

FRENCH ACHIEVEMENTS IN YEAR REVIEWED BY WAR CORRESPONDENT

(From Wednesday's Daily.)
By Henry Wood,
United Press Staff Correspondent

PARIS, Dec. 27.—During the closing three months of 1916, three events took place in France which demonstrated as never at any previous period of the war the apparently inexhaustible resources of France's military genius and strength, the equally inexhaustible resources of her financial and economic energy, and the absolutely unshaken determination both of her army and her civil population to continue the war to a successful close.

Two epic events were the launching on October 24 of the French offensive at Verdun, in which practically all the ground and positions won by the Crown Prince's armies in six months of sanguinary fighting were reconquered within six hours with a minimum of losses for the French, and secondly, the subscribing by the French nation as a whole in three weeks, from October 5 to October 29, of an unprecedented war loan of nearly \$2,300,000,000.

The third was the reorganization of France's cabinet along the lines of compactness and efficiency which David Lloyd-George introduced in England. Premier Briand remained at the head of the ministry, and Joffre, idol of France, and former generalissimo of her forces, while still retaining supreme command of the French forces, became counselor to the war council. General Nivelle, defender of Verdun and one of the popular heroes of the army, was made commander of French forces in the north and northeast.

While the French victory at Verdun, taken entirely by itself, stands out as an unparalleled achievement in the military history of the world, yet its real significance in the present war is only apparent when it is viewed in connection with all that had preceded it.

When the Germans launched their great offensive at Verdun on February 21, no secret was made of at least two of the objects which the Germans had in view. One of these was to prevent the Allies from starting their combined unique offensive, and the other was to deliver an absolute death blow to France.

While the Germans failed to reach Verdun, and while their great efforts failed to prevent the launching of the Allied offensive, yet they openly boasted that at least one of their objectives had been attained—namely, that they had caused France to bleed utter exhaustion before Verdun and that henceforward she would be incapable of further military effort.

Despite this boast and despite the losses which France undeniably sustained before Verdun, she launched on July 1, in connection with the English the offensive on the Somme, which has never been checked for a single instant, and in which, in addition to all the villages and ground regained, all the losses in dead and wounded inflicted on the enemy, the French themselves, independent of what the English have done, have captured over 45,000 prisoners, over 300 cannon and over 600 machine guns.

It was while still conducting this vigorous offensive on the Somme, which the Germans had boasted that France would never be able to do as a result of her losses at Verdun, that France on October 24, launched even a second offensive, this time choosing the German's own ground at Verdun where all of Germany's great infantry and artillery strength had been concentrated for eight months.

This offensive France launched all alone, without the slightest help from any of her allies and carried it to such a successful conclusion that the Germans withdrew from the fort of Vaux without even fighting.

Almost at the same moment of this great victory of France's military strength and France's military morale at Verdun, came the announcement on October 29, that the French nation as a whole was standing behind the fighting ranks in a manner equally as firm, and evidenced by its subscription of nearly \$2,300,000,000 to a new war loan, destined to enable the army to continue to a victorious conclusion.

When, following the war of 1870, Germany imposed on France an unprecedented war indemnity of one billion dollars, the sole object of which was admittedly that of crushing France economically and financially, the entire world stood amazed at the manner in which France, in less than a year, borrowed this sum from her people, and paid off the debt.

Yet in the present instance, after over two years of warfare, after subscribing in an amazing manner to preceding loans, the French people, not in a year, but in three weeks only, subscribed a new war loan of over two billion dollars, or over twice the amount of the indemnity imposed on France in 1870.

Like the military victory at Verdun, the real significance of this financial and economic victory can only be appreciated by viewing it in connection with other things.

With the beginning of the present war, for example, the French people were invited to turn into the Bank of France their hoards of gold, accepting in its place ordinary bank notes. This gold, they were told, was needed in order to permit France to maintain her credit abroad.

Since the issuance of this invitation, this gold has poured into the Bank of France at a steady, undiminished average of \$1,000,000 a week.

With this military strength displayed at Verdun, with this financial strength displayed in her October loan, and her new cabinet, together with the morale of the army and the spirit of the civil population, France feels that she can look forward to 1917 with great cheer and great hopes.

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