

High Command would not readily give up the Vimy Ridge, and he was determined to deal a blow which would force them to use up reserves in defence of it.

In anticipation of the great Spring Offensive of the Allies, the Germans had brought up all possible troops, artillery, ammunition and technical stores, to the Western Front. Their policy was to fight a battle of withdrawal, only giving up the front line when retention in the face of heavy fire meant heavy losses. When the Allies penetrated the forward system, and before they could consolidate ground won, they would be driven out by preconcerted counter-attack delivered at the critical moment. Close co-operation between infantry, artillery, and technical branches down to the smallest unit, instruction in the use of protective weapons—hand grenades, light machine guns—perfection of communications and of all sorts of improvements in close fighting, were the chief concern of the German commanders and staffs.

The Canadian Task.—The frontage of the Canadian Corps for the attack was 7,000 yards, extending from the Arras-Lens Road, at a point 1,000 yards north-east of Ecurie Church, to a point 1,200 yards south of the Souchez River and 1,000 yards west of the village of Givenchy-en-Gohelle. Across this whole front, to a depth of 500 to 700 yards, the German advanced fieldworks consisted of three lines of parallel trenches, protected by dense belts of barbed wire and connected by communication trenches and retrenchments. Behind this was arranged another intricate network of trenches and barbed wire, woven about a series of inter-supporting concrete machine-gun forts. Here was the battle area where the defenders would deal with any assault which might penetrate; it was bounded on the east by the second position, east of the Ridge and a mile from the front line on the left, two miles on the right. Running diagonally through this area, from Vimy village southwards and following about 1,000 yards behind the front line, was an intermediate trench—the *Zwischen Stellung*—and behind it, along the crest of the Ridge, covering the second position and the field batteries, were more wide belts of wire.

These different zones of defence called for different phases in the plan of attack. The four Canadian divisions would assault simultaneously and seize the forward zone by a rapid advance of about 700 yards all along the front. This objective was designated the Black Line. After a pause of forty minutes a further advance, to the Red Line, would be made, which on the right would breach the *Zwischen Stellung* on a narrow front, in the right centre would clear Les Tilleuls cross roads, and on the left would embrace La Folie Farm and Hill 145. In the two subsequent assaults only the two right divisions would be engaged; by the third advance to the Blue Line the remainder of the *Zwischen Stellung* would be taken, the village of Thélus and the high ground north of it would be captured, and the second position would be penetrated south of Vimy; in the fourth and final advance the second position in the woods along the eastern escarpment would be secured, with the guns in action there; this Brown Objective would be consolidated while patrols moved eastward to the Arras-Lens railway embankment.

Two German corps, each of three divisions, divided the front between the Scarpe and the Lens-Bethune road, with their point of junction between Givenchy-en-Gohelle and Hill 145. In the South, opposite the 1st Canadian Division, the