

CZAR'S ARMY HOLDING ITS OWN AROUND VILNA

RUSSIAN ARMY NEAR VILNA IN NO IMMEDIATE DANGER, PETROGRAD REPORTS

Czar's Forces Hold Two Railways From Vilna Affording Means of Withdrawing Forces Safely Should Removal Become Necessary—Russians also Maintaining Their Positions Westward Towards Orani.

Petrograd, Sept. 17, via London.—War Office advices state that "Vilna can be held as long as may be required by the strategic situation on that front."

It is not the purpose of the Russian staff, however, to defend Vilna at all costs, but "only so long as the presence of an army there does not inspire alarm."

The Russian forces at that point do not appear to be in immediate danger, notwithstanding the fact that the German operations flanking Vilna have been carried forward further and that German cavalry is driving for the railway between Molodechno and Polotsk. This railroad parallels the Vilna-Dvinsk line, about 75 miles eastward. The two railways running south and southeast from Vilna are still held by the Russians, affording a means of withdrawing the forces at Vilna should it become necessary.

The situation in that region is described as favorable. German cavalry holds a front 115 to 120 miles long, in the form of a great bow bending east.

The German cavalry is pushing along the railway from Svientslany to Glibok, which extends to within a few miles of the Molodechno-Polotsk line. The invaders are spreading out on both sides of this road and are attempting to cut the Molodechno-Polotsk line in several places. This, however, does not threaten the Russian retreat, as the railroad running southeast from Vilna to Minsk is strongly covered by Russian forces. Moreover, there remains the road extending south from Vilna, through Lidz to Baranovitch.

It is pointed out at the War Office that the favorable aspect of the position at Vilna of the Russians is shown further by the fact that they continue to maintain their positions to the westward in the direction of Orani. It is denied that their position has been weakened materially by the crossing of small forces of Germans to the left bank of the Viliya.

Another Report.

London, Sept. 17.—A Reuter despatch from Petrograd says: "The fate of Vilna hangs in the balance. The latest letters received from there state that cannonading is heard without interruption day and night. Bomb-dropping aeroplanes are constantly visiting. Three of them have been brought down recently. "The evacuation of government institutions has been completed, and factories are being removed. Thousands of workmen already have left. The supply of sugar has been exhausted and the price of various commodities has doubled. Newspapers have suspended publication."

house intact in the whole place. We usually went through the town at the trot and rarely did we pass without seeing fresh dead, either men or horses. On our last journey there I saw eight men (two sections of four) lying in the street where a shell had knocked them out a short time before.

Like Work of Earthquake

One of the exits from the town (the Menin Bridge) was usually shell-ed almost incessantly from dusk till after midnight, but it so happened that the small bridge was not smashed up. Incendiary shells were fired by the Germans and these set in a blaze a couple of houses near the Menin Bridge, which burned for days. It certainly seemed as if bricks and mortar were burning furiously. A cemetery on the opposite side of the road has been so much knocked about as to suggest that its condition is due to earthquake. This is where Prince Maurice of Battenburg is buried.

Having got clear of Ypres on the outward journey, we then proceeded to Lonnebeke, dodging three-inch shells and shrapnel all along the road, but these we became somewhat inclined to treat with contempt, as we had managed to avoid any actual collision with them, except on two occasions when the horse of the man riding beside me was hit with shrapnel.

Trying to Dodge Shells

Nearing the firing line we encountered what are now known as "whizzbangs" (a high explosive shell of shrapnel type). Having disposed of all my stores (rations being brought in new sandbags and taken away to the several trenches by carrying parties), I had to go to the company's trench or "dugout" before starting on the return journey.

The road from Lonnebeke was then usually quiet, but we had always to run the gauntlet through Ypres. The German lines were so close that in the stillness of the night they could probably hear the rattle of wagons on the cobbles when the vehicles were moving quickly.

My plan usually was to proceed at a walk and endeavor to get along unharmed by using the edge of the road, which is unspaved, but on approaching the town I would frequently find my plan frustrated by some boulder bringing his string of wagons along at the trot on the cobbles, and the usual result was that I got the beastly shells that were presumably intended for him.

Cathedral Figures Ruined

The fine old Cloth Hall, which dates from the 13th century has been simply battered to pieces, and the cathedral beside it is utterly wrecked also. One thing that attracted my attention with regard to the latter place some time ago was the entrance. The door is in the middle of a semicircular bay and above it are the figures of our Lord in the center and six apostles on either side.

From time to time, I have noticed the damage by shell fire, and first one and then another of the apostles has been knocked down. My curiosity was so great over these that the last time we came through (at a canter) I could not resist the inclination to go up to the doorway.

Flashing my torch on it I saw that only one—the central figure—remained unknocked, and though these are only figures in stone I seemed to feel a sense of satisfaction at the result of my investigation.

I must not forget to tell you a little

The latter were only 30 yards away and throw over a message intended for the French registering they were going and saying what terrible things they proposed to do to the British. A Capt. Johnson (an aerial war) got hold of this and by way of reply got an old boot and filled with cartons from Punch and other papers ridiculing the Kaiser and things German generally.

This he promptly threw over into the German trenches, and I am sure it would be productive of much bad language from Fritz. A short time ago the Germans in front of the Devon Regiment came out quietly at night and dug a long trench between the two opposite trenches. It was a smart thing to do, but the Devons capped it by going out the next night as soon as darkness fell and filled the trench in. They could not occupy it as it was enfiladed.

Retail Market. There was no unusual display of provisions in the local market yesterday. The dealers say that business is about normal for September. Beef

roasts were selling at from 12c. to 24c. per pound; lamb, 16c. to 24c.; pork 16c. to 20c. Butter is a little higher in price, creamery selling at 32c.; dairy, 28c.; tub, 24c. to 28c. Eggs are dearer, 36c. to 40c. being asked for fresh; case, 28c. to 30c. Vegetables are plentiful now at prices usual at this time of the year. Moose meat sells at from 20c. to 24c. per pound; venison, in limited quantity, 10c. to 20c. per pound.

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For Boys and Girls

What Would You Do With Five Dollars?

This time I am going to let you have quite a new competition. If some one gave you Five Dollars, in what way would you spend it? Think over carefully how you would use the money, then write in plain neat writing, your answer, using only one side of the paper. When completed attach three of the usual contest coupons, and send them all in to me not later than Thursday, 30th Sept.

UNCLE DICK,
THE STANDARD,
ST. JOHN, N. B.

To the boy or girl who sends me in what I consider is the best way of using the Five Dollars I shall award a valuable prize. With each attempt you send, state also what you would like as a prize should you be the successful competitor. A watch, a pair of skates, a jack knife, a doll, or any other similar prize may be suggested.

In the event of a tie, neatness of writing will be taken into consideration.

STANDARD COMPETITION,
For Boys and Girls
Full Name.....
Address.....
Age Last Birthday.....

A Special Drawing and Painting Contest

This week I want you to try and make a careful copy in pen and ink, of any picture you like, taken from a magazine or other picture book, or else take the same picture and color it with either chalks or water colors. To the boy or girl who makes the best copy, or coloring I shall award a beautiful prize. With each attempt you must send Three of the usual contest coupons, and also state what you would like as a prize, should you be the successful competitor. You may suggest a watch, a pair of skates, a jack knife, a needle work box, or any other present of a similar nature.

Send your sketches and colored pictures in not later than Thursday, Sept. 23rd, to

UNCLE DICK,
THE STANDARD,
ST. JOHN, N. B.



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