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Americans Escape Safely from Gievgeli

Mme. Grouitch Reaches Saloniki With 38 Orphans—Why Allies are Retreating

SALONIKI, Dec. 11.—There seems to be no longer any doubt that Gievgeli was evacuated early Friday by the French and Serbian forces. The Serbian inhabitants had already fled. On account of the bombardment even the Bulgarian residents moved out. The Director of the Post Office, who arrived here this morning by horseback says he was the last to leave the city, which was being bombarded.

He says shells set fire to the former American Hospital operated by Dr. James Donnelly, and which, after his death, was taken over by the French for the French and Serbian wounded, all of whom were safely removed. The railroad station was also destroyed.

Mme. Mabel Grouitch, the Serbian-American in charge of the Forthingham unit, with her assistant, Elva Reed La Grane of Oregon, left Gievgeli on the 9th, bringing safely here in a freight car thirty-eight Serbian orphans. These women are doing splendid work. The orphanage, which is supported by Mr. Frothingham of Baltimore, was originally at Nish. When driven from there the staff took refuge at Gievgeli. When your correspondent visited Gievgeli last week these women were managing restaurants, with the profits of which they supported the orphans. Lady Scott's unit of five nurses, who are Scotch, also escaped safely. No Americans or English remain in Gievgeli.

Refugees are now crowding into Saloniki on mattresses in carts, carrying their pitiful possessions in kerchiefs and baskets. It is a picture of this war that has been made familiar, but that these refugees are forerunners of a Bulgarian advance upon Saloniki does not follow. But Gievgeli is so near the border that if the Bulgarians mean to halt there or fight on Greek soil the next few hours should decide.

It is now possible to give in more detail an explanation of the withdrawal of the French and British to their second line of defense. To understand this withdrawal find on the map Krivolak, the former French advanced position, and follow the railroad and River Vardar southeast to Gradec, the present first French line.

The cause of this retreat is the inability to hold Monastir and their withdrawal west leaving a gap in the former line of the Serbians, French and British. The enemy is now south and west of the French, and their left flank is exposed.

On Dec. 3, finding the advanced position at Krivolak threatened by four divisions—100,000 men—General Sarrall began the withdrawal, sending south by rail without loss all ammunition and stores. He destroyed the tunnel at Krivolak and all the bridges across the Vardar and on his left at the Cerna River. The fighting was heavy at Prevedo and Biserence, but the French losses were small. He withdrew slowly twenty miles in one week and established his advanced position at Demir-Kapu, with his first line at Gradec. The British also withdrew from

their first line to their second line of defense. Kosturino, in the Bojimia Valley, and the important Hill 516 are also believed to be lost.

Demir-Kapu, meaning the Gate of Iron, is the entrance to a beautiful and celebrated valley. Starting at Demir-Kapu and ending two kilometers north of Gradec, it rises on either side of the Vardar River and railroad line, in places less than 300 yards wide, formed by sheer hills, rocky, treeless and exposed. For five miles along the crests of this narrow pass the French artillery is now placed.

Last week your correspondent visited Gradec, then occupied only by two companies of infantry. All the inhabitants had fled. It was a mud village which last year had been practically destroyed. Until now it had been known chiefly for its ancient church, richly decorated with painting on the walls inside and without. At the request of the commanding officer, Merse, I took many photographs to send to his wife to show here where he expected to spend the Winter.

Hill 516 is the most important position, as it commands the Valley of the Vardar. Last week, while I was visiting this hill, the Bulgarian fire was already so accurate that shells fell within 100 to 40 feet of us. If it is true that it is now occupied by the Bulgarians, this explains the withdrawal of the British line, which on that day, Dec. 3, was shelling from a hill a quarter of a mile distant and below us.

This afternoon a Greek military mission from Athens and General Sarrall discussed the question what course will be followed should the Bulgars cross the Greek border.

[Mr. Davis's dispatch is dated on Saturday. Advices received in London that morning from Reuter's Saloniki correspondent, announced that there was good authority for the statement that Gievveli had been occupied by the Germans the previous day. Subsequent dispatches stated that the announcement was premature and at latest accounts the Allies still held the town.]