

CANADIANS HOLD FIRM; STRAFE HUN

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Algiers, Dec. 14.—While Canadians held their northern anchor firm in the face of several counter-attacks in which enemy tanks were used. Indian infantrymen striking from the centre of the 8th Army line yesterday launched a new thrust toward the Ortona-Guardiagrele road, immediate goal of the Allies.

Germans suffered heavy losses in tanks and men from fire of artillery hidden in the hills.

Details of the fighting received at headquarters were of the sketchiest. They described the Indians' advance as "limited," and did not specify its exact location. Fifty prisoners were taken.

Canadians reinforcing their semi-circular positions around the coastal town of Ortona were counter-attacked repeatedly. The official spokesman was unable to add anything to the official communique's terse claim that 8th Army troops repulsed all of these thrusts, "inflicting casualties and knocking out hostile tanks."

The lull on the 5th Army front continued, although our patrols were busy, and large and active concentrations of German mortars and self-propelled guns were reported along the bed of the Liri River just west of Camino Maggiore heights.

Burning Hulks of Tanks.

The Nazi Command resorted to counter-attacks in a fierce, continuing effort to prevent the Canadians from closing in on the road junction of Ortona, 11 miles southeast of Pescara.

The result was the same as that experienced by both sides on previous occasions both in Africa and Italy when tanks ventured within range of well-placed heavy guns. Burning hulks of tanks marked the point where the enemy's armor came under point-blank fire.

The Canadians continued doggedly to win the heights overlooking Ortona. The whole current thrust of the 8th Army up the Adriatic coast hinges on the success in taking Ortona and then Pescara.

So determined has been the enemy stand that, since forcing the Moro River on Wednesday, Dec. 8, the Canadians had advanced little more than a mile up to Monday.

The Adriatic coast sector has been abandoned by practically all civilians, though some peasants still occupy their homes immediately behind the lines within sound of shellfire.

"Moaning Minnie."

The Germans were shelling the Canadian lines heavily with 88-millimetre cannon and 105-millimetre mortars as well as a six-barrelled Nebelwerfer known to the troops as "Moaning Minnie" or "Wailing

Willie," because of the peculiar whistle of its bombs.

To harassing fire from behind the Allied lines the enemy is replying with long-range guns. However, his artillery fire is no match for the shattering concentrations of the British and Canadian artillery team.

The New Zealand 2nd Division was reported attacking Nazi positions on high ground on the left flank of the Canadians in an effort to relieve some enemy pressure in the coastal sector.

This was the 102nd day of Allied operations on the Italian Peninsula, and it found the invasion forces still some 90 miles from Rome at the closest point.

Since its landing at Reggio Calabria Sept. 3 the 8th Army has covered more than 400 miles up Italy's east coast. The 5th Army, which debarks a few days later at Salerno, has progressed only 30 miles toward Rome, but it has had stiff opposition every mile of the way.

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