

Foch, the Tank and America's Great Aid Have Turned the Battle Tide in Favor of the Allies

These Three Elements Have Achieved Turnover in the Situation

Political Disunion Is Greatest Danger

Propaganda Is Too Little Checked in France and Britain

By Hilaire Belloc
Author of "Elements of the Great War" and Britain's most distinguished military critic.

(Special Cable to The Tribune)
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LONDON, Aug. 17.—The operations on the battlefield in the second offensive between the Somme and the Oise have their main interest for the moment on the Lassigny group of hills. What the French are fighting for is complete observation over the plain, across which the enemy is bringing up his supplies.

This observation they have not yet obtained. They have it from the western edge of the ridge above Beval, but have not yet got the isolated hill between Beval and Triescourt, and everywhere east of the middle of the range wooded and high ground stands between them and the plains.

Meanwhile, pending the other movement of greater effect, we may note new facts which have come out with respect to the numerical position. Of these the most important is the presence of thirty-one complete American divisions already in the field. That means in infantry alone something not far short of half a million men. Next we now know the condition of exhaustion of the enemy's reserves. There have been identified during the second defensive thirty-one divisions, of which thirteen were brought either from the enemy's reserves or from the south.

There is a certain amount of overlapping, as among the thirteen apparently were two divisions which previously had appeared between Soissons and Rheims. The total number of divisions drawn into the two offensives combined is considered to be over one hundred—that is, half the German army in the west.

We must remember that the space of time with which we are dealing is only one month, and in that brief period one-half of the enemy's forces has been involved in two defeats—close on half a million men in infantry alone—some 8 per cent have been taken prisoners and seventeen hundred guns have been taken as well. It is only by appreciating this that we can understand how truly the tide has turned since July 18.

Three Elements That Have Turned Tide

There are three elements which decided this great return tide, and there is one element only that can rob civilization of its due victory.

The three elements which in combination achieved the turnover in the military situation, the recovery of the initiative by the Allies and all that is to follow, are:

The military aptitude of the French;

The mechanical genius of the British; and

The peculiar character of the new American troops coupled with the elasticity of the American organization.

The element that we most fear is not military at all, but political. It is the danger of disunion which exists both in France and Britain, too little checked by the governments and appealing to the fatigues and disappointments of four years of war, to popular ignorance and to every joint of weakness in our national armors.

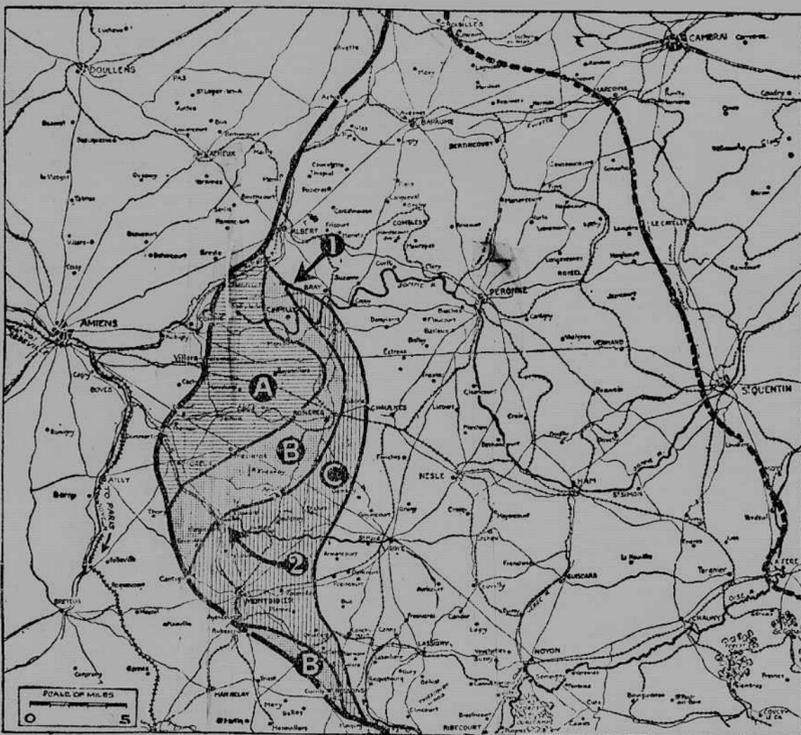
The effect upon the situation along the Western front, of French strategy, is obvious.

Tank Chief New Tactical Instrument

What is less clearly distinguished is the tactical effect of two new instruments of warfare—British strategical invention and the American reserves. From July 18 onward the great tactical instrument of the Allies, the instrument which has given them the power of surprise and penetration, the instrument which has permitted us to eliminate the old preliminary bombardment which always gave warning of the attack and at the same time ruined the ground over which the attack should take place—the instrument, in a word, which has changed the war is the tank. And the tank is, entirely in its original form and largely in its development, British.

And not only is the invention itself British; but its tactical use has been developed by the British. Nor

ABOLISHING THE MONTDIDIER SALIENT



The first three days of Haig's offensive drove the Germans from the whole apex of the salient and freed the railroads through Amiens, thus adding greatly to the security of the Allied armies. This map shows how it was done, the shaded portion, A, B and C, indicating the Allied gains on each day. The arrows (1) and (2) show where the German resistance on the flank of the Allied advance checked its progress, without being strong enough

must we forget that all these recent great successes are based upon the original experiment of which General Byng was the author in front of Cambrai nine months ago. He was the first to break and pass the enemy's defensive organization by the use of a fleet of tanks without preliminary bombardment.

With this aspect of the tanks should be connected, of course, the light armored cars, "the machine guns on wheels," as they have been called, which are part of the same conception and had a very great effect in the recent battles.

The third element of the change in the situation, the American levies, is of the same effect as a new tactical instrument because they come fresh among lighthearted who have been jaded by four years of war; they come chosen from the best military age into armies considerable parts of which are too old or too young for full efficiency; they come trained with a rapidity which was not thought possible—I mean that the rate of instruction has been astonishing—and, most important of all, they are coming into the field in very rapidly increasing numbers which are changing the whole balance of the war.

Americans Bring The Decisive Factor

That last point we owe to the admirable elasticity of organization which was shown when a determination was taken last March to accelerate in so unexpectedly high a degree the delivery of troops across the ocean. We see the effect of this continual increase of American numbers everywhere.

The great battle which was engaged under the command of General Haig, on August 8, apparently reached the close of its first phase in three days. The story of those days was one continued success.

Let us first of all understand the ground on which this battle was taking place. In their great advance last March and early April the Germans pushed the Allies back in a wide crescent, the important points along the edge of which, counting from Arras on the north to Novyon on the south, are: Arras, Albert, Villers-Bretonneux, Montdidier, Lassigny and Novyon.

Why Second Attack Was Launched

It was this salient that the Allied Higher Command chose for the second of their great operations. The German retreat from the Marne had reached their prepared line upon the heights of the Vesle and had completely straightened out the pocket in which they were caught at the moment of the counter offensive of July 18. They were firmly settled upon that straight line by August 5. Further operations here on a large scale would mean nothing but a slow reduction of strong defensive positions.

It was imperative that the initiative recovered by the Allies should not be lost, and the first great object of Foch in starting this second offensive operation was to keep the ball rolling; to develop and expand and continue this power of the initiative which he had recovered, and to

do so by leaving no time to the enemy to reorganize, to create a reserve and to plan a counter attack.

The Third Battle of the Somme, therefore, which was launched only three days after the arrest of operations on the Vesle, had for its main and principal object this continued retention of the initiative in Allied hands.

But apart from this general object there were special reasons for launching the attack in this particular sector, which may be called the salient of Montdidier, since the little town of that name stands at its head, or apex. These reasons were as follows:

First, a salient, even as large as this, is obviously vulnerable if attacked in flank, for by coming down on either side, precisely as was done in the case of the Marne pocket three weeks ago, you threaten, or cut and bring under fire, or actually occupy, certain roads and railways which supply the salient.

Second, in this particular case of the Montdidier salient there was another local reason of high importance for compelling the enemy, if possible, to abandon his advanced positions. This local reason was the freeing of the road and railway junction of Amiens and the restoration to use, by the Allies, of the great railway line from Paris through Amiens to Arras, which for four years had been the main lateral communication of the Allies and which was out of use so long as the nearest German guns were within a range of less than six thousand yards.

Third, freeing Amiens from distant fire, and the nearer points on the railway from immediate fire, will not be the only effect of the German retirement from the salient. There will also be a very important result in leaving the Allies ample ground for manoeuvre. The worst effect of the great German advance in March and April was that it so nearly cut off the British armies in the north from the French in the south. This disaster was just avoided; but the enemy got so far that the belt left between his lines and the Somme Valley was very narrow. Should he make a further advance and reach Amiens, and throw forces across the Somme Valley, which below that point is a broad and marshy obstacle with few crossings, he would virtually isolate the north from the south. The elbow room remaining to the Allies for their movement of troops would be insufficient.

With all these objects in view, then, primarily to make continued use of the initiative, leaving the enemy no respite, also to inflict heavy losses by crushing in the Montdidier salient, to create confusion in the enemy organization by this pressure, to relieve Amiens and the main Amiens railway and to increase the ground behind the lines for further manoeuvres—with all these objects, the British commander in chief struck just before daylight, on Thursday, August 8.

The sector of attack was about twenty miles long and was divided into the following portions, beginning from the north: The first is the triangle between the Ancre and the upper Somme Valley, a piece of front just over three miles long facing the large village of Morlancourt and the

bold projecting Hill of Chipilly. This northern end of the line of advance, beginning at Ville-en-Ancre and going down to Saily on the Somme Valley, was to prove the most difficult part of the ground. The British troops operating here were faced by the 27th German Division, which had only a day or two before been in local action on this ground and which was expecting further fighting.

Beyond the Somme the land rises to a plateau about eleven miles wide, the countryside being known as Santerre. The British line ran across this in a southwesterly direction past Villers-Bretonneux to a point where the plateau is cut by the shallow valley of the little River Luce, a tributary of the Avre.

Beyond this valley, for another three miles, the line was taken up to a point opposite Moreuil by the left of the French First Army, under General Debeny. Opposite the British line, which was held by the Fourth British Army under General Rawlinson, was the 27th German Division, between the Ancre and the Somme, and on the plateau of Santerre, in order from north to south, were the 43d, 13th, 41st, 109th, 25th and 14th divisions—the latter standing across the Luce Valley, at the end of the British line, and being in process of relief, at the moment the action opened, by the 117th German Division. Both these divisions thus caught in the confusion suffered heavily. The numbers of the German divisions on the front of the French advance have not yet been given.

It will be noticed that the German defensive organization here was quite dense. There was more than half a division to a mile, and this very circumstance, which was intended to strengthen what was known to be a vital sector, was the thing which cost the enemy heavy losses when he was surprised by the British advance.

Attack Developed Complete Surprise

The action opened with most intense, but momentary, bombardment, lasting only three or four minutes, and immediately followed by an advance all along the British line, led by tanks and armored cars. It had the effect everywhere of a complete surprise; and in the centre, upon the bare, open Santerre plateau, the attack went right through the German defensive system and made an advance which, by afternoon, reached Framerville, nine miles away from the starting point at Villers-Bretonneux. All this central movement, though Framerville was its extreme limit, pushed very far forward and reached Caix and Beaucourt, seven and six miles respectively from the point of departure on the original line.

But while this Thursday was so astonishingly successful, through the effect of surprise and through the tactical value of the tanks, on all the central plateau, there was a hold-up on the two wings north and south. On the north, between the Ancre and the Somme, it was found impossible to take Morlancourt, and the line was hardly advanced in spite of hard fighting all day. Further south, in the upper Somme Valley, the Chipilly Hill was carried, but lost again. On the right the French were held up for three hours by the German

Military Aptitude of French a Big Factor for Victory

British Mechanical Genius Wins Credit

Elasticity of U. S. Organization Is Quick to Bring Results

defense of Morisel. Until that bridgehead had been taken there was no way by which the French tanks could cross the marshy valley, and therefore there was no opportunity for advance. The French captured Morisel, with the remaining survivors of its garrison—800 men—at 8 o'clock, and after that they were able to go forward. By 10 they had surrounded and taken Moreuil, on the other side of the little river. By evening they had come into line with the British to the north of them and were past Plessier.

On the evening of the first day, therefore, the situation was this: Over all the great central plateau of Santerre there had been an advance superior to any hitherto made on the first day of any offensive since trench warfare began, and the German defensive system had been completely broken. The vital railway junction at Chaumes was within range of British guns. Montdidier, at the head of the salient, was badly pinched from the north and its railway communications were interrupted by the fire now directed against Chaumes junction. But the fact that the Germans were still holding the Chipilly Hill to the north gravely interfered with the road supplying the furthest point of the British advance. The Allies counted that day about 16,000 prisoners; but Montdidier still held, the salient was not yet reduced, nor, therefore, was the first object of the action attained.

The Battle on the Second Day

In the second day of the battle the enemy's general reserves were coming up and opposing a considerable resistance, while, on the Allied side, the advance was slackened by the necessity of bringing up artillery and munitionment. Further, a continued advance beyond Framerville and down toward Lihons and Chaumes was difficult so long as the Germans still retained Chipilly. The general advance in the first part of the second day was no more than three or four miles, the French getting through to Piermont, north of Montdidier, and pinching the salient still further by reaching Arvillers; but the British, though passing Rosières, two and a half miles from Caix, were still hampered in their movement by the enemy occupation of Chipilly Hill.

Great efforts had been made the day before to retake the hill, but had failed. It looked for a moment to a distant observer as though the advance had met a check. But rather late on this second day things began to change again for our advantage. Late in the afternoon of Friday the First French Army, whose left was already engaged in the region north of Montdidier, struck suddenly and unexpectedly in the southern face of the salient beyond and to the east of that town.

At the same moment the British north of the Somme and in front of Chipilly Hill, reinforced by certain American contingents, attacked again and the height was carried. With the morning of the next day the advance could assume a new form.

In the course of the preceding evening Australians and Canadians pushed forward to within 200 yards of Chaumes junction and stood on the rising ground near Lihons, looking down at the railway centre which was so vital for the Germans, and of course at such a range rendering it as unusable as though it actually had been passed and occupied. To the south the French on this same Saturday morning pushed up so far that they surrounded Montdidier, the garrison of which surrendered with all its material before 9 a. m. During the afternoon the whole line south of Chaumes went forward until by nightfall you have it running close to Chaumes, though still immediately west of that town and southward close to Roye, putting out of use the main German roads of supply into the salient, which all met at Roye. The line then bent back by Lignieres and came down to the neighborhood of Lassigny by way of Conchy.

The Montdidier salient had gone. The enemy was falling back everywhere behind strong rear guards, whose counter attacks permitted his retreat. The question of how far he will go and of how greatly the Allies can or will exploit their victory belongs to another phase of the battle.

Danger of Food Privation Now Passed, Says Hoover

United States Administrator, in Reporting New Programme of Allied Council, Emphasizes That This Country Must Continue Its "Rigid Economy"

(By The Associated Press)

LONDON, Aug. 17.—Discussing the Allied food situation here to-day, Herbert S. Hoover, United States Food Administrator, said:

"I am well satisfied with results from the conferences of food controllers which has been in progress during the last three weeks. These conferences were called at my request with a view to the formulation of policies and programmes with regard to the entire import of food supplies to the countries at war with Germany.

"An agreement has been reached with regard to policies which will effect a great measure of coordination in the purchase and transportation of supplies during the coming year and in their equitable distribution between all the countries, and a programme has been agreed upon as to the different commodities that are required not only to maintain the health but the comfort of the armies and civil populations.

"New Shipping Arrangements
"The people of North America are this year able to take upon their shoulders the movement of the great bulk of food supplies required, and it will therefore be possible to curtail the total length of voyage necessary to bring these supplies to the European Allies, thus effecting a considerable saving in tonnage as well as contributing a material factor of safety on account of the comparative immunity of the Atlantic lane over all others from interference by the enemy.

"The great transportation problem

Wilson Saves Soldier From Firing Squad

CAMP MEADE, Md., Aug. 17.—The new 11th Division, just organized with Major Jesse M. Carter as commander, has been named the Lafayette Division. Private Herman Landenson, of the 154th Depot Brigade, recently found guilty of desertion and disobedience of orders and sentenced to death, has been saved from the firing squad by President Wilson, who has commuted the sentence and discharged him from the army and fifteen years' imprisonment at Fort Leavenworth.

Landenson was a self-styled conscientious objector. He failed to fill out the questionnaire sent him by his local board and likewise failed to report for service when called. Arrested in Philadelphia, he was charged with desertion from the army. He was called in Harrisburg, on March 24, and examined absent in desertion until the time of his arrest.

Army Officer Objects to Nassau Police Tactics

Lieutenant Walter Miller, commanding the army aviators detailed until last week to the air mail service at Belmont Park, Queens, said yesterday that overzealous Nassau County constables had been making revolver targets of his men.

The two targets, according to Lieutenant Miller, were A. M. Edmunds and J. C. Sutton, mechanics, who were stopped by a constable or deputy sheriff or something on Thursday night when they were returning from Long Beach in a side-car motorcycle with two young women.

The county official, said the lieutenant, threatened the soldiers with arrest for speeding. They gave him their names and told him he could not arrest soldiers in uniform without a warrant. After a dispute, the lieutenant said, his men proceeded, but had not gone far before three more civilian officers jumped from the bushes and began shooting at them. Another shot was fired, said the lieutenant, just after the soldiers got beyond Nassau County into Queens.

Pope Sends Letter To Irish Bishops

ROME, Aug. 17.—In a letter to the Irish bishops answering one sent him on the occasion of the beatification of Oliver Plunkett, the Pope indicates that he recognizes the grave difficulties through which the Catholic episcopate and clergy are passing. His Holiness expressed, in fact, however, that thanks to the Christian fortitude, wisdom, prudence and moderation which the apostolic ministry demands above all where the situation is most delicate and serious, they are able, faithfully to fulfill their mission to prepare better times for the Church.

The beatification of Oliver Plunkett, who was put to death on the charge of treason, was decreed on March 17 last. The charge against Oliver Plunkett was that he had conspired to bring a French army to Ireland. He was hanged, drawn and quartered.

Lad Thought Dead Writes

ELIZABETH, N. J., Aug. 17.—The sorrow which had hung over the home of Private Edward J. Benz, 220 Caspian Street, ever since his family was notified last month that he had been killed in action was lifted to-day, when three letters written by Benz since the date of his reported death were delivered at his home. He had been wounded, gassed, and in a base hospital recovering, and expected to be back at the front soon, his letters read.

Mrs. Benz had put on mourning for her son.

14 American Names Appear Among Canadian Casualties

OTTAWA, Ont., Aug. 17.—The names of to-day's overseas casualty list: Wounded—C. Dillon, 374 Palisade Avenue, Jersey City; E. Collins, Beverly, Mass.; A. E. Cook, 316 Joy Street, Mount Pleasant, Ia.; W. J. Sobey, Los Gatos, Cal.; Lieutenant J. R. Holt, Beaver Falls, Penn.; C. Gray, Beverton, Mich.; C. Gatchell, Watertown, S. D.; W. F. Collins, 3223 West Lake Street, Chicago, and Lieutenant G. A. Ferguson, 129 Broadway, New York City.

Died—J. McDonald, address given as a Northern Park, Ashmont, Mass.; E. S. Crapone, Whitefield, N. H.; G. L. Tolson, 6 Worcester Square, Boston. Died of wounds—C. K. Hoye, Arkansas. Presumed to have died—J. Charlie, Boston.

within the next year is to move sufficient American troops into Europe to give an overpowering strength against any forces the Germans may be able to bring to bear, and in order to accomplish this economy in consumption is imperative in all the Allied countries.

"On the other hand, the danger of privation is now passed. In the United States we have need for continued rigid economy in consumption so that we may meet the increased demands from Europe and to enable us to carry over from this more abundant harvest year a stock of foodstuffs that will form positive assurance against any possible climatic eventualities in the next harvest.

Continuous Food Council
"Arrangements have been made by the four food controllers not only to cover these matters of policy, but also to provide for the erection of machinery for continuous supervision of the necessary operations. The Food Council, which is a body that has just been created, will be maintained in continuous session by means of having representatives of each government with their headquarters in London.

"The coal miners of Europe are now at the front. Consequently, this next winter will be a period of great suffering in Europe through a shortage of coal. If the people can have liberal supplies of bread, meat and fats there can be no fear of the morale among the civil populations of the European Allies. The promise of this has lifted a load of fear from the minds of the people on this side, particularly in France and Italy. It now remains for our people to make good, and as usual we have the resources to do it."

Aerial Sham Battle Will Be Feature of Police Field Day

New York policemen began a drive yesterday which they intend to continue until they have sold at least a half million tickets for the dual Police Field Day Games and Concert, to be held at the Sheepshead Bay Motor-drome August 24 and 31. Part of the proceeds from the games are to be used in purchasing new uniforms for the police reserves, both men and women.

The programme arranged for the two days includes not only athletic events, but a sham battle, in which nearly one thousand men will participate, and an exhibition of aerial warfare, with forty-two machines taking part. Several prominent singers have volunteered their services for both days.

Uruguay President Fired At

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, Aug. 17.—An attempt was made to assassinate President Viera of Uruguay on Tuesday afternoon during rioting growing out of the recent general strike, according to an afternoon newspaper. The President, it says, was standing on a balcony when fired at and the bullet missed him by a narrow margin.

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