

brought to a definite halt. On April 23 another offensive in the direction of Amiens made some progress, but in most places the assailants were repulsed or driven back by counter-attacks.

Finding that their efforts to force a passage to the Channel were unsuccessful and that a great body of troops had been assembled to resist them, the Germans then prepared to deliver a great attack on the French front in the direction of Paris. Twenty fresh divisions of veteran troops were brought forward by night marches with great secrecy. This attack was made along the Aisne on a front of thirty-five miles opposite Soissons and Reims. An artillery bombardment of terrific violence began at one o'clock on the morning of May 27, which continued for two hours and a half. Preceded by the usual barrage of gas shells and shrapnel, the German "storm troops," accompanied by many tanks, swept over the front line trenches. Their success was greatest on a part of the line west of Craonne, where the defenders were driven across the Aisne, then across the Vesle, and nearly annihilated. Four British divisions, which had been worn out by hard fighting elsewhere and sent to this part of the line for rest were forced to retreat in the direction of Reims. The German advance continued until the French had retired beyond the Marne, where they organized a fresh position and held their ground stubbornly. German attacks in the vicinity of Soissons and Reims met with little success. Inside of a week this offensive had lost its driving power. It had, however, been still more damaging than those preceding it, as a wide pocket was opened in the French front extending from the Aisne to the Marne, bringing the enemy appreciably nearer to Paris. The general situation had grown distinctly more serious for the Allies.

As a result of their costly experience, in attempting to resist these tremendous onslaughts on their advanced lines and in bringing up supporting troops through an exterminating barrage fire, it was decided by the Allied commanders to adopt a system of "elastic defence," which had already indeed been successfully practised by the enemy on several occasions. Secret instructions were accordingly issued to army commanders directing them no longer to hold their first positions at all costs as heretofore, but to retire to a main line of resistance a considerable distance in rear, by which great losses from gas shells and barrage fire might be avoided. This was substantially a reversion to the old doctrine by which the line of supports was made the line of resistance.

On June 9 the Germans launched another attack on a front of twenty miles between Noyon and Montdidier, pushing forward in great force on both sides of the river Oise in the direction of Compiègne. They penetrated the French position to a depth of three miles and made further advances the next day. The French retired gradually to their main line of resistance among the hills south of the river Matz. The evident intention of the Germans on this occasion was to unite the two pockets they had previously formed and secure a new base of operations from which they might accomplish an effective bombardment of Paris and render that great city untenable. They failed to break through, although they used forty