# CHANCE OF DECISIVE DEFEAT FOR ENEMY IN 1918; BUT NEXT YEAR HIS DOWNFALL CERTAIN

Brilliant Strategy of Foch in Series of Quick Blows Has Sent the Groggy Giant Reeling to His Certain Doom.

#### By Frank H. Simonds

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(WRITTEN AUGUST 26TH.)

Substantially three weeks have now passed since Foch, having gained the initiative at the Marne, launched the first of his blows at the Somme, that of August 8. In that period we have seen a bewildering and almost unfathomable revelation of French strategy as contrasted with German. The events of the campaign from March 21 onward taught us the German method, the combination of men and material in a colossal and brutal attempt to win a decision by sheer force. The strategy was a strategy of mass, of momentum, the effort by the employment of the most gigantic machine military history has known to

overpower all resistance. Between March 21 and July 18 the Germans delivered three major blows, each of them accompanied by a comparatively smaller blow in a secondary field.

The greatest blow was the first—the Picardy offensive, in which not less than 110 divisions took part, followed at a very brief interval by the Flanders operation, in which forty additional divisions participated. The second blow, that at the Aisne, was made by far smaller forces, and its secondary phase was the operation above Complegne and almed directly at the seizure of all the Lassigny Heights. The third blow was the Marne offensive, which had as its main circumstance the attack between the Argonne and Rheims, and as its minor detail cumstance the attack between the Argonne and Meims, and as its minor detail the drive south of the Marne, which took on additional importance when the

Foch Gained Mastery.

Now in each of the three operations the general circumstances were the same: an enormous concentration, a terrific initial drive, the gradual exterrific initial drive, the gradual exterrific not the forces engaged and thereafter a pause of upward of a month the comparative weakness of Ludendorff. ereafter a pause of upward of a month ring which the enemy had to recon-tute his mighty machine. And in each tute his mighty machine. And in each Foch Gained Mastery.

The major riddle was answered on August 8, when Foch threw Rawlinson against the German salient in Picardy at the point of junction of the armies of Marwitz and Hutler. The success of

stitute his mighty machine. And in each case the delay proved to be of greater value to the Allies than to the enemy. No blow was immediately decisive; failing this, each delay permitted the Allies to reorganize their shattered ranks. The pause after Pleardy gave Britain time to pause after Pleardy gave Britain time to send metropolitan troops from Italy; bled France to recall troops from Italy; bled Fr Victory gave America time to send to the consequences and escape from a Foch the numbers which were to insure him an eventual superiority and more immediately with reserves which were interesting to the conform to Foch's will for a period to conform to Foch's will for a period of weeks at the very least. This was not the case with the Marne defeat; its counter-offensive.

front on which a local dislocation, if it were considerable, might set the whole front from the Scarpe to the Oise in motion. It was, therefore, an ideal front on which to put into operation the French, as contrasted with the German, method of strategy, the swift, sharp blow rather than the mass attack. For Foch had not the masses which were necessary to repeat the German performance of March, and, beyond all else, it was essential that he should not give the foe time to transform a soft into a rigid front.

Breaking into the Crust.

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As a result we had on August 8 the sudden blow of Rawlinson, delivered on Thursday and practically checked by Sunday. It broke through a considerable extent of the soft front from the Somme southward, and it enabled Debeny's first French army, to the south, to move forward on its flank. The result was the precipitate retirement of the Germans out of the point of the Montdidier salient, with the loss of 30,000 prisoners and 700 guns. On the whole front the Germans brought the enemy to a standstill by August 12 on the old Somme front of 1916.

But this dislocation from the Somme right down to the Matz had materially affected that portion of the German line from the Matz to the Oise, holding the Lassigny Heights, which were a vital circumstance in the new German front to the north. Accordingly, when Rawlinson and Debeny had done their work. Humbert, with his third French army, suddenly intervened, and by a series of sharp attacks pushed the Germans right over the Lassigny Heights, across the tiny Divette and in upon Noyon. While the German line still held at Roye and Chaulnes, it began to give way at Lassigny.

The indirect Menace.

The indirect Menace.

But the dislocation of the Germans on the Lassigny Heights had a weakening influence upon the Germans across the Oise in the triangle between the Oise and the Aisne. Their flank toward the Oise was becoming menaced, and the progressive dislocation of the soft front between Arras and Soissons now extended to the sectors between Noyon and Soissons. This situation was promptly recognized and met by another swift, sure blow this time delivered by Mangin, who had first struck at Soissons, south of the Aisne, in the days of the second Marne, but now transferred the mass of his tenth army to the north bank of the Aisne and struck all the way from the Oise to the Aisne. In three days he had bundled the Germans out of all the strong positions south of the Oise the Nature of th The Indirect Menace. he had bundled the Germans out of all the strong positions south of the Oise and west of the Allette to the very edge of Soissons. He had taken 13,000 prisoners and more than 200 guns. He found himself by the middle of the week of August 19 holding all the positions occupied by the French between the Oise and the Aisne, held after the March 21 offensive and before the German attack of June 9, as far east as the Allette.

Byng Enters the Game.

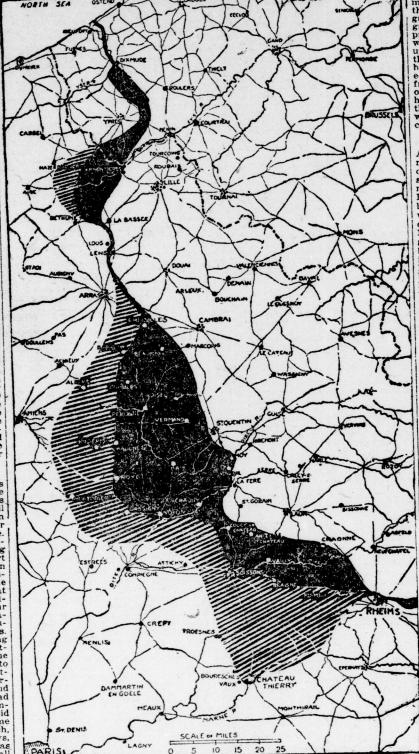
Byng Enters the Game. But by midweek Mangin's thrust was losing its force; the German lines were beginning to stabilize on advantageous ground, Humbert and Debeny were still before the old Somme lines, from Noyon him an eventual superiority and more immediately with reserves which were used with such effect in the Marne counter-offensive.

On its third effort the German man chine book down, the strutegy was dechine broke down, the strutegy was decided for the structure of the strutegy was decided for the strutegy was a structured to the structure of the strutegy was a structured to the strutegy was a structured to

mans were retiring toward Peronne right across the familiar country of the first Battle of the Somme. It was becoming patent that unless this dislocation were promptly checked it was bound to extend still further to the south and compel the Germans to get out of Roye, Chaulnes and Noyon.

Furthern than this, on Monday, August 26, when this article is written, the operative front of Byng had been suddenly extended northward astride the Scarpe, and the British were retaking positions familiar in the reports of Allenby's Battle of Arras, begun on April 9, 1917, just at the close of the Hindenburg retreat. Already the attack was approaching the northern

LIQUIDATING LUDENDORFF'S ASSETS



(Map Illustrating Simonds' Article.) The black area shows the German gains from March 21 July 18. The diagonal lines indicate the territory recovered by the Allies from July 18 to August 26.

have seen the limit of the application of the strategy. On the contrary, new attacks by new armies seem inevitable. Now, looked at from the broadest possible horizon, what does the Foch strategy aim at? Primarily it aims at destroying the organization and the morale of the central German armies before they can reach a position on which the front will become stabilized. Such a position exists in the old Hindenburg line. To this there is every reason to believe that the Germans are now turning, but the measure of the success of Foch will not be found in the territory regained when the Germans get back to their old defensive systems, but the condition in which they reach these systems and the cost to them in men and guns of their retirement. Don't look at the map between Arras and Soissons, as long as the Hindenburg line stands, to get any measure of Allied success; read, rather, the daily lists of the totals of prisoners, guns and materials captured. The ground is a desert, and in all human probability Ludendorff, left to himself, would have retired at least as far as the upper Somme if Rawlinson's successful thrust of August 8 had been a solitary blow and not one in a carefully arranged series. Between the old Somme front and the Hindenburg line there is only a desert; the man who has it behind him is the worse off, because even the ways of communication are lacking, while his troops in reserve are without cover or protection against the weather.

Loses Attacking Power.

has not the same value. Such a success in 1916 would have meant the expulsion of the Germans from France, for then they had no Hindenburg line behind.

Nothing that same by attacking we have defeated and almost routed they had no Hindenburg line behind.

Nothing that has yet happened.

It is an equally serious mistake to think that the present rapid advances are a sign of the return of an unlimited war of movement. They are not; when his line has been stablized. Nothline not be able to stabilize the front in a relatively near time and not further east than the ited war of movement. They are not; Hindenburg line. His position is not becomes. Yeal It is harmless.

they constitute in reality the pursuit of an enemy from one series of positions to the next. Unless the enemy is so demoralized in this pursuit between positions that he cannot stand on the next series of lines the war of movement will presently come to an

the old Somme line for a period of time. If this be the case then he has suffered a sweeping defeat, but this seems an unlikely conjecture. The weakness of his positions was too obvious. At all events he was attacked before he could start anything but the most limited local retreats; he had to accept battle at last about Bapaume, and the various attacks upset the equilibrium of his whole front from Soissons to the environs of Arras. The consequence has been a loss of more than 40,000 prisoners since the end of the original thrust of Rawlinson and Debeny, which alone cost him upward of 35,000 prisoners.

It is a mistake to measure present It is a mistake to measure present gains by the old standards of trench gains to his fee? gains by the old standards of trench gains by the old standards of trench garfare. Byng went further in three days of his latest drive than Rawlinson was able to make in six months on the Somme in 1916. But the enemy is not making the same fight and the ground that Foch is an apostle of the offensive; he wan the Marne by attacking with an

Nothing that has yet happened pre-cludes a desperate attempt on Luden-dorff's part to regain the initiative when his line has been stablized. Nothand no such comparative strength

yet as bad as that of the Allies just before Foch took command, after Petalin had saved Haig by closing the gap between the Oise and the Somme. But that position was one of deadly peril, and Ludendorff's, if not so critical, is one of extreme discomfort, carrying with it the patent danger of disaster in the immediate future and bounty

tween positions that he cannot stand on the next series of lines the war of movement will presently come to an abrupt end. If he is, then we shall see a march of victory going far forward, but it will not be a war of movement then, but just an uninterrupted pursuit until the enemy can find a new position and stand either at the Meuse or the Rhine.

Chance for the Clever Fighter.

The engaging aspect of Foch's strategy is that it permits no period of rest for the enemy. Ludendorff is always being attacked. If one Allied army rests another is at work, and each army's success opens the way for the attack of another. There is an ever present demand for reserves; the strain lincreases, it does not diminish; the whole line cannot stabilize itself; a local dislocation is always in progress, and this is communicating itself to adjoining sectors. So far it has been something like the strategy of a lightweight boxer against a heavyweight, in which the skill of the smaller man has

probability Ludendorff. left or himself, the upper Somme if Rawlinson's successful thrust of August 8 had been a solfare him to rail be communicating itself to ade larguagh how and not one way a the old Somme front and the Hindenburg line there is only a desert; the man who has it belong the ways of communication are lacking while his troops in reserve are without cover or protection against the weather.

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