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THE CANADIAN ARMY.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:—

Captain (now acting Major) Paul Triquet,
Royal 22e Regiment.

For determined leadership and example.

The capture of the key road junction on the main Ortona-Orsogna lateral was entirely dependent on securing the hamlet of Casa Berardi. Both this and a gully in front of it had been turned by the Germans into formidable strong points defended by infantry and tanks.

On 14th December, 1943, Captain Triquet's company of the Royal 22e Regiment with the support of a squadron of a Canadian Armoured Regiment was given the task of crossing the gully and securing Casa Berardi. Difficulties were encountered from the outset. The gully was held in strength and on approaching it the force came under extremely heavy fire from machine guns and mortars. All the company officers and 50 per cent. of the men were killed or wounded. Showing superb contempt for the enemy Captain Triquet went round reorganizing the remainder and encouraging them with the words "Never mind them, they can't shoot". Finally when enemy infiltration was observed on all sides shouting "There are enemy in front of us, behind us and on our flanks, there is only one safe place—that is on the objective" he dashed forward and with his men following him, broke through the enemy resistance. In this action four tanks were destroyed and several enemy machine gun posts silenced.

Against the most bitter and determined defence and under heavy fire Captain Triquet and his company, in close co-operation with the tanks forced their way on until a position was reached on the outskirts of Casa Berardi. By this time the strength of the company was reduced to 2 sergeants and 15 men. In expectation of a counter-attack Captain Triquet at once set about organizing his handful of men into a defensive perimeter around the remaining tanks and passed the "mot d'ordre. Ils ne passeront pas".

A fierce German counter-attack supported by tanks developed almost immediately. Captain Triquet, ignoring the heavy fire, was everywhere encouraging his men and directing the defence and by using whatever weapons were to hand personally accounted for several of the enemy. This and subsequent attacks were beaten off with heavy losses and Captain Triquet and his small force held out against overwhelming odds until the remainder of the battalion took Casa Berardi and relieved them the next day.

Throughout the whole of this engagement Captain Triquet showed the most magnificent courage and cheerfulness under heavy fire. Wherever the action was hottest, he was to be seen shouting encouragement to his men and organizing the defence. His utter disregard of danger, his cheerfulness and tireless devotion to duty were a constant source of inspiration to them. His tactical skill and superb leadership enabled them, although reduced by casualties to a mere handful, to continue their advance against bitter resistance and to hold their gains against determined counter-attacks. It was due to him that Casa Berardi was captured and the way opened for the attack on the vital road junction.

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