

CANADIANS LEAD IN TRIUMPH 5816 ENEMY IN BRITISH NET

CANADIANS PUT IN FRONT TO CAPTURE VIMY RIDGE

Strongly Supported by Some of Most Famous Regiments in General Haig's Army—Guns of Heaviest Calibre, Formerly Used on Biggest Battleships, Pound German Positions Out of Recognition—Enemy Tries in Vain to Blind Eyes of the Attacking Armies

(By Stewart Lyon, Special Correspondent of the Canadian Press.)

CANADIAN HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE (via London), April 9.—The crest of the Vimy ridge has been carried. The strongest defensive position of the enemy on the western front has been captured by the army of Sir Douglas Haig, and the Canadian corps was given the place of honor in the great event, being strongly supported by some of the most famous of the British formations. The attack was preceded by a bombardment which continued for several days, and in which guns of the heaviest calibre, formerly used on only the biggest battleships, took part. The results, as revealed by aerial observation, were a repetition of the battle of the Somme. Airplanes, flying low, could find only shapeless masses of churned-up earth where the enemy first line had been.

By Saturday afternoon Thelus, the chief village held by the enemy on the ridge, and lying due east of Neuville St. Vaast, was pounded out of all recognition, only two houses remaining. Prisoners taken told of heavy enemy losses. Even in the deep dugouts, where the Germans had hoped to be reasonably safe in that rain of death, no safety was to be found anywhere. In a desperate attempt to blind the eyes of the attacking army the Germans on Sunday endeavored to destroy our observation balloons.

Saturday night our guns continued the work of devastation under conditions which made a spectacle that was majestic and awe-inspiring. A full moon in the east lit up the countryside with mellow beams on the horizon, while the flash of the guns made a continuous play like that of the Northern Lights in the Dominion, or distant sheet lightning. This was sharply broken now and again by a column of reddish-yellow flame where, on the ridge, high explosives were bursting.

The gunners, with tireless energy, continued the cannonade through Easter Sunday. On Monday morning came the supreme moment, that in which our infantry was called upon to go out and reap the fruit of months of preparation. They had endured, unwaveringly, the answering fire of the enemy, which, however, was not comparable to ours. Some, impatient to be at the foe, had gone out on small wars of their own, and it is recorded that in one of the individual encounters in No Man's Land a Canadian, meeting a German, pursued after emptying his revolver ineffectively at him. The Canadian cast about for some other weapon. The only one within reach was his steel helmet, and with the sharp edge of that he killed the armed German.

Such was the spirit of the infantry who, in the grey preceding the dawn, sprang from their shelters when the appointed time came. It was a great occasion, and greatly they rose to it.

VICTORY IN HALF AN HOUR.

From the craters of the scarred front, which resembled the openings made in quarrying operations, the distance to the top of the ridge ranged from twelve hundred yards to a little short of a mile. Thereafter the ground falls easterly toward the great plain of Cambrai. Up the ridge, amid the shattered Hun trenches, our men swarmed in successive waves. On the northern end a few trees along the skyline marked where the Wood of La Fere had been, and our troops advanced as through the remains of an orchard.

Within half an hour after the first German "S.O.S." rocket had been sent up, indicating a surprise attack, our objective was attained, with slight loss. The tanks which accompanied our advancing infantry had little to do, but were seen in action later near the crest of the ridge, on the extreme north of the line, at a point east of Souchez, where much fierce fighting took place in 1915, when thousands of men fell.

The enemy put up a stiff fight. Hill 145 had been provided skillfully with concealed machine gun positions, and long after they had been driven from the surrounding ground with machine guns on the hill they continued to sweep points of approach to the hill with their fire. Encouraged by this show of resistance on what otherwise was a stricken field, the enemy began to send up reserves in trains from Lens, Douai and perhaps a greater distance, with the intention of launching a counter-attack. That attack was never made. As reports came in from the front and from the aviators of this massing of the enemy beyond Vimy and the trenches in the vicinity, a tremendous barrage was turned on by our heavy guns, the range being too great for field artillery.

Probably for the first time in the war twelve-inch weapons were used for this purpose at very long range. The splendid co-operation of the artillery arm in preventing this counter-attack did much to lessen our casualties on a difficult part of the front. On the southern end of the Canadian front the Germans yielded ground more readily than in the north. Many prisoners were taken, and as for Thelus, which had been strongly held before, our guns hammered it to pieces. It did not long hold out. By 12:30 o'clock, seven hours after the battle began, no organized body of the enemy remained on Vimy ridge, save the nest of concealed machine gun sections on Hill 145.

EVEN UP OLD SCORES.

Of the casualties it can only be said this moment that they are surprisingly light, especially in view of the importance of the ground won. The prisoners taken on the Canadian part of the front probably total close to two thousand. The British troops on the adjacent part of the front captured over three thousand. Our men were splendid, and proud that they have been counted worthy to furnish a striking force in so important an operation as the recapture of Vimy ridge.

No ground in all France is more dear to the heart of the French people than the front from which the Canadians set out to drive the enemy from his positions on the ridge of Vimy, the Chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette, Souchez, and the sugar refinery there, to conquer the crumbling ruins of which men died during the war in thousands. The Cabaret Rouge, Neuville St. Vaast, the Labyrinth, are names that will be forever glorious there.

In the spring of 1915, before the tremendous dramas of Verdun and the Somme had been conceived, the army of France made the first great attempt to drive the entrenched foe from his positions. The progress made, reckoned in miles, was almost negligible, but the French learned on the ridges and in the long sheltered slopes of this difficult terrain the lessons that enabled them and their allies to win at Verdun and the Somme.

HAIG'S MODEST REPORT OF NOTABLE GAINS

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

LONDON, April 9.—To-night's official report from Gen. Haig says:

"The operations continue to be carried out successfully in accordance with the plan. Our troops have everywhere stormed the enemy defences from Henin-sur-Cojeul to the southern outskirts of Givenchy-en-Gohelle to a depth of from two to three miles, and our advance continues.

"The enemy's forward defences on this front, including Vimy ridge, which was carried by the Canadians, were captured early in the morning. These defences comprise a network of trenches and fortified localities—Neuville Vitasse, Telegraph Hill, Tilloy les Mofflaines, Observation Ridge, St. Laurent-Blangy, Les Tilleuls and La Folle farm.

"Subsequently our troops moved forward and captured the enemy's rearward defences, including, in addition to other powerful trench systems, the fortified localities of Feuchy, Chapelle de Feuchy, Hyderbad redoubt, Athies and Thelus.

PRISONERS, GUNS, BOOTY.

"Up to 2 p.m. 5,816 prisoners, including 119 officers, passed through the stations, and many more remain to be counted. Of these a large number belong to the Bavarian divisions, who have suffered heavy casualties in to-day's fighting.

"The captured war material includes guns and a number of trench mortars and machine guns, which have not yet been counted.

"In the direction of Cambrai further progress has been made in the neighborhood of Havrincourt Wood.

We have captured the village of Demicourt.

"In the direction of St. Quentin we captured the villages of Pontru and Le Verguier.

"The aerial activity of the past few days has continued with great energy. Several successful bombing raids were carried out by us, our machines co-operating with our artillery with excellent results. Two hostile machines were destroyed and fifteen others were driven down and probably crushed. Two German kite balloons were brought down in flames. Ten of our airplanes are missing."

The first statement, timed 11:25 a.m., follows:

"We attacked at 5:30 o'clock this morning on a wide front from south of Arras to south of Lens. Our troops have everywhere penetrated the enemy's lines and are making satisfactory progress at all points.

"In the direction of Cambrai we stormed the villages of Hermies and Boursies, and have penetrated into Havrincourt Wood.

"In the direction of St. Quentin we captured Fresnoy le Petit and advanced our line southeast of Le Verguier.

"No estimate of the prisoners taken can yet be given, but considerable numbers are reported captured."

GERMAN ADMISSION.

The official communication issued by the War Office at Berlin says that heavy fighting took place throughout the day on both sides of Arras, "the enemy having forced his way into parts of our positions."

The report adds that there was strong artillery firing on the Aisne and Champagne fronts.

BEGIN TITANIC STRUGGLE THAT MAY DECIDE ISSUE

Haig Threatens to Break North End of Hindenburg's Line—Battle Starts With Weather So Thick That There is No Visibility for Airmen, and Men Have to Struggle Forward in Rainstorm—Foe Flings High Explosives Into Arras to Interrupt British Preparations

"Along the Vimy ridge the Canadians achieved heroic success by gaining this high dominating ground . . . which is the great wall defending Douai."

(By Philip Gibbs of The London Daily Chronicle)

WAR CORRESPONDENTS' HEADQUARTERS, Monday.—To-day at dawn our armies began a great battle, which, if fate has any kindness for the world, may be the beginning of the last great battles of the war.

Our troops attacked on a wide front between Lens and St. Quentin, including the Vimy Ridge, that great, grim hill which dominates the Plain of Douais and the coalfields of Lens and the German positions around Arras.

BREAK NORTH END OF HINDY'S LINE.

In spite of bad fortune in weather at the beginning of the day, so bad that there was no visibility for the airmen, and our men had to struggle forward in a heavy rainstorm, the first attacks have been successful, and the enemy has lost much ground, falling back in retreat to strong rearward lines, where he is now fighting desperately. The line of our attack covers a front of some twelve miles southward from Givenchy-en-Gohelle, and is a sledgehammer blow, threatening to break the northern end of the Hindenburg line, already menaced around St. Quentin.

As soon as the enemy was forced to retreat from the country east of Bapaume and Peronne, in order to escape a decisive blow on that line, he hurried up divisions and guns northward to counter our attack there, while he prepared a new line of defence known as the southern part of the Hindenburg line, which joins it, and is known as the Siegfried position, after two great heroes of old German mythology. He had hoped to escape there before our new attack was ready, but we have been too quick for him, and his own plans were frustrated.

A TITANIC CONFLICT.

So to-day began another titanic conflict, which the world will hold its breath to watch because of all that hangs upon it. I have seen the fury of this beginning, and all the sky is on fire with it. It is the most tragic and frightful sight that men have ever seen.

BAND PLAYED THEM OUT.

I went up in the darkness long before light broke to-day to see the opening of the battle. The roads were quiet until I drew near to Arras, and then onwards there was the traffic of marching men going up to the fighting lines. In the darkness there were hundreds of little red lights, the glow of cigarette ends. Outside one camp a battalion was marching away, and on the bank above them a band was playing them out with fife and drums. On each side of me as I passed men were densely massed, and they were whistling and calling out jests and gibes, wonderful lads that they are. Away before them were the fires of death to which they were going very steadily with a tune on their lips, carrying rifles and shovels and iron rations, while the rain played a tattoo on their steel hats.

I went to a place a little outside Arras, on the west side. It was quite dark, because there was a kind of suffused light from the hidden moon, so I could see the black mass of the Cathedral City, the storm

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BRITISH AND CANADIANS ARE VICTORS IN TREMENDOUS FIGHT AROUND ARRAS

Capture Vimy Ridge, Sweep Foe Back on a Wide Front and Take 6,000 Prisoners—Operation Still Proceeding—"Tanks" Play Big Part in Splendid Triumph for Allied Arms—1,000 Prisoners Alone Taken by British in Labyrinth Called "The Harp"

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

From a Staff Correspondent of the Associated Press (with the British Army in France (via London), April 9.—The war on the western front, which has been moving more rapidly in the past few weeks, broke into full swing to-day. Widening their attacks which they have been directing against the retreating Germans in the sector of the Somme, the British struck still farther north, and in a series of assaults on a broad front, with Arras more or less the pivotal point, they drove the Germans from scores of important positions, penetrated far into the German lines, and inflicted heavy casualties.

A visit to corps headquarters this afternoon indicated that the number of prisoners taken in the past twelve hours will exceed five thousand. The barbed wire "cages," or compounds, built to receive prisoners which were expected to be taken, were overcrowded long before noon, although the principal attack did not begin until shortly after dawn.

Vimy Ridge Captured. The heaviest fighting to-day developed along a line a few miles southeast of Arras, in a northerly direction to the neighborhood of Lens, but the actions extended far in the direction of St. Quentin. In the territory captured to-day was the famous Vimy Ridge, which had been fought over time and again ever since the war was ten months old. The French had fought desperately and valiantly in

an endeavor to wrest this vantage ground from the Germans, the battles costing both belligerents untold casualties. Back of the northern end of Vimy Ridge lie the principal coal fields of France, which are still in German hands.

The fighting on Vimy Ridge was carried out by the Canadians, who had retained a footing on the ridge all winter, but always higher up was the enemy. On either side of the Canadians were English and Scottish battalions, and in to-day's battle there was glory enough for all.

"Tanks" Have a Share. The irreplaceable "tanks" also shared in the honors of the successful assault.

One position captured to the northeast of Arras was a sort of labyrinth of trenches entangled in multiple bands of wire, called "The Harp," because of its shape. Prisoners had

proclaimed this strong point practically unassailable, but, sweeping over it to-day, the British took within it nearly a thousand prisoners, and they captured also during the day three German battalion commanders, who compare in rank with Colonel in the British army.

Canadians Capture 2,000. The Canadians took 2,000 prisoners. It was said everywhere along the attacking line that the Germans appeared to have been taken by surprise, and only in a few instances did they put up a strong fight. One reason for this was that they had been fairly grazed by the British artillery fire for the past ten days.

From the high ground overlooking Arras a panoramic view for many miles of the British attack was presented. The concentration of guns for this operation was probably the greatest for a given amount of front since the war began. Almost countless guns had taken part in the bombardment since the beginning, but it was not until last night that many masked batteries joined in the grim chorus.

Approaching the battlefield well before dawn, the reflection of the gun flashes against the low-hanging clouds gave the inevitable impression of a continuous play of sheet lightning along the horizon. But when this wonderful night picture of warfare came into full view it seemed as if one stood on the brink of an overwhelming inferno. Looking down into the valley tongues of flame could be seen flashing from hundreds upon hundreds of guns flashing white-hot serpentine fangs. The guns were playing upon the ridges looming up in the distance enveloped in darkness, upon

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WAR SUMMARY

CANADIAN TROOPS EARLY YESTERDAY MORNING CARRIED THE FAMOUS VIMY RIDGE in a big offensive, in which the British line was advanced from two to three miles on a front of about twelve miles, running from Henin on the Cojeul River, six miles southeast of Arras, to Givenchy-en-Gohelle, six miles northeast of Arras. The ground captured includes a network of fortified trenches and towns, the new front running north to south through Givenchy-en-Gohelle, Thelus, Athies, Feuchy, Chapelle de Feuchy, to Henin-sur-Cojeul, and leaving in the wake of the British attacking forces as they swept eastward a chain of important fortified towns and positions.

THE FIGHTING BEGAN AT DAWN on a wide front between Lens and St. Quentin, the post of honor at Vimy Ridge falling to the lot of the Canadians, who for months have been lying under the shadow of the towering heights which the French scaled in September, 1915, in one of the most memorable and bloody engagements of the war. Unable at that time to carry the slopes on the farther side in face of big German reinforcements, the summit had to be abandoned. The British troops yesterday morning pushed forward in a heavy rainstorm, the misty weather rendering difficult the work of the air machines. The weight of the attack forced the enemy

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BAVARIANS AT ODDS WITH BERLIN

"We Bavarians have had no great call for gratitude to Berlin during this war."—Munich Post, speaking of the food distribution from Berlin.