

kept me fully informed of the enemy troops opposed to me.

Between March 29th and the present date no less than forty-one successful raids have been carried out. In addition to the heavy casualties which have been inflicted on the enemy, 871 prisoners and twenty-four machine guns have been brought back to our lines. These results reflect the greatest credit on the troops employed.

During April signs continued to accumulate that the enemy contemplated an offensive astride the Brenta, but it was not until the middle of May that it appeared probable that this operation would be combined with an attack across the Piave. By the end of May the general plan of the enemy for their forthcoming attack could be clearly foreseen. Subsequent events proved that the Italian High Command had made a forecast correct in nearly every detail.

Early on the morning of June 15th, after a short but violent bombardment, in which smoke and gas were freely employed, the Austrian attack was launched. The fronts of attack extended from S. Dona di Piave to the Montello on the plains, and from Grappa to Canove in the mountains, fronts of twenty-five and eighteen miles respectively. The whole of the British sector was involved.

The British front was attacked by four Austrian Divisions. It was held by the 23rd Division on the right and the 48th Division on the left. On the front of the 23rd Division the attack was completely repulsed. On the front of the 48th Division the enemy succeeded in occupying our front trench for a length of some 3,000 yards, and subsequently penetrated to a depth of about 1,000 yards. Here he was contained by a series of switches, which had been constructed to meet this eventuality. On the morning of June 16th the 48th Division launched a counter-attack to clear the enemy from the pocket he had gained; this attack was completely successful, and the entire line was re-established by 9 a.m.

Acting with great vigour during the 16th, both Divisions took advantage of the disorder in the enemy's ranks, and temporarily occupied certain posts in the Asiago Plateau without much opposition. Several hundred prisoners and many machine guns and two mountain howitzers were brought back in broad daylight without interference. As soon as "No Man's Land" had been fully cleared of the enemy we withdrew to our original line.

The enemy suffered very heavy losses in their unsuccessful attack. In addition we captured 1,060 prisoners, 7 mountain guns, 72 machine guns, 20 flammenwerfer and one trench mortar.

I wish here to place on record the prompt and generous assistance in both artillery and infantry given to me by General Monesi, Commanding the 12th Italian Division. As soon as it was discovered that the enemy had penetrated the front of the 48th Division, General Monesi placed all his available reserves at my disposal, and thus appreciably improved the situation.

Elsewhere the enemy had made progress at a number of points, but in no single instance up to his expectations. Everywhere he found himself faced with the most determined resistance. The Italian High Command had ample reserves available and handled the situation with coolness and decision. Steps were at once

taken to deprive the enemy of the gains which he had made.

Torrential rains brought the Piave down in flood and added to the embarrassments of the enemy. Many of his bridges were washed away, and those which remained were constantly bombed by British and Italian aviators. By means of a succession of vigorous counter-attacks the enemy was gradually pressed back again both on the Piave and the mountain fronts. As a result, not only was the original front line entirely re-established, but that portion of the right bank of the Piave, between the Piave and the Sile Rivers which had been in Austrian hands since November, 1917, was cleared of the enemy.

Captured orders and documents proved beyond doubt that the enemy's plans were extremely ambitious, and aimed in fact at the final defeat of the Allied forces in Italy. The result was a complete and disastrous defeat for Austria.

At the end of June there were indications that the enemy intended to renew his offensive in the mountain sector, but these signs gradually died away.

On July 4th His Majesty The King of Italy held an International Review and presented decorations to those Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and men who had especially distinguished themselves in the recent fighting. The British Forces were represented by a battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

The work of the Royal Air Force under Colonel P. B. Joubert, D.S.O., has been consistently brilliant, and the results obtained have, I believe, in proportion to the strength employed, exceeded those obtained in any other theatre of war. Between March 10th and the present date 294 enemy aeroplanes and nine hostile balloons have been destroyed, and this with a loss of twenty-four machines. Much useful work in co-operation with the artillery has been carried out, and frequent and successful long-distance reconnaissances accomplished.

The action of the artillery, both British and the Italian which had been temporarily placed under my command, deserves special mention. Constant and effective counter-battery work has been carried out. The damage done has been fully confirmed both by visual observation, photography and prisoners' statements. The success which has been achieved and the close co-operation existing between the British and Italian artillery I ascribe chiefly to the energy and tact of Major-General A. E. Wardrop, C.B., C.M.G., till recently Commanding the Artillery of the British Forces in Italy.

I should like to draw your Lordship's special attention to the loyal, keen and devoted work of the Italian Heavy Artillery attached to the British Force. Under the command of Colonel Onnis, they have helped us in all operations, small and great. The smoothness of the liaison between the British and Italian Artilleries is most creditable to the officers entrusted with the difficult task of co-ordinating combined Artillery shoots which entail an accurate knowledge of all the technical terms employed by both nations.

The Intelligence Service has kept me fully informed of the situation and probable intentions of the enemy. The Field Survey Company, Royal Engineers, has rendered most efficient service in map making, flash spotting, sound ranging and other scientific duties.