The Canadian Attack at Amiens, 8–11 August 1918

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Abstract

By mid-1918, the character of the First World War had changed completely from the relatively static previous three years of battle. In March, the Germans had launched their desperate gamble to win the war in a single massive offensive and had been halted, at great cost to both sides, by June. On 18 July the French, aided by American forces, launched their highly successful counter-attack at Soissons and demonstrated that the German forces were far weaker than the previous year. The opportunity was ripe to strike quickly and in force. This occurred at 4:20 a.m. on the 8th of August when the Battle of Amiens opened with the resounding crash of the combined artillery of two armies. One of the most powerful Allied forces ever assembled during the Great War, consisting of the French First (Debeney) and British Fourth (Rawlinson) Armies strengthened by the Canadian Corps and the entire British Cavalry and Tank Corps, rushed forward and fell upon the first line of generally ill-prepared and heavily outmatched Germans just east of the important railway centre at Amiens.

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On 8 August 1918, British, French, Australian and Canadian troops launched a surprise offensive directed against the Germans near the city of Amiens. The attack was a complete success and the Battle of Amiens marked the beginning of the end of the First World War. A Manchester Guardian reporter describes the German retreat.

British Army, Friday night (published 10 August 1918): It is a great victory. The headquarters of the 11th German Corps in huts at Framerville was charged by tanks and the Corps Staff pursued down roads and across fields, one general escaping capture by running like a hare. Tanks or armoured cars – I am not sure which – captured a German ambulance train with its staff of doctors and women nurses.

La bataille d'Amiens — 8-11 août 1918. Account of the 1918 Battle of Amiens that began the final push to win the First World War. This is one of the 17 pamphlets on specific battles in The Canadian Battle Series. This pamphlet is available online only in French, but you can get an English copy in print. PDF version, 70.5 KB.

La bataille d'Amiens — 8-11 août 1918 (in French only). Date of publication: 1995. Type: Canadian Battle Series. Report #: 15. Author: Greenhous, Brereton. The attack began on 8 August. In the first few hours of the battle six German divisions collapsed. Entire units began to surrender. Ludendorff called 8 August the “Black Day of the German Army”. By the end of the day the Allied had advanced nine miles over the entire ten mile front. 16,000 prisoners were taken during the first day. The unexpected extent of the British and Commonwealth armies’ successes at Amiens and Bapaume encouraged Foch to plan a massive triple offensive for the end of September, with the intention of breaking the Hindenburg Line and forcing the Germans out of France (Meuse-Argonne offensive, battle of Flanders and battle of Cambrai-St. Quentin). The Germans suffered very heavy losses during the battle of Amiens. The Battle of Amiens, also known as the Third Battle of Picardy (French: 3ème Bataille de Picardie), was the opening phase of the Allied offensive which began on 8 August 1918, later known as the Hundred Days Offensive, that ultimately led to the end of the First World War. Allied forces advanced over 11 kilometres (7 mi) on the first day, one of the greatest advances of the war, with Gen Henry Rawlinson's British Fourth Army (with 9 of its 19 divisions supplied by the fast moving Australian Corps of