

France. On the other hand, a deep penetration at that point, by bringing the Amiens-Bethune railway and main road under fire, would have placed the British Army in a critical position, by threatening to cut it in two and by depriving it of vital lateral communication.

The tactical and strategical results to be gained by a moderate success at that point were so far reaching in effect that, notwithstanding the natural difficulties confronting an attack on that sector, it was fully expected that the German offensive would be directed against this, the central part of the British Front.

The French knew well the value of the ground here. To recapture it in 1915 they had engaged in the most savage fighting of the war and sacrificed the flower of their regular army.

Although the British Front had later been extended to the south, and Vimy Ridge had become the centre sector of the British Army, the French always manifested the deepest interest in this sector, and it was often visited by their Generals and other officers of high rank.

With the prospect of a German Offensive now confronting us, I ordered that the defences should be revised, to take advantage of the lessons recently learned and to embody the latest methods. Moreover, instructions had been issued by the First Army defining the policy of defence to be adopted and the methods to be followed.

The completion of the revised Corps defences and the execution of the new Army programme resulted in the organisation of a very deep defended area, consisting of successive defensive systems, roughly parallel to the general line of the Front and linked together by switch lines sited to protect both flanks.

Each defensive system was designed to protect definite topographical features, the loss of any one of which would considerably handicap the defence by uncovering our artillery.

As planned, the main framework of the defence in depth was based upon Machine Gun positions, protected by belts of wire entanglement so placed, in relation to the field of fire of the Machine Guns, that they were enfiladed over their entire length. The whole area was compartmented in such a way that the loss of ground at any one point could be localised and would not cause a forced retirement from adjoining areas. (See Photo-Map No. 3.)