

Port Winners

Canadians Clear Way For Antwerp

Antwerp, Oct. 12 (CP).—From the Normandy beachhead to Holland, the coast-hopping Canadians have been driving the Germans from port to port, and now they are fighting for the greatest prize of all—the opening of this port of Antwerp, which will be of incalculable value to the Allied armies.

A month ago British armored columns took the city. A week ago Canadians cleared the port area. But Antwerp is an inland port 40 miles up the winding River Scheldt, and a force of nearly 40,000 Germans has been left behind on the Scheldt coast to delay its opening as long as possible. Big coastal batteries on the river coast prevent ships passing up the estuary.

The Canadians have taken the ports of Caen, Rouen, Dieppe, Boulogne, Calais, Zeebrugge and Ostend in their march across Northern France and Belgium to the Dutch frontier. Then these veteran port liberators were given the order: "Clear the Scheldt and open Antwerp."

They rapidly developed the three-pronged operation aimed at German positions on both sides of the Scheldt that is now in full swing. They know the importance of speed in this task. They know that with Antwerp open, two miles of excellent docks and cranes receiving great convoys from Britain and even direct from Canada and the United States would mean that the gigantic supply problem of the Allied forces attacking into Germany would be solved.

Is the Finest Port

They know that opening Antwerp is as important a task right now as even the operations on the German frontier. Advances are determined by supply in this type of war, and supply is determined in turn by available ports. Antwerp is the finest of them all.

The Germans had no time to wreck it. It could operate tomorrow if the Scheldt Estuary were cleared.

With Antwerp going full blast, six Allied armies supplied to capacity all the time could probably roll forward for weeks. And with good flying weather to aid the ground advance, the war might soon be finished. Supply is that important.

So the Canadians struck first on the Leopold Canal in Belgium. The German 64th Division was drawn into battle, and although the Canadian bridgehead was not expanded, it proved valuable as a killing ground. Fifteen hundred Germans of the 5,000 in the Scheldt pocket have been wiped out.

Hun Evacuation is Begun

This pocket, south of the estuary, now is being slowly folded up, and the Germans, seeing disaster ahead, are believed to have begun evacuation.

North of Antwerp the Canadians swung along the other side of the Scheldt and probed along the causeway leading to South Beveland Island on the north side of the estuary. Beveland will have to be cleared of its 4,000 Germans and then there will be Walcheren Island on the north of the river mouth, just west of Beveland. There are 11,000 Germans on Walcheren, the lowlands of which are rapidly being inundated as the dikes are blown out by RAF Bomber Command.

The big squeeze play on both sides of the Scheldt is on. It will not be easy, for it is a straight infantry job.

It is a battle of canals, of dike crossings, of advances through flooded areas and over dead flat land where there is no ground for artillery observation. Tanks cannot be used. It comes down to company against company, platoon against platoon, man against man.

Bomber Command is punching hard, too, by blasting German coastal guns and supporting the Canadians in other ways.

Canadian infantry have had some tough, dirty jobs in their campaign in this theatre and this is as complicated and nasty as any.

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