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THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST DIVISION (U.S.)  
IN THE THIRD PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE. 39

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST AMERICAN DIVISION  
IN THE THIRD PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE.

INTRODUCTION.

The operations of the First Division in the Third Phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, from November 1-11, 1918, resolve themselves into three, more or less distinct phases or operations. Chronologically, the first, from November 1-5, when the Division (less the First Artillery Brigade and the First Ammunition Train) was in corps reserve for the Fifth (U.S.) Army Corps; (1) the second, November 6, when the Division assaulted the line on the Meuse River, from Villemontry to Mouzon, passing through the 80th (U.S.) Division; (2) and the third, its march and assault on Sedan, November 6-7. (3)

- (1)History  
1st Div.  
p.212.
- (2)History  
1st Div.  
p.227.
- (3)History  
1st Div.  
p.231.
- (4)History  
1st Div.  
p.212.
- (5)History  
1st Div.  
p.213.
- Before discussing these operations of the Division, it will be well for us to consider the period from its relief in the Second Phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive from the line by the 42nd (U.S.) Division, on the night of October 11-12, 1918, until its appearance as corps reserve of the ~~W.M.~~ Fifth Army Corps in the vicinity of Epinonville on the night of October 31 to November 1. (4)
- Its stubborn and brilliant fighting in the Second Phase had added fresh laurels to its already magnificent record, but at the terrible cost of 196 officers and 7324 men. (5) Naturally, most of the losses were in the Infantry components, so that when on October 13, the Division (less its Artillery and Ammunition Train, which had been left in line to support the 42 Division) left the vicinity of Cheppy,

Regiments looked like small battalions and companies that just two weeks before were powerful units two hundred and fifty men strong were now mere skeletons of themselves.

To make matters worse, there were no trucks available, so these tired men, many of them sick with dysentery, started

(6) History  
1st Div.  
p.212. on a long kike of 75 kilometers to the Vavincourt area. (6) A part of the march was through the battle-torn wreckage of the Argonne Forest itself, but as the miles went by the countryside began to look less dreary, in spite of the constant rain. Finally the area was reached and a few busy days were spent in cleaning up, delousing and receiving replacements.

On October 20, a five-day schedule of intensive training was ordered and subsequently , faithfully carried out.(7) The replacements were excellent in every respect save one,

(7) Personal observation.

(7a) History  
1st Div.  
p.217. they were almost totally lacking in training. (7)<sup>a</sup> Practically all of the privates who had survived the battle had to

be made non-commissioned officers, whether especially fitted or not. However, all ranks were imbued with the division spirit, as epitomized by General Pershing; "The Commander-in -Chief has noted in this Division a special pride of service and a high state of morale, never broken by hardship

(8) Par.4  
G.O.201  
GHQ,AEF,  
L 918. nor battle.",(8) and this made the task easier. In general, the forenoons were devoted to Rifle Marksmanship and Bayonet Training. The instruction in the former was of a most elementary sort. No formal targets were available, so tin cans, rocks, small pieces of paper, anything wase used; the idea being to accustom the men, many of whom had never fired a rifle, to align their sights and to the kick of the rifle.

The afternoons were given over to terrain exercises, chiefly

combat formations. Battalions were deployed in their normal formations for the attack so that the replacements could see for themselves how it was done. It was a case of, "Here Green, you follow Smith, and keep abreast of Jones over there."

To further stimulate interest, the Division Commander issued a memorandum to be read to all platoons, calling attention to the fact that the Division would probably enter the line again at an early date and that every effort must be made to put the Division in shape to meet the demands of

(9) Memo. 168 the High Command. (9)

Hq. 1st  
Div.  
1918.

Several important changes had occurred in the higher units of the Division. Brigadier <sup>General</sup> Frank Parker who had commanded the 18th Infantry and later the First Brigade, succeeded to the command of the Division, when Major General C.P. Summerall was placed in command of the Fifth Army Corps.

(10) History 1st Div. p. 212. on October 12. (10) Col. H.H.J. Erickson who commanded the 26th Infantry in the Second Phase, was placed in the command of the First Brigade, and Brigadier Francis C. Marshall relieved Brigadier General Barnhardt of command of the Second Brigade.

Lieutenant-Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, who had been seriously wounded at Soissons, and who had by no means recovered from his wounds, returned to the Division, and was assigned to the command of the 26th Infantry, in which he had commanded a battalion so successfully. Although, not a matter of record, so far as the author could discover, it was stated that this officer went AWOL from the SOS, where he had been assigned due to his physical condition, to join his old outfit. Whether true or not, it had an inspiring effect on the

(11) Personal men of the 26th Infantry. (11)  
observa-  
tion.

Between October 25 and 29th the foot elements of the

Division were transported by French camions to the area north  
(12)History of Vaubecourt, (12) the First Brigade arriving first, billet-  
1st Div.  
p.218. ed in the Recicourt Woods and the Second Brigade later in the  
Bois de Parois. Here intensive training was resumed and final dispositions preparatory to taking up the combat.

On October 31st, Major General Summerall now commanding the Fifth Army Corps, addressed the various regiments, praising them on their past performances and exhorting them to still greater efforts. In speaking to one of the regiments, which were formed in a hollow square, his closing remarks were in substance as follows: "Men, you belong to a fighting division. You have pushed the enemy back on three fronts. You have gone far. You will go further. You have suffered much. You will suffer more. You have gone long without food. You will go longer. You have faced death. You will face it again. Your record will go down in history as a splendid example of courage and fortitude. Your name and fame will be immortal". Needless to say this talk made a great impression on the men, as they knew it came straight from his heart. However, a mule Skinner who had just driven up, and who had heard a few of the last remarks, said, in an awed and altogether earnest tone of voice, "Who in the hell is that guy,

(13)Personal observation. anyway." (13) (13a)

The Division moved by marching to the area about Cier-

(13a)The 26th Infantry in France. ges and Gesnes, as reserve of the Fifth Army Corps. (14)  
p.79. While the rest of the Division had been recovering its strength in a training area, the First Artillery Brigade

(14)History and the First Ammunition Train, had been constantly in the  
1st Div.  
p.219. line except for a brief period from October 23rd to 25th, when most of the personnel was sent back to Cheppy for a

short rest, the guns being left in place with skeletonized crews. It had remained to support the 42nd (U.S.) in its attack on October 14 and 16 on St. Gerorges-Landres et St. Georges section of the Kriemhilde Stellung. A relief of the Brigade was begun on October 16, but the elements were called back in line again, no sooner than they had started, and remained there either in support of the 42nd Division or in preparation for its part in supporting the 2nd Division on

(15) History 1st. Div. November 1. (15)  
p.222.

The strain on the artillery during this period had been terrific. They had been constantly in the line since the night of September 30-October 1, 1918, except for a brief two days rest, yet they always executed their missions in true First Division style. The First Artillery Brigade never failed to support the Infantry to the limits of its power, and both were intensely proud of the other's achievements. As splendid as the Infantry was, the Artillery always had more veterans in its ranks, due to the fact that its casualties, although heavy for artillery, were naturally less than those of the Infantry, with the result that there was probably no finer Artillery in the world than the First Artillery Brigade.

(15)a History 1st Div. (15)a.  
p.219.

#### RESERVE OF THE AMERICAN FIFTH ARMY CORPS.

As stated before, the night of October 31 - November 1, found the First Division, less its Artillery and Ammunition Train, bivouaced in the vicinity of Gesnes and Cierges as reserve of the Fifth Army Corps. The 2nd (U.S.) Division was the left assault division and occupied the line, 1 kilometer

south of St. Georges to the northern edge of the Cote de Chatillon, and the 89th (U.S.) Division held the line from the northern Bois de Bantheville to a point 1 kilometer west of the Le Carre Farm. (15) The initial mission of the First Division called for its being held in readiness with a view to its passing a front line division during the operations, its action dependent on the outcome of the attack towards

(16) F.O.88 Barricourt Buzancy. (16)

1st Army  
AEF Oct.  
27, 1918.

5th Corps  
Monograph

The First Artillery Brigade and the First Ammunition Train were grouped with the Second Division Artillery for the attack and it participated in the tremendous barrage and artillery preparation that was put on on November 1st by

(17) History the Fifth Army Corps. (17)

1st Div.  
p.227.

There was a total of 608 guns of all calibers in the corps attack. A two hour fire for destruction was laid down. Two heavy guns or howitzers fired on every known enemy battery. All enemy machine guns, trenches, and routes of communication were deluged with shells and shrapnel from the light guns augmented by thick cones of machine-gun fire. This commenced at 3:30 A.M. November 1st, and continued until 5:30 A.M., when the barrage fell. This barrage was most effective and a description of it may be of interest. It was approximately 6 kilometers or  $3\frac{3}{4}$  miles in width, and of an average depth of 1000 meters. At 150 meters in front of the Infantry moved a line of high explosives and smoke shells, in proportion three to one, fired from 75 mm guns. 200 meters beyond this line, one battery out of every three fired

(18) Barrage 75 mm shrapnel. 300 meters beyond this were concentrations Chart.  
History of 8" howitzer and 155 mm bursts, with an additional danger  
1st Div. zone of 400 meters. (18) As the Infantry moved forward, the  
pp.325  
234.

guns were pushed up to the front thus continuing their effectiveness. The result of this barrage was so deadly that nothing could stand in its path. Enemy guns were found smashed by direct hits, caissons blown up, horses and gunners

(19) Personal in mangled and confused masses. (19)

observa-  
tion near  
Bayon-  
ville et  
Chennery.

The Fifth Army Corps reached all of its first day's objectives on record time. (20) Due to the brilliant work of the Fifth and Third Army Corps on November 1st, the enemy was forced to either deliver a strong counter-attack or withdraw from all territory south of Buzancy-Boult-aux-Bois, and he was so demoralized that he chose the latter. (21) There being no immediate use for the services of the First Division, the Division was moved at 5 P.M. on November 1st to the Bois

(22) Personal de Romagne. (22) (22a)

observa-  
tion.

On November 2nd the Fifth Army Corps made a comparative-

(22a) 5th Corps ly small gain, neither the 2nd Division on the left nor the Monograph 89th Division on the right having quite reached the corps Operations Order #16 objective for the day. The front of the 2nd Division was A, 2nd Inf.Brig. approximately as follows. Its left rested in the northern Nov.2, 1918. edge of the Bois de Folie about 1½ kilometers south of Fosse and its right rested on the Barricourt-Nouart road about 1 kilometer south of Nouart. The left of the 89th Division had made only a few hundred yards progress and the line ran from a point on the Barricourt-Bayonville et Chennery road about 1½ kilometers southwest of Barricourt, thence sloping gradually upward to the vicinity of Tailly, which was on the ob- jective. (23)

(23) Plate XIII,  
Report  
of  
First  
Army.

On the early morning of the 2nd, the Second Brigade moved from the Bois de Romagne, which it had reached but a few hours before, to the vicinity of Bayonville et Chennery,

- (24) F.O.110 · the rest of the Division in the Bois de Romagne.(24)  
5th Army Corps Nov.2, 1918. Par.2 Fifth Corps Mono-graph.
- On November 3rd, the Fifth Army Corps reached the third day's objective and during the night of the 3rd-4th, on the extreme left penetrated several kilometers beyond, due to the brilliant work of the 9th and 23rd Infantries of the Second Division. The front of the Second Division on November 3rd was approximately as follows. Its left from a point about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  kilometers north of Fosse near the Fosse-Beaumont road, then generally north to a point about 4 kilometers south of Beaumont, then south again to the vicinity of Le Champy Bois. The 89th Division reached the third day's objective, its right near Beauclair. (25)
- (25) Plate XIII. Report of 1st Army
- On the night of November 3rd the First Division moved through Bayonville et Chennery to the Bois de Folie. This march was a difficult one as the roads were muddy in the extreme and a constant rain was falling. The First Brigade occupied the western part of the Bois de Folie and the Second Brigade the eastern portion. The First Field Artillery Brigade was ordered to rejoin the Division and take position during the night south of the Nouart-Buzancy road in the vicinity of the Bois de Folie. (26)
- (26) F.O.59  
1st Div. Nov.3, 1918. Fifth Corps Mono-graph Report of Operations in Mouzon, 1st Div. Personal Observers.
- On November 4th, the Fifth Army Corps continued its drive with great success. On the left, the 2nd Division exploited the gains made on the night of November 3-4th by the Third Brigade and the 89th Division made substantial gains. (27) The Fifth Army Corps contemplated using the First Division in the assault on November 4th, but the rapid progress of the two front line Divisions evidently caused it not to do so. The plan was to have the Division march on Laneuville in one column, composed of the 16th Infantry and

- (27) Report of Operations of 3rd Inf. Nov. 2-11, 1918. some attached elements, and to have another column composed of the 26th Infantry march on Beaumont. The remaining regiments were to constitute the main body and were to be held in readiness in the Bois de Folie. After the First Division had passed through their lines, the 2nd and 89th Divisions were to assemble behind the front. (28)
- (28) F.O. 60 Fifth Army Corps. Nov. 3, 1918. The rapid advance of the 2nd Division on the night of November 3-4th uncovered the left flank of the Fifth Army Corps, so the 26th Infantry of the Second Brigade was ordered on the afternoon of the 4th to move to the Foret de Dieulefit and take up a position on the Fosse-Beaumont road. (29)
- (29) Memo. C.G. 2nd Brig. to C.O. 26th Inf. Nov. 4, 1918. As one of the battalions of this regiment (First Battalion) wound its way through Nouart, several gaily painted German planes fired at the column with machine guns without inflicting any damage. A few moments before the planes appeared, the sky seemed full of Allied planes, but when the attack on the column was made, all of our planes evidently found business elsewhere. (30)
- (29a) Personal observation. The remainder of the Division continued to bivouac in the Bois de Folie during the rest of the 4th and a part of the 5th. (31)
- (31) Mono-graph 1923 p. 613. On the night of November 4-5th, the 2nd Division took Beaumont and the 89th Division reached all of its objectives west of the Meuse River on the 5th. It was decided that the Capt. L.R. First Division would enter the line on the left of the 2nd Boyd for 16th Inf. Division. (32)
- (32) History 1st Div. p. 227. The rapid advance of the Fifth Army Corps, especially of the 2nd Division had kept the First Division on the move, marching chiefly at night over soggy roads, jammed with traf-

(33) Personal observation.

fic of all sorts. The rain had been almost continuous since leaving the billeting area near Vavincourt. A few casualties had occurred chiefly during the period when the Second Brigade was near Bayonville et Chennery. (33) The Division was considered "fresh troops", but it was fresh only in the sense that it had not yet gained contact with the enemy. Yet morale was high. Everyone realized the importance of the job at hand. The replacements were anxious to show their mettle and the veterans of Cantigny, Soissons, St.Mihiel, and the Second Phase, were more than eager to make good their prodigious boasts with which they had been regaling the replacements.

(34) Personal observation.

(34)

#### MOUZON.

(35) History  
1st Div.  
p.227.

Early in the afternoon of November 5th, telephonic orders were received from the Fifth Army Corps for the First Division to relieve the 80th Division (U.S.) along the Stonne-Beaumont road, and to attack towards the Meuse River in the direction of Mouzon at 5:30 A.M., November 6th. (35)

The terrain from the Stonne-Beaumont road to the objective over which the attack was to be made, was very favorable to the enemy as it consists in high hills and patches of thick woods and culminates in a series of very high hills overlooking the Meuse, at a distance generally of about two kilometers from the river. The day's objective was this line of hills, with patrols sent into the villages of Mouzon and Villemontry. Between the hills and the river was open ground. On the other side of the river (east) were mountainous heights which afforded the enemy excellent observation, and

(36) Personal observation.

The purpose of the attack was to seize a crossing at  
(37) F.O.61 Mouzon. (37) The Second Brigade was given the sector:  
Hq.1st. Eastern boundary; Beaumont(exclusive)-Bois de l'hospice  
Div. Nov.5, (inclusive)-Villemontry. Western boundary; Crossroads  
1918. History of the Yoncq-Mouzon with the La Bagnolle-Beaumont road-  
1st Div. the Yoncq-Mouzen road-and Mouzon exclusive.

The Second Brigade was to attack on a front of two battalions, with one battalion in support and one regiment in reserve, in the vicinity of La Thibaudine Farm.

The 26th Infantry, then in the Bois de Dieulet was given the mission of the assault regiment, and the 28th Infantry, then in the Bois de Falie, was to constitute the reserve.

The First Infantry Brigade was given the sector: Eastern boundary; west of the Second Brigade.

Western boundary; La Bagnolle-western edge of Bois de Yoncq-Hill 297-Hill between Bois Gerfaux and Bois de Pourron-Hill 275 (1 km N.W. of Pourron-Le Poncay Farm)

This Brigade was ordered to attack in the usual First Division method: regiments abreast, with one battalion in assault. The right of the sector was given to the 18th Infantry and the left to the 16th Infantry.

The Artillery which had rejoined the Division after serving with the 2nd Division, was ordered to support the attack when requested to do so by Brigade commanders.

The battle Command Post of the Division was to open on November 6th at 5 A.M. at Le Gros Faux cross roads.(37)

On the right of the First Division was the 2nd Division which was holding the river line and on the left was the 6th (U.S.) Division of the First Army Corps (U.S.), but this di-

vision was so far to the rear that extra precautions had

- (38) History  
1st Div.  
p.229. to be taken to protect the left flank. (38)

Upon receipt of their orders the various elements of

- (39) History  
1st Div.  
p.227. the division began to move. (39) All of the Infantry except the 26th Infantry, had to march from the Bois de Folie and this meant an all night hike through black forests, over muddy unknown roads. The 26th Infantry was more fortunate as it was already in the Bois de Dieulet. All elements were in place by 4 A.M. on November 6th. (39)

No reconnaissance was possible due to the short notice on which the Division moved. To make matters worse the maps issued to elements of the Second Brigade, and to probably the whole Division, did not show the presence of a new road leading into Beaumont, which practically paralleled the Stonne-Beaumont road and which at night was very difficult to distinguish from the correct road. Its presence was discovered, however, before the troops reached the road, so that

- (40) Personal  
observa-  
tion. it made no difference. (40)

The route of the 26th Infantry to the jump-off line as contemplated, was to pass through Beaumont, but the town was being very heavily shelled, so it was avoided by marching across country. To insure that the right direction be taken, the members of the Intelligence Section were stationed along the route to be travelled. The regiment avoided many losses in this manner and saved considerable time in reaching the

- (41) Personal  
observa-  
tion. line of departure. (41)

The jump-off line was subjected to unaimed and intermittent shelling. Occasional bursts of machine-gun fire occurred during the night and at intervals very light and rocket flares were sent up by the enemy. There was every evi-

(42) Personal dence that he was holding the line and in some force. (42)  
observa-  
tion.

From right to left the assault battalions were the 2nd Battalion, 26th Infantry, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, and the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry on the extreme left. The 7th Field Artillery was near Beaumont to support the attack of the Second Brigade and the 6th Field Artillery was in position behind the First Brigade, while the 5th Field Artillery was prepared to cover the ad-

(43) History  
1st Div.  
p.228. vance of the whole division. (43)

Promptly at 5:30 A.M. on the morning of November 6th, the battalions jumped off. A rather heavy fog made visibility poor. Practically no resistance was met. The 18th Infantry captured Yoncq by 7 A.M. and a few prisoners, and by noon all elements were on their objectives. A sharp fight took place before a platoon of the 26th Infantry occupied Villemontry. Upon reaching the line of hills set forth as the day's objective, the 18th Infantry and patrols from the 26th Infantry occupied that part of Mouzon west of the Meuse River, after some fighting. The bridge over the river was blown up just before the patrols reached the town, and several mines were set off which caused several buildings to burn. The Germans then bombarded the town with artillery and machine guns. Several casualties occurred among our troops and among

(44) Personal  
observa-  
tion.

The fog lifted about noon and enemy artillery and air-

(44) History  
1st Div.  
p.228. planes became active. In one of the battalions, the Scout Officer, a recent graduate of a British school was ordered by his Battalion commander to select a suitable place for the battalion P.C. The lieutenant found an abandoned quarry, conveniently located with reference to the companies, hid

in a patch of woods, and apparently from every standpoint very desirable. Unfortunately, the Germans thought that it might prove too tempting to pass up and shortly afterwards shelled it very heavily, inflicting a number of casualties. It received, by far, more attention than any other place in

(45) Personal observation.

the vicinity. (45)

Shortly before the patrols reached Mouzon, a most spectacular feat was accomplished by an artillery piece, evidently the accompanying gun of one of the regiments of the First Brigade, although the author was unable to find out positively where the gun belonged. It advanced at a slow trot up the Yoncq-Mouzon road to a distance of about 1500 yards from Mouzon, all in plain view of the enemy on the other side of the river. It went into action as if on a parade ground, apparently expended all its ammunition, then leisurely trotted back to cover. The gun position looked as though hail was dropping around it, so thick were the enemy shells. The daring of this gun crew was typical of the entire First Artillery Brigade. This feat must have been witnessed by at least a thousand Infantrymen and must have strengthened their conviction that the First Artillery Brigade was their truest Al-

(46) Personal observation.

ly. (46)  
While slight losses occurred and there were but few prisoners taken (loss 7 officers and 347 men, and 1 officer and 10 men of the enemy captured), the work of the Division proved that it was as ever a thoroughly coordinated machine. To march 10½ miles over unknown and slippery roads, on a

(47) Report Mouzon area. Nov. 5-6 1918.  
H.Q. of 1st Div. 5th Corps Monograph.

dark rainy night, to a jump-off line that had not been reconnoitered, pass through another Division and assault 5 miles called for the highest possible coordination. (47)

**SEDAN.**

In discussing the operations of the First Division towards Sedan, one or two points must be clearly borne in mind. The German army was in retreat and for the first time in the history of the war, its official communiquees admitted that the line in front of the First American Army was broken. The iron discipline of the German army had deteriorated, although it was still fighting a magnificent rear-guard action. To make matters still worse, Austria-Hungary had quit and there were political and economic troubles of the gravest sort at

(48) History  
1st Div.  
p.230.

The method of warfare too, had changed rapidly since the Fifth Army Corps had smashed the lines at Barricourt on the 1st of November. Up to that time the closest support between the artillery and the infantry had existed and large gains had generally been made only under cover of heavy artillery fire, but by November 6th all of this had changed.

The attack on Mouzon had been made with practically no artil-

(49) Personal  
observa-  
tion.  
History  
1st Div.  
p.229.

lery support. (49) Open warfare of the sort that General Pershing had predicted had come true at last, and the First Division which had never neglected its training for this very thing, reaped rich results from its heart-breaking hikes when it chased "Sitting Bull" all over the Gondrecourt area in 1917 and at later periods.

Liaison within the Division had become very difficult, but had been well maintained during the Mouzon operation. A few telephones had been installed but runners were the chief means of communication. There was no liaison with the 2nd

Division on the right or with the First Army Corps on the

(50)History      left until late on November 6th. (50)  
1st Div.  
p.231.

Major General C.P.Summerall, the Commanding General of the Fifth Corps, arrived at Division Headquarters which was located at La Gros Faux Farm, a little after noon on November 6th and ordered the Division Commander to march on Sedan

(51)History      and assist in its capture, on the following morning. (51)  
1st Div.  
p.230.

General Summerall's action was based on a memorandum from the Headquarters, First American Army, which was as follows:

" Memorandum for Commanding Generals, 1st Corps, 5th Corps.

Subject: Message from the Commander-in-Chief.

1. General Pershing desires that the honor of entering Sedan should fall to the First American Army. He has every confidence that the troops of the 1st Corps, assisted on their right by the Fifth Corps, will enable him to realize this desire.

2. In transmitting the foregoing message, your attention is invited to the favorable opportunity now existing, for pressing our advantage throughout the night. Boundaries will not be considered binding.

(52)History      By Command of Lieutenant General Liggett." (52)  
1st Div.  
P.230.

The contemplated move was a daring one. It had to be made during the night, over unknown terrain, across the front of entire corps, the location of whose divisions were not

(53)History      known. (53) Several factors favored it, however. The enemy 1st Div.  
p.230. was badly demoralized and the Division itself was not pinned

down in a fire fight, although it was holding a line. Above all, there was the entrancing possibility of seizing Sedan, the possession of which was of utmost importance, as it would greatly hurry or even induce the victory which had been so long sought and at such terrific cost. The seizure of Sedan would cut off the enemy line of communications and a staggering blow to his already faltering morale. Neither the Corps Commander nor the Division Commander were men calculated to adopt a hesitating or conservative attitude on such an occasion.

Any plan adopted would have two main considerations;

(54) History      the approach formation and the formation for the attack. (54)  
1st Div.  
p.230-231 Sedan as the crow flies, is approximately  $10\frac{1}{2}$  miles from  
Mouzon, and of course much farther by road, and it was ut-  
terly impossible to reach it other than by roads at night.  
Two planes were open to the Division Commander. The Divi-  
sion could move by the left flank along the Meuse valley,  
and force its way over a very restricted front to the heights  
southwest of Sedan. This would limit its ability to deploy  
and had the further disadvantage of leaving both flanks ex-  
posed. The other plan open was to have the Division move by  
columns on a wide front to the heights southwest of Sedan,  
ready to deploy for the attack. This plan seemed to promise  
more chance of success, although liaison would be difficult  
in the extreme, and was adopted.

The Brigade Commanders were assembled and the prelimi-  
nary orders given, which they in turn passed on to their regi-  
mental commanders. Later, as soon as possible, formal orders  
were issued. It may be of interest to note that the maps  
used in this operation, were the French 1-80,000. This was  
true, at least for the regimental commander of the 26th In-  
fantry, and is believed to be true of the maps issued to all

(55) Personal  
observa-  
tion.      (55)

The order as finally issued was as follows:

✓  
" SECRET AND PERSONAL  
Field Orders  
No. 62.

Headquarters First Division,  
American Expeditionary  
Forces.  
France, November 6, 1918

Map: Mezieres -1-80,000.

1. No further information of the enemy.

The First Army advances on Sedan, the 5th Corps on  
the right and the 1st Corps on the left.

2. Our Division will constitute the advance troops and  
seize Sedan.

3. (a) The Division will advance in five(5) columns numbered from east to west.

Column 1: Battalion of the 16th Infantry.

Route : Autrecourt-through the valley of the Meuse via Remilly-Wadelincourt.

Column 2: 16th Infantry (less 1 battalion), 1 Company 1st Engineers.

Route : Pourron-Autrecourt-Raucourt-Haracourt-Thelonne-Noyers.

Column 3: 18th Infantry (less 1 battalion)

Route : Pourron-Autrecourt-Raucourt-Maisoncelle-Bulson-Chaumont, thence north.

Column 4: 28th Infantry - 1 company Engineers.

Route : Stonne-Chemery-Chehery-Fenois.

Column 5: 26th Infantry.

Route : Stonne-Chemery-Omicourt-Hanngne-St. Martin.

(b) Divisional Reserve.

1 battalion 18th Infantry;

1st Machine-gun Battalion;

1st Engineers (less two companies)

Route : La Becaute-Raucourt- from which point it will follow Column No.2 at a distance of about one kilometer.

(c) The 6th Field Artillery will follow close on the 18th Infantry and the 7th Field Artillery the 28th Infantry.

The 5th Field Artillery will follow in three columns - one battalion in each column, Nos.2,3,4.

(x) Column No.1 will leave small details to guard captured bridges over the Meuse along its route.

4. The Field Artillery and Sanitary Trains will move under orders to be issued by G-1.

5. The Division P.C. will close at its present location at 20:00 hours this date and march via La Becaute-Raucourt-Maisoncelle-Bulson-Chaumont.

By command of Brigadier General Parker;

J. N. GREELY,

Distribution "C"

Chief of Staff. "

(56)

(56) History  
1st Div.  
p.447.

Liaison officers were sent to the headquarters of the First Army Corps, to the headquarters of the 6th Division, which was supposed to be the right Division of the First Army

(57) History  
1st Div.  
p.231.

Corps and to the left brigade of the 2nd Division. (57)

(58) Personal observation.

The terrain to be covered was typical of the Argonne country, high hills and patches of heavy woods, all favorable to the enemy. The roads were in terrible shape as the rain had been constant, and the Germans in retiring had cut them up badly. (58)

(59) History  
1st Div.  
P.232.

By dark the regiments had been assembled and commenced their memorable advance between 7 and 8 P.M.. All the Infantry was assembled except one platoon of Company "E", 26th Infantry which was occupying Villemontry. A message had been sent to its commander to withdraw, but the runner who carried it was killed. When the lieutenant learned unofficially that the regiment was withdrawing he refused to move, stating that the First Division never gave up any ground once captured. (59) A battalion commander of the 26th Infantry, receiving the preliminary order over the phone, made the Colonel positively identify himself before he would agree to

(60) Personal withdraw. (60)  
observation

It was to prove the First Division's hardest march. It was made over frightful roads, on a dark rainy night in the face of the enemy. Bridges had as a rule been destroyed by the enemy and at one place the 26th Infantry had to cross a stream by means of a single plank. The morale of the officers and men was extremely high in spite of the fact that they had hiked all the night before, had fought all day, and that at least in one regiment, the 28th Infantry, the men had gone without food since the afternoon of the 5th. (61) One company commander in the 26th Infantry, who had just recently rejoined his regiment from the hospital, fainted, and recovering some hours after, pushed on and rejoined his Com-

(61) Mono-  
graphs  
1923.  
Capt.  
Livesay.

(62) The 26th Infantry  
in France  
p.83.

The First Battalion of the 16th Infantry, commanded by

Major C.W.Ryder, constituted Column 1. and marched by the

(63) Story of river road. (63) It came under machine-gun and artillery fire almost immediately, and to make matters worse, all the p.66-67

bridges were out and the road was badly mined in places.

(63a) History 1st Div. About midnight the Column was broken and the battalion commander who was with the advance party did not know of it until 3 A.M., when it was too late to bring them forward.

In the rear group was the machine-gun company which was a most serious loss. The forward group of two and a half companies pushed on and encountered hand-to-hand fighting in Allicourt. The town was cleared, the Germans retreating towards Sedan. They were completely surprised, not dreaming that the Americans were anywhere in the vicinity. At 4:30 A.M. the enemy was encountered in numbers at Pont Maugis, but the town was taken as usual by hand-to-hand fighting.

A column of artillery from the direction of Thelonne was captured. It comprised two 77 mm field pieces, several caissons and rolling kitchens. A number of prisoners were taken. The advance of the First Battalion was halted at daybreak, when it assembled in a ravine near Noyers and awaited the arrival of the rest of the 16th Infantry, which constituted Column 2. (63a)

Column 2 encountered heavy machine-gun fire at Thelonne and remained there until 7:30 A.M., when it advanced to the vicinity of Noyers where it was joined by its First Battalion.

The First and Second Battalions then assaulted Hill 252, northwest of Pont Maugis, passed over and were soon organized in the woods to the north of it. That the position gained by the 16th Infantry was the nearest point to Sedan reached

(64) History by any American unit is claimed by the First Division. (64)  
1st Div. p.233.

Company "A", First Engineers, had been called upon to protect the right flank of the 16th Infantry and in doing so, after Hill 252 had been passed by the Infantry, met a large force of Germans who had infiltrated back into Pont Maugis. A hard fight ensued drove them out as a part of their morning's work. It was occurrences such as this and that of the attack by the First Engineers on Hill 272 in the Second Phase of the Meuse-Argonne, that caused all arms in the Division to admire the others and welded it into a great fighting team. As the attack on Hill 252 commenced, elements of the 42nd (U.S.) Division were seen approaching Thelonne and Lia-

(65)History  
1st Div.  
p.233. ison was established with them. (65)

Columns 1 and 2 had thus merged into a line , and no further advance was made.

Let us now consider the other columns.

After plodding all night along heavy roads the 18th Infantry, which was Column 3, arrived at Bulson at 5:30 A.M., November 7th, where it met elements of the 42nd Division and

(66)History  
1st Div.  
p.233. was ordered to halt, which it did north of the town. (66)

Column 4, composed of the 28th Infantry, followed the route ordered and found elements of the 42nd Division and of the French Fourth Army in the town of Chehery, when it reached there at 7:40 A.M. Passing beyond the town the leading battalion (3rd Battalion) deployed and advanced to attack Hill 297, north of the town of Chevenges. Machine-gun fire came from the Bois de la Queue and from the Bois de la Marfee, and to stop the fire from the latter, Company "A", cleared the western edge of the woods and then connected up with the Third Battalion which was then advancing up the southern slope of Hill 297. In coming up the 116th Infantry

- of the 42nd Division was found dug in along a road from Chevenges leading to the Route National from Chehery. (67)
- (67) History 1st Div. p.233. In compliance with an order from Division Headquarters the regiment ceased to attack at 11 A.M. and dug in well up on the southern slope of Hill 297. Division Headquarters had learned that the enemy held the heights east of the Meuse with strongly fortified machine-gun and artillery positions, and it was decided not to pass the crest of the hill until nightfall. The reason that this information was delivered so speedily to the 28th Infantry was because Division Headquarters had been established at Chehery shortly after 8 A.M. This town was under shell-fire and remained so during the day. By noon the 7th Field Artillery reached Chehery. (68)
- (68) History 1st Div. p.234. The men of the Headquarters Company of the 28th Infantry carried their 37mm guns by hand from the assembly point of the regiment on the afternoon of November 6th to their positions behind Hill 297. (69) The carts had been sent back for food before the regiment left the Mouzon area and did not get back either with the food or in time to carry the guns to Sedan. (69) Superb morale such as this needs no comment. A pair of men would carry the gun as long as they could endure it then pass it on to another pair.
- Column 5, composed of the 26th Infantry, with its Third Battalion leading, reached Chemery on the early morning of November 7th, and began to suffer casualties from artillery fire. At 7 A.M. the regiment neared Omicourt, when it was discovered that the enemy held the heights beyond with strong machine-gun detachments. The Third Battalion dislodged the enemy and pushed on. The First Battalion leap-frogged the
- (70) 26th Inf. in France p.83. (70) Third Battalion and continued the attack towards St. Aignan.

St. Aignan was in the center of a horse-shoe shaped valley formed by high wooded hills. From the foot of the hills to the town was bare open ground. Machine-gun fire came from the town, so patrols were sent beyond to the flanks. (71)

(71) Personal observation.

A regiment of the 40th French Division appeared as the wooded heights near Omicourt were being cleared. It presented a wonderful sight as it passed through the 26th Infantry

(72) Personal observation.

and took up a position on its right. (72) The officers and men were spick and span, dressed as for a gala occasion and presented a great contrast to the sleepy, hallowed-eyed, mud-

(72a) 26th Inf. in France.

p.83.

Almost immediately following the French Battalions which were in assault formation, came the rolling kitchens of the

(73) Personal observation.

regiment. (73) Needless to say, the smell of hot food, although a bit garlicky, presented a tremendous temptation to the men of the First Battalion of the 26th, who had halted in assault formation near the road on which the kitchens were. Very few men moved on the kitchens, which spoke a great deal for the discipline in the 26th.

The closest liaison had existed with the French elements on our flanks, the P.C. of Lieut. Colonel Roosevelt, commanding the 26th Infantry, and that of the French battalion commander of the troops on the right, being located together, when the Commanding General of the 40th French Division drove up to the P.C. and informed the regimental commander that our troops were advancing directly in the path of his preliminary artillery fire and orders required its immediate employment. ~~Colonel Roosevelt~~ replied that his mission was to flank Sedan as ordered by his superiors, and that unless orders were changed such were his intentions. No sooner had

(74) 26th Inf. he made this statement than orders were received to withdraw.  
in France  
p.83.

(74) The regiment was pulled out of the line immediately and marched back 10 kilometers to Chemery.

General Summerall, reached Division Headquarters at Chehery at 2 P.M. on November 7th, when he learned that the 42nd was in the area, so ordered the First Division moved to the east to clear the area for them. About an hour later, at Chemery, the rear echelon of the Division Headquarters, he received a wireless from the First American Army, ordering the First Division south of the line La Becaue-Autrecourt. Orders were issued immediately and that night all elements began to trace their weary way to the new area. (75) Thus ended the last fight of the First Division in the World War.

(75) History  
1st Div.  
p.235.

It was the next day before any food was to be had, and never was food more enjoyed than when it was finally gotten.

(76) Personal  
observa-  
tion.

(76) From 4:30 P.M. on November 5th to midnight on November 7th, the Division had fought and marched without sleep, rest, and practically without food. The 16th Infantry had marched 54 kilometers; the 18th, 53 kilometers; the 28 Infantry, 52 kilometers; and the 26th Infantry, the astounding total of 71 kilometers or nearly 45 miles.

(77) History  
1st Div.  
p.235.

Fifty-four prisoners, two 77 mm guns, two anti-tank guns, a number of machine guns, four rolling kitchens and some transport had been captured at a cost of ten officers and four hundred and ninety-six men as casualties. (77)

From the vicinity of the Bois de Yoncq on November 8th the Division moved to the vicinity of the Bois de Belval and Sommauthe, being held in corps reserve, pending the operations of the 2nd and 89th Divisions, between Pouilly and Mousson. These operations were accomplished by these Divisions

(78) History on the night of November 10-11th. (78)  
1st Div.  
p.231.

On the morning of November 11th the news of the Armistice was announced. Little emotion was shown as the real significance of the thing did not sink in. That night however, in the Bois de Folie, the men began to realize that the war was over when fires were permitted for the first time during the campaign. All night long flares were sent

(79) Personal up and grenades set off in celebration. (79)  
observa-  
tion.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM.

It is indeed difficult to criticise a successful operation. In preparation for its entry into the Third Phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the First Division had made the most of the little time allotted to train its replacements. That its training program was sound, was proved by the result of the campaign. Great efforts had been made to appeal to the pride of the officers and men, and this had much to do with the fine results obtained.

No criticism can be found of the action of the First Division when in corps reserve. It was ready, and it might be said, more than eager to get into the line. It always promptly moved to any place ordered by the High Command.

The attack on Mouzon was successfully executed and the Division carried out its mission to the letter. A few mistakes were made by subordinate commanders, such for example as that of location of a command post in a conspicuous quarry, the location of which was known by the enemy. Naturally, in open warfare such as this was, communication was difficult,  
~~but this was necessarily met by the higher commanders of all~~

units, pushing their headquarters as far forward as possible.

So far as the Division itself is concerned, no criticism can be made, either of the plan or the execution of the march on Sedan. The tactical principle that a force be not too much dispersed was violated in favor of the greater mistake of crowding a unit into a space too small to maneuver in, as was the only other plan open. It is true that a great many sound tactical principles were violated, such as the utter lack of preliminary reconnaissance before committing a force to the attack, as was the case here, but here it was done knowingly, the enemy situation permitting it.

The splendid morale, spirit of cooperation and confidence existing between all ranks in the Division made such an undertaking as a night march in the face of the enemy feasible.

#### LESSONS.

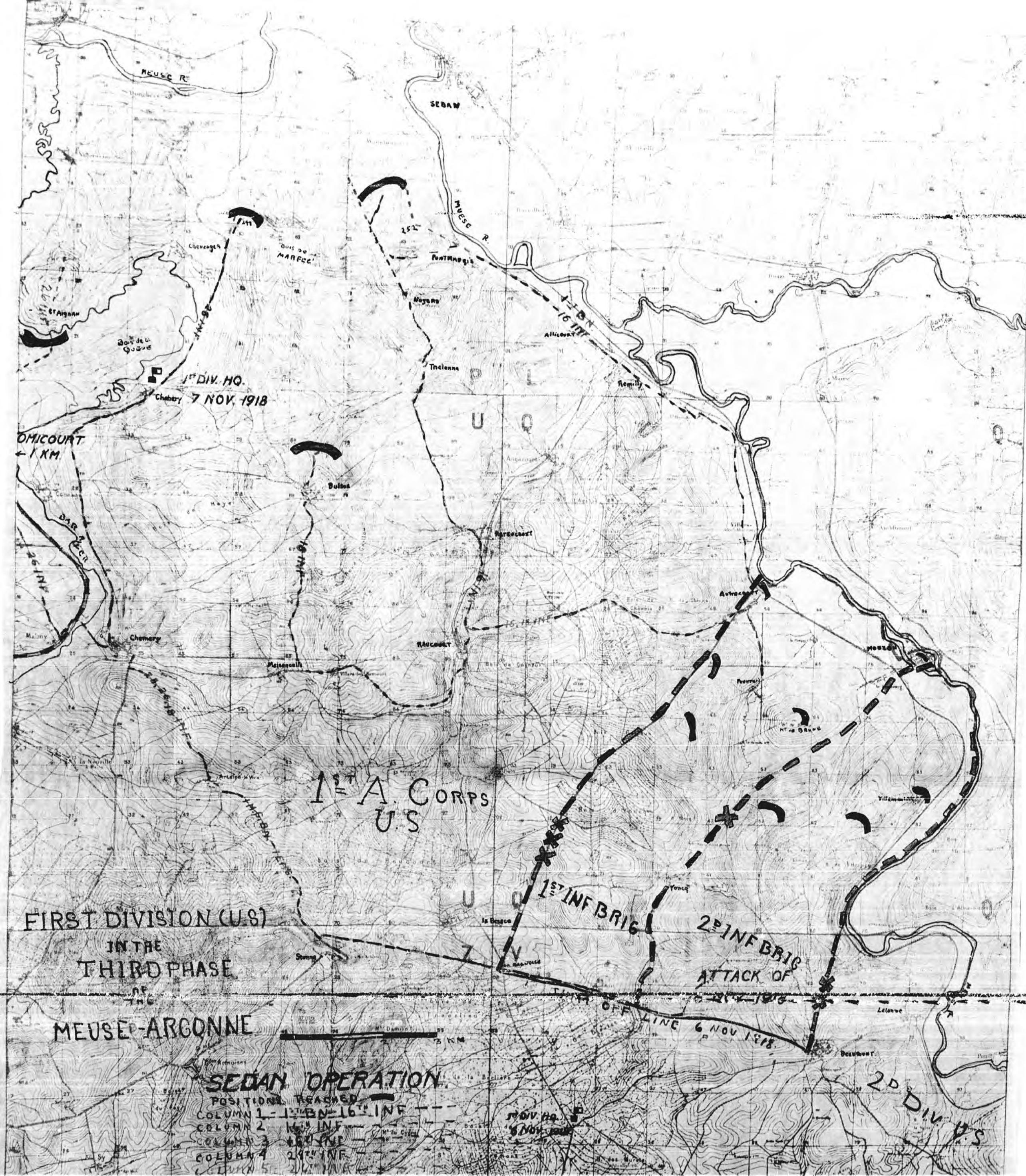
1. Morale is the greatest asset that any organization can possess.

2. An organization that has a cadre of highly trained leaders, endowed with high morale can be counted upon to assimilate replacements in a minimum of time.

3. Open warfare training is essentially the best training for any sort of warfare.

4. In open warfare communication is best obtained by having the posts of command of the higher echelons well forward.

5. Coordination and cooperation of the various arms of the service is vital to the success of an organization.



FIRST DIVISION (U.S.)  
IN THE  
THIRD PHASE

MEUSE-ARGONNE

SEDAN OPERATION

POSITIONS REACHED

COLUMN 1 - 1<sup>ST</sup> BN - 16<sup>TH</sup> INF

COLUMN 2 - 1<sup>ST</sup> BN - 14<sup>TH</sup> INF

COLUMN 3 - 1<sup>ST</sup> BN - 15<sup>TH</sup> INF

COLUMN 4 - 2<sup>ND</sup> BN - 24<sup>TH</sup> INF

1<sup>ST</sup> DIV. HQ  
7 NOV. 1918

OFF LINE  
6 NOV. 1918

20 D. U.S.