

"In short, the enemy still possessed a sufficient superiority of force to retain the initiative, and it was known 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 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, as it turned out, the enemy was in no condition to push a new offensive and when it did come at last he elected for a direct thrust at Paris from the Aisne front. Launched at the end of May, this great offensive swept steadily on until, despite the desperate resistance of the French, reinforced by British and American troops, the Marne was reached, and it culminated on July 15 with the opening east and south-west of Rheims of what was to prove the last enemy blow on the grand scale. On July 18 Foch struck his shattering counter-stroke.

Meanwhile the British armies on the West Front had been engaged in what Field-Marshal Haig describes as a period of active defense. This included local attacks, the building of a new system of railways behind Amiens, and the digging of five thousand miles of trench. The lesson of the necessity for great depth of defense had been hardly learned in March.

Coming to July he says: "Two months of comparative quiet worked a great change in the condition of the British armies. The drafts sent out from England had largely been absorbed, many of the reinforcements from abroad had already arrived, and the number of our effective infantry divisions had risen from forty-five to fifty-two (this in addition to nine British divisions engaged on the Marne). In artillery we were stronger than we had ever been."

As a consequence we entered early in June on more ambit-