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BRITISH LINE STILL HOLDS

Withdrawals Made By British to Positions Prepared Long Ago—Fighting Becomes More Severe, Never Ceasing for a Moment—More Than a Million Germans Engaged—Paris Bombarded By Monster Cannon Located 76 Miles Away—Canadians Make Biggest Gas Attack in History.

THE withdrawal of the British forces along the battle front in France was long ago planned in the event of the Germans attacking in great force. This announcement comes from the British front thru the Associated Press correspondent, who describes the operation of the British army as a masterly withdrawal, made possible by gallant shock troops on the front lines, who checked the advance of the Germans, while artillery, machine gun and rifle fire worked appalling slaughter among the masses of German infantry as they were sent forward, thus enabling the main body of the British to fall back deliberately and without confusion.

This army, it is declared, has been conserved, and up to the present few counter-attacks have been made against the Germans. Where the British have stormed the Germans' newly-acquired positions they have driven them back. But each mile of advance makes the bringing up of supplies to the German artillery and infantry more and more difficult, and unquestionably the British strategy, as demonstrated since the beginning of the great attack, is to let the enemy, so far as he may, wear himself out against a powerful defence.

Both British and French forces, where their lines meet south of St. Quentin, are watching events with optimistic eyes.

Chauny Taken By Germans.
 The town of Chauny, southwest of St. Quentin, situated on the road to Compiègne, the gateway to Paris, has been occupied by the Germans and, according to the Berlin official communication, everywhere between the Somme and the Oise Rivers, the Germans are pressing their advantage.

Thruout Sunday, along the entire fifty-mile battle front, the fighting never ceased for a moment, and where Field Marshal Haig's men were unable to withstand the terrific onslaughts delivered by greatly superior forces, ground was given, but always in orderly fashion.

It has now been definitely ascertained that considerably more than a million Germans have been brought to the western front in an endeavor to crush the British army holding the line from the region of Arras to the south of St. Quentin, but it daily becomes increasingly evident that the enemy in his drive has met with opposition not counted upon and has been unable to realize to the full his objectives.

In addition to Chauny the Germans are claiming the capture of both Peronne and Ham and to have increased the number of prisoners taken to more than 30,000, in addition to 600 guns and large stores of war materials.

It is claimed also by the Germans that American and French regiments, which were brought up to reinforce the British, have been defeated, but no further information than this mere statement has been vouchsafed.

In their retirement, according to Berlin, the British are burning towns and villages behind them. This statement, however, seemingly is capable of being received with reserve, as the Germans themselves, in their famous "strategic" retirement, left little standing in the territory they evacuated, even deploding the country of trees.

Monster Gun is Located.

One of the mysteries of the offensive, which now has been solved, is that the shelling of Paris is being done by a long-range German gun. This statement is contained in the Berlin official communication, and a Paris despatch says that one of the guns has been located near Laon, about 76 miles from the centre of Paris. Thruout Sunday morning and into the mid-afternoon shells were dropped in Paris at intervals of from twelve to twenty minutes.

Already the spirit of boastfulness, which pervades the German army in times of success, is being strongly manifested. Field Marshal von Hindenburg has complimented the German emperor on the "initial success," and the latest German official communication is loud in its plaudits of the German troops, declaring that the "attacking spirit of the infantry could not have been exceeded."

The official reports represent the battle position in France as undoubtedly grave. The newspapers recognize this, but do not attempt to appraise the situation or prophesy the course of events. They consider this the critical hour of the war.

The German seizure of Chauny may compel the withdrawal of the French lines, in order to preserve contact and alignment with the British. Much rests on the use of the allied "army of manoeuvre," organized by the Versailles conference, which may prove the decisive force of the battle.

Great Activity in the Air.

Altho the German press correspondents have telegraphed to Berlin that Germany has multiplied her aircraft tenfold, the British flying men still remain supreme in the air, and they are showing how the battle is going by their destruction of German machines. In two days of air fighting they have destroyed or driven down more than 100 German machines, with a loss of only 17 of their own craft missing. It is generally regarded by military experts that the result of a modern battle depends on the ascendancy of aircraft. In addition they have given highly efficient service in the dropping of many tons of explosives on important points in the German lines, firing on enemy troops, and also in long-distance raids, bombarding Mannheim on the Rhine.

Enemy Pushed Back. Line Held Strongly.

WITH THE BRITISH ARMY IN FRANCE, March 24.—The British and French, who co-operate at the junction of the two armies, were viewing the trend of the German offensive with optimistic eyes. Hard fighting was in progress, but the latest reports showed little or no change in the situation in favor of the enemy since yesterday, while, on the other hand, the defenders had pushed the attacking forces back after a bitter

Big Gun That Bombards Paris is Now Located Canadians Launch War's Record Gas Attack

In addition to the news from the front, the French have discovered it is a monster gun which has been raining projectiles on Paris at intervals of 20 minutes. This cannon is sited in the forest of St. Gobain, west of Laon, 76 miles from the Paris city hall.

From their headquarters in France comes the news that the Canadians carried out the greatest projector gas bombardment

struggle and were holding strongly the whole new front to which they had withdrawn.

Fighting of a most desperate nature has been continuous since the initial attack, but so far the British have used few troops other than those which were holding the front lines.

These shock troops have been making as gallant a defence as was ever recorded in the annals of the British army and, as a result, they have enabled the main body of the forces to fall back deliberately and without confusion and occupy positions which had been prepared long before the German offensive began.

Utter Disregard for Life.

The Germans, on the other hand, operating under the eyes of the emperor and the crown prince, have been hurling vast hordes into the fray with utter disregard for life, and have followed into the abandoned positions, getting farther and farther away from their supplies and finding their communications increasingly difficult.

More than fifty German divisions have already been identified by actual contact, and many of these men were simply given two days' iron rations and sent over the top into the frightful slaughter made by the allied artillery, machine guns and rifles. The slaughter of the enemy infantry as it advanced in close formation over the open, has been appalling.

The British losses have been within the bounds expected, due to the tactics of the commanders. The allies have lost a considerable number of men in prisoners and a certain number of guns. But very few pieces of artillery have been taken by the Germans since the first day. In fact, the whole withdrawal has been executed in a masterly manner, showing how thoroughly the British had planned for the very events which have occurred.

It is permitted to say now, what some have known for a long time, namely, that the British never intended to try to hold the forward positions in this region if the Germans attacked in the force expected.

There is every reason to believe that harder fighting than has yet taken place will develop shortly. The Germans, in the British view, cannot now hesitate in carrying on their attack, and it is a case of break thru or admit defeat.

In this circumstance it is interesting to note a statement made yesterday by a German officer, a prisoner, who declared that the German offensive was an act of desperation brought on by the fact that the fatherland must have peace.

However, the British take such assertions at their face value and are proceeding accordingly.

The hardest fighting yesterday occurred east of Peronne, and in the Bois de Genlis. The most important phase of the battle occurred in the latter neighborhood. During the morning, the Germans had pushed southward toward Ham, and had succeeded in getting a foothold at some points in the defences to which the British had fallen back.

The British organized a counter-attack and hurled themselves against the Germans with such ferocity that the enemy was forced to give way, and the situation was restored. This was one of the very few counter-attacks as yet attempted by the British.

Last night was fairly quiet along the battle front, but this morning the British again surged forward against the Germans to the southeast of Ham, while the enemy continued his assaults in the neighborhood of Mory, southwest of Croisilles.

Fighting on New Positions.

"North of Peronne," says the official statement tonight from British headquarters in France, "enemy attacks were directed with the greatest violence against the line of the river Tortille (a tributary of the Somme). Our troops on this portion of the battle front have been withdrawn, and are fighting on new positions."

"Further north, repeated assaults by large bodies of German infantry have been repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy. In this fighting the seventeenth and fortieth divisions greatly distinguished themselves, beating off many hostile attacks."

"Fresh hostile attacks developed this morning in great strength on the whole battle front," says Field Marshal Haig, "and they have continued thruout the day."

"South of Peronne the enemy succeeded, after heavy fighting, in crossing the River Somme at certain points. These are being dealt with."

Germans Suffer Most From Machine Gun Fire.

LONDON, March 24.—The Daily Mail's correspondent at the front, telling of the battle now in progress, says: "Along a considerable part of the front there was a series of redoubts, about a mile apart, each redoubt being held by a hundred men, somewhat on the principle of the blockhouses in South Africa, with formidable belts of barbed wire around them and a strong armament of machine guns and trench mortars, and provisioned for two days."

"All of them did valuable work in delaying the German waves of advance. They were surrounded and subjected to a

terrible fire, but all held on during the first day of the attack until late in the afternoon.

"The Germans suffered most from the machine gun fire. Their mode of attack in crossing No Man's Land consisted of a first wave of two companies, marching almost shoulder to shoulder, with light machine guns. A hundred yards behind came two more companies, closely followed by a number of machine guns. Next, after an interval of two or three hundred yards, came the light trench mortars and the battalion staff. Again there was a space of two hundred yards, and then across prepared exits from the German trenches, the field artillery drove out into the open in columns, forming into line of battle as soon as possible."

(Full particulars page two.)

in history against the enemy between Lens and Hill 70. Five thousand drums were released simultaneously from projectors and cast into the German line from the outskirts of Lens to Cite St. Auguste and Bois de Dix-Huit. Nine minutes afterwards the Canadian guns opened up a creeping bombardment, searching the enemy positions for forty minutes.

Anxiety in London.
 The British people have experienced no other period of anxiety comparable with this week-end since the days of the retreat from Mons, in August, 1914, when the fate of the small British army was undecided.

There was perfect spring weather today, and all the streets and parks were crowded, but solemnity and gravity prevailed everywhere, which even a stranger must have noticed. Men and women, and even the children, were reading the newspapers, and special editions which printed the afternoon official reports were bought as fast as the offices could supply them. The churches were filled, and the day was one of anxious waiting.

The British people had not expected any marked retirement by the British army, altho they had been warned that this would be a natural development of a great battle. Hence, the bulletin caused general depression. Toward night it became known that the official view of the situation did not warrant such despondency.

The loss of guns was regarded as inevitable, but the British casualties are understood to be relatively small, considering the magnitude of the operation so far as the reports give them.

British Armies Congratulated.
 The following telegram, dated March 21, has been sent to the general officers commanding the third and fifth British armies:

"The field marshal commanding-in-chief sends his congratulations to the troops of your army on their splendid defence today. He relies upon their continued steadfastness and valor to crush this new attack, and with it the enemy's last hope of success."

Copies of the German plan of offensive, taken from prisoners, according to the British headquarters' correspondent of Reuters, show that the enemy's objectives were as follows: First day, average penetration along the whole front of attack, eight kilometres; second day, 12 kilometres, and on the third day, beyond which the scheme does not appear to be carried, 20 kilometres.

The success attained thus far falls much short of these objectives, the despatch states. Continuing, the correspondent says:

Among the captured machine guns are some identified as having been used in the Balkans last year.

"Every attempt to cross the Somme, by means of four bridges thrown over the river during Friday night, were detected and frustrated with loss by our artillery fire. All roads in the rear of the German advance are blocked by columns of troops, guns and transport vehicles, furnishing a target upon which we are making deadly play. Rough estimates of the what they are worth. They probably are based mainly upon casualties inflicted vary between 30 and 50 per cent. of all enemy divisions so far identified, but I give these figures for statements made by prisoners."

1,164,000 Germans Engaged.

Describing the great struggle in France, the Havas correspondent says:

"The British retired in good order, ceding ground foot by foot, to strong positions prepared months ago."

"In the later stages of the battle 97 German divisions were engaged. Thus the German command concentrated against the British front half of the forces at their disposition on the whole western front."

Based on 12,000 men to a German division, the number of Germans engaged according to the Havas correspondent, was approximately 1,164,000.

No Change Saturday Night.

There was no material change in the situation on the battle front in northern France thruout the night, altho further fighting occurred at a number of points, the war office announced today. British troops are holding the line of the Somme River to Peronne. Small enemy parties which attempted to cross the river, in the neighborhood of Fargny, were driven back.

Northward from the Somme, at Peronne, the British troops are holding their positions, after beating off a number of attacks during last night.

The text of the statement reads:

"There has been no material change in the situation on

the battle front during the night, altho further fighting has taken place at a number of points.

"Our troops are holding the line of the Somme River to Peronne. Small parties of the enemy, which endeavored to cross in the neighborhood of Fargny, were driven back."

"On our right we are in touch with the French, and to the north of the River Somme at Peronne our troops hold their positions, after beating off a number of attacks on different portions of this front during the early part of the night."

"Heavy fighting is still to be expected."

Fifty-four Enemy Planes Brought Down.

An official report on the aerial operations says that fifty-four enemy aeroplanes have been brought down.

The text of the statement reads:

"The enemy's low-flying aeroplanes were most persistent in their attacks on our infantry in the forward areas. Many of these machines were attacked and brought down by our pilots. A total of twenty-nine hostile machines were brought down and twenty-five others were driven down out of control. Two enemy balloons also were destroyed. Nine of our machines are missing."

"Our machines on Saturday carried out another most successful raid on factories in Mannheim. Nearly one and a half tons of bombs were dropped, and bursts were seen on a soda factory, the railway and docks."

"Several fires were started, one of which was of great size, with flames reaching to a height of two hundred feet and smoke to five thousand feet. The conflagration was visible for 35 miles."

"The weather Saturday again favored operations and our aeroplanes were constantly employed in reconnoitering positions of troops, in photography and bombing and in reporting suitable targets for our artillery. Many thousands of rounds were fired by our pilots from low altitudes on hostile troops massed in villages and in the open continuously thruout the day."

"More than fourteen tons of bombs were dropped on enemy billets, on his high velocity guns and on railroad stations in the battle area."

"During the night ten heavy bombs were dropped on an important railway bridge and works at Konz, just south of Trarres, in Germany. Eight of these bombs were clearly seen to be bursting among the railway works."

Fierce Fight in the Air.

"Our bombing aeroplanes were attacked by thirty-two hostile machines and a fierce fight ensued. One of the enemy's aeroplanes was brought down in flames and another was downed and fell in the centre of Mannheim. Five others were driven down out of control."

"Despite this severe combat and the enemy's heavy anti-aircraft gun fire, all our machines returned, except two."

"Nearly two tons of bombs were dropped from low heights on a hostile airdrome south of Metz. Six bombs were seen to burst among the hangars and to set fire to some of the huts of the airdrome. All our machines returned."

"From nightfall till early morning our flying squadrons bombed areas on the battle front in which hostile troops were concentrated, as well as enemy ammunition dumps and large guns. More than fourteen tons of bombs were again dropped by our machines, two and a half tons of which were looted on the docks of Bruges. All our machines returned."

Attacked Ontario Battalion.

German forces were beaten off with heavy loss shortly after 5 o'clock this morning, when they launched a raid in strength against Canadian trenches in the Hill 70 sector. Advancing under the protection of a heavy trench mortar barrage, supported by high explosive and gas shells, the enemy attacked along the whole of an eastern Ontario battalion's front. Beaten off from one company's sector, he succeeded in gaining a foothold in another. Desperate trench fighting with bombs and bayonets and revolvers followed, in which one of our officers alone threw over a dozen bombs and emptied his revolver in the faces of the enemy. The opposition of our men was so fierce that the enemy was thrown in disorder out of the trench, leaving sixteen dead behind. In their flight across No Man's Land they were caught in our artillery barrage and left many of their number dead in our wire. Our men suffered numerous casualties, but, in addition to those inflicted on the Huns, they captured three prisoners.

Another Enemy Raid Falls.

Earlier in the week another enemy raid against an eastern Ontario battalion's lines north of Lens failed signally. Attacking in four parties, of about 20 men each, the Boche never succeeded in entering our trenches, but was caught by our artillery, machine gun and rifle fire, and retired in disorder, leaving several dead in front of our parapet, and one man seriously wounded and an unjured prisoner in our hands.

Numerous clashes have taken place between our own and hostile patrols, in which we have had much the better of the argument. In one daylight attack on a sniping post, one of our privates, crawling up to the sniping places, looked into a loophole. A rifle was thrust into his face. He grabbed the barrel and, using it as a lever, jumped over the top into the sniping post. The occupants of the post ran until one of our bombs was exploded immediately in front of them.

Our artillery continues to dominate that of the enemy, one feature during the last few days being the extremely successful work of our counter-battery firing in co-operation with aeroplanes. In one day, four direct hits were secured on hostile battery positions, six fires were started, and eight explosions were caused.

Greatest Epic in History.

Reuters' correspondent at the British headquarters in France, in a message today, states: "The enemy is now throwing his last ounce of weight and resources into the struggle. Upon the course of the immediate future hangs the issue of the