

The Battle of Amiens

In August 1918, the Allies launched a major offensive on the Western Front against the German forces. This began as the Battle of Amiens on 8 August and developed into the Hundred Days Offensive that ultimately broke German resistance and resulted in the end of the War.

In March 1918, the German army launched a major offensive against the Allies on the Western Front. Despite initial successes, the attack petered out and by the summer, the initiative had passed to the Allied forces from Britain, France, USA and the British Empire.

The Allies decided to attack at Amiens in Northern France. The assault involved over 2,000 artillery guns and almost 600 tanks. It began in dense fog at 4:20 am on 8 August and caught the Germans by surprise. Allied forces advanced over 11 kilometres (7 miles) on the first day, one of the greatest advances of the War, with the British Fourth Army, made up of British, Australian and Canadian soldiers playing the decisive role. It took 13,000 prisoners, while the French captured a further 3,000. Total German losses were estimated to be 30,000 on 8 August alone. The Fourth Army's casualties were approximately 9,000.

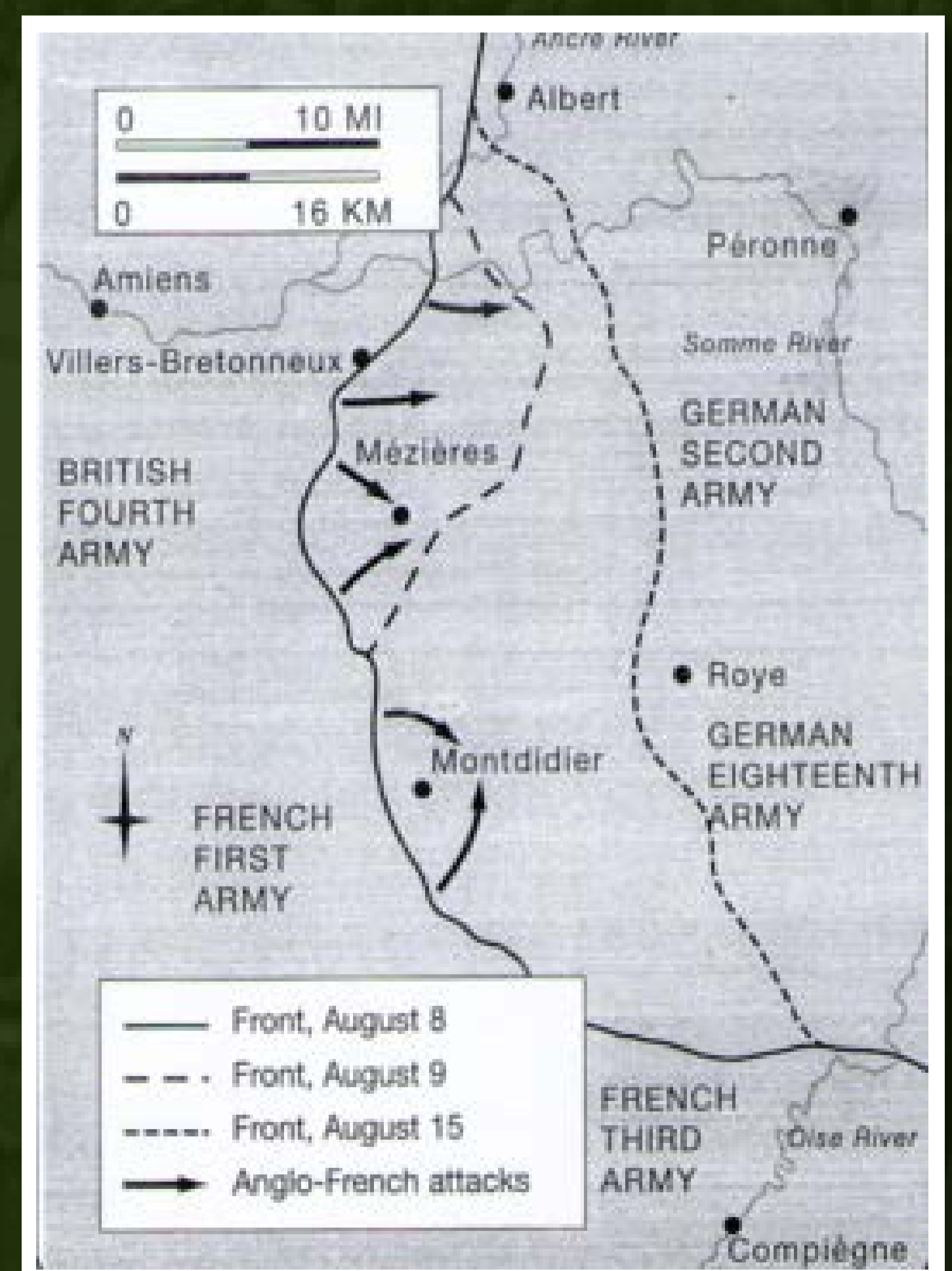


Corporal of the Tank Corps standing beside the camouflaged Mark V tank 'J18' of the 10th Battalion in a cornfield near Albert, 9 August 1918. The battalion was attached to the III Corps during the Battle of Amiens. Photography courtesy of Imperial War Museum.



Battle of Amiens. German prisoners arriving at a temporary POW camp with mounted military police escort. Near Amiens, 9 August 1918. Photo courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

The German General Erich Ludendorff described the first day of the Battle of Amiens as 'the black day of the German Army', not just because of the ground lost to the advancing Allies, but also because the morale of the German troops had sunk to the point where large numbers of troops began to surrender.



Map of the Battle of Amiens, August 1918

The Battle of Amiens was one of the first major battles involving armoured warfare and broke the stalemate of the fighting in the trenches that had been a feature of much of the preceding four years. It did not end the War but it gave the Allies the initiative to press on with the 'big push' and the Hundred Days Offensive that ultimately led to the German collapse and the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918.