

On March 21st the long-expected German attack broke forth on the fronts of the Fifth and Third Armies, and it was soon apparent that the enemy was meeting with very considerable success. There was no evidence whatever of any depression within the Division as a result of these German successes.

The Canadian Corps was ordered to make further troops available to support the Third Army, with the result that the 4th Canadian Division was ordered to put its Third Brigade in line in the Hill 70 Section. It relieved the 1st Canadian Division on March 23rd-24th.

The Division was to be relieved on the 27th-28th by the 46th British Division, and pass into G.H.Q. Reserve in the Barlin area ; but on the morning of the 28th came a renewed enemy attack, this time extending north of the Scarpe, where the 56th British Division had been pressed back to the second line as far north as Gavrelle. All information from prisoners pointed to a renewal of the attack with fresh troops on the 29th against the southern end of the Vimy Ridge, and the situation was decidedly serious. By the morning of the 28th there were five reserve and support battalions of this Division in various stages of relief distributed between the line Fosse II-Souchez and Barlin. These five battalions were placed under the orders of Brigadier-General V. W. Odlum, and designated as "Odlum's Special Brigade." By dawn on the 29th this Brigade concentrated near Mont St. Eloi, whence they were to move in support of the 56th Division in case of further attack. This sudden change of orders entailed great hardship for the troops concerned.

The expected attack did not come off, but the 4th Canadian Division was ordered to relieve the 56th Division by 29th-30th. The battalions of Odlum's Special Brigade returned to the orders of their own Brigadiers, and took over the line on 29th-30th. They came under orders of the 3rd Canadian Division until the 30th, when the remainder of the Division arrived and assumed command of the line in the Gavrelle-Oppy sector.