

The German Army had made its effort and had failed. The period of its maximum strength had been passed, and the bulk of the reserves accumulated during the winter had been used up. On the other hand, the position of the Allies in regard to reserves had greatly improved. The fresh troops made available during the late spring and early summer had been incorporated and trained. The British Army was ready to take the offensive; while the American Army was growing rapidly and had already given convincing proof of the high fighting quality of its soldiers.

At a conference held on the 23rd July, when the success of the attack of the 18th July was well assured, the methods by which the advantage already gained could be extended were discussed in detail. The Allied Commander-in-Chief asked that the British, French and American Armies should each prepare plans for local offensives, to be taken in hand as soon as possible, with certain definite objectives of a limited nature. These objectives on the British front were the disengagement of Amiens and the freeing of the Paris-Amiens Railway by an attack on the Albert-Montdidier front. The rôle of the French and American Armies was to free other strategic railways by operations farther south and east.

In addition to the disengagement of Amiens, the situation on the British front presented strong arguments in favour of certain other schemes, such as the disengagement of Hazebrouck by the recapture of Kemmel Hill, combined with an operation in the direction of La Bassee. If successful, such an operation would have the effect of improving our position at Ypres and Calais. The Lys salient would be reduced and the safety of the Bruay coal mines become less threatened.

These different operations had already been the subject of correspondence between Marshal Foch and myself, as well as of the earnest consideration of the British General Staff. Ultimately, I had come to the conclusion that of the tasks assigned to the British forces the operation east of Amiens should take precedence, as being the most important and the most likely to give large results.

It would depend upon the nature of the success which might be obtained in these different Allied operations whether they could be more fully exploited before winter set in. It was subsequently arranged that attacks would be pressed in a converging direction towards Mezieres by the French and American Armies, while at the same time the British Armies, attacking towards the line St. Quentin-Cambrai, would strike directly at the vital lateral communications running through Maubeuge to Hirson and Mezieres, by which alone the German forces on the Champagne front could be supplied and maintained.

As a secondary result of the advance of the British Armies towards the all-important railway centres about Maubeuge, the group of German Armies in Flanders would find their communications threatened from the south, and any operations which it might be possible for the Allies to undertake in that theatre at a later date would be powerfully assisted thereby. It was obviously of vital importance to the enemy to maintain intact his front opposite St. Quentin and Cambrai, and for this purpose he depended on the great fortified zone known as the Hindenburg Line.

(14) *General Scheme of British Operations.*

The brilliant success of the Amiens attack was the prelude to a great series of battles, in which, throughout three months of continuous fighting, the British Armies advanced without a check from one victory to another. The progress of this mighty conflict divides itself into certain stages, which themselves are grouped into two well-defined phases.

(A). During the first part of the struggle the enemy sought to defend himself in the deep belt of prepared positions and successive trench systems which extended from the springtide of the German advance, about Albert and Villers Brétonneux to the Hindenburg Line between St. Quentin and the Scarpe. From these positions, scene of the stubborn battles of the two preceding years, the German Armies were forced back step by step by a succession of methodical attacks which culminated in the breaking through of the Hindenburg Line defences.

(B). Thereafter, during the second period of the struggle our troops were operating in practically open country against an enemy who endeavoured to stand, on such semi-prepared or natural defensive positions as remained to him, for a period long enough to enable him to organise his retreat and avoid overwhelming disaster. The final stages of our operations, therefore, are concerned with the breaking of the enemy's resistance on these lines.

Throughout this latter period, the violence of our assaults and the rapidity of our advance towards the enemy's vital centres of communication about Maubeuge threatened to cut the main avenue of escape for the German forces opposite the French and American Armies. The position of the German Armies in Flanders, themselves unable to withstand the attacks of the Allied forces operating under the King of the Belgians, was equally endangered by our progress behind their left flank. To the south and north of the area in which our victorious Armies were driving forward through his weakening defence, the enemy was compelled to execute hasty withdrawals from wide tracts of territory.

The second phase had already reached its legitimate conclusion when the signing of the Armistice put an end to hostilities. Finally defeated in the great battles of the 1st and 4th November and utterly without reserves, the enemy at that date was falling back without coherent plan in wide-spread disorder and confusion.

FIRST PHASE: THE FIGHTING IN ENTRENCHED POSITIONS.

THE BATTLE OF AMIENS.

(8th-12th August).

(15) *Plan of Operations.*

The plan of the Amiens operation was to strike in an easterly and south-easterly direction, using the Somme River to cover the left flank of our advance, with the object in the first place of gaining the line of the Amiens outer defences between Le Quesnel and Mericourt sur Somme, thereby freeing the main Paris-Amiens Railway. Having gained the Amiens defence line, the attack was to proceed without delay towards Roye, and to include the capture as soon as possible of the important railway junction of Chaulnes,