

The front of attack covered twenty thousand yards. The First French Army, acting under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, was to attack on the right, the Canadian Corps in the centre, the Australian Corps on its left and the Third British Corps on the left of the latter. The intention was to push forward rapidly in the direction of the railway leading from Roye to Chaulnes. A large number of officers from the Australian and Canadian Corps were sent to observe demonstrations of co-operation between tanks and infantry at the training school to familiarize them with the combined tactics of these troops. After a brief bombardment on the morning of August 8 four hundred and fifteen heavy and light tanks advanced, followed by strong columns of infantry, the number of tanks allotted to each division ranging from twenty-four to thirty-six according to the nature of the ground. This movement was favoured by heavy fog which screened them from view until close to the German positions. The ground was broken and interspersed with many compact villages surrounded with gardens and orchards, and here and there small woods and copses. The German defences consisted largely of disconnected trenches with many machine gun emplacements scattered about. Their defenders were surprised and the advance was extremely rapid at first. The German positions were penetrated to a depth of more than eight miles and many villages captured. In an official report the defeat of the German Second Army on this occasion was attributed to the fact that "the troops were surprised by the massed attack of the tanks and lost their heads when the tanks suddenly appeared behind them, having broken through under the protection of natural and artificial fog." The attack was resumed on the morning of the 9th and rapid progress again made all along its front, in some places to a depth of more than six miles. During the day the resistance perceptibly stiffened and the Germans brought up fresh troops supported by a few huge tanks. The movement of the French First Army had been restricted to a demonstration in force on the 8th followed on the morning of the 9th by a heavy artillery bombardment which was discontinued about noon-day. The Germans were thrown off their guard and relaxed their vigilance in the course of the afternoon. At five o'clock when they were engaged in preparing their evening meal, the French began their principal infantry attack, moving swiftly against the German line of retreat, eastward, and ultimately surrounding the town of Montdidier which was taken about noon on the 10th. The German reserves had been moved to protect the important railway junction at Chaulnes from the British attack. Counter-attacks were repelled on August 11 and 12, and the French continued their advance all along their front from Montdidier as far as the Oise. They crossed the Matz and recaptured several villages on the further bank. Farther to the south and east other advances were made. This success brought the allied troops into the old trenches occupied by them in 1916, and the pressure of strong German reserves supported by many batteries of artillery made a further advance inexpedient. Thirteen British infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions had been engaged and in the course of four days they had captured 21,850 prisoners and four