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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST DIVISION IN THE
SECOND PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE.

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST DIVISION IN THE
SECOND PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE.

INTRODUCTION.

In order to understand why and how the 1st Division was able to drive the wedge east of the Argonne Forest October 1-12, 1918, it is necessary to get the background of the organization.

Shortly after the United States declared war on Germany, April 6, 1917, the 1st Division was organized.(1)

(1) 1st Div.
Hist.p.1.

The original units of the division, infantry, artillery,

(2) Pershing,
Gen. speech
Camp Dix,
N.J. Nov.11,
1920,

engineers, were selected personally by General Pershing.(2)

The units of the division as eventually constituted were:

Division Headquarters,

Headquarters Troop,

1st Infantry Brigade:-

16th Infantry; 18th Infantry; 2nd Machine Gun
Battalion.

2nd Infantry Brigade:-

26th Infantry; 28th Infantry; 3rd Machine Gun
Battalion.

1st Field Artillery Brigade:-

5th Field Artillery (155 mm. Howitzers)†

6th Field Artillery (75 mm. guns); 7th Field

Artillery (75 mm. guns); 1st Trench Mortar Battery.

1st Regiment of Engineers.

1st Machine Gun Battalion.

2nd Field Signal Battalion.

The divisional trains. (3)

(3) 1st Div.
Hist. p.1.

The first units debarked at Saint Nazaire, France

on June 26, 1917 and by September 30, 1917, all the com

(4) 1st Div.
Hist.p.6
and p.10.

bat elements of the division were on French soil. (4)

The division was assembled in the Gondrecourt area where it underwent an intensive period of training in open and trench warfare. This training included duty in quiet sectors in the trenches. (5) In all of this training, the fact that the rifle and bayonet are the principal weapons of the Infantry was strongly emphasized. (6)

(5) Personal experience.

(6) Personal experience.

From the middle of January until the first of April, 1918, the Division occupied what later came to be known thruout the A.E.F. as the "sector north of Toul" (7)

(7) Personal experience.

From May 1918 to September 20th 1918, the division had fought at Cantigny, in the great allied counter offensive of July 18, 1918 and at Saint Mihiel, with honor and distinction. (8) Thus, the line and staff of the Division were thoroughly seasoned and as a result of never having been defeated, the morale of all ranks was very high. (9)

(8) Personal experience.

(9) Personal knowledge.

GENERAL SITUATION.

The battle of the Meuse-Argonne began on September 26th 1918 and made rapid progress until September 28th. (10) By September 29th the green divisions in the front lines met the full brunt of violent enemy reactions. Due to lack of training and discipline, and poor leadership, it was necessary to relieve four front line divisions, among them the 35th Division. (11)

(10) Personal knowledge.

(11) Harper, vol. 5, p. 232-233.

SPECIAL SITUATION.

When the Meuse-Argonne operations commenced, the 1st Division was assigned to the III Corps and placed in Army Reserve. (12) The division headquarters was at Benoit-Vaux, south of Souilly. The units of the division were astride the "Voie Sacree" with the foot troops generally

(12) 1st Div. Hist. p 174.

- west of the road and the mounted units on the east. The units had been purposely so placed as the Army expected to use the Division in extending the attack east of the Meuse. (13) Roads to the east of the Meuse were reconnoitered and conferences had with the commanders of the French Corps and divisions occupying this sector. (14) About 4.30 P.M. on the afternoon of September 27th the Army ordered the Division by telephone, to proceed by march-^{ing} to the vicinity of Nixeville, all units to be on the march by 7 P.M. The Division complied with the order (15) and after a twelve hour march in a heavy rain, found itself bivouaced in woods made boggy by old French bivouacs or horse lines and often tangled by the wire of the rear defenses. (16) September 29th the Division was assigned to the I Corps and ordered to the vicinity of Neuville. Foot troops were carried in French camions or trucks and the mounted units moved by marching. All available roads were being heavily used, but the movement was accomplished without incident or interruption. (17) In a way this movement was remarkable. Telephonic orders were received at 2 P.M. from the Army and the Division was told that one camion train was then on the way and that the movement would start at four P.M. It started promptly on time and was smoothly carried out only because of the close mutual support of line and staff. (18)
- (13) Personal knowledge.
- (14) 1st Div. Hist. p. 174.
- (15) Personal experience.
- (16) 1st Div. Hist. p. 175.
- (17) 1st Div. Hist. p. 176.
- (18) Personal knowledge.
- (19) 1st Div. Hist. p. 176.
- The I Corps ordered the Division to relieve the 35th Division on the night of September 30th on the east bank of the Aire River. (19)
- TERRAIN:

Squarely in line with the advance of the Division were series of hills with wooded crests and smooth, glacial like slopes, which were fringed with patches of brush and

- woods. The most prominent of these hills were Hills 240, 263, 269 and 272. The hills were cut by several transverse ravines drained by small streams flowing into the Aire. Parts of the sector were covered with heavy woods, the largest being Bois de Montrebeau, Le Petit Bois, Bois de Moncy and Bois de Romagne. (20)
- To the west and east of the sector were other high hills and heavy woods. This group of wooded hills and ravines formed a barrier three miles deep, north of Exermont. (21) The position dominated the Aire valley and the terrain to the east and west. It has been called the key position of the Meuse Argonne (22) and General Pershing said of it: "That positions in this area were of vital importance to the continuation of the general advance". (23)
- In addition to the natural obstacles the Germans had most skillfully organized the ground. Every open space was covered by bands of interlocking machine gun fire, supported by artillery concentrations. (24)
- MISSION.
- The mission of the Division was to drive straight ahead in its zone of action to its objective. (25) The Army desired to neutralize the flanking fire from the Argonne and to expel the enemy from the territory east of Fleville. This territory was needed to launch a counter attack northwest thru Cornay and Chatel-Chehery, thus outflanking the Argonne Forest. It was so important from the Army viewpoint that the 1st Division was employed in this sector in spite of the complicated road movement necessary to get the Division into position. (26)
- (20) Legg, p. 557.
- (21) Thomas, p. 29.
- (22) Thomas, p. 29.
- (23) Pershing, p. 19.
- (24) Palmer, p. 272.
Thomas, p. 292.
Gen. Summary.
- (25) 1st Div. Hist. p. 429.
- (26) Pershing & Liggett, p. 54 and p. 56.

OPERATIONS.

September 30-October 3.

The I Corps ordered the 1st Division to relieve the 35th Division on the night of September 30th, the relief to be completed by 5 A.M. October 1st. (27) The Corps order further specified that the Commanding General, 1st Division would have full charge of the relief. This was contrary to the usual custom, as the unit to be relieved generally had charge of the details of the relief.

(27) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
176.

(28) Personal
knowledge.

(28)

The 35th Division was badly disorganized from its division headquarters forward. A few patrols of the 35th Division had advanced as far as Exermont but had been driven back. (29) 35th Divisional Headquarters was in a bad state. When the battle echelon of 1st Division headquarters arrived at Cheppy to take over, both the Division Commander (35th) and his Chief of Staff were at the front trying to rally their men. The Assistant Chief of Staff G-3, did not know definitely where the front line was or where his regimental command posts were. The only definite information that he had of his combat troops was the location of the divisional artillery brigade and regiment of engineers which was holding part of the line. (30)

(29) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
190.

(30) Lt. Col.
Gallegher.

To add to the disorganization, the enemy had launched powerful counter attacks in the preceding forty eight hours. The Corps had been forced to reinforce the 35th Division by a regiment of the 82nd Division. (31)

(31) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
176.

The original intention of the high command was to have the 1st Division pass thru the 35th Division and attack on the morning of October 1st. This was changed and the 1st Division was ordered to relieve the 35th Division. (32)

(32) Personal
knowledge.

----five---

(33) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
176.

The reported line of the 35th Division ran from Baulny to Echsfontaine over a four kilometer front. (33) South of this line ravines cut across the sector. The most northern one extended from Baulny to the Apremont-Epinonville road and included part of the reported 35th Division front line. About a kilometer south of this, a second ravine ran from Charpentry to Echsfontaine. A kilometer and a half south of this ravine there was a third one which ran by Very to Epinonville. Between the ravines were open plateau. (34)

(34) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
177.

The Division Commander in his order for the relief placed his four infantry regiments in line from right to left, 26th, 28th, 18th and 16th Infantry. Each regiment was in column of battalions. (35) The Division Commander further prescribed that the leading battalions with their head on the Charpentry-Echsfontaine road at midnight would advance to the line L'Esperance-Chaudron Fme.-Serieux Fme.-Boleaux Bois not later than 3 A.M. and dig in. (36) The result was to place the leading battalions along the northern ravine, the support battalions in the second ravine and the reserve battalions in the Very ravine.

(35) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
428.

(36) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
428.

From Neuilly, where the Division was, there was only one road forward and it was the axial road of the I Corps, the Neuilly-Varennes road. This road crossed the lines and no mans' land of trench warfare days and was in bad shape. Beyond no mans' land the enemy had exploded a mine in the center of the road at least forty feet deep. a plank one way road had been built by the engineers around this crater.

From Neuville to Varennes the road was a solid mass of stalled vehicles of all kinds. The 1st Division, less the 5th Field Artillery and trains, passed thru this mess by marching cross country. (37) Machine Guns were carried by hand for more than sixteen kilometers. (38) By dark the leading elements of the division were close to Cheppy.

(37) Personal knowledge.
(38) 1st Div. Hist. p. 177.
Captain Helseley.

The Infantry relief was carried out without incident and the 35th Division, less its artillery brigade and sanitary train, were withdrawn and assembled in the vicinity of Cheppy. (39)

(39) Personal knowledge.

The night was very dark and infantry battalions marched on narrow fronts with companies in column of twos and without distance between platoons. (40)

(40) Legge, p. 558.

The 1st Field Artillery Brigade was unable to get further than Cheppy on the night of September 30th, but on the night October 1-2, the Brigade got into position. The 6th Field Artillery in support of the 1st Brigade, took up a well chosen position east of Charpentry, where it was defiladed from view to the north and to the west. The 7th Field Artillery, supporting the 2nd Brigade, occupied a position southwest of Echfontaine. The howitzer regiment, the 5th Field Artillery, under cover of the ravines, had its 2nd Battalion near Charpentry and the 1st and 3rd battalions near Very. (41)

(41) 1st Div. Hist. p. 181.

Division headquarters was located in German dugouts at Cheppy; the 1st Brigade headquarters at Charpentry and the 2nd at Very. Two field hospitals were placed at Cheppy. (42) The 1st Engineers, who had been on detached service with the III Corps, rejoined the division on the night of October 2nd after an exhausting march and were placed in division reserve southwest of Very. (43)

(42) 1st Div. Hist. p. 181. and p. 426.
Personal knowledge.

(43) 1st Div. Hist. p. 427.

The 1st Machine Gun Battalion was held in division reserve southeast of Varennes, on the Varennes-Avocourt road. (44)

(44) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
427.

The brigade machine gun battalions had been practically broken up in the spring of 1918 and the companies attached to infantry battalions as a fifth company. Later the wire companies of the 2nd Field Signal Battalion were broken up and detachments had been ^{attached} to infantry battalions, regimental and brigade headquarters.

(45) Personal
knowledge.

This had been done for the sake of efficiency. (45)

(46) Personal
knowledge.

Patrols were promptly pushed forward; contact was gained with the enemy; and prisoners were taken. (46) In front of the 1st Brigade was the V Guard Division and front of the 2nd Brigade was the 52nd Division. Both of them were fresh first class fighting divisions. Prisoners stated that they had orders to hold their positions at all cost. (47)

(47) General
Summerall.

From October 1st to October 3rd, the sector was a perfect hell. The enemy, from his positions in the Argonne Forest, had splendid artillery enfilade fire. High explosive and shrapnel were mixed with gas. The rattle of musketry fire and the tattoo of machine guns were constantly heard. "M" Company of the 18th Infantry was practically put out of action because the ground it was digging in on had been gassed. Casualties amounted to an average of 500 daily. It was possible to get food to the front lines only at night and in many cases the carrying parties were knocked out. However the Division gave the enemy as much as it received. (48)

(48) Personal
knowledge,
& 1st Div.
Hist. p.
182-183.

On October 2nd, an order was received from the Corps that the next morning at day-break each front line regiment would send out an officers' patrol of a platoon to keep in contact with enemy. The Division Commander

protested and stated that all of his regiments were in close contact with enemy and that it was practically murder to send these patrols out. The Corps replied that the order came from the French who had information that the enemy was retreating and that the patrols must be sent out. This faux pax had a far reaching effect as will be shown later. The patrols were sent out and those of the 1st Brigade were pinned to the ground almost as soon as they started and practically exterminated. The patrols of the 2nd Brigade were able to advance from a half to three quarters of a kilometer. Some of them were rescued, still holding their positions, when the Division finally advanced. (49)

(49) Personal knowledge.
& 1st Div.
Hist. p.
185.

By aggressive patrolling and local exploitation the enemy had been driven north of the L'Esperance- Le Bol-eaux road and the 2nd Brigade had even made some advance north of that road. (50)

(50) Personal knowledge.

OCTOBER 4TH - 5TH.

On the night of October 2nd, the Division received the order for an attack. This attack was to be an offensive all along the Meuse Argonne front. (51) "D" day was later named as October 4th and "H" hour as 5.30 AM. (52)

(51) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
429.

(52) Personal knowledge.

The following units were attached to the Division for this operation:-

One French regiment of artillery;

One Company of Gas troops;

A squadron of Cavalry;

An air observation squadron;

A balloon company;

Three tank companies. (53)

(53) 1st Div.
Hist. p.184,
& Personal
knowledge.

The Corps order prescribed that two accompanying guns (75 mm.) would be attached to each assault battalion of infantry (54).

(54) Personal knowledge.

In estimating the situation, the Division Commander realized that his left flank, advancing over open ground, would be subject to heavy close range artillery fire from the Argonne Forest. Further, strong resistance from the Bois de Montrebeau could be expected. As far as Exermont ravine, the terrain in front of the 2nd Brigade was unfavorable for defense, also the patrols of the 1st Brigade, sent out from each of the regiments on October 2nd had been pinned to the ground as soon as they moved out. On the right, these patrols had been able to advance some distance and the 2nd Brigade had even gained some ground north of the L'Esperance-Le Boleaux Bois road by local exploitation. So, it was reasonable to suppose that the 2nd Brigade would be able to advance much more quickly than the 1st Brigade. The Division Commander's decision was to the effect that 2nd Brigade would make a sharp, deep penetration pivoting upon the 1st Brigade, and that 1st Brigade with a refused left flank, would be brought up with the 2nd Brigade. (55)

(55) General Summerall.

The division order for the attack prescribed that the division "advance to its objective without reference to the advance of the division on our right (91st Div. 5th Corps) and on the left. (28th Div.)" (56)

(56) 1st Div. Hist. p. 429.

The infantry regiments, in column of battalions, were to attack abreast of each other. The division order also prescribed that one company each from the assault and support battalions of the left regiment

(16th Infantry) would be sent up the Aire valley as combat patrols with the double mission of cleaning up hostile machine gun nests at Fme. des Granges and to obtain liason with the 28th Division. The right regiment (26th Infantry) was to send strong combat patrols along the edge of the woods on its right flank. The third line battalions of the exterior regiments (16th and 26th Infantry) were designated as division reserves, and the third line battalions of the interior regiments (18th and 28th Infantry) were designated as Brigade reserves.

The division order planned that the artillery would put down a barrage 200 meters in front of the line of departure at H minus five minutes. The infantry was to throw out a screen to the line of departure at midnight and advance to it at H hour. The barrage was to lift at "H hour, advance at the rate of 100 meters in four minutes, and halt 30 minutes, 200 meters in front of the first and second objectives. A standing barrage was to be put down on the final or Corps objective for 20 minutes. (57) This barrage was very thin, there being only forty eight guns to 5000 yards of frontage or approximately one gun for each 100 yards. (58)

The machine gun companies of the division reserve battalions were turned over to the brigade commanders to fill in gaps and protect their brigade flanks. A platoon of tanks was ordered deployed across the front of each infantry regiment and two platoons were placed generally along the brigade axis of advance. Two platoons were ordered to accompany the third line battalions to assist in mopping up. The tanks on the 16th

(57) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
430.

(58) Thomas,
p. 297.

Infantry front were ordered into the 18th Infantry zone of action when the 16th Infantry reached the northern edge of the Bois de Montrebeau.

The observation squadron was ordered to have one command plane in the air at all times and it was to call for the staking out of the line on each objective. The squadron was also to have two artillery planes in the air at all times. The balloon company was to assist the artillery.

The company of gas troops was ordered to place a smoke screen along the southern edge of the Bois de Montrebeau from H minus five minutes to H plus thirty minutes.

The cavalry squadron was held in division reserve ready to move on thirty minutes notice.

The 1st Engineers were held in division reserve ready to move at H minus one hour. (59)

The infantry regiments used a novel method in handling the straggler question: The 1st Sergeants formed a straggler line in the zone of advance of each regiment, thus insuring an immediate return to their organizations of all stragglers. (60)

The advance started according to schedule.

From the "jump off" the 26th Infantry on the right had a fight on its hands. The enemy from well chosen and protected positions completely dominated its zone of action. The enemy fire was especially deadly from La Neuville-le Comte Fme. and the woods one kilometer to the east of the zone of action of the regiment (across the continuation of Exermont ravine). The 1st Battalion in assault was so badly depleted upon arrival at the first objective that the 2nd Battalion passed thru it and con-
ued the assault. The 28th Infantry took La Neuville-le-

(59) F.O. 47,
1st Div.
1st Div.
Hist. p
429-430.

(60) Legge,
p. 565.

Comte Fme. relieving the pressure on the left from the 26th Infantry. However repeated assaults were necessary to take the woods to the east. At 5 P.M. the 1st and 2nd Battalions were occupying a line from La-Neuville-le-Comte Fme. to the western edge of the woods on the right with its right flank refused. (61) A thousand yards north of Exermont ravine the enemy had several batteries of 77 mm. guns which used direct fire against the infantry of the 2nd Brigade. The 2nd Battalion 26th Infantry entered Exermont ravine with 30 officers and 1000 men but when it reached the northern edge it had but 6 officers and 285 men. (62)

The 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry, the assaulting battalion of that regiment, enjoyed slight cover until it started out of the ravine. There it ran into not only this murderous artillery fire but also heavy fire from the La Neuville-le-Comte Fme. strongpoint. An artillery battery and the machine guns were put out of action by the accompanying guns and the battalion finally captured this battery turning the guns on the enemy. The battalion finally occupied the line Beau-guard Fme.-La Neuville-le-Comte Fme. (63)

The 3rd Battalion, 18th Infantry, was designated as the assault battalion of that regiment, but because of the fog and darkness the 2nd Battalion closed up on it as H hour approached and both battalions assaulted together in the regimental zone of action. As the two battalions left the first objective they ran into heavy artillery and machine gun fire on the bare slope leading to Exermont ravine. When the leading elements got into Exermont they were met with heavy enfilade artillery

(61)1st Div.
Hist. p.
193.

(62)Thomas,
p.300-301.

(63)1st Div.
Hist.p.191.
Captain
Butler.

fire from the Argonne and with close range, flanking fire from cover of the ridge which lead to the base of Hill 240. In spite of heavy losses, the remainder of the two battalions began a slow and painful advance up the bare, open ridge leading to Hill 240. Altho exhausted and suffering from very heavy casualties, detachments managed to ascend to the crest of Hill 240, climbing up the steep southern slope thru a dense heavy growth of scrub. On the crest, a hail of artillery and small arms' fire greeted them and they were forced to descend to a position at the southern base of the hill. The line was extended to the left, joining up with the 16th Infantry. On the right, the line was refused to join up with the 28th Infantry, thus making the front line extend in a northwest-southwest direction. The two battalions were reorganized and the position organized in depth with the 3rd Battalion in front. Two companies of the Brigade reserve were placed in position north of Exermont ravine on the left of the 18th Infantry zone of action as counter attack elements. (64) Machine guns were used by the 18th Infantry to a good advantage in destroying machine gun nests thru out the day. (65)

(64)1st Div.
Hist. p.
190.

(65)Hist.2nd
M.G.Bn.p.
36.

As the 16th Infantry, with the 3rd Battalion in assault, left the line of departure, it became the target of raking enfilade artillery fire from the Argonne Forest. In spite of it, the 3rd Battalion advanced and took the town of Fleville. The two companies in the Aire valley cleared Fme. des Granges of machine guns. Division headquarters ordered the line to be withdrawn on the reverse slope south of Fleville, because it was believed that the

town would be heavily shelled and it was. There they dug in. This regiment had the honor of being the only unit in the First American Army to reach its objective on that day. It paid a heavy price though, because of the 20 officers and 800 men who had jumped off with the 3rd Battalion but 2 officers and 240 men were left. The right flank of the regiment was refused to join up with the 18th Infantry. (66)

(66)1st Div.
Hist.p.
189-190.

The Division Commander attached the 6th and 7th Field Artillery regiments to the 1st and 2nd Brigades respectively, when he discovered that the infantry was unable to keep up with the barrage. It was only because of the close mutual support of the infantry and artillery that the former was able to advance at all. (67)

(67)Personal
knowledge.

The accompanying guns, except those of the 28th Infantry, were knocked out soon after the jump off and, as one writer has expressed it, "They accomplished little more than to add to the heroic sacrifices of the day".(68)

(68)1st Div.
Hist. p.
186.

37 mm. guns were used to good advantage by the 26th Infantry and the 28th Infantry found the 3 inch trench mortars a useful aid in knocking out enemy machine guns.(69)

(69)Captain
Cornish &
Captain
Butler.

As can well be imagined, the tanks suffered heavily. Only five out of forty seven tanks reached Exermont ravine and they were destroyed by direct hits. Casualties to tank personnel amounted to eighty four per cent.(70) These tanks were in bad mechanical shape though. They had been used in the St. Mihiel attack and then had been moved to the Meuse Argonne front without being sent to a tank park for repairs. (71)

(70)1st Div.
Hist. p.
194.

(71)Personal
knowledge.

The cavalry squadron was not used as there was no opportunity for doing so. (72)

(72)Personal
knowledge.

From a divisional standpoint the supply elements functioned very well and at no time was there any deficiency in food or ammunition. (73)

(73) Personal knowledge.

The field hospitals and the sanitary train were hard pushed, but they did their duty in accordance with the highest standards of the Medical Corps. (74)

(74) 1st Div. Hist. p. 194.

At the end of the day, the Division had accomplished its mission in part. A wedge from two to four kilometers in depth had been driven. And it was driven thru almost insurmountable obstacles by the discipline, morale and courage of the combat units of the 1st Division - principally good old "John Doughboy". (75)

(75) Personal knowledge.

The Corps ordered the attack continued on October 5th. The Division Commander decided to first bring the 18th Infantry and the 2nd Brigade on line with the 16th Infantry and then have all four infantry regiments continue the attack to the original 3rd objective. In other words, the scheme of maneuver was to pivot the attack on the 16th Infantry (76).

(76) Personal knowledge.

The first objective of the 18th Infantry and the 2nd Brigade was a line from the crest of Hill 240 to the northern edge of the woods just north of Hill 212. The second objective was from the line of the 16th Infantry to the northern base of Hill 272. (77)

(77) 1st Div. Hist. p. 196 and F.O. 48, p.436.

The terrain was more difficult, if anything, to attack than that of the day before. On the right Hill 212 and the woods to the north were held in strength. Beyond, the western edge of the Bois de Moncy and Fme. d'Arietal were strongly organized. Further on, the forbidding Hill 272 was alive with machine guns. In the 28th Infantry zone of attack, there was first a deep, narrow valley to be crossed on the northern edge of which the enemy had a

small trench system. The zone of attack was enfiladed from Hill 212 and Hill 240. To the north Hill 272 again dominated this zone. In the 18th Infantry zone of action, first and foremost Hill 240 had to be taken. When it was taken, the whole northern slope was under observation from that damnable Hill 272, which absolutely dominated the ground over which the Division had to attack. On the left, what remained of the 16th Infantry grimly held on while the enemy kept a rain of artillery pouring down on them from the heights of the Argonne Forest.

The Division order provided that the artillery fire heavy concentrations between the line of departure and the first objective from H minus 15 minutes to H hour. At that time a rolling barrage was to precede the infantry at the rate of 100 meters in 4 minutes. While the Infantry waited for two hours on the first objective, the artillery was to place heavy concentrations on the terrain between the first and second objectives and in the western edge of the Bois de Moncy. The same rolling barrage was to be placed in front of the infantry as in the advance to the first objective. The same method of employing the artillery was to be used in advancing to the 3rd objective.

The Division attack order also prescribed that two companies of the 26th Infantry attack due east and take the western edge of the Bois de Moncy. The Commanding General of the 2nd Brigade was given the division reserve battalion of the 26th Infantry and he was ordered to have that battalion and the battalion of the 28th Infantry in brigade reserve, pass through the assault battalions of his brigade at the first objective and make the attack on the second objective.

The results of the days' fighting were to straighten the line and to widen the wedge already driven. Again, it was the close mutual support of infantry, machine guns and artillery which permitted the advance to be made.

The Corps had ordered the Division to assist the advance of the division on the right, now the 32nd Division, so the Division Commander ordered the Commanding Officer, 26th Infantry, to send a patrol through the Bois de Moncy towards Hill 269, when he had taken the Fme. d'Arietal. This was done and the patrol managed in some accountable manner to reach Hill 269. It reported the hill unoccupied, so a platoon of twenty four men were sent to occupy it. As a matter of fact, the report that the hill was unoccupied was partly incorrect. This hill consisted of a ridge running east and west. On the ridge there were three knolls, the westernmost the lowest and the eastern one the highest. The western knoll was unoccupied but the others were held. As the crest and sides of the hill were heavily wooded, it was only natural that the 26th Infantry believed that it had all of the hill. However, this platoon greatly confused the enemy, as his line in front of the 32nd Division was several hundred meters south of Hill 269 and its partial occupation probably saved a costly attack.

The Division Commander promptly requested, on October 6th, that the 32nd Division relieve the garrison on Hill 269. Both the V Corps Commander and the 32nd Division Commander refused to believe that the 1st Division had taken the hill. The Division Commander then made a personal appeal to the Army Commander, General Pershing, and on the night of October 6th-7th, a battalion

H hour was fixed at 6.30 A.M.

The 1st Battalion of the 26th Infantry was again in assault but after heavy losses in taking Hill 212, it was necessary at that time to pass the 3rd Battalion thru it. This was done and the first objective was taken on time. In advancing to the second objective, the 3rd Battalion had a difficult time due to the strong points of the Fme. d'Arietal and in the western edge of the Bois de Moncy. These strong points were taken by infiltration and by direct eastern attack of two companies on the Bois de Moncy as the division order had prescribed. Further advance was impossible due to the heavy machine gun fire from Hill 272. So the 3rd Battalion dug in on the line southern edge of Le Petit Bois-Fme. d'Arietal and well into the Bois de Moncy.

The 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry met stubborn resistance from the start but by infiltration and pure courage, it advanced to the crest of Hill 240. The 2nd Battalion, which had been in Brigade reserve, made the assault on the second objective. However, the fire from Hill 272 was so deadly that it was forced to dig in along the northern base of Hill 240.

The 3rd Battalion of the 18th Infantry again climbed Hill 240. A fresh enemy battalion was defending it. The attack became a large number of small fights and the issue was kill or be killed. The enemy garrison was simply annihilated. The advance on the 2nd objective was stopped by the enemy machine guns on Hill 272 and the battalion dug in along the northern base of Hill 240, connecting up with the 16th Infantry on the left and the 28th Infantry on the right. The 16th Infantry made no advance. (78)

of the 32nd Division, marching thru the zone of action of the 1st Division, relieved this gallant platoon.

(79) Personal
knowledge.
1st Div.
Hist. p.201;
Farrel, p.
51.

(79)

OCTOBER 6-8.

The Division was ordered to hold its line on October 6th. This does not mean that the front was quiet. Attempts were made to push patrols to the front and to advance by infiltration against Hill 272, but all movements were checked by the enemy. The 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry, while attempting to flank Hill 272 ran into a large body of enemy troops. Hard fighting resulted but the enemy was defeated and the ground gained was held. The 1st Engineers began the construction of a defensive position along the Chaudron Fme.-Serieux Fme. line.

The artillery had continually been displaced forward with the advance and during the day some of it got as far north as La Neuville-le-Comte Fme. (80)

(80) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
202-203.

On the morning of October 6th, the Division Commander was asked by the Corps his opinion as to the feasibility of having the 82nd Division enter the zone of the 1st Division and having it attack northwest against the Argonne on the morning of October 7th. The Division Commander stated that the plan was feasible but advised that it would be better to delay the attack twenty four hours. His reasons for advising delay were that there was no opportunity for the 82nd Division to make a proper reconnaissance especially of fords across the Aire River and that the 82nd Division would have to make a forced march to get into position.

The high command decided that it was necessary to attack on October 7th. The 82nd Division entered the zone on the night of October 6-7, and under the supporting fire of artillery (the 6th Field Artillery assisted) it successfully attacked the line Chatel-Chehery-Hill 244. This action outflanked the Argonne Forest and stopped the severe galling enemy enfilade fire that the 16th Infantry had endured since October 4th. (81)

(81) Personal
knowledge.

One of the missions for which the Division had been sent into action was now an actual accomplishment. So, on October 7th, the Division was transferred to the V Corps to accomplish its second mission, - to outflank the territory to the east which the enemy had so far successfully defended.

The zone of action of the Division was changed somewhat, so that the eastern boundary was the line Hill 269 - Tuillerie Fme. and the western boundary was the line Fleville - Sommerance. The 181st Infantry Brigade of the 91st Division, badly shaken by recent fighting, was attached to the Division.

During the night of October 7-8, the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry, in division reserve, was moved north to the southern edge of Hill 240. The machine gun company of the 1st battalion 16th Infantry was returned to its battalion on that night. It had been used by the 1st Brigade on machine gun missions. (82)

(82) Personal
knowledge.
and
Captain
Helsely

It was now necessary for the Division to again take over Hill 269. So, the 1st Battalion, 1st Engineers, with one company of the 1st Machine Gun Battalion attached, was directed to take it over.

After a long, dreary night march in a heavy rain and over unfamiliar ground, the Battalion made the relief. The next morning, it was discovered that the enemy was holding the two eastern knolls in force. The Battalion Commander, displaying praiseworthy aggressiveness, at once decided to attack. His plan of attack was tactically sound and the Engineers without automatic rifles and grenades, attacked with the bayonet and took all of the hill. Not only that, but they held it. (83) In so doing they lived up to the highest traditions of their Corps and of the 1st Division.

(83)Farrel,
p. 53.

The 26th Infantry while preparing to attack Hill 272 on the afternoon of October 8th discovered two bodies of enemy troops, one just south of Hill 263 and the other just north of Hill 272. They were apparently getting ready to counter attack. The 26th Infantry assisted by machine gun and artillery fire broke up these bodies, but the regiment was unable to resume its maneuver against Hill 272. (83)

(83)1st Div.
Hist. p.
204.

The three days of October 6-8 were a nightmare to the 1st Division. The enemy shelled the rear areas so heavily that the Field Hospitals at Cheppy had to be moved further south; all ravines were gassed, his machine guns and trench mortars were never silent. At night the zone of action was an awe inspiring sight. Signal rockets of all colors were in the air; woods were on fire, ammunition dumps exploded; and the flashes of the artillery lighted the heavens. Hill 240 was a cloud of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire at night. He got as good as he sent though. The artillery of the Division concentrated on Hill 272 and tons of metal were thrown

(84) Personal
knowledge.

on it. Prisoners later reported that the artillery had cut the lines of communication on the hill and that the garrison was practically cut off on October 8th. (84)

OCTOBER 9TH.

On October 8th, an order was received from the V Corps, for a general attack on October 9th. The Corps gave the Division, with the 181st Infantry Brigade attached, the mission of helping the 32nd Division on the right by attacking in a slightly northeasterly direction, thus cleaning up Le Petit Bois and the Bois de Romagne. (85)

(85) F.O. 49, 1st
Div. & 1st
Div. Hist.,
p. 439.

The Division was in a bad state to make any further attacks. Casualties had been exceedingly heavy; the Division was tired; the only two fresh units in it were the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, and the 2nd Battalion, 1st Engineers.

The Division Commander was fully aware of these facts and further that the hardest task of all was ahead of him, - the taking of the redoubtable Hill 272. In addition, his artillery strength was very weak for an attack such as this.

Under these conditions he decided to employ his last infantry reserve against Hill 272 and to divide his attack into separate phases or operations so that the full artillery strength at his command could be employed in each operation. (86)

(86) Personal
knowledge.

To carry out this plan, the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, was attached to the 18th Infantry and the attack order of the Division prescribed that it should make the attack against Hill 272.

Two objectives were fixed. The first a line running north of Hill 272 and the second a line running just

north of the Cote de Maldah and the Bois de Romagne.

The attack order described three operations. In the first operation, the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry was to be the spearhead of the attack and was to take Hill 272, the other units of the 1st Brigade conforming to its movements.

At H plus 22^{minutes} the 2nd Brigade was to attack with its least fatigued battalions, the battalions in brigade and division reserve being made available for that purpose. The relieved battalions were placed in brigade and division reserve and ordered to reorganize at Fme. St. Germaine and Fme. d'Arietal respectively. The attack was to pivot on the 1st Battalion, 1st Engineers on Hill 269. The 361st Infantry on its right was ordered to hold its position.

For the 1st Brigade, the artillery was to put down a barrage which was to advance at the rate of 100 meters in three minutes for fifteen minutes, while in the valley between Hill 240 and 272, and at the rate of 100 meters in six minutes, while the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, climbed Hill 272. A rolling barrage of 100 meters in six minutes was placed in front of the 2nd Brigade as its zone of action was through woods.

After a two hour halt on the first objective, the 2nd Brigade was to advance to the second objective. During this halt the artillery was to fire heavy concentrations in the zone of the 2nd Brigade between the first and second objectives.

Brigade Commanders were ordered to organize a defensive position on the line, - Hill 240 - northern edge of woods north of Hill 212 at H hour.

The second operation was to advance the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, to the second objective. After completing its mission with the 2nd Brigade the artillery was ordered to fire heavy concentrations between the first and second objectives in the zone of action of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry for thirty minutes and then to put down a rolling barrage, which advanced at the rate of 100 meters in six minutes.

The third operation was to advance the rest of the 1st Brigade to the second objective. After the artillery had placed heavy concentrations in its zone of action for thirty minutes the 1st Brigade, less the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, was to advance under a rolling barrage at the rate of 100 meters in 6 minutes.

All units, on reaching the second objective were to organize in depth.

Support and reserve machine gun companies were formed into battalions for overhead fire.

The Division had in reserve, the 362nd Infantry, (worn out and depleted), the 2nd Battalion, 1st Engineers, a battalion, rather the remnant of a battalion, of the 26th Infantry and one company of the 1st Machine Gun Battalion (after it finished its overhead fire mission).

The gas troops were ordered to fire thermite concentrations on small patches of woods and trenches near Hill 176 for 15 minutes preceeding H hour.

The Cavalry was ordered to send mounted patrols to the infantry brigades for messenger duty.

The signal battalion was directed to place visual signaling stations on Hill 240 and 269 connected to the Division command post by a series of relay stations. These stations were to be used to send short messages to the rear.

(87) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
439-442.

H hour was fixed as 8.30 A.M. October 9, 1918. (87)

Luckily for the 1st Division there was a heavy dense fog on the morning of October 9th. The attack of the 1st Brigade started on time but the battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, stated to the author that it is doubtful whether his battalion could have moved if it had not been for the fog. (88) As it was, the battalion with a dash and spirit that could not be denied, climbed the steep and rugged slopes of the hill, captured the crest, and reached its objective on time.

(88) Major
Ryder,
Captain
Helsely.

The attack of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Infantry broke down under heavy machine gun fire from Hill 176 and concentrations of enemy artillery fire in the narrow valley between Hill 240 and 176. One company enveloped Hill 176 from the west, forcing the enemy to withdraw and the battalion reached the first objective on time.

The 16th Infantry on the extreme left reached the first objective on time, though it had severe losses. (89)

(89) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
208-209.

While the 1st Battalion, 1st Engineers was organizing for the attack at 7.30 A.M. the enemy launched a heavy counter attack on Hill 269. It was beaten off after a desperate struggle and the gallant engineers were ready to advance at H hour. (90)

(90) Farrel,
p. 55.

The 2nd Brigade, under what one officer has called a rain of artillery shells and machine gun bullets, reached the first objective, taking Hill 263 on time. (91)

(91) Captain
Butler.

The attack, by successive operations from right to left, then proceeded according to schedule, the enemy defense wilting after Hill 272 was taken. An enemy force getting ready to counter attack Hill 263 was caught by the barrage and dispersed by the assault battalion of the 26th Infantry.

At the end of the day's fighting the line was a curve shaped one, from one half a kilometer north of Fleville to the northern slope of the Cote de Maldah, then to northern edge of Le Petit Bois and thru the Bois de Romagne to the eastern boundary of the zone of action.

(92) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
208-210.

(92)

The second mission of the Division was now accomplished, but the personnel of the Division was exhausted. The front line infantry units were so tired that the men slept soundly in spite of a heavy bombardment. The enemy was so badly disorganized that a German rolling kitchen with a meal of bean soup prepared drove into the front line of the 28th Infantry. (93)

(93) Captain
Butler,
Captain
Helsely.

OCTOBER 10-11TH:

Altho the Division should have been relieved, the Corps ordered an attack on October 10th. The Division did advance from one to two kilometers by sending patrols out and as they found the territory unoccupied the infantry battalions followed them. In this way the line was advanced until it reached from just north of Sommerance to the northern edge of the Bois de Romagne. (94)

(94) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
210-211.

On October 11th, the Corps ordered the attack continued. The Division Commander ordered the same method of attack as had succeeded on the previous day. This time, the patrols encountered heavy machine gun fire from Kriemhilde Stellung, a well organized enemy line in front of Landres-et-St. Georges and no progress could be made. (95) Officers on duty with front line units state that front line battalions reported on October 10th, that the enemy was preparing this position and that Germans were seen digging in and emplacing machine guns. However, the author is

(95) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
211.

positive that no such information reached the Division
Commander. (96)

(96) Captains
Boyd and
Butler;
Personal
experience.

On the night of October 11-12th the Division, less
the 1st Field Artillery Brigade and Ammunition train
was relieved by the 42nd Division, and the Division, after
a long and arduous march, was placed in army reserve. (97)

(97) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
212.

GAINS and LOSSES:

The Division had driven a wedge seven kilometers
deep in a vital part of the enemy's line; it had de-
feated parts of eight German divisions (1st and 5th
Guard, 28th, 37th, 41st, 45th, 52nd and 115th divisions)

The prisoners taken were:-

28 officers, including one Lieutenant Colonel,
455 non-commissioned officers,

924 enlisted men.
1407 total.

Large amounts of stores, munitions, small arms, ten
trench mortars and thirteen pieces of field artillery
were captured.

The casualty list of the Division was exceedingly
large and is listed in the history of the Division as
follows:

Killed or died of wounds:	68 officers, 1526 men,
Wounded; ,.....	128 officers, 5706 men,
Missing; ,.....	, 59 men,
Prisoners; ,.....	, 33 men

Total: 196 officers, 7324 men. (98)

(98) 1st Div.
Hist. p.
213.

ANALYSIS and CRITICISMS:

The scheme of maneuver used in this operation was a simple one. It was an application of the pugilist's "one-two",- if you lead with your right hand, then follow it with a blow with your left. This "one-two" was used in a double sense. In each of the phases of this operation, the attack was pivoted on one flank while the other made the drive. This scheme was used in part because of the lack of artillery. In the second sense, the "one-two" was used by first leading with the artillery and then following it up with blow by the infantry.

Factors, which contributed to the success of the operation, were the deep disposition in depth; the prompt and correct use of reserves; the use of all means at hand; the close mutual support of the infantry and supporting weapons, especially the artillery; and the fact that in each unit of the 1st Division there was a nucleus of well trained non-commissioned officers and enlisted men of the old regular army who had refused commissions when the war broke out.

The infantry was disposed in column of battalions, thus permitting fresh battalions to leap frog the depleted and exhausted front line battalions. The latter were thus given an opportunity to reorganize. Another advantage was that none of the units ever became lost or disorganized.(99)

When the situation demanded it, the Division Commander did not hesitate to throw in his reserves, yet he retained in his control sufficient troops to make the supreme effort on October 9th.

Every means at the disposal of the Division Commander were used to their fullest extent. For example, infantry weapons (machine guns, 37 mm. guns, mortars), tanks, artill

lery, air service, gas troops and cavalry were all employed to the full limit of their capacities and limitations.

The close mutual support of the infantry and the artillery was one of the outstanding factors of the success of each day's fighting. The infantry had confidence in the artillery and the officers and men of the 1st Field Artillery Brigade believed implicitly in their infantry.

It is the humble opinion of the author, that the nucleus of old soldiers in each organization of all the regular army divisions in the A.E.F. was in a large measure responsible for their success. No place was this more true than in the 1st Division. When officers and leaders fell, there was always some old, well disciplined "file" to take their places. The company of the 28th Infantry which took Hill 263 was commanded by a sergeant of the old school. (100) As a result, the organizations never became demoralized or disorganized, or lacked leaders.

(100) Captain
Butler.

In the final analysis tho it was the supreme courage of the Infantry and splendid leadership which won the victory.

It is difficult at best to criticize a successful operation, and in this case made more difficult by the author's position as a member of the staff of the Division Commander. It is easy to say that if - - - - - had been done, that "such and such" would have happened. The fact remains that the methods used did succeed and for all other methods there remains that most doubtful word in the English language: IF.

The only criticism that can be made of the action of the Division is the form of field orders used. However,

the Division had served with the French for over a year and these forms were French. In addition, the Division was used to them.

The high command cannot be condemned too severely for ordering out the patrols on October 3rd.

The Division was ordered to send out accompanying guns, but the people who were to use them knew little or nothing of their technical or tactical use. As these guns practically gave the 28th Infantry the strongpoint of La Neuville-le-Comte Fme. their use was fully justified in this case.

The 1st Division should have been relieved on the night of October 9th at the very latest, as the Division was so exhausted that it is doubtful whether it could have withstood a strong counter attack.

The enemy defended his positions magnificently, making the very best use of the favorable terrain. (101) He fought to the bitter end for every inch of ground and this battle may very well be called: "The Battle of Extermination".

(101)
General
Summerall.

LESSONS:

(1) In the modern warfare, disposition in depth is an absolute essential to success.

(2) The proper and timely use of reserves is an important factor in any battle.

(3) The Commander who uses all the means at his disposal will succeed.

(4) The close mutual support of the infantry and its supporting arms is more than ever an essential to success.

(5) Even a few disciplined, trained soldiers are invaluable to any organization in combat.

(6) Reports of enemy movements should be carefully verified, before a commander is justified in acting on the reports.

(7) Infantry with high morale can advance against modern materiel.

(8) Fog or smoke is a big help to offensive operations.

(9) The biggest lesson for the American officer, especially the younger ones is the art of leadership as shown by the Commanding General of the 1st Division, - Major General C. P. Summerall. It is well worth the trouble for any ambitious young officer to study his career and the methods he used to obtain success. It is worth while, because practically the same condition of the American Army in the last war, will exist in the next war. We shall have the courageous, intelligent American citizens as our soldiers. They will have had little or no training and they most assuredly will be undisciplined. But they will want to learn, they will want to fight and all that they will ask is to be shown the way, - to be given leaders.

General Summerall was a well known field artillery officer before the war. He was known to be a student and an officer of great ability. He had served with distinction in the war with Spain, in the Philippines and in China during the Boxer uprising.

In the early part of the World War he commanded the artillery brigade of the 42nd and 1st Divisions. On the eve of the great allied counter offensive of July, 1918, he was given command of the 1st Division. It was a most difficult task, but by absolutely refusing to let any of his command quit, by the strength of his will, he put the Division thru that terrible ordeal.

He had not been able to keep up with infantry tactics of the World War, so for the next six weeks, he applied himself diligently, working fifteen to twenty hours daily to perfect himself. Just before the St. Mihiel offensive, he talked tactics, especially infantry tactics, for three hours to his brigade and regimental commanders. He wound up by saying in effect: "Gentlemen the 1st Division will never ask to be relieved; it can always do a little more; it will never be held up; it will always advance; and that advance will always be in depth". (102)

(102)
Personal
knowledge.

He impressed his personality on every man in that division from his chief of staff to the lowliest mule skinner in the supply train. He did it by stamping this personality upon his higher commanders and they passed it down.

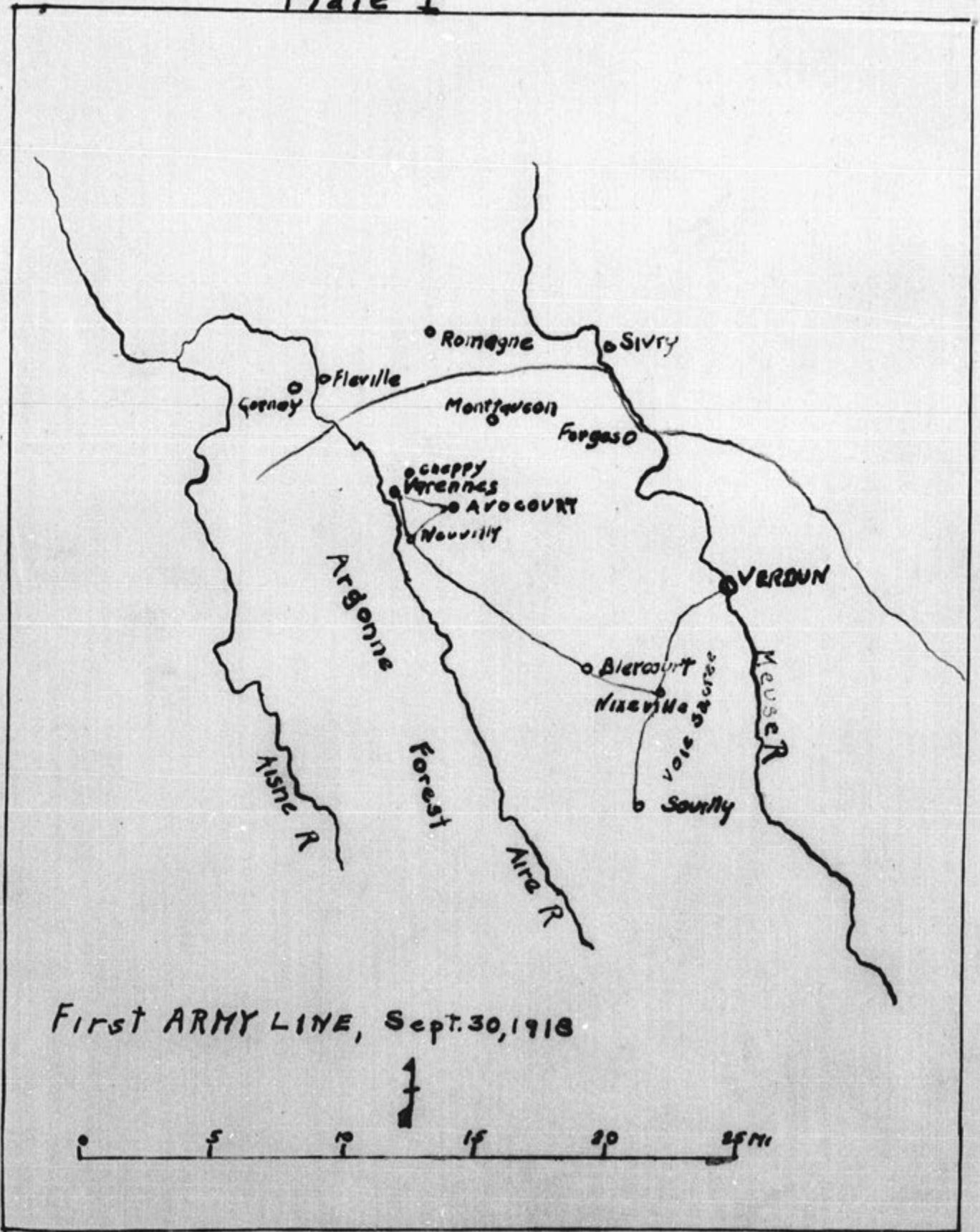
He believed absolutely in his country's cause and had implicit faith in the American soldier. He was ready and anxious to accept his responsibilities and required his subordinates to do likewise. With him, a thing was right or it was wrong. It was never half right or half wrong. He firmly believed that a soldier could do no military wrong and that if he did it was his leaders' fault, and he acted accordingly.

He would visit a field hospital and be as gentle as a woman with a wounded private and five minutes later he would be cursing a brigadier general for not having taken his objective. Frederick Palmer has aptly said of him: "General Summerall is a leader compounded of all kinds of fighting qualities, who some say can be gentle as a sweet natured chaplain, while others say he is nothing but brimstone and ruthless determination". (103)

(103)Palmer
p. 269.

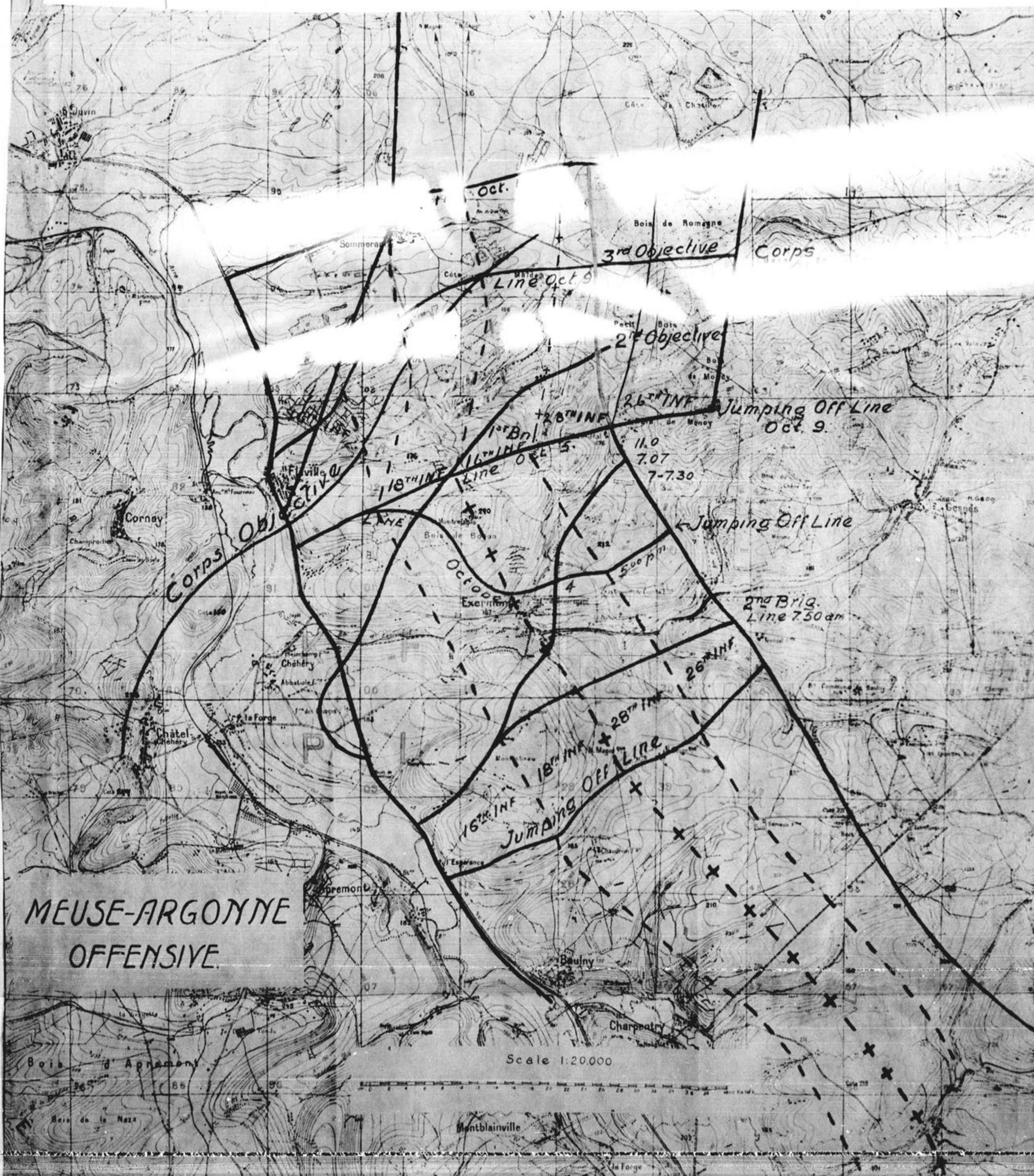
It was this leadership by the "Mangin of the American Army", combined with the courageous bravery of the American Infantryman that won this Homeric victory for American Arms.

Plate I



First ARMY LINE, Sept. 30, 1918

MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE.



Scale 1:20,000