WEATHER AIDS ALLIED DRIVES

Bright Skies Bring Good Fighting Days to Western Front

GROUND DRIES QUICKLY

British and French Drawing Their Lines About St. Quentin

By PHILIP GIBBS

Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger

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There was an attack of some importance yesterday morning by the British and French troops north and south of St. Quentin, and the first news to hand was that they penetrated the village of Pontruet and to other ground thereabouts and took something like 700 prisoners.

The French apparently gained territory around the old British outpost line near St. Quentin known as Epine de Dallon, where the British fifth army was violently attacked on the morning of March 21. I am unable to give further details today, as I have been to another quarter along the British front but tomorrow I hope to send a narrative of this new success.

Elsewhere along the greater part of the British front the fighting has been confined to local actions and artillery work, but during the last twenty-four hours on our front opposite Epehy and below Villers-Guislain the trench and outpost fighting has been continuous and severe. Here the enemy counterattacked several times in some strength, but each time he was bloodily repulsed by the British.

position known as the Quadrilateral.

When the German storm troops came over they were received by a machine-gun and rifle barrage which broke them up, and some 200 prisoners were left in the hands of the British, with twenty of their machine guns. A hundred dead Germans were counted inside the British lines after this attempt. Later in the day—that is at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and again at 6 o'clock—the enemy advanced between two outposts held by eastern county troops, and were driven back with a loss of twenty prisoners.

The assault troops were in a state of confusion owing to this failure, and the British seized the opportunity and rushed a trench known as Duncan avenue, which they captured and consolidated, while another 100 prisoners were gathered in.

The Londoners and other men of the British divisions had some trouble with the enemy during the night or made trouble on their own account to keep him worried, and pushed out into the sunken roads and established advanced posts and blockades.

Since Saturday morning, in consequence of these minor actions, the British have taken here a toll of 400 prisoners and have received a considerable number of German machine guns. Some of the troops engaged hereabout have been fighting with great endurance for a long time, and they had to face severe machine-gun fire day and night and all the discomforts of wet weather, which make the fighting harder and more miserable. But they have stuck it out doggedly and grimly and have beaten down the efforts of the Alpine corps, which is a strong body of men, and four more fresh German divisions, of whom two have come into the line during the last forty-eight hours. Not only have they mastered the Germans and repulsed their fierce counter-attacks, but they gained much ground of value to us and to the enemy. This is proved by German maps showing it to be a part of the main Hindenburg defenses and to be held at all costs.

Elsewhere, as I said, the British front has been fairly "quiet" after our recent victories. But, as I always like to point out, it is only comparative quietness, and the fields are not "healthy" places where our soldiers picnic between battles under the blue sky, which is over them today. German long-range guns are busy firing in a harassing way over our lines, and when I went up among the Canadians I found some of these shells had fallen unpleasantly near groups of men, who were in need of some respite from this continual strain on the nervous system.

At night bombing squadrons came over searching for British camps and billets and horse lines, and dropped packets of high explosives. Of late the enemy's fighting planes and guns have been making dead set at the British kite balloons, not liking their quiet observation. So some of the balloonatics, as they are called in a friendly way by the infantry, have had to dive overboard and trust to the strength of the parachutes and a kindly breeze. But the German flying men have not enjoyed this sport with impunity, and there have been deadly duels during the last few days, which ended in a crash of German airplanes chased by British flying patrols.

VON HERTLING RAVES OVER U. S. WAR FURY

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French, English and Americans, who are supported by every kind of modern instrument of war.

"The events of the last few days have proved the old spirit is alive in our troops. The fatherland's true sons are intrepidly preventing the enemy's pertinacious attempts to break through.

"Shall we, then, lose courage and forget what previously happened? Shall we refuse the old absolute confidence in the men who hitherto have led us to victory because of vicissitudes incident to all wars? No, gentlemen, that would be unmanly timidity and base ingratitude."

Has Confidence in Generals

Expressing confidence in Field Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff, the Imperial Chancellor said they would be equal to the situation, and that the Allies' "premature cries of victory" will soon die away. He continued:

"Certainly the pure enthusiasm which characterized August, 1914, could not last, but the firm resolve to hold out till the end will, despite all vacillations and vicissitudes, continue. The people at home will not leave the army in the lurch just when everything is at stake. From the first day we waged the war as a war of defense. Only to defend ourselves did we invade Belgium."

In vigorously defending Germany's action toward Belgium the Imperial Chancellor admitted that in invading Belgium Germany transgressed the written law, but he stated:

"As for individuals, so is there also for states another law. That is the law of self-defense."

Places Blame on England

"We have never concealed the fact," said the Chancellor in the course of his address, "that all thoughts of conquest were far from our minds. But how do things stand on the opposite side? If one credited the utterances of the chief official and unofficial, they only desire to repel a Germany which in criminal arrogance is striving for world hegemony; to fight for freedom and justice against German imperialism and Prussian militarism.

"We know better. The world war was prepared years ago by the well-known encircling policy of King Edward. In France there arose extensive war literature which referred to impending war with Germany. Austria-Hungary's influence in the Balkans was to be eliminated. The Russian expansion movement and the Pan-Slavic demanded it.

Russia Used the Match

"The match was not put in the powder by the Prussian military party but while the German emperor was to the last moment endeavoring to preserve peace the Russian military party put through the mobilization against the will of the weak Czar, and thereby made war unavoidable.

"The official account of the Sukhomlinoff trial made this clear to every one who desired to see. We can look calmly forward to the judgment of posterity. For the present it is true those who are in power in the enemy countries have succeeded by an unparalleled campaign of lies and calumny in obscuring the truth. When a result was not obtained by the spoken or written word it was achieved by pictorial representations—productions of absolutely devilish fantasy, from which one turns with horror and disgust.

"But the object has been attained. **A hatred has been raised among the enemy populations against the Central Powers and particularly against Germany**—a hatred which eschews all moderation and chokes off all just judgment.

"You have all read Premier Clemenceau's last speech, a speech which seemed in its fanatical hatred and the coarseness of mind displayed, to surpass anything hitherto achieved. But in America it found a many-voiced echo as is proved by the pronouncements that are reaching our ears from across the ocean.

"**The wildest war fury is at present raging in the United States. The people are intoxicated with the idea that America must bring the blessings of modern liberal kultur (?) to the enslaved people of Central Europe,** while at the same time they are rejoicing at the many millions of dollars which the war armaments are causing to flow into the pockets of the business men.

Takes Entente to Task

"Theory and practice are two different things. The old proverb of the mote in another's eye and the beam in one's own finds constant illustration in the machinations of the Entente. They are never tired of condemning our march into Belgium, but they pass over the oppression of Greece, the interference with that country's internal affairs and the enforced abdication of its King, as if they were matters of course, and the enforced abdication of its King, as if they were matters of course.

"They assert that they are fighting to protect oppressed nations, but the century-old sorrows and the justifiable grievances of Ireland nowhere find a hearing, not even in America, where the people are acquainted with them through the numerous Irish immigrants. The British Government, which is especially fond of talking of right and justice, recently found it compatible with those principles to recognize the conglomerate rabble of Czecho-Slovaks as a belligerent power.

"How will the German people have to meet that? Will it, forsooth, beg for mercy in fear and trembling? No, gentlemen. Remembering its great past and its still greater mission in the future, it will stand erect and not cringe or grovel.

"The situation is serious but it gives us no grounds for deep depression. The iron wall of the western front is not broken, and the U-boat is slowly but surely fulfilling its task of diminishing tonnage thus, above all, increasingly menacing and restricting reinforcements of men and material from the United States.

"The hour will come because it must come, when our enemies will see reason and be ready to make an end of the war before half the world is converted into a heap of ruins and the flower of its manly strength lies dead on the battlefields."

Advises United Stand

Count von Hertling said it was the business of the Germans to stand together, cool, confident, united and resolute, with their one aim the protection of the fatherland, its independence and its freedom of movement. There was no antagonism, he declared, between the Government and the people. The former only desired to work with and for the nation. Alluding to the differences of opinion on political matters, the Chancellor said:

"The period after the war will also confront us with new domestic problems. I will not speak of these now but, as I know that the prevailing discontent is not influenced by the sufferings and worries of war-time, but also by quite definite cares and grievances of a political nature, I will make some brief remarks on the subject:

"Since taking on my shoulders the heavy burden of the Chancellorship, I have always endeavored energetically to carry out what was still lacking in this respect. I am, of course, alluding to that great reform bill which, it is true, does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Reichstag, but nevertheless engages political circles in Germany far beyond the Russian frontiers."

Count von Hertling asserted that the Prussian Government was firmly resolved to have the bill accepted, and to that end it would not hesitate to use any means constitutionally available. He begged his hearers to remember that this question was one of a far-reaching alteration in the historical structure of the Prussian States, and that it would be unfair if the representatives of the old order were not given the opportunity of defending their standpoint in parliament. There must be no question of procrastination, the Chancellor said.

"Should we, however," he continued, "not succeed in attaining our contemplated aim by parliamentary debate, then another way indicated by the constitution will be pursued."

Takes Up Wilson's Terms

Referring to the question of peace the Chancellor then said that humanity shudders at the thought of what this war may bring others, and the question is engaging the attention of more people as to the possibility of creating an organization among peace-needing nations which would "set right in the place of might and a peaceful solution instead of sanguinary battles."

The Chancellor proceeded:

"As is known, the President of the United States laid down in fourteen points the guiding lines for a conclusion of peace. On January 21 of this year I discussed in your committee all these points, and regarding the last remarked that the idea of a league of nations as suggested had my entire sympathy on the condition that an honest will to peace and the recognition of the equal rights of all States of the league were guaranteed.

"How necessary was this reservation was shown by the statements of our enemies, who in a league of nations thought of an alliance directed against Germany and her allies.

Four Points Accepted

"President Wilson in a message on February 2 (February 11) took a further step in the same direction and laid down four points or principles, which in his opinion should be applied in an exchange of views. In my Reichstag speech of February 22, I declared myself in principle in agreement with the possibility of discussing a general peace on such a basis.

"**President Wilson, however, has neither then nor since taken any notice of it.**

"Meanwhile the former idealist and zealous friend of peace seems to have developed into the head of the American imperialists. But the plan of a league of nations yet to be established is not to be discredited by such an action. It has found eloquent advocates in the Swiss President and the Norwegian Premier Knudsen, both of whom dwell especially on the interest of neutral States in such an institution.

"I also do not hesitate to express my opinion again today on this question and to indicate publicly the aim and basis of such an association. It is a question of promoting universal, equal and successive disarmament, the establishment of obligatory courts of arbitration, freedom of the seas and the protection of small nations.

"Regarding the first point, on February 24 I described the idea of restriction of armaments as thoroughly discussable, adding that the financial position of all the European States after the war would give the most effective support to a solution of this question.

"Regarding the question of arbitration, my standpoint has long been history. I will not go into details, but interesting material which I have before me shows that Germany in the past repeatedly suggested arbitration of disputed questions, the carrying out of which in several cases, however, was prevented by opposition raised in Great Britain or America. If an international understanding could be reached that disputed questions of law between various States must always be submitted to arbitration courts, and if this were made obligatory for members of a league of nations, it would undoubtedly be an important step toward the attainment of the general aim. More precise prescriptions, especially regarding requisite guarantees for the recognition of verdicts made by arbitration, need careful and thorough consideration.

Regarding Freedom of Seas

"I have expressed myself before this on the question of freedom of the seas, which form a necessary prerequisite for the unrestricted intercourse of states and peoples. Here, however, the greatest difficulties, naturally, are not raised on our side. On a former occasion I pointed out that there must be unhindered access for all nations to the inland seas, no 'predominant' position of Great Britain at Gibraltar and Malta and in the Suez Canal. * * * An English newspaper has called this impudence.

"Finally, there is a protection of small nations. Here we can forthwith and without reserve state that in this matter we have an entirely clear conscience. May, therefore, a league of nations be no mere dream of the future. May the idea deepen and stir the people in all countries zealously, express themselves with the means for its establishment. The first and most important prerequisite will be an energetic will to champion peace and justice.

"Here I will close my remarks. The Foreign Secretary will deal with the political situation in more detail and discuss especially in that connection the well-known Austrian note and the reception it has met with up to this time on the part of the enemy.

"Those in power in the so-called democratic States have with precipitance and without consulting their peoples exhibited a curt attitude of rejection. By so doing they once again show where the passion for conquest, where imperialism and militarism are in reality to be sought."

Von Hintze Speaks

Admiral von Hintze, the German Foreign Secretary, also addressed the main committee. He said that Germany maintained her readiness for peace, notwithstanding repeated rejections of peace offers from the Central Powers.

Speaking on the recent Austrian peace proposal, Admiral von Hintze said that the Government's attitude toward peace had been manifested to the whole world in repeated appeals.

"We maintain this appeal for peace, our readiness for peace," he continued, "despite the partly jeering, partly sneering rejections which we have experienced from our enemies. In this we are in full accord with our allies."

The foreign secretary said that after the previous failures it had appeared to the German Government that it should not take any further steps in this direction and that a moment when the nation's enemies were "suffering from war psychosis and the intoxication of victory" was not a suitable time for new appeals for peace.

"The appeal, however, was made," the secretary added.

General von Risberg addressed the main committee on behalf of the Minister of War. He explained, according to a telegram from Berlin, that the failure of the German offensive on the western front was due to the failure of the German army to surprise the Entente Allies and the necessity of assuming the defensive on the arrival of the English home army on the theatre of war, to the employment of colored troops and to the intervention of American divisions.

Ministers Attend Sitting

The sitting of the main committee of the Reichstag was attended by the Imperial Chancellor, Foreign Secretary von Hintze and other Secretaries of State.

Friedrich Ebert, president of the committee, announced that the meeting had been called at an earlier date than expected owing to Austria's peace proposal.

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