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ADVANCED OFFICERS' COURSE.
1922-1923.

OPERATIONS OF THE 35th DIVISION
in the
FIRST PHASE OF THE MEUSE ARGONNE.

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MAJOR 23d INFANTRY.

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y.

Abbreviation.	Title.	Author.	Publishing House	Address	Date of Publication.
	The American Army in the World War.	G. Waldo Browne	Overseas Book Co.	Manchester N.H.	1921
Von Giehl	Battle of the Meuse-Argonne.	Maj. Herman von Giehl, Chief of Staff, 16th Army Corps, German Army.	Infantry Journal,	Washington, D.C.	Aug. 1921.
	Final Report Commander-in-Chief, A. E. F.	Gen. John J. Pershing	War Department	Washington, D.C.	
Heroes	Heroes of the Argonne.	Charles B. Hoyt	Franklin Hudson Publishing Co.	Kansas City, Mo.	1919.
	History of the A.E.F.	Shipley Thomas	George H. Doran Co.	New York, N.Y.	1920.
	Our Greatest Battle (Meuse-Argonne)	Frederick Palmer	Dodd Mead & Co.	New York, N.Y.	1919.
	Our 110 Days Fighting	Arthur W. Page	Doubleday, Page & Co.	New York, N.Y.	1920.

ORGANIZATION

(1) Mimeograph on the 35th Division by Historical Branch, W.F.D. General Staff, U.S.A.

The 35th Division was organized at Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma late in September, 1917 from units of the National Guard of Missouri and Kansas.(1)

It is unlikely that any division organized during the World War could be said to be more typically American than this one, coming, as it did, largely from the medium sized towns of Kansas and Missouri. In many instances companies had been maintained in the college towns and their personnel largely recruited from these colleges.(2)

(2) Author's observation.

The infantry units were formed by consolidation of National Guard infantry regiments, most of which had back of them records extending over many years of meritorious service, both to their respective states and to the nation. A military unit, such as a regiment may be divided into two or more parts for the purpose of organizing additional regiments, and each part will take with it the spirit of the parent organization. But the consolidation of two old regiments, particularly in this emergency when the nation was in need of every military resource at its command, was, to the personnel of the units making up the division the initial "slap in the face". The necessity of creating an esprit de corps in these newly organized units will be apparent.(2)

Almost immediately following this consolidation was begun the "weeding out" process. Officers ranging in grade from lieutenant to colonel faced the "firing squad" known as the

"B Board". Other field officers were sent to a school from which many never returned. Thus, these citizen soldiers watched and wondered at the return to civil life of officers who had spent years of study that they might be prepared for such service as this. Many of these officers were known to have been successful to a marked degree in civil undertakings of no small magnitude. They were known to be men of character and sufficient qualities of leadership to maintain their various activities in addition to the organizations which largely made up the division. Naturally the many changes in commissioned personnel incident to this "weeding out" process was not conducive to upbuilding of morale within the units.(3)

(3)Author's observation.

T R A I N I N G.

Unfortunately for the division, its commander, Maj. Gen. Wm.M. Wright, and his chief of staff, Col. Robert McCleave, were in France during the early months of its training period. Both these officers were permanently taken from the division shortly after its arrival in France.(3)

General Wright's successor during his temporary absence in Europe, almost immediately following the organization of the division, was a typical example of the old time "hard boiled" school. He practiced and passed on to his subordinates the theory that discipline was best instilled by fear; that the officer who was thoroughly hated by his subordinates was on the high road to success. It is perhaps useless to record the pitiful failure of honest effort in some quarters to carry

out this theory.(4)

The division was given some six months training prior to its departure for France. Most of this training, in so far as the infantry was concerned, was devoted to close order drill and bayonet training.(4)

(4) Author's observation.

A trench area of sufficient magnitude to accommodate a regiment was constructed. Each regiment was trained at least once in occupation of a trench sector at night. Only a few maneuvers, including one at night, by units as large as a regiment were carried out.(4)

A target range was constructed and some time devoted to rifle marksmanship. No record is found of any training in musketry nor combat exercises.(4)

The division left Camp Doniphan the middle of April, 1918. The infantry reached Le Havre May 11. The artillery followed a month later, but did not join the division until the middle of August. Training continued in France until July 1st when the infantry took over their first sector from the French in the Vosges Mountains.(5)

(5) Heroes p 40.✓

The division remained in this area until August 31st, when it was started toward St Mihiel, where it was held in Army Reserve. The Vosges sector was known as a quiet area, and while several raids on both sides served to break the monotony, as compared to the Argonne operation which was to follow, it must be admitted the Vosges trenches were a veritable

(6)Heroes p 53.

rest area.(6)

September 21st the division reached the woods in the Auzeville area, some twenty kilometers in rear of the line then held by the French and from which it was to attack five days later. The artillery and animal transportation had marched from the St Mihiel area while the infantry moved by trucks. On this same day both infantry brigade commanders were relieved.

(7)Heroes p 66.

(7) In the Official Army Register for 1922, the following appears after the name of one of these Brigadier Generals.

"Distinguished grad.Army Sch.of the Line, O9. Grad.Army Staff Coll. 10. Army War Coll. 17." (8) The other Brigadier General relieved had served with distinction as a field officer in the 20th Kansas Volunteers during the Spanish American War, and has recently been appointed a Brigadier General, O.R.C.(9) Three infantry regimental commanders had been replaced within a week.(9)

(8)Official
Army Register,
1922. p 393,
McClure,Nathaniel
F.

(9) Author's
observation.

September 22d the artillery reached their positions and shortly after dark on September 25th the infantry began its march to the front line . The congestion on the road was such that the term "march" should not be used here. Infiltration would very accurately describe this move which brought the troops to the front line barely in time for the "jump off".(9)

S E P T E M B E R 26th.

(10) Report of
Commander in
Chief, A.E.F.
Nov. 20, 1918
p 16.

(11) Field Orders
No. 44, 35th Div.
24, Sept, 1918
5:00 P.M.

(12) Author's
observation.

The 35th Division, as the right element of the 1st Corps, attacked on the morning of September 26th with the 91st Division, 5th Corps, on its right and the 28th Division on its left. (10)(11)

Line of departure, Allied trenches, (6705) to (3800). The attack was made by the 69th Infantry Brigade with one battalion of the 70th Infantry Brigade and one company of 110th Engineers (to cut wires) attached. The attack order provided for one battery of light artillery to be attached to the "first line to be used as forward guns". (11) These guns did not materialize. (12) The plan provided that the attached battalion of the 70th Infantry Brigade would mop up Vauquois Hill and Bois du Rossier¹⁹¹⁸, thereafter rejoining its brigade (the division reserve) which was to follow the leading brigade at not more than two kilometers. (11)

The Division Commander, in issuing his attack order on the afternoon of September 25th, ordered verbally that his Brigade, Regimental and Battalion Commanders LEAD the attack, explaining that he wanted them with the advanced elements of their respective commands. (12)

The attack was made at 5:30 A.M. preceded by a most effective artillery bombardment lasting three hours. At H hour, the artillery placed before the advancing infantry a rolling barrage which moved forward at the rate of 100 meters in four minutes. (11) The 3d Group, 317th Regiment and 219th R.A.C. (French Artillery) were attached and supported the attack. (11) The 344th Tank Battalion (less one company) had been assigned to the division

(13) Field Orders
No. 44, 35th Div.
24, Sept. 1918
5:00 P.M.

(14) Author's
observation.

(15) Statement
of Lt. Col. C. E.
Delaplane, Inf.

(16) Field Orders
No. 29, Hq. 69th
Inf. Brigade,
25, Sept. 1918
3:00 A.M.

(17) Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August, 1921
p 133.

(18) War Diary
140th Infantry.

(19) Heroes p 80.

and throughout the entire engagement rendered valuable assistance.

(13)(14)(15) The 1st Aero Squadron was attached to the division for all aviation duties. The attack order provided that one plane be kept constantly over the division sector during day-light hours keeping in constant radio communication with the Division P.C. and the artillery battalion assigned for fugitive targets.(13)

The assault brigade was disposed as follows: - Regiments abreast, 138th Infantry on the right, 137th Infantry on the left: Regiments in column of battalions, one company, 129th Machine Gun Battalion attached to each regiment. The Brigade Reserve consisted of two battalions, one from each regiment, plus the 129th Machine Gun Battalion (less two companies). This left each regimental commander two battalions and two machine gun companies.(16) The brigade reserve was to follow the support battalions at about 700 meters. (16)

The division covered a front of something over three kilometers. A heavy fog, which did not lift until about 10:00 A.M. covered the area.(14)(17) Some confusion and intermingling of units resulted. (18) Both the Division and Brigade Reserve pushed forward on the heels of the support battalions of the assault regiments. (14) Some few casualties resulted in the reserve units from especially well concealed enemy machine gun nests which had not been located by assault units in the dense fog.(19) On the whole, prior to the lifting of the fog, the advance had been rapid and casualties comparatively light.(14)(15)(18)

(20) War Diary
140th Infantry.

(21) Author's
observation.

(22) Heroes p 79.

(23) Heroes p 79.

(24) Heroes p 80.

(25) War Diary
140th Infantry.

(26) Heroes p 74.

(27) Author's
observation.

(28) History A.E.F.
Shipley Thomas
p 246.

The first serious resistance was encountered about 11:00 A.M. when the line had reached a position before Cheppy and Varennes. (20)(21)(22)

On the right the 138th Infantry was held up by enemy machine gun fire before Cheppy, but with the assistance of six tanks from the 344th Tank Battalion, succeeded, shortly after noon, in overcoming the resistance, and by 1:00 P.M. were in possession of Cheppy. (20)(22) A portion of the 137th Infantry, part of the Brigade Reserve, had, during the fog, worked over into the zone of the 138th Infantry and assisted in the capture of Cheppy. (23) Even with the assistance of the tanks, casualties suffered by the 138th Infantry and the units of the 137th Infantry in capture of Cheppy had been heavy. (24) The 138th Infantry pushed on through Very under heavy artillery and machine gun fire and at about 4:00 P.M. dug in for the night about one kilometer north of Very. (24)(25)

On the left, as the assault battalion of the 137th Infantry approached Varennes, it was stopped by heavy enemy machine gun fire from buildings in that village, which enfiladed its lines. (26)(27) The division on the left had not yet taken Varennes. (27)(28) Individual soldiers crept into the town and with grenades

stopped the machine gun fire and captured a considerable number of prisoners. (27) That part of the town lying east of the Aire River was captured about noon. (26) Immediately north of Varennes and on the east side of the Aire River is a horseshoe shaped hill,

wooded and rising abruptly some fifty meters. This hill was studded with enemy machine gun nests and artillery.(29)

(29) Author's observation.

Although several machine gun nests and enemy artillery positions had been located on this "Horseshoe" immediately north of Varennes, artillery fire on these positions was requested, but unfortunately, due to conditions of roads and terrain, the artillery had been unable to advance, and no assistance could be given.(30) Tanks came forward and rendered valuable assistance in cleaning machine gun nests out of low ground about Varennes.(30)(29)

(30)Heroes p 74.

About this time, the Commanding Officer, 139th Infantry (left regiment of the Division Reserve) pushed his regiment forward past the command post of the 137th Infantry and took up a position in the vicinity of the junction of Route Nationale No.46 with the Varennes - Cheppy road and thus placed it approximately between the two assault regiments. This move was made shortly after noon.(29)(30)

(31) Message from Capt.Hudson, 137th Inf.,dated Sept.26,1918 from Heights north of Varennes.

It was not until nearly 4:00 P.M. that the 137th Infantry, advancing in the face of terrific direct fire from machine guns and artillery fire from concrete "pill boxes" and prepared positions succeeded in taking this "Horseshoe Hill".(31)

After the fog of the morning, the enemy, from Hill 263, had

(32)History A.E.F. Shipley Thomas p 246.

used his artillery most effectively on our advancing lines.(32) This hill, in the sector of the division on the left, was not taken until late in the afternoon. The first assaulting waves

(33)History A.E.F. had been practically wiped out.(33) The support battalion, Shipley Thomas p 246. by 4:00 P.M. had become intermingled with the assault

(34) Message from Capt.Hudson, 137th Inf.,dated Sept.26,1918 from Heights north of Varennes. battalion. (34)

About 3:15 P.M. the Commanding Officer, 139th Infantry, seeing the 137th Infantry held up in the low ground before "Horseshoe Hill", advanced along the ridge northeast of Route

(35)Heroes p 77. Nationale No.46 to a position about two kilometers south of

(36)Message from Commanding Officer 139th Infantry dated 7:00 A.M. Sept.27,1918. Charpentry, where the regiment was forced by enemy machine gun and artillery fire from both front and left flank to "dig in". (35)(36)

(37) Author's observation.

On reaching and capturing the high ground north of the "Horseshoe", and observing elements of the 139th Infantry to its right front, the 137th Infantry (less 1st Battalion in Brigade Reserve) reorganized and advanced a short distance north, connecting with the 139th Infantry to its right front.

(37)

Three miles had been the net advance for the day. At Boureilles, Vauquois Hill, Cheppy, Varennes, Very and "Horseshoe Hill" guns, supplies and prisoners were taken.(38)

(38)Heroes p 82.

Prisoners taken were of the 15th Landstrum Battalion and the First Guard Division.(38) Von Giehl, in his Battle of the Meuse Argonné says:- "Their blow (speaking of the Americans) fell chiefly on the First Guards Division, whose position lay east of the Argonne. The 77th and 28th American Divisions in the Argonne did not make a serious attack, and on the day of

the attack, won only an insignificant amount of terrain, which was, for the most part voluntarily ceded by the 2d Landwehr Division. The left flank of the First Guards Division was at first quickly flattened out and the entire division then forced back against the eastern edge of the Argonne. Varennes and Cheppy were lost. During the evening, the enemy pushed through as far as Baulny but was driven out by the 4th Guards Regiment. Eighteen tanks, disabled by fire, remained stranded near Charpentry alone. In the evening the 1st Guards Division, which had suffered extremely heavily, held the line running approximately through Argonne-Charpentry-Epinonville!(39)

(39) Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
pp 133, 134.

Page, in Our 110 Days Fighting, states the First Guards Division was the only first class German division in the line on September 26th.(40)

(40) Our 110
Days Fighting
Page
p 90.

Unfortunately, no record of losses by days is available. That losses after the fog raised were extremely heavy in the assault regiments would be evident to any one familiar with the terrain covered and the fighting accomplishments of the 1st German Guards Division. The machine gunners of the 1st Guards Division had a habit of holding their machine gun nests until our scouts were nearly upon them. Then one of the crew would crawl out, put up his hands and --"Kamerad". Thereupon our men would rise and advance. The "Kamerad" boche would then duck back into his pill box and his teammates would again open up on the advancing line. It took our men quite a while to

realize this scheme of things. It was very effective during most of the day. Finally, of course, all of these machine gun crews were captured. The enemy's defensive tactics was the subject of conferences that night in various shell holes and it is a curious fact that after the first day, few prisoners could be seen going toward the rear.(41) Von Giehl says:-

"The 1st Guards Division suffered extremely heavily."(42)

(41) Author's observation.

(42) Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
p 134.

Beyond the excellent barrage preceding and during the initial stage of the attack, the artillery had been unable to assist in the days work.(43) This was due to the blowing up of the roads by the enemy's mines, the condition of the terrain and the very weakened condition of the animals, of which the division was short some fifteen hundred.(44)

(43) Heroes p 91

(44) Report of
Lt.Col.R.G.Peck,
Inspector, 1st
Army Corps dated
Oct.12,1918.

The Infantry brigades found themselves at the end of the day in a sort of diagonal formation, thus:-



The 138th Infantry had lost its commanding officer as a result of machine gun wound. The 138th Infantry and the 139th Infantry had each lost one major killed. One of the majors of the 137th Infantry had been seriously wounded by a sniper.(45) The 140th Infantry appears to have kept in the relative position assigned it and to have suffered no casualties on this first day.(46)

(45) Author's observation.

(46) War Diary
140th Infantry.

S E P T E M B E R 27th.

(47)Heroes p 83.

After consultation with his artillery brigade commander, and upon the latter's representation that no effective artillery support could be given earlier than 8:30 A.M. the 27th, the Division Commander ordered an attack to begin at that hour.(47) Later during the night 26-27, orders from the 1st Army Corps directed the attack be launched at 5:30 A.M. This necessitated a change in the Division Commander's plan and communication of information as to such changes to all concerned without delay.(47)

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The new plan included a passage of lines by the 140th Infantry through the 138th Infantry, placing the 70th Infantry Brigade in the front line with two battalions of each regiment in assault echelon.(48)

(48)Heroes p 84.

The order was not received by the 140th Infantry until a half hour before the attack was scheduled. (49) At least one of the infantry regiments did not receive the attack order until after 6:00 A.M. and that consisted of a message directing the attack at 6:30 A.M. and prescribing a combat liaison group of two companies with two platoons of machine guns to connect with the division on the left.(50) This was twice the size of the connecting group used the preceeding day, and would indicate the gap between the two divisions was somewhat greater than had been anticipated, and than could be covered by the original group. (51)

(49)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(50)Message from
C.O.69th Inf.Brig.
to C.O.137th Inf.
dated 6:15 A.M.
27 Sept.1918.

(51)Author's
observation.

(52) War Diary
140th Infantry.

The artillery barrage, as was known would be the case, failed to materialize.(52)

But little progress was made. Several messages asking for artillery support were answered by the Brigade Commander, 70th Infantry Brigade at 10:35, 10:40 and 11:32 A.M. saying he was attempting to get artillery support from the battery west of Cheppy. At 1:50 P.M. the Brigade Commander sent word that the Division Commander had taken up the matter of artillery support and that it could be promised within a short time.(53)(54)

Some tanks came forward and a second attempt realized a slight advance. However, artillery fire was so severe that the tanks withdrew and the infantry, facing a thick wire entanglement and under a storm of machine gun and artillery fire from front and flanks were compelled to take advantage of such cover as the shell holes afforded.(55)

Another order to attack at 5:30 P.M.(55) was received shortly after 5:00 P.M. It was directed in this division order that the attack would follow a barrage moving one hundred meters in four minutes. The artillery fire was negligible.(56)(57)

Despite the inability of the artillery to plow its way through the hub-deep mud to a position in support, the infantry, after its check of the morning, and after withstanding several counter-attacks by the 4th Guards and 20th Infantry Regiments,(58)(59) advanced with the assistance of the tanks, captured Charpentry, Baulny and the high ground north of that village.

It was getting dusk as the 139th Infantry approached Charpentry, which it succeeded in taking before dark. The

(53)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(54)Heroes
pp 85 and 86.

(55)Heroes p 86.

(56)Heroes p 91

(57)Author's
observation.

(58)Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
p 134.

(59) Final Report
Gen. John J.
Pershing.
p 46.

137th Infantry, finding the 139th Infantry occupied with Charpentry and a considerable gap left open to its immediate front, advanced on toward Baulny, captured it and occupied the heights about five hundred yards northwest where it reorganized and dug in about midnight. (60) Two companies of machine gun troops belonging to the 139th Infantry, lost from their regiment during the night's advance, reported and were placed on either flank of the assault battalion of the 137th Infantry.

(60) Author's observation.

(60)

On the right, the 140th Infantry had reached a position (3472) to (4274). (61)

(61) War Diary
140th Infantry.

Night found the division two and one half kilometers nearer Germany. The total gain for the two days being seven and one half kilometers. (62)

(62) Heroes p 90.

Again no record of the day's casualties is available. The Executive Officer, 69th Infantry Brigade was killed. One battalion commander and the adjutant, 139th Infantry had become casualties. The Lieutenant Colonel, 137th Infantry had been evacuated early in the morning. The Colonel, 137th Infantry a man well advanced in years, was unable, from exhaustion, to advance with his regiment. The second battalion commander, 137th Infantry was wounded and evacuated. Both the Commanding Officer 137th Infantry and the Commanding Officer 139th Infantry, in their zeal to carry out the Division Commander's verbal orders to LEAD, became separated from their commands during the advance in the late evening, and in case of the Commanding Officer,

(63)Heroes
pp 89 and 90.

139th Infantry, did not return until the 29th of September.(63)

It is surprising to note that during the day the heaviest casualties were suffered by the units of the reserve brigade.

Both these regiments, lying on the high ground north of Cheppy and Varennes with little or no protection, suffered heavily

(64)Heroes p 91.

from enemy artillery fire from front and flank. (64)

The enemy had found it necessary to push in another of his

(65)Von Giehrl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
p 134.

first class divisions, the 5th Guards Division.(65)

The 35th was shooting up one division a day of the enemy's best divisions, entrenched in the elaborate defenses of the Hindenburg line, with their wire entanglements and concrete "pill boxes". But more destructive than all else combined, was the incessant high explosive enfilading artillery fire from the left flank across the river.(66)

(66)Author's
observation.

Von Giehrl says:- "The enemy infantry suffered particularly from the flanking fire of thirteen German field batteries which from their position on the eastern edge of the Argonne, constantly held up the advance. The main attack, supported by tanks was launched on both sides of the valley of the Aire against Montblainville and Charpentry."(65)

S E P T E M B E R 28th.

At 3:30 A.M. September 28 the 140th Infantry received orders to push forward and protect the right flank of troops on their left. The advance was begun at 5:30 as ordered and continued until 8:00 A.M. when machine gun fire from the direction of Apremont, Exermont and Les Fontaine temporarily halted the progress.(67) At 9:45 A.M., preceded at 150 meters by the tanks, a second attack was made in the face of terrific machine gun and artillery fire. The 140th Infantry paid heavily for the ground gained but succeeded in reaching the crest of hill east of Montrebeau Woods at (2996) and held this position during the remainder of the day.(68)

(67)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(68)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(69)Heroes p 92.

(70)Final Report
Gen. John J. Pershing position held by the 137th Infantry and 139th Infantry.(69)
p 46

(71)History A.E.F.
Shipley Thomas
p 253.

(72)Heroes p 93.

(73)Author's
observation.

(74)Verbal reports
of officers with
pursuit at time.

On the left of the line, preceded by a heavy preparatory concentration, the Germans at 6:30 A.M. counterattacked the position held by the 137th Infantry and 139th Infantry.(69)
(70)(71) This was the hour set for the advance of these regiments on this date.(72) The counterattack was successfully repulsed and in the instant pursuit of the enemy, disorganization, already considerable as a result of the previous night's advance, became much greater.(73) It will be noted, however, that while this pursuit resulted in further disorganization of elements of the 35th Division, it also resulted in the complete annihilation of the enemy's counterattacking party.(73)(74)

As the advance continued across the L'Esperance-Chaudron

Farm Road, through the open fields, sloping up to the north and Montrebeau Woods, it was again met with a torrential downpour of enemy machine gun and artillery fire from the direction of Exermont and from the thirteen German field batteries located in the eastern edge of the Argonne.(75)

(75)Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
p 135.

From the shelter of Montrebeau Woods, the enemy machine gunners, confident in the advantage of their positions, seemingly covered every foot of space over which our troops

(76)Heroes p 94.

must pass.(76) In their stand in Montrebeau Woods, the enemy made use of defensive tactics similar to those of the early day American Indian. They were behind trees, and in

(77)Heroes p 97.

small ravines. Their pill boxes were in clusters. (77) Our men were able to force them out only by crawling up on them and using grenades and rifles.(77) By evening the woods and

(78)Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
p 135.

heights of Montrebeau had been taken.(78)

Von Giehl says in his Battle of the Meuse Argonne, describing September 28th: "The American losses were heavier on this day, but the German troops had also suffered severely.

(79)Von Giehl
Infantry Journal
August 1921
p 136.

In the 5th German Division the battalions mustered no more than 50 to 60 men, and the total effectives of the 1st Guards Regiment amounted to scarcely more than 300 men. The 52d Division, however, had not yet taken up its position."(79)

(80)Author's
observation.

As a matter of fact the condition of the infantry of the

(81)Statement of
Lt.Col.C.E.Dela-
plane, Inf. to
author in March
1923.

35th Division on the night of September 28th did not differ greatly from that of the enemy as described by Von Giehl.

(80)(81)

At 3:25 P.M. a reorganization, or rather a reassignment had taken place.(82) It will be remembered that late in the evening of the 27th, the 137th Infantry (then left regiment of reserve brigade) had been obliged to fill a gap in the front line on the extreme left of the division. During the 28th the 138th Infantry had pushed in on the right of the 140th Infantry.(83) Thus the order of battle on the afternoon of the 28th was, right to left:- 138th Infantry (69th Brigade), 140th Infantry (70th Brigade), 139th Infantry (70th Brigade), 137th Infantry (69th Brigade). The Commanding Officer, 69th Infantry Brigade was given the left of the line, while the Commanding Officer, 70th Infantry Brigade was given the right of the line.(83)

The Colonel, 137th Infantry, who from fatigue had been unable to advance the night of the 27th, had pushed forward early in the day and again taken over command of his regiment. The major who had been in command during the greater part of his absence was evacuated. The Lieutenant Colonel of the 138th Infantry, who had been in command since September 26th, when his Colonel was wounded, was killed. The Colonel of the 139th Infantry who had become lost the night of the 27th-28th was still absent. Another colonel, assigned prior to the battle, as a result of removal of brigade commanders at that time, late in reporting, reached Charpentry during the late evening seeking the Commanding Officer, 69th Infantry Brigade, but failed to

(84)Heroes p 98. find him during the night. (84) Excepting the 140th Infantry, commanders had changed so rapidly that, while the units were accustomed to frequent changes to meet the vagaries of those in authority, it was difficult to know who and where the various unit commanders were.(84) It later developed that the Division Chief of Staff and his assistant, G. 2 had been relieved about this time. (85)

(85)Statement of
Maj.Bruce
Magruder, Inf.
to author in
March, 1923.

The Division Commander had made long tours of personal reconnaissance which, under the conditions existing, enabled him to keep well informed on the progress of such small units as he could reach, but naturally prevented any control on his part of his command. (86)

(86)Heroes p 101.

More of the artillery had succeeded in getting forward. One battery of the 129th Field Artillery was near Cheppy, another of the 128th Field Artillery was west of Very. The

(87)Heroes p 93. - 130th Field Artillery (155 mm) was in place at Varennes.(87)

(88)Heroes p 97.

A steady pour of rain had set in at 5:00 P.M.(88) The aid stations of the 137th Infantry, established in German trenches north of Baulny, were literally packed with wounded.

(89)Author's
observation.

It became necessary to lift these wounded men out of the trenches to prevent their drowning, which again exposed them to severe machine gun and artillery fire. This condition was reported to the Division Commander who immediately ordered evacuation of these men.(89)

S E P T E M B E R 29th.

Orders for renewal of the attack at 5:30 A.M. had been issued during the night September 28-29. These orders reached the 140th Infantry at 5:25 A.M.(90) The 138th Infantry was to pass through the 140th Infantry and continue the attack to Exermont.(91) The 138th Infantry did not receive its attack order until 6:45 A.M.(92) The Commanding Officer, 140th Infantry ordered formations in column of battalions with staggered columns, scouts and connecting files to be in front of leading battalion. While the formation was being taken up, peremptory orders were received from the Commanding Officer, left brigade and the officer lately relieved as chief of staff of the division, to advance. At this time the Commanding Officer, 140th Infantry informed his brigade commander (right brigade) that the 138th Infantry was approaching and requested instructions as to whether to proceed as ordered by the Commanding Officer left brigade and the former chief of staff, or allow the 138th Infantry to follow out the division order, and make the attack. The reply was to go ahead. Before deployment of the leading battalion could be accomplished the Commanding Officer, left brigade, or the former chief of staff, ordered the battalion commander to advance without further delay which he did in column.(93) Troops of the 91st Division on the right stated at 9:40 A.M. they had no orders to advance.(94)

(90)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(91)Field Orders
No.48,35th Div.

(92)Message R.I.O.
138th Inf.dated
9:00 A.M.29th
Sept. 1918.

(93)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(94)Message from
C.O.70th Inf.Brig.
9:40 A.M.29th
Sept.1918

The advance, which was made under heavy artillery fire from three directions and machine gun fire from ravines and woods, continued to Exermont where the remnants of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 140th Infantry were consolidated at 9:40 A.M.

(95)War Diary
140th Infantry.

(95) Our troops were to the west but owing to the severity of the action no contact was made. Part of a battalion of the 139th Infantry reached Exermont at 10:00 A.M. and extended the line to the east. This position was maintained under increasingly heavy fire until 1:00 P.M. when an order from the Brigade Commander directed withdrawal.(95) Information was received that a position running northeast from Baulny to Eclisfontaine-Apremont road, to the south and east of Chaudron Farm, was being prepared by the engineers and it was to this line they were ordered to retire. The position was maintained during the remainder of the day. (95)

(96)Operations
report 137th
Infantry.

On the left of the line the Commanding Officer, 137th Infantry received the attack order at 4:20 A.M. (96) Finding many troops of the 139th Infantry intermingled with those of the 137th Infantry, they were formed up together as effectively as was possible in the darkness of Montrebeau Woods.(97)

(97)Heroes p 103

There was no evidence of the promised artillery barrage at 5:30. "The barrage ordered by the division order for this attack appears to have been fired by the 2d Battalion of the 128th Field Artillery precisely at the hour ordered. The barrage started on X coordinate 80.6 and between Y co-

(98) Col. Conrad H. Lanza, F.A. in paper on "The 35th Division on September 29th, 1918."

ordinates 01.5 and 03.0, giving a frontage of 500 meters for each battery. (98)

The advance under heavy fire continued to a point north of Montrebeau Woods overlooking Exermont, where enfilade machine gun fire forced the detachment into cover of a

(99) Heroes p 105.

ravine leading out of Exermont toward the west. (99) Finding his detachment isolated and suffering increasingly heavy casualties, the detachment commander ordered his men to fall back on Montrebeau Woods. An enemy counterattack against Montrebeau Woods was repulsed during the morning. Early in the afternoon a second enemy counterattack in greater strength was launched. With the assistance of the Division Artillery, this second counterattack was beaten off by the remnants still holding Montrebeau Woods. The enemy counterattack from the east had been more successful in that they succeeded in taking a number of prisoners. Increasing enemy forces appeared in

(100) Heroes p 109.

the east. (100) A message from the Brigade Commander directed that the 137th and 139th Infantry fall back on the position being prepared by the engineers on Baulny Ridge. (101)

(101) Heroes p 110.

The 110th Engineer Regiment which, since September 28th had constituted the Division Reserve, worked in the open and under heavy fire prepared a temporary defensive position. (102)

(102) Heroes p 111.

At 12:30 P.M. our artillery had put a barrage on a German counterattack threatening the detachment of the 139th Infantry still holding Exermont. Shortly after this, seeing

(103)Heroes
p 112.

enemy troops in increasing numbers forming to his front and flanks, the officer in command requested reinforcements, but was directed to fall back to the line being prepared.(103) As evening drew on it found the division entrenching along the heights of Baulny Ridge, with small groups still holding Montrebeau Woods.

Let us examine matters from the standpoint of the "Higher Command" that we may get an idea of what was going on and what was its effect upon the infantry soldier in the Exermont neighborhood. "After the battle of September 26th, and attempts to advance on the two succeeding days, which met with but little success, the First Army, at 11:50 P.M. September 28th, issued Field Orders No.27, directing the continuance of the attack by the 111d, Vth and 1st Corps, to be made at hours to be designated by corps commanders, but not to be later than 7:00 A.M. on the 29th. The 1st Corps, in which was the 35th Division, was given the mission to drive the enemy through an east and west line through Apremont. The Army artillery was ordered not to fire south of a line through Dun-sur-Meuse; Bantheville; and Landres-et-St. Georges, except after agreement with corps commanders."

"This army field order was based on information partly from corps and divisions as to the positions of front lines, which information was in part incorrect, and resulted in an erroneous estimate of the situation. It appears to have been the intention to pursue, not to attack, and the pro-

hibition as to the use of the artillery was intended to facilitate the infantry advance by not requiring it to be confined by slow accompanying fires of heavy artillery, leaving necessary artillery support to the corps and divisions. This seems to have been a serious tactical error, as will appear later, explained by accepting as true an incorrect idea that the Germans were retreating."

"That the troops of the 35th Division, in their attack of this date on Exermont, would be exposed to destructive frontal and enfilading fire from the German lines, had been foreseen at Army Artillery Headquarters before the campaign started on September 26th. On the 23d instant a letter of instructions had been sent to the Railway Brigade, directing preparation of fire for use at the proper time, on German positions facing Exermont, and particularly Hill 180, and adjacent heights, which, as long as they remained in hostile hands would permit enfilading fire being brought on American troops east of the Aire River."

"At 1:30 A.M. September 29th Colonels Ward and Watkins, Corps of Engineers, on duty with G3 of the First Army, visited First Army Artillery Headquarters to discuss the necessity of destroying enemy observation stations. These two officers stated that the Commander in Chief had verbally directed the Corps to attack on September 29th without regard to objectives, but that G3 of the First Army had required in the written order

issued, that the 1st Corps attack the Foret d'Argonne, to include the Bois de Chatel. These officers stated that our losses on September 28th from hostile shell fire were over 5000 and that it was imperative to have more artillery assistance."

"Acting upon the message received above, the First Army Artillery at 1:40 A.M. and 1:55 A.M., notified by telephone the Chiefs of artillery of the Vth and 1st Corps to make arrangements for army artillery assistance for attack that same morning, which could not be given them under the written field orders issued unless their corps requested it. The chief of artillery, 1st Corps, replied that he knew nothing of the proposed attack but would start on the work required."

"At 11:00 P.M. on the 28th of September, the 1st Army Corps issued their Field Orders No.60, directing all divisions to advance at 5:30 A.M. on September 29th. Nothing is said as to objectives and in this respect the order corresponds to the verbal directions attributed to the Commander in Chief by Colonels Ward and Watkins. This same order directs the division artillery to support the infantry advance and specifies that two guns will accompany each leading infantry battalion. The corps artillery is directed to concentrate on hostile batteries, and later to advance by echelon. It should be noted that the advance ordered in the corps field order does not correspond with the attack specified in the army field order, which was issued apparently later than the corps order."

"In all, the army had about 95 heavy guns available to support the attack in the general sector of the 35th Division. Due to Army Field Order, they could not be used unless specifically asked for by the corps. The Army chief of artillery offered their use to the corps chief of artillery. There is no record of any request for the use of this artillery being received from the corps until late on the afternoon of the 29th. The battle was fought without the aid of this artillery, due apparently to mistaken belief at army headquarters that its use was not needed." (104)

The day had proven most disastrous. Von Gehrl says:-
"The main blow of the Americans was this time directed at Exermont and the Valley of the Gesnes, running thence eastward. At 10:00 A.M. the enemy, assisted by tanks, had broken through at Exermont and beyond, but was flung back again on to and past Exermont by the entrance into the struggle of the regiments of the 52d Division. The German counterattack was then pushed forward up to Esperance Farm and Montrebeau Woods, and Tronsol Farm was retaken. This attack of the 52d Division, supported on its right and left by the remainder of the Guards Divisions, temporarily, but seriously, shook the American front, until the German attack was stopped by the bringing up of strong American reserves, together with fighting and bombing squadrons. The 28th and 35th American Divisions bore the brunt of the fighting here and suffered exceedingly heavy losses, partly due to flanking fire from artillery in the Argonne (105)

(104) Col. Conrad H. Lanza, F.A. in paper on "The 35th Division on September 29th, 1918."

(105) Von Gehrl Infantry Journal August 1921 p 135.

"The orders of the division commander to send forward 75mm guns, and corps orders directing that two guns accompany each leading infantry battalion, were not carried out."(106) "The Germans used accompanying guns on this date as on other occasions with infantry on the defensive. The guns were placed in line previous to the fight, no attempt was made to move them thereafter; and if the attack against them succeeded, they were abandoned. This is quite different from placing them in the attack to advance against similar concealed guns supported by the infantry and machine guns."(106)

(106) Col. Conrad H. Lanza, F.A. in paper on "The 35th Division on September 29th, 1918."

"It would appear from the records of messages sent within the 35th Division that the relations between the division commander and the commanding general of his artillery brigade were of a formal and unsatisfactory nature, and that written communications were exchanged between officers at the same place when apparently verbal conversations would have secured better results, had the officers been on good terms with ^{each other} ~~one another~~."(106)

"In addition to the above correspondence between the division commander and his artillery brigade commander, the division commander appears to have made a report, not found on file, to the corps commander, to which the corps commander replied at 8:40 A.M. on the 29th of September: 'If your artillery brigade commander is not giving full support and is not to you a satisfactory and loyal commander, you are authorized to relieve him.' An examination of the files of the 35th Division for the 29th

of September does not show any further communications between the division commander and the artillery commander until 12:00 noon, on the 29th of September, which message is given below.

(107) Col. Conrad H. Lanza, F.A. in paper on "The 35th Division on September 29th, 1918."

Apparently confidence between the division commander and his field artillery commander did not exist, and naturally liaison was bad."(107) (Note) Message referred to is not available.

S E P T E M B E R 30th.

The flanking fire of the preceeding days was less severe.

(108)Heroes p 114.

Units on the flanks now occupied Apremont and Eclistontaine.(108)

(109)Heroes p 115. The 138th Infantry reported a total strength of 853 men.(109)

The 129th Machine Gun Battalion reported about 150 men and 19

(110)Heroes p 116. guns.(110) Detachments were still holding out in Montrebeau

(111)Heroes p 119. Woods and Chaudron Farm, covering evacuation of the wounded.(111)

Two counterattacks were repulsed without loss of ground

(112) Our Greatest during the day.(112)"A battalion of the 82d Division brought up Battles.

Palmer p 192. to renew the attack on the 30th met a killing barrage which

(113) Our Greatest warned commanders that advancing one fresh battalion was only Battles.

Palmer p 191. throwing more cannon fodder into the ravine." (113)

Late in the afternoon of September 30th orders were re-

ceived that the division was to be relieved the night of Sept-

(114)Heroes pp 119 and 120.

ember 30th- October 1st by the 1st Division, the artillery remaining until the 2d of October and the Sanitary Train two days longer. (114)

The division had advanced twelve and one half kilometers.

(115) American Army in the World War. Browne - p 143.

(115) Its casualties during the battle amounted to thirty-three and 77/100 per cent of its strength. But two American divisions engaged in this battle suffered casualties so heavy,

(116)Our 110 Days Fighting Page - p 275.

and one of these, after being withdrawn, was again sent into the battle.(116)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The methods of instilling discipline by means of fear and hate, as employed during the early part of the training period may have their place. Certainly they are not effective in handling intelligent young Americans of the anti-conscientious-objector type in time of war. Their respect must be gained by a demonstrated knowledge of the military profession and ability to lead them. Shortcomings cannot be concealed by bluff and bluster. The young men who will make up our future armies, though lacking, as did the 35th Division, much that might be desired in military training, will be men who live under the competitive system -- they are keen observers, judges of men, and they will recognize the bluffer the minute he is so unfortunate as to appear among them, while they will follow the real leader unhesitatingly.

The all too frequent changes, particularly immediately preceding a major engagement, in officers commanding higher units - brigades and regiments - does not tend to increase the efficiency of the force as a whole. The command of two infantry brigades and three infantry regiments was changed within a week preceding the battle. Without exception, the officers relieved had been subject to observation by the Division Commander several months prior to their relief, and if their relief was justified, certainly there is no justification in putting it off until this late date.

The same is true of the general staff officers of the division, two of whom were relieved during the battle.

Further it appears the relief of the artillery brigade commander was contemplated during the battle, due to lack of cooperation with, and loyalty to the division commander. Picture the Division Commander, in the midst of battle, on official terms with his artillery commander, obliged to communicate his wishes in writing and to add the word "imperatively" to his instructions. It was the duty of this artillery commander to render full and complete obedience to, and cooperation with the plans of the Division Commander. In the face of this situation, the Division Commander, feeling as he did, should not have hesitated. He did go so far as to ask permission to relieve his artillery commander, but, having obtained it, did not act.

The Division Commander's verbal order, prior to the battle, that his unit commanders LEAD - that they accompany the advanced elements of their respective commands, made of them squad and platoon commanders, and in some instances, scouts within the enemy's lines, rather than brigade and regimental commanders.

The requirement in the division's initial attack order that the division reserve follow the assault units at not more than two kilometers, should have specified that it follow at not less than one kilometer, thus conserving man power ~~and~~

and really conforming to the principle of formation in depth. Had this provision been included, one of the most disastrous blunders of the engagement, and a large per centage of the losses would have been avoided.

The action of the Commanding Officer of a regiment of the division reserve in committing his command to the engagement without cause, without permission or knowledge of either his Brigade or Division Commander, proves the grave responsibility which our nation assumes when it entrusts the lives of a war strength regiment to an individual, no matter how brilliant or gifted, but whose education in matters military, is limited to a three months course at a training camp. An appreciable number of the casualties in the 139th Infantry on September 26th must be charged to lack of judgment on the part of its commander. The individual should not be criticised, but rather the policy requiring him to accept such a responsibility without preparation. Doubtless this temporary officer, a lawyer by profession, handled this tactical situation as well as a similarly important legal question would be handled by a professional army officer in practice before the supreme court.

It is difficult to conceive what line of reasoning would permit a brigade of infantry, in division reserve, to lie unprotected all day September 27th under heavy shell fire, suffering casualties even greater than the assault brigade, when a sheltered position, occupation of which would have saved

a very large per cent of these casualties, was available. It would seem that the whole theory of the engagement was attack - advance, without regard to losses. This is borne out in the corps attack order for the morning of September 27th when a renewal of the attack was ordered without artillery support. The most charitable construction possible in this instance is the assumption that the corps was ignorant of the situation with respect to the division artillery. This conclusion must carry with it the admission that the corps 'information of our own troops' was at least incomplete, and that possibly a breakdown in liaison in other units than the 35th Division was responsible.

This lack of information both of our own troops and the enemy is admitted by the former chief of staff of our 1st Army to Col. Conrad H. Lanza, Field Artillery, in a statement made in October, 1919, discussing the 1st Army's order for employment of its artillery on the 29th, when this weapon was used to fire on a position seven kilometers north of the position held by the infantry. As late as 1:55 A.M. September 29th, the chief of artillery of the corps stated he knew nothing of the proposed attack for the following morning.

There was a complete breakdown in liaison within the division after the second day. The only explanation is lack of training in this phase.

No opportunity for reorganization was afforded.

Insufficient, at times, no reserve was held out by higher commanders. The critical moment found the Division Commander with his engineer regiment the only troops with which to influence the engagement.

The artillery was unable to advance rapidly due to the shortage of animals and poor condition of the few they had. Colonel Conrad H. Lanza, F.A., U.S.A. says:- "Five hundred meters is too extensive a front for a battery to cover in barrage. It is about four times that allowed for in operations controlled by the 1st Army Artillery. The barrage ordered for the attack of the morning of September 29th was placed 1000 meters north of the starting point of our infantry, and as shown later was beyond the German positions which were actually attacked. An investigation of the attempted use of 75 mm horse artillery ~~was~~ accompanying guns in our 1st Army showed that of the 143 attempts made, in not one single instance had the guns ever accompanied infantry in such a manner as to enable them to fire and assist the infantry during the advance."

L E S S O N S

One of the most important essentials to the success of any military commander is a thorough knowledge of the human element, and the ability to so handle and conserve that most important portion of the fighting machine as to realize the maximum from it. I refer to the policy of a temporary commander of the division during a considerable portion of its training period, and to the continuous changes in officers commanding larger units.

The importance of personal reconnaissance preceding the initial attack. I refer to the advance of the division to the assault line the night preceding the attack, and although the division had been in camp some twenty kilometers from this line several days prior to the attack, only a very few of even the field officers were afforded an opportunity for reconnaissance.

It is impracticable to continue an attack against strong opposition for periods greater than forty-eight hours without an opportunity for reorganization. I refer to the repeated orders:- "The attack will be renewed." Some one should have known that much better results could have been obtained had an opportunity been given for reorganization.

The failure to observe the principle of formation in depth is well illustrated in the heavy casualties result-

ing from crowding of the reserve upon the assault units and later in the lack of penetrating force due to intermingling of reserve units with assault units.

The effectiveness of flanking fire is forcibly illustrated in the results obtained by the thirteen German batteries firing from concealed positions in the Argonne Forest on the left flank of the division, and later by enfilading machine gun fire of the enemy in the vicinity of Exermont.

Premature employment of the reserve is brought out in the action of a regimental commander in committing his command to the action during the first day.

The difficulty of exercising control of units, particularly as large as regiments and brigades, from positions in advance of such units. I refer to the Division Commander's verbal order that his higher unit commanders accompany their leading elements.

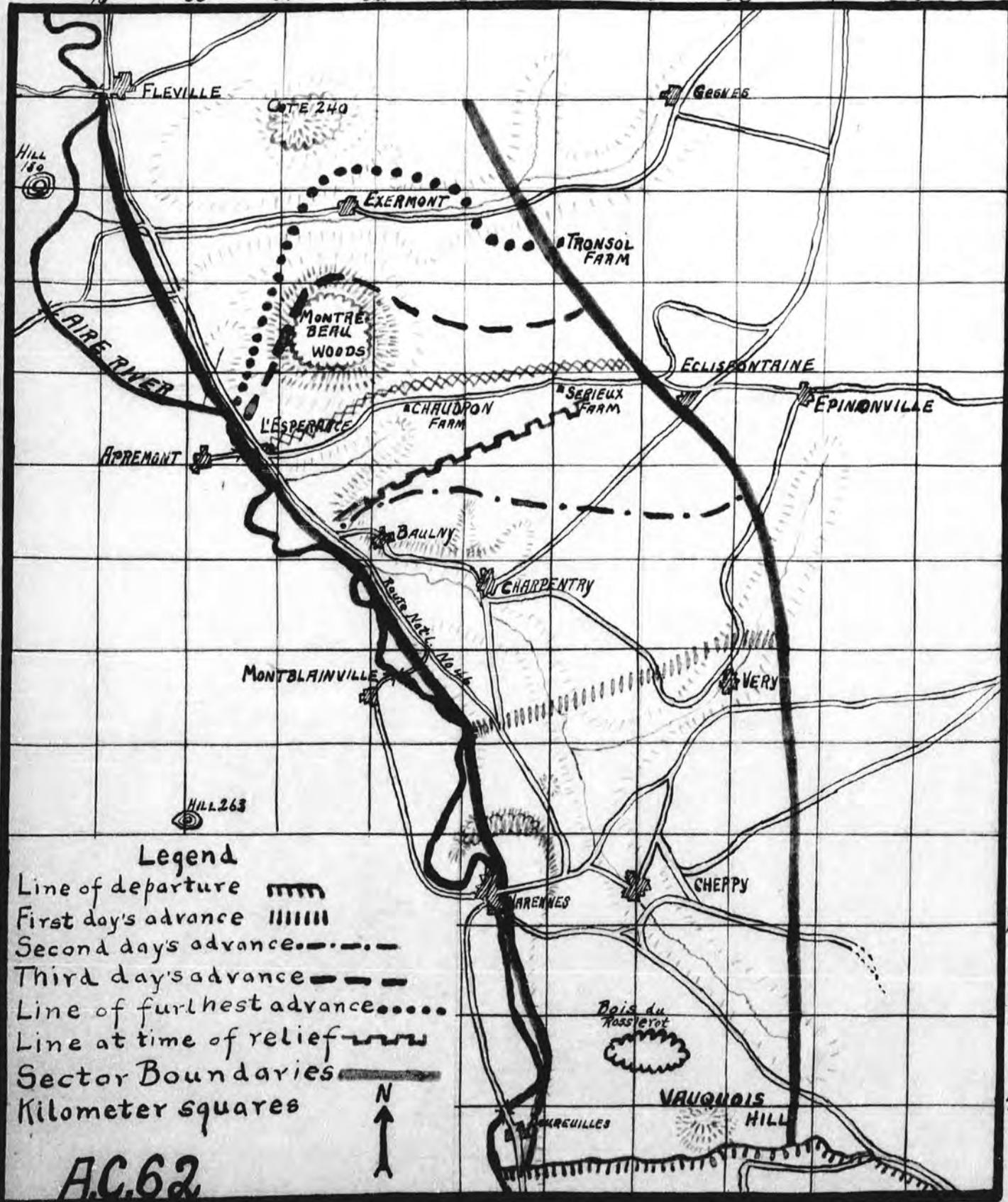
The importance of liaison, and the difficulty of maintaining it in a severe action, cannot be overestimated.

The cost of attacking prepared positions, stubbornly held by an enemy well equipped with artillery and machine guns, without effective artillery support.

Difficulty of neutralizing artillery fire from concealed positions without cooperation from the air service.

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Legend

- Line of departure
- First day's advance
- Second day's advance
- Third day's advance
- Line of furthest advance
- Line at time of relief
- Sector Boundaries
- Kilometer squares



A.C.62