

# Bulletins from the Front II (1918)

## Abstract

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Newspapers were an important medium for propaganda during the Great War. Written under the watchful eye of the military censor, these reports from the German front lines were invariably positive – despite major setbacks, stalemate, and staggering human costs. By casting the course of the war in such an unrealistic light, reports like the ones included below made it difficult for many Germans to accept defeat.

## Source

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1. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 83, March 24, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service]. General Headquarters, March 23. Under the leadership of His Majesty the Kaiser and King, the offensive against the English front near Arras-Cambrai and St. Quentin has been going on for two days now. Good progress was again made yesterday.

Divisions of the army group “Crown Prince Rupprecht” stormed the heights to the north and northwest of Croisilles. Between Fontaine le Croisilles and Moendre, they penetrated the second enemy line and took the villages of Boulx-Braucourt and Morchies located inside it. A heavy English counterattack was unsuccessful.

Our army broke through the first two enemy lines between Connelieux and the Omignon stream. The heights to the west of Gonzeancourt, Hendicourt, and Viller-Faucon were taken. In the valley of the Cologne stream, Roisel and Marquaixe were stormed. The battle for the heights around Epchy was especially fierce. Surrounded from the north and the south, the enemy had to surrender these positions to our troops. Between Epchy and Roisel, the English attempted in vain to stop the advance of our victorious troops with heavy counterattacks. Everywhere, the English were thrown back with very heavy losses. The heights to the north of Vermand were stormed. We are standing before the third enemy line.

These successes led the enemy to retreat from his positions in the bend southwest of Cambrai. We followed the enemy via Demicourt, Flesquiere, and Ribecourt.

Between the Omignon stream and the Somme, the army group “German Crown Prince,” after taking the enemy’s first positions, fought its way through the Holnon Forest and over the heights of Favy and Rouzy and penetrated the enemy’s third lines.

To the south of the Somme, divisions broke through the enemy lines and, pushing forward without reserve, threw the enemy back behind the Crozat Canal to the west. Rifle battalions forced their way across the Oise to the west of La Fere. Together with the divisions that followed, they stormed the heights crowned by the military fortifications of La Fere to the northwest of the city.

2. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 85, March 26, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, March 26. In the continuation of the “Great Battle” in France, our troops have achieved new successes. English divisions and French troops brought up from Flanders and Italy attacked desperately. They were beaten back!

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Since the beginning of the battle, 93 enemy planes and 6 air balloons have been shot down. Captain Freiherr von Richthofen achieved his 67<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> victories in the air, Lieutenant Bongartz his 22<sup>nd</sup>, First Lieutenant Loerzer his 24<sup>th</sup>, Vice Seargent Baeumer his 23<sup>rd</sup>, Lieutenant Kroll his 22<sup>rd</sup>, and Lieutenant Thuy his 20<sup>th</sup>.

The number of captured artillery pieces has risen to 963. More than 100 tanks lie in captured positions.

3. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 100, April 11, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, April 11. Yesterday, the attack was continued on an even broader front. The troops of General Sixt von Arnim took Hollebeke and the adjacent first English line to the south. They stormed the heights of Meesen (Messines) and held these heights against strong enemy counterattacks. To the south of Waasten (Warneton), they advanced up to the border of the Ploegsteert Forest and reached the road connecting Ploegsteert and Armentieres.

The army of General von Quast crossed over the Lys at a number of points between Armentieres and Lys and is engaged in battle with English troops who have recently been brought up to the north bank of the river. To the south of Estaires, our battles have brought us to the Lowe and the area northeast of Bethune.

The number of prisoners taken has risen to well over 10,000 – among them one Portuguese general.

4. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 106, April 17, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, April 17. On the blood-soaked battlefields of last year's Flanders battle, General von Sixt's army took Paschendaele and is pushing forward to Becelaere and Gheluvelt.

5. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 146, May 28, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, May 28. The army of General von Boehn has stormed the Chemin des Dames. This elongated ridge – where the great French breakthrough attempts of early 1917 were shattered, and which we cleared last fall for strategic reasons – is once again in our hands.

6. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 195, July 16, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, July 16. The army of Colonel General von Boehn has crossed the Marne between Jaulgonne and the east of Dormans. Early in the morning, military engineers got storm troops across the river and thus created the foundation for the day's successes. Infantry stormed the steep slopes on the southern bank of the Marne. The construction of the bridge took place under their protection. In constant battle, we broke through the fiercely defended forest territory of the first enemy line and beat the enemy back to his rear line at Condé-la-Chapelle-Compliey-Mareuil. To the north of the Marne, we also took the first line from the French and the Italians between Ardre and the Marne.

7. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 198, July 18, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, July 18. Battle has begun to flare up again between the Aisne and the Marne. There, the French have begun their long-awaited counteroffensive.

Through the use of their strongest squadrons and tanks, the French were able at first to suddenly break through our first infantry and artillery lines at certain points and to push back our lines. Furthermore,

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together with the available reserves, our trench divisions [*Stellungsdivisionen*] have thwarted an enemy breakthrough. Around noon, the French attack on the line to the southwest of Soissons-Neuilly and to the northwest of Chateau-Thierry was brought to a standstill. In the afternoon, forceful individual attacks by the enemy on our lines along the entire battlefield failed. Columns of enemy troops heading to the battlefield were targeted by our victorious fighter planes. Our fighter planes shot down 32 of the enemy's airplanes.

Toward the southern front of the Marne, the French, after their failures on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> [of July], made only minor attacks to the northwest of Mareuil. They were warded off.

8. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 201, July 22, 1918

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, July 21. Between the Aisne and the Marne, the enemy sought to force a decision in the battle yesterday by deploying a number of new divisions. The enemy was repulsed. He suffered heavy losses. The peoples supporting the French [*Hilfsvölker*], the Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, and Senegalese Negroes, shouldered the main weight of the battle at the most difficult sites. The Senegalese battalions, which were divided among the French divisions as blocks of storm troops, followed behind the tanks ahead of the white Frenchmen. Americans – including black Americans – English, and Italians fought among the French.

[...] To the south of the Oureq, our counterattack also broke the enemy attack. To the northwest of Chateau-Thierry, in the past few [days], we have victoriously defended our positions, time and again, from heavy and repeated attacks by the Americans. The Americans have suffered especially heavy losses. In the night, undisturbed by the enemy, we moved back our defensive lines to the north and northeast of Chateau-Thierry.

9. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 219, August 9, 1918:

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, August 9. Between Ancre and Avre, the enemy attacked yesterday with strong forces. Assisted by a thick fog, he infiltrated our infantry and artillery lines with his tanks. To the north of the Somme, we beat back the enemy from our positions with our counterattack. Between the Somme and the Avre, we brought the enemy attack to a halt just to the east of the Morcourt-Harbornieres-Gaiz-Fresnoy-Contoire line. We have suffered losses in prisoners and ordnances. Among the prisoners we took were English, Australian, and Canadian auxiliary corps, and French.

10. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 232, August 22, 1918

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, August 21. Yesterday the English began a major new offensive to the south of Arras. English army corps and New Zealanders were employed in a deep formation to the south of Moyeville and the Ancre in the direction of Bapaume. The English cavalry stood behind the front ready for battle. Supported by a strong artillery fire and hundreds of tanks, the enemy's infantry attacked on a front approximately twenty kilometers wide. Their first rush collapsed in front of our battle positions. In local counterattacks, we took back portions of the strips of land that had been left to the enemy according to plan. The enemy continued with heavy attacks throughout the day. Their focal point was the wing of the field of attack. They were turned back completely and suffered heavy losses.

11. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 247, September 6, 1918

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, September 6. Exploratory divisions of the enemy, who were feeling their way forward between Ypres and La Basse and advanced north of Lens amidst heavy firing, were turned back. In the evening, Hessian troops turned back numerous enemy attacks between Kloegeert and Armentieres. In so doing, they took more than 100 prisoners. There was a

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successful push forward into the English trenches near Hulluch.

[...]

To the east of Soissons, the enemy has followed across the Vesle. Our infantry divisions and artillery held him up for a long time and the enemy suffered losses. Heavy attacks by the Americans on the heights to the northwest of Fismes were fended off.

12. *Freiburger Tagblatt*, No. 310, November 8, 1918

WTB [Wolff Telegraph Service], General Headquarters, November 8, 1918. The French, who had gained a footing again on the eastern bank of the Schelde to the northeast of Oudengarde, were beat back across the river in a counterattack. Last night, we carried out additional planned movements between the Schelde and the Maas. In front of our new lines rearguard battles developed; they assumed considerable size to the south of the road from Valenciennes to Mons, on the Sambre, to the north of Avesnes, and on the Maas heights to the southwest of Sedan. Everywhere these battles ended with the warding off of the enemy. In the evening, the enemy stood east of Bavai – to the north of Avesnes – to the east of La Capelle – to the southwest of Hirson – to the south of Signy-l'Abbaye, near Poix Terron and on the Maas heights to the southwest of Sedan. To the east of the Maas there were minor battles in the forest to the west of Brandeville.

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