

Fighting began again during the first week in May and lasted on the left bank of the Meuse, until the first of July. Fort Vaux was taken on June 6, and on June 9 one hundred thousand men were employed on a front of only three miles in a desperate assault on the heights of Thiaumont which they eventually carried. The British offensive on the Somme caused a great diversion of troops in that direction and compelled the Germans thenceforth to remain on the defensive in this sector.

The long delayed allied attack on that part of the German lines was preceded by a tremendous bombardment lasting continuously for five days on a broad front, by frequent raids at night with small parties to ascertain its results, and by successful assaults on the German aircraft. Many of their observation balloons were brought down, and allied aeroplanes bombed divisional headquarters and the principal railway stations in rear. Decisive ascendancy in the air was secured in the sector selected for the main offensive, and the concentration of troops was carried out with all possible secrecy. The British forces had been heavily reinforced and two new armies formed. A large additional frontage was taken over by them from the French on the Somme. The time for the assault was fixed for 7.30 a.m. on July 1. Sir Henry Rawlinson commanded the British troops allotted for the attack, which was made on a front of twenty miles against the Thiepval ridge, while the French attacked on an eight mile front on both sides of the river Somme, to their right, under the orders of General Foch. The British attack failed on the extreme left, owing to insufficient preparation, but the German first line was pierced on a front of sixteen miles in the face of an obstinate resistance, chiefly from machine guns concealed in positions where they could not be reached by artillery fire. The French were successful all along their front, as an attack there seems to have been somewhat unexpected. The advance was continued on July 2 and 3. On the following day, operations were delayed by heavy thunderstorms, but the French continued to gain ground. Heavy reinforcements had been received by the Germans who began violent counter-attacks upon the British.

On the 7th a division of the Prussian guard made a desperate attack on the British position near Contalmaison, which was repelled with great loss, many prisoners being taken. Fighting continued day after day with great fury, and the Germans were driven from a large portion of their second line by the end of the month. Numerous desperate struggles took place for small positions. The fighting in the month of August continued daily with slow but steady gains of ground on the part of the Allies, yet at no point did they succeed in breaking through. The artillery bombardment was continued with unprecedented energy. On some occasions, ninety thousand shells were fired within an hour by the allied guns, and in certain instances, more than a million inside of twenty-four hours. A great force of cavalry and horse artillery was held in readiness close in rear, with the intention of taking advantage of a breach in the enemy's position. A great joint attack was delivered with considerable success on a front of forty miles on September 3, in which twenty-eight allied divisions