

five divisions, comprising the IX. Corps (see para. 10 below). These had only just been reconstituted, and, being badly in need of rest and training, were not yet considered fit to hold an active sector. In return for these five British divisions, and in accordance with Marshal Foch's views, presently explained, regarding the enemy's intentions, the French had dispatched a number of their divisions to be held in reserve in rear of the British right and to strengthen the Flanders front.

There remained available for operations on the British front forty-five British infantry divisions, most of which were below establishment. Fully three-fourths of them had been heavily engaged in one or other of the enemy's offensives, if not in both. All were urgently in need of rest; they contained a large number of young, partially trained and totally inexperienced recruits, and subordinate commanders had had little or no opportunity to become acquainted with their men.

#### (2) *The Position of our Allies.*

The French, though as yet they had been less heavily engaged than ourselves, had none the less been obliged to employ a substantial proportion of their reserves in the fighting south of the Somme and north of the Lys.

The American Army, though rapidly increasing in number and efficiency, was not yet ready to take the field in sufficient strength materially to affect the situation. In short, the German attacks, though they had failed to break the Allied line, had stretched the resources of the Allies to the uttermost; while before Amiens and Hazebrouck they had brought the enemy within a short distance of strategic points of great importance. In these circumstances, the possibility of an immediate renewal of the enemy's offensive could not but be viewed with grave anxiety.

#### (3) *The Enemy's Position.*

On the other hand, the enemy had undoubtedly paid heavily for his successes, and had used up a great number of divisions, among them his best and his most highly trained. The reserves which he was known to have had at his disposal at the beginning of the year would suffice, indeed, to make good his losses; but in his case, also, time would be required before the divisions which had suffered most would be fit to undertake a fresh attack against prepared positions.

At the commencement of the period under review the enemy was estimated to possess seventy-five divisions in reserve on the Western Front. It was evident that further German attacks could not long be postponed if the enemy was to achieve a decision before the weight of the American Army was thrown into the scale.

#### (4) *The Enemy's Intentions.*

At this period, early in May, the Allied High Command repeatedly expressed the opinion that the enemy would renew his attack on a large scale on the front Arras-Amiens-Montdidier. The strategic results to be obtained by the capture of Amiens, the separation of the French and British Armies, and an advance towards the sea along the Valley of the Somme were very great, and might well have proved decisive. The enemy's opening offensive had already brought him within a measurable dis-

tance of success in this direction, and had carried his Armies through practically the whole of our organised lines of defence.

Since the conclusion of his attacks on this front in the first week of April, the enemy had had a considerable period of time in which to re-establish communications through the devastated area, and make his preparations for a fresh advance. This period of delay had also afforded us some opportunity, of which full use was being made with all the means and resources in our power, to lay out new trench lines and reconstruct such old systems as already existed. This work, however, was still far from complete, and our defences could not be compared with those which the enemy had already overrun.

#### (5) *The Policy of the British Armies.*

In short, the enemy still possessed a sufficient superiority of force to retain the initiative, and it was known that he would be compelled to act within a comparatively limited time if he were to turn his superiority to account before it passed from him. These were the two main factors which had to be taken into consideration when deciding the policy of the British Armies during the late spring and early summer. The common object of the French and ourselves was to tide over the period which must still elapse until the growth of the American Armies and the arrival of Allied reinforcements placed the opposing forces once more on a footing of equality.

The situation was an anxious one, but it was confidently expected that, if all measures open to us were undertaken promptly and executed with the energy and zeal demanded by the occasion, the enemy's future assaults would be met and overthrown as those had been which he had already made. If the Allies could preserve their front unbroken until August at the latest there was every hope that during the later portion of the year they would be able to regain the initiative, and pass to the offensive in their turn.

The period under review accordingly divides itself naturally into two main sections. During the first, the policy governing the action of the forces under my command was the maintenance of an active defence, whereby our line might be preserved unbroken, while every opportunity was taken to rest and train our sorely-tried Divisions. As the strength and efficiency of our Divisions were restored, minor operations of gradually increasing scope, but with limited objectives, could be carried out with greater frequency. These would serve to keep alive the fighting spirit of the troops, and could be used to effect local improvements in our line, where such improvement was considered necessary either for defence or for attack.

The second period arrived when the swelling list of German casualties and the steady influx of American and Allied reinforcements had produced an equilibrium of strength between the opposing forces. The complete success of the Allied counter-attack on the 18th July near Soissons marked this turning-point in the year's campaign, and commenced the second phase of the Allied operations. Thereafter the initiative lay with the Allies, and the growing superiority of their forces enabled them to roll back the tide of invasion with ever-increasing swiftness. At this point and in this connection I should like to pay my personal tribute to the