

sector south of Thélus was defended by the 1st Bavarian Reserve Division; in the centre, opposite the 2nd, 3rd and the right of the 4th Canadian Division, lay the 79th Reserve Division, recently arrived from East Prussia and now holding the left of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps front; in the North, opposite the left of the 4th Canadian Division, the 16th Bavarian Jaeger Division of the VIII Reserve Corps covered Givenchy.

Preparations for the Battle.—There was no secrecy about the Canadian preparations for the capture of the Ridge. All manifestations of activity were followed closely by the enemy and correctly interpreted; the commander of the 79th German Reserve Division at the end of March issued an accurate summary of the situation, closing with the ominous words: "The Canadians are known to be good troops and are, therefore, well suited for assaulting. There are no deserters to be found amongst the Canadians". The plans and preparations for the capture of the Ridge had, in fact, been under way since January, 1917, and no effort had been spared in perfecting them. For the ensuing months various engineering works were of first importance on the Canadian side of the line: the trenches had to be improved, 26 miles of forward roads had to be repaired and maintained, and three miles of plank road were constructed in the shelled area; 20 miles of light railway line had to be maintained and extended into the forward zone to handle daily 830 tons of freight—rations, small arm ammunition, bombs, grenades, artillery ammunition and engineer stores; signal communications required the installation of 25 miles of new buried cable route in which 1,500 miles of circuit were laid, and 66 miles of new overhead route were erected, making a total of 2,600 miles of telegraph and telephone wire. At the front line, to accommodate the attacking troops, eleven subways, old and new, were prepared, with a total length of nearly four miles, the longest 1,500 yards; all had at least 25 feet of head cover, they were lighted by electricity and piped with water from the rear; in them were also dugouts for brigade and battalion headquarters, dressing stations for the wounded and magazines for ammunition.

In general, the Canadian scheme was to destroy the enemy's defences by a carefully applied artillery bombardment, lasting two weeks; for this period observed fire would be carried out daily on his dugouts, rearward positions, forward trenches and barbed wire entanglements; by day and night his lines of communication would also be harassed with incessant shell and machine-gun fire. The work of destruction completed, every known hostile battery still in action would be silenced by our heavy guns, and the infantry assault would be launched under a rolling barrage by the field artillery. The infantry would follow the advance of this barrage closely, each battalion and company having a definite task; as each objective was secured there would be a pause for a stipulated period; machine guns—one to every 25 yards of frontage—would come into action to help in the consolidation of the ground gained, fresh troops following close on the original assaulting battalions would pass through and, as the prearranged rolling barrage again opened, the forward movement would resume until the final objective was attained. Once captured the Ridge would be held.

Such an elaborate prearranged attack had never before been attempted, and its success depended on perfect co-ordination of action on the part of every branch of the service and of every man in the Corps. In the arduous work of preparation,