across, the Aisne.

The Germans still are stubbornly contesting with the British points of vantage on the line south of the Somme near Chaules and north of Roye, which are still in German hands, and which are the keystones to the enemy defence line. With the capture of Beauvraignes by the French, however, Roye apparently is on the eve of falling, and with its fall doubtless the entire line northward to the Somme also will give way.

The Germans in the Merville sector of the Lys salient everywhere are being closely followed by the British as they give up positions under attack, and at last accounts they were showing no indication that an immediate halt is in their mind. On the Lys front, altho the Germans are showing some resistance, they are not putting their wonted heart into their work.

PARIS, Aug. 20.—The French forces fighting east of the Oise on a front of about 15½ miles have advanced to an average depth of about 2½ miles and captured numerous villages, according to the French official communication issued this evening. More than eight thousand prisoners have been taken.

South of Roye the town of Beauvraignes has been occupied by the French after bitter fighting. The text of the communication follows:

"South of the Aisne we have captured Beauvraignes after a bitter struggle. In the course of our advance yesterday between the Matz and the Oise we took five hundred prisoners.

"East of the Oise our troops this morning attacked the German lines on a front of about twenty-five kilometres, from the region of Bally as far as the Aisne.

"On our left we have reached the southern outskirts of the Ourcamp Forest and also the outskirts of Carlepoint and Calmes.

"In the centre we captured Lombray and Bierancourdello and gained a footing on the plateau north of Vassens.

"On our right the villages of Vezaponin, Tartiers, Cuisy-en-Almont, Oly and Courtil have fallen into our hands.

"On all the fronts of attack we have advanced on an average to a depth of four kilometres. We have taken more than 8000 prisoners.

"The number of prisoners taken since the 18th between the Oise and the Aisne is more than 10,000.

French German Divisions Beaten.

With the French Army in France, Aug. 20.—General Mangin's operations of the past two days prepared the way for a fresh advance today. The attack began at 7 o'clock this morning on a front of 20 miles from Pimprez, on the right bank of the Oise, to Fontenoy.

Yesterday's heavy bombardment apparently warned the enemy that an attack was coming, for during the night fresh enemy divisions were brought up from a long distance in the rear in motor lorries, and Jaeger divisions, the captors of Mont Kemmel, were shifted from the Soissons region to help meet the shock of General Mangin's men.

These reinforcements seem to have been of little avail. After three hours of attack the French had advanced an average of 2½ miles along the whole front, and thousands of prisoners are beginning to flow back. The German infantry fought stubbornly and left considerable dead on the ground, but their artillery fire was feeble, and virtually no airplanes took part.

Ground Covered With Dead Germans.

The attack of General Mangin's forces from Fontenoy, on the Aisne, to Pimprez, on the Oise, was progressing favorably when this despatch was filed.

Prisoners were continuing to arrive at the rear to add to the several thousand captured before noon, and the gain in territory at 1 o'clock had been from one to two and a half miles. The enemy was resisting with the greatest vigor at vital spots. Where the fighting is thickest the ground is covered with German dead.

The artillery preparation, which was most violent, began yesterday morning, and the enemy, anticipating an attack, hastened to reinforce his lines, sending up two of his best divisions, which were held in reserve. These divisions arrived during the night in motor lorries.

An hour and a half after the order was given to attack, infantrymen were passing Audignourt and Vassens, and were followed immediately by batteries of three-inch guns. The first line of defence was then breaking.

The Germans, on retreating, filled the ravine with mustard gas. This, however, proved only a temporary trouble, the entire ravine being turned in a short time and the French troops progressing toward Bierancourdello, eight miles south-east of Noyon.

Farther to the right Tartieres, 2½ miles southeast of Mor-

tain, was entered at 9 o'clock, and columns of prisoners began to appear upon the plateau to the rear.

The artillery reaction was very weak over this part of the front.

French aviators, flying way down under the low-lying clouds, kept the staff regularly informed as to the progress of the attack, and harassed the enemy with machine gun fire. No German fliers tried to interfere with their work. Few were seen in the air during the morning.

The Germans made a desperate defence in the hilly and wooded region south of the Oise around Carlepoint, Calmes and Lombray, where they held strong positions, which were profusely dotted with quick-firers. The Four-a-Verre and Croissette Farm were taken by the French after a violent struggle, which proved very costly to the enemy.

At noon the line had advanced to the road east of Carlepoint, to the Calmes Wood and Bellefontaine, and south of Lombray and Bierancourdello to Vezaponin, and then southward to the east of Tartieres and to Oly.

According to latest information, General Mangin's line now runs from La Quenotte, north of Bally, to Champ de Merlier, to Petit Maupas, to Cuts, to Hill 160, to Vezaponin and to Valpriez Farm, five miles northwest of Soissons.

The French have captured Vezaponin and are on the plateau east of Tartieres. From that point the line is uncertain, but the French are progressing towards Camelin.

The Germans are making stiff resistance at Hill 160, which is east of Le Mesnil. The advance is over most difficult ground, but the attack is still proceeding.

Operation a Splendid Success.

The operation began this morning by General Mangin's troops between the Aisne and the Oise, southeast of Noyon and northwest of Soissons, looks this evening to be a splendid success. General Mangin has taken from the Germans at Cuts and Mont de Choisy the last heights remaining south of the Oise in that region.

At Mont de Choisy the French troops are within two and one-half miles of the Oise at Fontenoy, the direct road to which is now under the fire of the French batteries.

Carlepoint, to the southwest, is also in the hands of the French tonight, and from this place their guns command another road to the Oise at Sempiigny, directly south of Noyon.

General Mangin, with his right solidly on the heights north of the Aisne around Fontenoy, is sweeping the Germans off the high ground south of the Oise, obliging them to retreat across the river or retire eastward. In either event the success of the movement will expose the region about Noyon to artillery attacks from the south, the southeast and the southwest.

The Germans are fighting hard against this danger, relying principally upon machine guns, as in the Thiescourt region, thus indicating that some of their artillery already is across or is on the way across the River Oise. The count of prisoners and an inventory of the booty taken still are incomplete. One corps in this operation had counted 1500 prisoners up to noon, and had immense quantities of captured war materials of all sorts.

General Mangin's offensive forestalled a German attack which officers taken prisoner said had been prepared for 7.30 o'clock this morning. The extremely heavy artillery preparation during the past 24 hours by the French served as a warning to the Germans that the French also had an attack in preparation, and two German divisions, one of Jaegers, and the other of men from Baden, were brought up during the night in lorries to attempt to defend the German line.

On Twenty-Mile Front.

Reuter's correspondent at French headquarters cables under this evening's date as follows:

This morning's advance was on a front of twenty miles, between Pimprez and Fontenoy. During the night the Germans had brought up fresh divisions from a long distance in the rear. These included a Jaeger division which the captors of Mont Kemmel had driven out of Soissons. The reinforce-

ments availed little. Three hours after the attack had begun the French had pushed forward a distance of two and a half miles along the whole front, and had taken thousands of prisoners. The German infantry fought well, but the artillery was feeble. The enemy's aviation arm was practically non-existent. The entire German front line had been taken an hour after the attack had begun. The most difficult part of the operation was the passage of the Audignourt ravine, the northern edge of which was the German main line of resistance.

### British Advance Their Lines

London, Aug. 20.—East of Arras, along the Scarpe River, the British, in sharp fighting, have advanced their line slightly to the east of the village of Fampoux, while farther north, astride the Lys River, the British have reached L'Epinette, and north of Merville have captured the villages of Vierhoek and La Couronne, according to Field Marshal Haig's communication from headquarters tonight. The text follows:

"Local fighting has taken place today on both banks of the Scarpe River. South of the river hostile attacks upon certain posts which our troops have succeeded in establishing east of the enemy's former front lines were repulsed. North of the Scarpe our line has been pushed forward a short distance east of Fampoux after sharp fighting, in which we secured a few prisoners.

"In the course of the day further ground has been gained by us astride the Lys. Our troops have gained L'Epinette and the area east of Merville. North of Merville we have taken Vierhoek and La Couronne. A raid attempted by the enemy early this morning northeast of Loere was repulsed."

Germans Do Not Stop.

With the British Army in France, Aug. 20.—Field Marshal Haig's forces continued to advance through the day in the Merville sector of the Lys salient. They are closely following the retreating Germans, who, this afternoon, seem to have gone back to an extreme depth of between three and four miles and are still showing no inclination to come to a halt. Especially to the south of this sector the Germans have left behind them numerous lines of retarding wire entanglements.

The German guns appear to be far behind the infantry in the movement toward the rear. This is indicated by the extremely light enemy artillery fire, even that of the smaller cannon.

In the operations of the past few days on this whole Hazebrouck front, including those between Outtersteen and Vieux Berguin, 19 officers and 845 of other ranks have been taken prisoner. The largest part of this number was composed, until overcome by the advancing British, of rearwards and screens covering the enemy's retirement.

Barren Waste Left.

There has been some fighting, of course, but it has been mostly of a local skirmishing nature. The country evacuated by the Germans is mostly a barren waste. The houses have been either shell-scarred or leveled, and the trees and earth shot to pieces.

South of the River Somme the enemy artillery has quieted down and the situation here for the moment seems to have become calm.

German Morale is Weakening.

Every day now some new document or incident comes to light showing either a weakening of the morale in the German army or the anxiety of its leaders.

The latest is a step to make the soldiers cease whining when writing letters to friends and relatives at home, as it is considered by the German commanders to be bad for home morale.

It is a secret, captured, order issued by the commander of the second German army. He states that a special examination of home-going mails discloses a disregard for the army postal regulations. Aside from disclosing the exact location of

units, many of the soldiers have told of "successes of the enemy." The destruction of trains by enemy aircraft especially has been mentioned.

Reuter's correspondent at British army headquarters cables under date of this evening:

"If the German retirement is proceeding according to the present plan, they are now confronted with a situation which must complicate their calculations. The hasty abandonment of Merville on Sunday was doubtless due to our unexpectedly obtaining possession of the dominating contour east of Merville. Hitherto we followed the Germans.

"An order signed Solfachwith, Von Hutier's chief of staff, states that outgoing mails of the second army have been subjected to an examination, disclosing a wholesale disregard for the regulations. Officers and men have been writing exaggerated accounts of the enemy's successes, false statements regarding casualties, food and clothing shortages, etc.

"He points out that the writing of pessimistic letters is a punishable offence.

"It is definitely stated that the 418th Infantry Regiment refused to obey an order to attack at Puisseux recently. A written protest has been sent to the regimental commander.

"Nineteen officers and 845 men have been captured in Flanders up to last night. The enemy's losses were heavier."

New Act in Large Drama.

Washington, Aug. 20.—Interpreted at first as a local operation intended primarily to enable the allies to retain complete possession of the initiative on the Picardy front, the rapidly developed success of the French east of the Oise tonight was accepted by many military officials here as a definite and fully prepared effort having a specific part in the larger strategic plans of General Foch.

Latest advices tonight, describing the advance of the French tenth army for 2½ miles on a front of more than fifteen miles, were taken by experts here as conclusive evidence that the major plan of the allied generalissimo, the organization of which came with the attack on the right flank of the Rheims-Soissons salient, is far more comprehensive than has been supposed in many circles. It is believed now to include a series of actions which will occupy every moment until arrival of winter rains makes the plateaus of Picardy and the plains of Flanders impossible for large troop movements.

Most observers agreed that the immediate objective of General Mangin's forces appeared to be the "picking" of the Roye pocket, with the subsequent control of the important supply lines between that city and Noyon. For the larger objective, toward which efforts of the allies are being bent, was seen the capture of Noyon and a resultant breakdown of the German defensive line over a front of scores of miles.

Activities of the British army east of Arras and around the Merville sector are thought to be linked up with this larger plan. Not a few strategists in army circles foresee in the near future a more important thrust by these forces, completing the cycle of offensive from Rheims to the sea.

Preparing for a Defence.

It is possible the enemy may think that if he could arrange to leave a broad space, say of two or three miles, between the British lines and his own, holding the latter with fairly strong forces but keeping the greater part of his armies well to the rear, he would have a better chance to defend himself against the combined operations of the infantry and tanks, the effectiveness of which he apparently has learned to respect.

If this is part of his plan, he seems not to have reckoned that the British would follow on his heels so closely. The Merville withdrawal, however, is the most significant development for a long while, for the enemy has been holding on to this salient as a sort of jumping-off place for the continuance of his Flanders operations, and in holding it has suffered greatly, especially from the allied artillery. The initiative having passed from the Germans, the position ceased to be of value to them. Merville, of course, has been entered, and the allied patrols by this time have operated some distance beyond it.