

pare plans for local offensives to be undertaken at an early date with definite limited objectives. The first great objective proposed on the British front was the liberation of the Amiens-Paris railway which had been rendered unworkable by the enemy's fire for several weeks.

The British forces had been greatly diminished by casualties during the two great offensives directed against them in March and April. Eight divisions had then been reduced to mere skeletons and no longer could be regarded as fighting formations. Two others which still continued in the line were greatly weakened. There had been immense losses of artillery and military stores, including two hundred tanks, material for light railways, rolling stock and motor carriages. Two months of comparative quiet had brought about a great improvement. The gaps in the ranks were more than filled by drafts from England and reinforcements from other fronts. The number of infantry divisions had been increased from forty-five to fifty-two, and the total strength of British troops employed in France was not less than 1,700,000. All losses of material had been more than replaced. The artillery was stronger than ever before and a stock of thirty-five million shells had been accumulated for its use. New lines of railway had been built and additional tracks laid on old lines in many places, totalling a length of two hundred miles. New defensive lines of great strength and remarkable complexity had been constructed which included five thousand miles of trenches. By the end of July, the British forces were wholly reorganized in France and prepared to undertake the great task imposed upon them. Reserves amounting to more than a million of men were under training in England from whom losses could be readily replaced. A decided supremacy had been secured in aerial warfare. To enable this attack to be made with sufficient force, it was decided to transfer the Canadian Corps from the area occupied by the First British Army to that held by the Fourth Army. In order to deceive the enemy as regards this move, two battalions were placed in the line in the Kemmel hill sector and wireless messages purposely sent to be intercepted, worded in such a way as to indicate the presence of Canadians in this part of the front. It was freely announced that the corps would move in the direction of Ypres, where the Second Army expected an attack. Many tanks were ostentatiously paraded near St. Pol. The transfer began on July 30, and the movement into battle-assembly positions was completed on the night of August 7-8. The concentration area lay to the southwest of Amiens, a distance of forty miles from the battle-assembly position. Every precaution was taken to conduct these movements with the greatest secrecy. The troops moved by railway, motor bus and route march, entraining and detraining being accomplished during hours of darkness. The area chosen for concentration was heavily wooded and well adapted for concealing the presence of troops. The advance of the infantry to the position of assembly was accomplished in motor lorries and buses during the night. Here woods, villages and sunken roads afforded considerable cover from overhead observation. The extensive wood of Gentelles was largely used to conceal the assembly of many tanks. Cloudy and foggy weather greatly favoured secrecy and the movement of these troops seems to have been unobserved by the enemy.