

divisions in this offensive and suffered enormous losses. An attack on a large scale in the vicinity of Reims on June 18 also failed with very heavy loss. A pause in operations then occurred during which a great number of British and American troops arrived in France and careful preparations were made for a counter-offensive on a grand scale.

The German artillery preparation for their fifth and last effort began at midnight, July 14-15, on a front extending for nearly sixty miles from Chateau Thierry to the western edge of the Argonne forest. Their fire was to a great extent wasted upon positions which the French had already determined to abandon, and when the infantry advanced at daybreak they were opposed by a mere curtain of troops, who retired rapidly before them. As they followed in pursuit, they were overwhelmed by the fire of batteries securely posted in the rear of the main line of defence. By using canvas boats they succeeded in crossing the Marne at several points and then establishing pontoon bridges. Their progress was definitely checked on July 16, and a vigorous counter-offensive began two days later against the exposed right flank of the German salient on the Marne. One of the secret preparations made for this counter-offensive was the construction of a very large number of light tanks on the Renault model, armed with small guns to accompany the infantry in their advance. Rain was falling heavily on the morning of July 18, when the French counter-offensive began in the region between Villers Cotterets and Soissons by an army commanded by General Mangin, whose troops had been discreetly hidden in the wooded valleys among the hills. There was no preliminary bombardment. The infantry advanced at dawn under cover of a rolling barrage, directed by the map, and accompanied by eight hundred swift "mosquito tanks." The German front line was taken by surprise and gave way. On the left the French advanced until they reached the hills overlooking Soissons, and in some places the French cavalry pressed through the gaps thus created and took part in the pursuit. When night fell the Allies were able to report that twenty thousand prisoners and three hundred and sixty guns had been taken. Three British divisions and many British tanks took part in this attack near Reims. Several divisions of United States troops also co-operated in the vicinity of Chateau Thierry, where they fought stoutly. The pressure of the Allies continued with encouraging success, driving the Germans steadily before them until they were forced to recross the Marne, and part of their troops were withdrawn to the Aisne. These advances had the effect of materially shortening the allied front, and removing the menace against Paris. Large masses of troops assembled as reserves for a projected offensive against the British front under Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria were drawn away to resist this attack and the contemplated operation was consequently abandoned.

On July 23, a secret conference was held of the allied commanders at which the methods for developing the advantages of the success already gained were discussed at considerable length. The commanders of the British, French and American armies were required to pre-