

Victoria Cross Is Awarded Major Paul Triquet, Montreal, For Heroic Action in Italy



MAJOR PAUL TRIQUET

London, March 6.—(CP Cable)—Canada's second Victoria Cross of the war was awarded to Major Paul Triquet, 35-year-old company commander of the Royal 22nd Regiment. Triquet, a Montrealer, who holds the rank of acting major, earned the Empire's highest award for valour during the December battle of the Moro river in Italy. A former company sergeant-major, the wiry, mustached officer who rallied his men with cries of "Never mind the Germans, they can't shoot straight," led his company in an attack on a little group of houses making up the settlement of Casa Berardi.

Triumph For Canadians

His successful action was part of an operation by which the Canadian 1st Division outflanked a strongly-held crossroads south of Ortona and pushed enemy para-

troopers into the seacoast town itself.

At the time the Canadians had been over the Moro river just a week and had been unsuccessful in

repeated attempts to dislodge the Germans from a gully in front of the crossroads two miles inland on the main Ortona-Osogna highway.

The action was fought December 14 after a depleted company from the Seaforth Highlanders with a few tanks mounted the road still farther south and marched to the outskirts of Berardi.

The Seaforths retired when night-fall came and Triquet led his men into the attack. Stone houses in green, sloping groves had been converted by the Germans into strong points mounted with machine guns. The paratroop defenders were also supported by tanks.

The quiet-spoken major, whose men think the world of him, had Sherman tanks with his company. As they went in, the Germans opened up with fierce machine-gun and mortar fire and all of Triquet's officers were killed and wounded and half of his men became casualties.

Kept Joking

Triquet kept moving about among the remainder, talking and joking in French. When he found his group virtually surrounded he called: "The enemy is all around us. The only safe place is our objective."

He led them on a dash toward the edge of the settlement, where the men dug in, and he directed them in driving off continuous counter-attacks that lasted until the rest of the battalion moved up to relieve him, two sergeants and the 15 other ranks who remained.

Native of Quebec

Triquet, who has a son and daughter in Montreal, is a native of Cabano, Que., a lower St. Lawrence village. He is a veteran of the Royal 22nd and was a company sergeant-major when he came to England after enlistment for active service.

He was commissioned March 18, 1941, and for a time headed the battalion's unarmed combat school while the Vingt-Deux was training in England.

The major, who speaks with the clipped accent of a non-commissioned officer giving orders on parade, fought throughout the campaign in Italy and is one of the most soldierly, popular officers in the battalion that has fought with distinction on Canada's first major front in the second Great War.

Canada's first V.C. of this war was awarded October 2, 1942, to Lt.-Col. C. C. I. Merritt, of Vancouver and Belleville, Ont., for valour shown in the Dieppe raid, August 19 of that year.

Col. Merritt, a prisoner of war since Dieppe, was the man who waved his helmet as he led his troops of the South Saskatchewan regiment, of which he was commanding officer, across a bullet-swept bridge.

Pinned for Five Days

In a dispatch from the Canadian Corps front in Italy dated February 7 War Correspondent Foster

Barclay, of the Canadian Press, who has since returned to Canada, said that the German paratroopers, hurriedly sent to the Moro valley approaches to try to push the Canadians back, might have succeeded had it not been for Major Triquet and four-score French-Canadian troops of the Royal 22nd.

Barclay added these Canadians stormed and held a vital objective 2½ miles from the Ortona crossroads. They were pinned down for five days, "surrounded, shelled, mortared, bombed and picked off by snipers." But Major Triquet urged the men forward, saying "Boys, there's only one safe place—that is our objective."

They fought ahead to Casa Berardi and then the battle of Ortona began.

153-045-008

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Triquet