

# The Iron Brigade

(Contributed.)

On every front to which Czech soldiers are sent the Austrian generals fully understand what it means when a nation desires to break down the walls of its jail.

From the very first day of the war it was clear that the Czech soldiers would not fight for the cause of the Germans and Magyars against their friends—the nations of the Entente. They were therefore put at once under careful observation at the front as well as behind the lines. The watch increased in severity with every month of the war.

"This is not a war secret," said Prince Ludwig Windischgratz in the Hungarian Parliament on August 28, 1916, "and the whole world sees it, how the service battalions are composed so that in every Czech service battalion at least 4 per cent of Magyar and German troops are included."

Yet all these measures could not prevent the Czech soldiers from carrying out their purpose. Though carefully watched by their German and Magyar hangmen they continued individually and in groups and even in regiments to pass over to the side which, in the Austrian terminology, is that of the enemy, but to the Czechs is that of their liberators. In September, 1914, the 8th Regiment of the Czech Landwehr, when ordered to march to the Russian front refused obedience and attacked its German officers.

Thereupon the 75th German Regiment was sent against it and the Czechs had to pay the penalty of their revolt. The 36th Regiment, recruited from the district of Mlada Boleslav also mutined whilst still in Bohemia and was decimated by the Germans and Magyars. More effective was, however, the action of the Czechs at the front. The fact that several Czech regiments crossed over to the Serbian side contributed much to the ignominious Austrian defeat in Serbia in the closing months of the year 1914. Thus the 12nd Regiment, recruited from Benesov, crossed over in a body to the Serbians and entered Nish with its band playing the Serbian national hymn. Similar incidents occurred also at the Russian front. Some regiments, as for instance, the 85th from Bemo, were found out when attempting to surrender to their friends, and were massacred by the German and Magyar troops; others however, like the 35th Regiment from the town of Pilsen and the 28th Regiment from Prague, succeeded in crossing over to the Russian side.

Similarly of the 11th Regiment from Pisek, all but two companies joined the Russians.

The Czechs, who surrendered to the Serbs or Russians were soon found fighting again—but this time on the side of their friends.

In Russia they organized a brigade of their own, so called the Czecho-Slovak brigade. But short was the career of this first unit of the new Bohemian army in Russia. July witnessed its splendid success in the brief Russian offensive, and the same month saw its total annihilation. Cable reports give but a brief skeleton of facts, but from it the stirring tragedy of a body of nine thousand patriotic rebels can be constructed.

July 3rd, when all America was heartened by the unexpected news of the powerful Russian offensive near Zborov, the Russian official report stated: "Yesterday afternoon after a severe stubborn battle, the Zorafsky regiment occupied the village of Presovec, while the gallant troops of the fourth Finnish division and the Czecho-Slovak brigade occupied the strongly fortified enemy position on the heights west and southwest of the village of Zborov and the fortified village of Korshiduv. Three lines of enemy trenches were penetrated. The Czecho-Slovak brigade captured 62 officers and 3,150 soldiers, fifteen guns and many machine guns. Many of the captured guns were turned against the enemy."

Very little came from Russia after that about the Czech heroes of the Russian offensive. Complimentary mention was made a few days later of the work of a Czech regiment of cavalry and the news came that Minister Kerensky publicly acknowledged the great debt owed by Russia to the brave men of the Czecho-Slovak army.

And then the bright outlook suddenly changed; Job's news came from Galicia day after day. No longer was Lemberg threatened, but Tarnopol, which had been in Russian hands for nearly three years, was lost and the last foothold of the Slavs on Galician soil was slowly abandoned. A time of much disappointment and great anxiety to all Americans; to Bohemians in the

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United States it was a time of dread, of waiting for horrible news. For all who knew aught of fighters of the Czecho-Slovak brigade were certain that surrender they could not and flee with the others they would not.

The expected blow fell Saturday night, July 28th. A few lines, almost hidden in the columns of war stuff and speculations about the opening of the fourth year of the war, but what a tragedy they portrayed to some half a million people in the United States. This is the brief message: "The Vecherne Vremya reports that in the fighting at Tarnopol, Galicia, three regiments of Czech volunteers, abandoned by Russian troops resisted until the last, the officers blowing out their brains and the soldiers rushing where the shells were bursting the thickest."

One is reminded of Waterloo and Napoleon's guard that dies, but does not surrender. The Czechs have not

the keen sense of the dramatic that a Frenchman possesses even at the threshold of death, but they died like the old guard.

The great war has been so crowded with slaughter and heroism for three years that perhaps the brief history of the Iron Brigade of Czecho-Slovaks will receive but a bare mention. But by Bohemians and Slovaks, wherever they may live, regardless even of the fact, whether the dream of free Bohemia, for which these men fought will be realized, the men who died at Tarnopol in July, 1917, will be honored forever as patriots and heroes. To the Bohemian knights who fell at Crecy in 1348 defending their blind King John, to the democratic peasants who fought the nobility to the last man at Lipany in 1434, to the Moravian heroes who were cut to pieces on the White Mountain in 1620, when the Hungarian mercenaries had deserted them, will now be added the

iron Brigade of the first Bohemian army since 1620.

The three regiments were annihilated because some of the Russians did not do their duty. Bohemians bear no ill will to Russia for this. No other race has followed the rapid changes of the Russian kaleidoscope since March of this year with greater sympathy or with clearer comprehension of the enormous difficulties that Russia has to overcome in its effort to become a real democracy. It is certain that the fate of the first brigade will not dampen the ardor of the remaining units of the Czecho-Slovak army in Russia nor the enthusiasm of tens of thousands of others who are volunteering for service against the common enemy of mankind. "They shall not have died in vain," will be the firm resolution of everyone who has the Czech blood in his veins. Liberty of Bohemia shall be bought by the lifeblood of her sons.

## French Forward; Take Hill 304

While British Are Repulsing Repeated Counter Attacks on the New Positions at Lens.

## ITALIANS ARE PUSHING ON THE ISONZO FRONT

The French made an attack this morning on the left bank of the river Meuse, between Avocourt wood and Deadman's hill. The war office announces the capture of Hill 304, Camard wood and the fortified works between Haucourt wood and Bethin-

court. The French gained more than their objectives, advancing to an average depth of two kilometers (1 1/4 miles.)

The Italian war office reports that the battle on the Isonzo front continues and that about sixty guns already have been captured.

The Russian official statement issued today makes no mention in the Riga region, saying that on the Russian front there were only fusillades and scouting operations.

On the Rumanian front, the Austro-Germans last night attacked the Russian-Rumanian positions near the village of Krendsheni and after occupying part of the trenches of the defenders were ejected by counter attacks.

Report from the British front in France says heavy fighting proceeded throughout the night in the

southwest edge of Lens for possession of the great slag heap known as the Green Crassier, from the crest of which the Canadians broke through late yesterday after having a footing on it all day. The British this morning were continuing the battle from positions which they had seized immediately northwest of the Crassier and the Germans were making very strenuous efforts to re-establish the shattered defenses they had suffered on the top of this artificial hill.

The Canadians were holding the Crassier late in the afternoon in the face of numerous bitter counter attacks by strong forces of the enemy. In each case hard hand to hand fighting with bayonet resulted in the Germans being thrown back with severe losses.

Portugese troops repulsed German raiders at two points in the region of La Bassee.

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