

North and South Carolina: Cloudy tonight and Sunday; probably rain.

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## BRITISH DEFENSES BROKEN AT ONE POINT

### Elsewhere the German Onslaught is Being Withstood

## GERMAN SHELLS FALLING IN PARIS 62 MILES AWAY

## BRITISH WEST OF ST. QUENTIN WERE FORCED TO RETIRE

Field Marshal Haig Announces Breaking of the Defensive System

FALL BACK TO OTHER PREPARED POSITIONS

British Had Prepared Trenches Further in the Rear to Meet Such an Emergency. Holding Elsewhere

London, March 23.—Powerful enemy attacks delivered with great weight of infantry and artillery have broken through the British defensive system west of St. Quentin, the war office announces.

The British troops on the northern portion of the battlefield are holding their positions.

The British west of St. Quentin are falling back in good positions further west. Heavy fighting with fresh enemy forces is in progress.

The war office states that there are prepared positions behind the British to which they are falling back.

The statement follows:

Heavy fighting continued until late hours last night on the whole battle front. During the afternoon powerful hostile attacks delivered with great weight of infantry and artillery, broke through out defensive system west of St. Quentin. Our troops on this part of the battle front are falling back in good order across the devastated area to prepared positions farther west.

"Our troops on the northern portion of the battle front are holding their positions.

"Very heavy fighting with fresh hostile forces is in progress."

For the second time on the Western front since the opposing armies established themselves in their trench systems the defensive zone has been broken through. In other great attacks the British, French and Germans have been able to bend back the line, but not to strike through the zone of defense. Many military critics had reached the opinion that it would be impossible to break them until one side or the other had been worn down to such a point that it would be no longer able to man it.

Unless the British are able to restore the situation by a counter attack a withdrawal on a wide front will be necessary with open field.

The point at which the British line has been broken is near the southern end of the German attacking front, which extends from Arras to LaFere, 15 miles below St. Quentin. Below this sector is the great area in the front, where the line approaching nearest to Paris turns sharply to the east.

The German offensive has developed with almost unparalleled rapid-

ity. One reason for this is indicated in Field Marshal Haig's reports showing that the Germans are constantly bringing up fresh bodies of troops.

The statement of the British war office that the troops west of St. Quentin are falling back to prepared positions indicates that the Germans although they have broken through the British defensive system have not pierced the entire British zone of defense. The allusion in the British statement to the defensive system may be only to the main battlefront system behind which other lines have been prepared. If that is the case, the Germans have done little more than repeat what the British did in the battle of the Somme when they pierced the Hindenburg line and captured long stretches of it, forcing the Germans to retreat to prepared positions in the rear.

The experiences of the attacking forces in other campaigns show that the Germans, as they progress, are likely to find their movements more difficult and the resistance of the British more effective. The more deeply they strike into the British lines the further they must move from their bases, entailing increasing difficulties in providing supplies for their troops. They must move forward over a devastated area while the British will have the great advantage of good roads and railroads. Perhaps the greatest problem of the Germans is the lack of heavy artillery. In every previous campaign of this nature it has been necessary for the advancing forces to halt frequently while bringing up the heavy pieces.

The extent of the British defenses has been a subject of much speculation, but it is known they have been vastly improved during the last winter. Earlier in the war when the offensive rested with the French and British less attention was paid to positions of the rear. The British in particular were said to scorn elaborate defensive zones such as the Germans constructed. After the defection of Russia and consequent increase of German strength in the West, however, it became necessary for the Allies to consider defensive measures, which were carried out during the winter.

Field Marshal Haig has deemed it expedient not to divulge the exact location of the British battle line, but the most intense fighting has been around Croisilles on the north and Laverguer on the south. In the center of the northern half of the 50 mile front near the Bapaume-Cambrai high road, the British have held against the enemy. Near Croisilles the Germans used nine divisions in their attack and south of St. Quentin they used six divisions. Here the British retired to the protection of the Oise river and the flooded ground near it.

Berlin, in announcing the capture of 15,000 prisoners and 200 guns, does not locate the fighting areas, nor does it specify the sectors of most intense action. It places the fighting as along a front between Arras and LaFere. The initial German efforts were aimed at Lagnicourt, at the northern end of the sharp Cambrai salient, and at Gouzeaucourt, at the southern point of the salient. After the first assault the Germans, firing great quantities of shells into the British positions, lengthened the attacking fronts several miles at both ends of the salient. Apparently they gained the first line British position on the sectors attacked, but suffered severely from British rifle, machine gun and artillery fire against their solid advancing ranks.

The Germans have not yet taken advantage of the concentration of Allied attention on the Cambrai front to make an attack on another section in the West. Intense artillery bombardment in the Verdun and Ypres sectors, however, continues. Along the Chemin-Des-Dames and in the Champagne the German guns have been firing violently, but three small German attacks in the Champagne were repulsed by the French.

## SECRETARY M'ADDOO WIRES ACCEPTANCE CITY'S INVITATION

Director General of Railroads Will Be Here on April Ninth

LAYING PLANS FOR HIS ENTERTAINMENT May Be Heard at Harbor Island Auditorium—Academy of Music Admittedly Inadequate

Hon. William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury and director general of railroads, will be in Wilmington the evening of April 9, and will address a Wilmington audience. Telegrams to this effect were received by the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs and by Major Joseph W. Little, chairman of the county executive committee of the War Savings campaign. Following is a copy of the telegram received today.

"Deeply appreciate your hospitable invitation to visit Wilmington. While I had already arranged itinerary after careful consideration, I have found that by special effort it will be possible for me to accept. I have arranged to arrive over the Atlantic Coast Line at 6 p. m. April 9, thus giving time for an evening meeting." The telegram was signed by Secretary McAdoo himself and not by an under secretary, and was dated out of Washington.

Already plans are being discussed for the reception and entertainment of the city's distinguished visitor to be. The Academy of Music is admittedly inadequate to seat the vast crowd that will want to hear the second biggest man of the country, and it is not thought possible that an open air meeting would be satisfactory to either Mr. McAdoo or his audience, despite the delightful climate of this section. It has been suggested that the meeting be held in the Harbor Island auditorium, the belief being expressed that the Tidewater Power Company would be more than willing to place the fare down and back within easy reach of all. These matters, however, will come up later and will be acted upon then.

## SELECTIVE DRAFT AMENDMENT UP

Washington, March 23.—Consideration of a joint resolution providing for the registration under the Selective Service Act of all men who have reached the age of 24 years since June 5, last, was taken up in the Senate today.

Senator Hardwick's amendment providing that all male persons, citizens of the United States or residing in the United States, who have become 31 years old since being registered, June 5, and not already enrolled in the military forces, shall be exempt from the draft law, was rejected by the Senate without a record vote.

## CLEARING HOUSE CONDITION.

New York, March 23.—The actual condition of clearing house banks and trust companies for the week shows that they hold \$54,965,830 in reserve in excess of legal requirements. This is an increase of \$20,650,020 from last week.

## BAKER VISITS ALBERT

London, March 23.—Newton D. Baker, the American Secretary of War visited King Albert of Belgium and the Belgian front yesterday.

## AIR RAID ALSO

Paris, March 23. 9 a. m.—An air raid alarm has just been given.

## TWO DAYS TERRIFIC FIGHTING CAUSED THE BRITISH TO YIELD

## BOMBARDING PARIS.

Paris, March 23.—The Germans having been firing on Paris with long range guns since 8 o'clock this morning shells of 250 millimetre have been reaching the capital and suburbs at intervals of a quarter of an hour, killing about 10 persons and wounding about 15. The shortest distance from Paris to the front is over 100 kilometres (62 miles).

The announcement that Paris was being bombarded was made officially this afternoon. Measures for counter attacking the enemy's cannon are under execution.

London, March 23.—The Germans forced their way into Bory but a dashing counter attack drove them out, Reuters correspondent at British headquarters telegraphs. A large party was surrounded and probably was captured.

The Germans this morning were pressing hard the British forces defending Hermies, about 2 1/2 miles back of the old line, in the region southwest of Cambrai.

More intense fighting is expected. The operations are so vast and is changing with such kaleidoscopic rapidity as the line surges backward and forward that it is impossible to visualize the scene sufficiently to give a connected and accurate account of it at present.

Forty-nine German divisions have been identified thus far on the battle front and prisoners have been taken from 18 of them. Some estimates place the number of German divisions engaged as high as ninety, but it is impossible to say whether this is accurate.

## 25,000 PRISONERS.

Berlin, March 23.—Between Fontaine Les Croisilles and Moeuvres German forces penetrated into the second enemy position and captured two villages, army headquarters announced today. British counter attacks failed.

So far, the statement announces, 25,000 prisoners, 400 guns, and 300 machine guns have been taken.

The two villages taken on the Fontaine Moeuvres front were Vaulx-Vraucourt and Morchies. (The former village is about 3 1/2 miles and the latter about 2 1/2 miles behind the former British front.

## Fighting Gallantly.

British Army Headquarters in France, March 23.—11 A. m. The British, gallantly fighting, are still presenting a solid front to the fiercely attacking Germans although the defensive troops have withdrawn their lines in certain places for strategic reasons.

## ORDERS ISSUED TO TAKE NO PRISONERS

London, March 23.—General officers operating in Finland and the Ukraine are ordered the soldiers to take no prisoners but to hang Red Guards as they are only bandits, German newspapers report George Ledebour, an Independent Socialist leader as declaring in the Reichstag, according to an Exchange Telegraph dispatch from Amsterdam, Deputy Ledebour added: "On the one hand, we make peace with the Bolsheviks and on the other we hang them."

That is the best way to stir up hatred that will last forever against everything German."

The speaker was interrupted by President Kaempff who called him to order.

## Encounters on Italian Front.

Rome, March 23.—Numerous patrol encounters have occurred along the Italian front, the War Office announced today, and there has been some increase in the artillery fire on the mountain line.

## French Attacked.

Paris, March 23.—The Germans launched an attack on the French lines in the Woivre district last night which was dispersed by the French fire. The Germans suffered appreciable losses and left some prisoners in the hands of the French.

## BELIEVE PRESENT BATTLE DECISIVE

London, March 23.—Common in the press on the new offensive as summarized by the Copenhagen correspondent of the Exchange Telegraph Company is to the effect that the present battles are the final and decisive exertion of strength on the part of the German people before peace comes.

The newspapers say Germany need hold only a short time, and that victory will be obtained.

Much attention is being paid also to the Italian front.

Washington, March 23.—Army officials today awaited eagerly fuller details in the break by the British system west of St. Quentin, reported by London. Until the extent of the retirement of the British lines is revealed there is no means of gauging the strategic possibilities of the German successes.

Observers found comfort in the fact that announcement of withdrawal came from British, not German, sources, and also in the orderly movement of the British to new positions. These facts, they feel, preclude the possibility that a large sector of the British position has been overwhelmed and a grave threat created at the security of the whole line in that region.

## GERMAN ARTILLERY DELUGED BRITISH WITH IRON FLOOD

Preparations of Enemy Described as Most Violent Ever Endured

600,000 GERMANS WERE IN THE DRIVE

One British Division Withstood Assaults of Six German Divisions Until Darkness Came

London, March 23.—The artillery preparation of the Germans in the drive against the British lines which is now in progress is described by those who took part in it as the most violent they ever endured, according to the Daily Mail's correspondent on the British front. "The thing that stands out as characteristic of the fighting up to the present," says the correspondent, "is that we did so well under the terrific impact."

Continuing, the correspondent says: "Upon one corps' front there was a gun for every 15 yards. The strength of the mortars which the enemy brought up in such great numbers sent over such an overwhelming weight of iron and high explosives that in most parts of the front wire ceased to be an obstacle and trenches were obliterated. At the same time all of our known battery positions were drenched by gas, but their gas shells failed to reach all of our batteries, nor did they succeed anywhere in breaking down our wire. At one point where the Germans found our wire unbroken they set to work with scissors until they had made a way through. All of this was done under our machine gun fire."

A curious fact reported by our airmen was that the Germans composing the special assault divisions wore new uniforms. Our relaying corps did valuable work despite adverse weather conditions. One of our men in the early morning reconnaissance spotted several thousand Germans moving westward south of Bullecourt and another reported 3,000 in the enemy in a sunken road in the area waiting to advance. Few enemy machines were seen and they merely flew low, peppering our trenches with their machine guns.

"This is the first battle where the British gunners had to serve their guns in gas masks and it was a difficult task. Fortunately practices with masks have been taking place frequently for an hour daily. I found every one I saw pretty confident. At first they did have a hard job to meet the masses of Germans who came on in denser formation than ever before, yet all reports show that they fought magnificently. For example, south of St. Quentin one of our divisions had to bear up against the repeated assaults of no fewer than six German divisions, possibly 90,000 men, and only when the assaults ceased with darkness did our troops withdraw to strong positions behind the canal system between St. Quentin and Oise."

It is estimated that altogether nearly 600,000 Germans participated in the offensive. The enemy fought well and his gunners did good service. The quickness with which the guns were brought forward into No Man's Land after the infantry had advanced was marked. He had in many places the advantage over us in positions and he was at all points largely superior in numbers."

The Action is Now Somewhat in the Open at One Point

EFFECT OF BREAK NOT YET APPARENT

Quite Likely That French Troops Are Becoming Engaged—Fifty German Divisions Are Now Involved

After two days' terrific battling in their great offensive on the Western front, the Germans have finally succeeded in bringing the action at one point on the front somewhat more into the open.

Field Marshal Haig reports that the British defensive west of St. Quentin, near the southern edge of the 50-mile front under attack, was broken through by the great weight of the enemy infantry and artillery. The British here are falling back in good order.

That the yielding of the line at this point had been by no means unexpected and possibly had been foreseen as ultimately inevitable, is indicated by the statement that the retirement is to prepare positions further west across the devastated district. There is nothing in the report to indicate that this retrograde movement will affect the strong defensive lines to the north in any way seriously, as it is explicitly stated that these positions continue to be held by the British forces.

Just what the effect will be upon the Entente line to the south is not yet apparent. The British hold the front to a point some 15 miles south of St. Quentin, the river Oise at about the town of LaFere, where the French line begins. No reports have been received from Paris as to whether the French forces have become involved in the battle. From the nearness of the point of German penetration to their lines, however, it would seem probable that they soon will be found taking part in the struggle.

There is another factor to be considered also, should the German thrust develop more seriously. There was created last winter by the Supreme War Council at Versailles an Entente "army of manoeuvre" understood to be made up of troops of all Allies, which was designed to be available for action at any point on the wide front from the North Sea to the Adriatic, where it should be needed.

It has doubtless not been the Entente intention to throw this army into action hastily, but it unquestionably stands ready for use in any emergency and might easily prove the vital factor in any general engagement which the Western front fighting should develop.

The battle is still in progress along the British front with the Germans continuing to throw fresh forces into the struggle. It is estimated that 50 German divisions are already involved with probably 25 or more additional divisions in close reserves. Advice from correspondents indicates that wherever the British troops are falling back they are doing so in excellent order and with deliberation withdrawing voluntarily at some points in order to maintain an unbroken front.

## Special Services Held.

London, March 23.—Special services of intercession have been ordered in all churches under the Archbishop of Munich to the success of the operation on the Western front, according to a dispatch from The Hague to the Daily Mail. A pastoral letter from the archbishop to all churches declared that the hour for a decisive engagement had struck.