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OPERATIONS OF THE 35TH DIVISION  
IN FIRST PHASE MEUSE ARGONNE  
1918

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### Marginal Abbreviations Used.

C-A	Liggett, Hunter	Commanding an American Army
H-35	322.13	History of the 35 Division.
P E K	Olson, H. O. Major,	Personal Knowledge and Ex- periences.
P O	Olson, H. O., Major,	Personal Opinion.
R-1 A	Pershing, John J Genl. Liggett, Hunter, Lt. Genl.	Report of the First Army.
Sec.-A	Hq., Second Army,	General Orders, No. 11.
SFO-35	300.4-F.4	Secret Field Orders, 35 Div.
W O S	322.13 War College	Analytical Study, Hist. Sect.



OPERATIONS OF THE 35TH DIVISION ( U S )  
IN FIRST PHASE OF THE MEUSE - ARGONNE.  
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INTRODUCTION.

The operations of the 35th Division in First Phase of the Meuse-Argonne covered the period 26th September to 1st October, 1918. The conduct of these operations became an issue at the end of the operations, and resulted in an investigation by the American High Command. This subject has, perhaps, received more critical study by the military expert, the layman and the politician than any other similar feature of our World War activities. There were many defects, and many errors were committed, and there is no doubt but that the division received from the American High Command, the most severe criticism administered during our entire world war activities.

Before raising the curtain on the scene in the Meuse-Argonne proper, in order better to comprehend the reasons for, and causes of some of the developments as they unfolded themselves during this brief activity, we will first review hastily the division's history of training and activity prior to the time it entered these operations. There are some points in the early history of the division that are particularly significant, when viewed in connection with what happened eventually.

## HISTORY OF PREVIOUS TRAINING AND ACTIVITIES.

The 35th Division, composed mainly of National Guard troops from the states of Missouri and Kansas, was organized at Camp Doniphan, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, September 17th, 1917. During the time it remained in the United States it was supposed to, and did conduct a system of schools and training. However, reports of inspectors and higher commanders during this period, indicate that bad weather interfered to a great extent; that too much time was spent upon basic and relatively unimportant and non-essential training, and that the more advanced and so vitally necessary training was being neglected. The chief and most outstanding faults mentioned being (a) neglect of communications systems, (b) carelessness in sanitary management, (c) ignorance as to locations and uses of command posts (d) lack of knowledge of use of ground, (e) lack of combat reconnaissance, and (f) lack of knowledge of machine guns.

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These same reports, however, indicate a very high ~~###~~ class of personnel as individuals, generally, as to physique, morale, esprit, and individual accomplishments. Training in team-play and in higher functions seems to be lacking throughout. During November, 1917, an inspector's report recommended that the division be sent abroad as soon as it could be adequately equipped, to complete its training over-seas, as "the peculiar internal conditions of the division" and the constant visits and distractions kept the division from taking its work seriously so near home. Up to the time the division left for overseas duty there seems to have been very little improvement in the result of training. (1)

In April, 1918, the division sailed for France via England. It arrived in France and took up training under British supervision in the EU area about May 14 - 26. Training, with many varied interruptions, continued until about June 5th. From June 5th to 8th the division moved into sector area in the Vosges,

where it remained until the time of the St. Michiel offensive. The Signal Battalion did not arrive in France until the latter part of June, 1918, and then took up trench sector service in the Vosges. The Artillery had training mostly away from the division, receiving the standard artillery course at COETQUIDON, and the artillery did not join the division until the latter had taken up trench duty in the Vosges. Reports of Inspectors and GHQ representatives indicate that the Signal Battalion upon its arrival in France had had scarcely any systematic training pertaining to its functions in open warfare features; that up to August, the time the division left for the St. Michiel area, due to orders for change of station, the Signal Battalion equipment was boxed, and no schedule was possible. (2)

(2)  
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From August 14th on, the division took entire charge of a new and enlarged sector, 30 Km. in extent (Gerardmer), and from then on, there was little opportunity for training, although some was undertaken, but it featured mainly trench warfare, and its training policy was largely influenced by foreign methods. This condition continued until the division was relieved, about September 1st, to take part in the St. Michiel offensive. (3)

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During the period Sept. 1st to Sept. 11th the division was on the move, partly by motor bus, and partly by marching, to the St. Michiel area. It arrived at, and bivouaced in Forêt de Haye, (near Vignuelles) on Sept. 11th. Division Headquarters was at Liverdun. Here the division remained in concealed bivouac, as reserve of First Army until Sept. 15th. The division took no real active part in the St. Michiel offensive. (4)

(4)  
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II

On Sept. 15th the division again moved to the region of Charmontois, where it passed to the temporary control of the Second French Army for supply and tactical control. It again changed station to the area known as Baives devant Bar. Division Headquarters temporarily at Passavant en Argonne, where it ar- (5)

(5)  
H-35  
II



rived Sept.18th,1918.

(6) Again,the division,on Sept.19th,moved to the vain-  
H-35 court - Auzeville area,ostensibly to relieve the 73rd French  
Division in the Grange-le-Comte Sector.By Sept.23rd,the divisi-  
on completed the relief of the 73rd French Division.The 69th  
Brigade of the 35th Division holding the rearmost lines with  
two battalions,each with a machine gun company attached in re-  
serve.The extreme front line was held by French troops,in order  
to keep the enemy in the dark regarding the change.This area  
turned out to be the one from which the division was to make  
its advance in the main offensive on Sept.26th.Division Head-  
quarters,first echelon,was now,Sept.23rd,-25th,Grange-le-Comte  
Farm;the rear echelon was at Camp Perrin,near Froidos,the rema-  
inder of the division was bivouaced in the woods and fields in  
the vicinity.(6)

(7) It is now the eve of the great allied offensive on  
P E K the Western Front,and the 35th Division is now practically on  
and in rear of its line of departure.We will pause here a few  
moments and consider some incidents that occurred in the divi-  
sion which the reader may analyze and decide whether or not  
he considers special diet or particular tonic for a green divi-  
sion about to enter its first engagement.(7)

(8) (a) At this time,or during the period Sept.18 - 24,  
P E K the Division Commander,apparently arbitrarily relieved both  
Brigadier Generals of the Infantry Brigades,and as no replace-  
ments were to be had,this caused a shift of commanders along  
the entire chain of command in the infantry.These Brigadier s  
were men of long service,had been with the division during al-  
most its entire existence,and each had,at times,commanded the  
division.(8)

(9) (b) A day or two before the offensive the Chief of  
P E K Staff was ordered away and a new one from outside the division  
joined.The former Chief of Staff had been with the division(9)

for a considerable time; the new one was a total stranger in the division.

(10) P E K (c) The writer joined the division 30 hours before the Meuse-Argonne offensive, almost direct from the U.S., for the purpose of relieving the former Division Signal Officer. The writer was new in the Signal Corps, new in the A.E.F., new in the division and new on knowledge of the area. The former Signal Officer had been with the division during almost its entire service, and, at the time, had no urgent orders for the immediate future, as far as was known. (10)

(11) P E K (d) On the evening before the battle, the Division Commander, at a conference of the majority of the officers of the division gave a very caustic resume of the former activities of the division. He referred particularly to the shortcomings of units and officers; how much criticism and rebuke he had received and patiently borne on account of the failures and the shortcomings of all of them, and ended up by saying "Now, tomorrow, and henceforth pay me back". (11)

(12) P E K (e) On the evening before the battle the Outpost company of the Signal Battalion, which had moved up into the rear area of the line of departure, was caught in the enemy shelling and the Captain of the company was severely wounded, and many of the most competent non-commissioned officers were either killed or severely wounded. (12)

#### ORGANIZATION, STRENGTH AND EQUIPMENT.

On Sept. 26th, 1918, the division was composed as follows:

lows:

Division Commander	Major General Peter E. Traub,
Chief of Staff	Colonel Hamilton S. Hawkins,
Asst. Chief of Staff, G-1	Colonel William R. Gibson,
Asst. Chief of Staff, G-2	Maj. Parker C. Kallock,
Asst Chief of Staff, G-3	Lt. Col. Walter V. Gallagher
Division Surgeon,	Lt. Col. Raymond C. Turck,



Division Signal Officer,	Lt.Col.George A.Wieczorek,
Asst.Division Signal Officer,	Lt.Col.Hans O.Olson,
Division Engineer,	Colonel Thomas C.Clark,
Division Gas Officer,	Captain William W.Wise,
Division Machine Gun Officer,	Lt.Col.Donald D.Hay.
69th Infantry Brigade,	Colonel Louis M.Nuttman,
137th Infantry,	Colonel Clad Hamilton,
138th Infantry,	Colonel Harry S.Howland,
70th Infantry Brigade,	Colonel Kirby Walker,
139th Infantry,	Lt.Col.Carl L.Ristine,
140th Infantry	Lt.Col.Channing Delaplane,
128th M.G.Battalion,	Major Westley Halliburton,
129th M.G.Battalion,	Major Thomas H.Loy,
130th M.G.Battalion,	Captain Paul A.Frey,
60th F.A.Brigade,	Brig.Gen.Lucien G.Berry,
128th.F.A.	Col.Frank M.Rumbold,
129th.F.A.,	Col.Carl D.Elem,
130th.F.A.,	Major William W.Thurston,
110th Trench Mortar Battery,	Capt.Fred W.Manchester,
110th.Amn.Train.	Lt.Col.Fred R.Fitzpatrick,
110th Engineers,	Colonel Thomas C.Clark,
110th Field Signal Battalion,	Major Milton R.McLean,
110th Tr.Hq.& M.P.	Col.Willie McD Rowan,
110th Engineer Train	1st.Lieut.Peake Vinoil,
110th Supply Train,	Major George M.Faught,
110th Sanitary Train,	Major Herbert C.Woolly,
137th.Field Hosp.	Major Archie N.Johnson,
138th.Field Hosp.,	Major William W.Gilbert,
139th.Field Hosp.,	Major Seth A.Hummel,
140th.Field Hosp.,	Major Henry T.Salisbury,

(13)  
H-35

The following units were attached to the division at this time:  
1 Company, 1st Gas Regiment, (13)  
53rd Pioneer Infantry,



(17) P E K very elaborate system of defensive works, everything that German ingenuity, skill, material and the experience of four years of war experience could provide had been injected into the defenses of this position. Every village was strongly fortified. Vauquois Hill in particular, was extensively wired with galleries running thru the hill. A network of narrow gauge railroads furnished the general area with ample transport for supplies and ammunition, and the works for the housing of personnel were well provided for safety and comfort. (17)

(18) P E K In addition to the natural strength and the artificial strength of the area itself, almost the entire area was dominated by the high ground on both sides. The terrain over which the division had to operate, was, to some extent then, a defile. The terrain presented unusual difficulties from the standpoint of the assailant. Every artifice known to field engineering had been (19) resorted to by the enemy, and the area was covered by a network R 1 A of wire entanglements, machine gun emplacements, dug-outs made of p.38 concrete, and the natural advantages being utilized in every possible manner to secure cross and enfilade fire. (18) (19).

In this area the enemy had at least four principal lines of works facing the attacker. The First Position through (20) Vauquois-Boureuilles; the Intermediate Position, through Varennes R 1 A Cheppy; the Second Position, north of Baulny-Charpentry, and part Pl. VII of the Third Position north-east of Exermont. (20)

#### OPPOSING FORCES .

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(21) H-35 While no definite data are available as to actual or even approximate strength and situations during the various step of these operations, it is well known that the following named enemy organizations, either in whole or in part were engaged with the 35th Division: (21)

(a) The First Guard Division, one of the crack divisions of the German Army, although somewhat depleted at this time, from recent

(b) The Second Landwehr Division, in part, at least.



- (c) Fifth Guard Division, in whole or in part, and
- (d) Fifteenth Landsturm Battalion, Sector Troops at the start.

MISSION.

At this time the 35th Division was an integral part of the First Army Corps. This Corps was composed of the 35th, 28th, and the 77th Divisions. As part of the First Army Corps, the 35th Division was to be one of the assault divisions in the offensive, the 91st Division of the 5th Corps on its right, and the 28th Division of its own corps on its left. The general advance was to be up the Aire valley, assisting the 91st Division in the reduction of Bois de Money and Le Petit Bois on the right of the 35th Division zone. Boundaries and direction of advance as described in plan, hereafter, and as shown on map hereto attached. (22)

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PLAN.

The plan in general was to attack, connecting with the 91st Division on the right and with the 28th Division on the left. The zone of action for the 35th Division was to be bounded on the right (east) by Vauquois, inclusive - Very, inclusive - Ecluisfontaine, exclusive, - Sommerance, inclusive. On the left, (west) the division zone was to be bounded by Bourcuilles (exclusive, Varennes, exclusive, Apremont, exclusive, Fleville, inclusive. Corps objective, the high ground south of Charpentry; The American Army Objective, the general east and west line through l'Esperance-Montrebeau Woods-Neuville le Comte. Organization in depth and exploitation of front were to be featured upon reaching the American Army Objective. The general direction of attack was to be northwest. Vauquois Hill, the Gibraltar of the position, and Rossignol Woods were to be passed by and outflanked the mopping up troops behind the assault regiments completing the capture of these positions. (23)(24).

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In detail, the plan called for the division to attack

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in column of brigades, regiments side by side, each with one battalion in assault line, one battalion in support, and one battalion in reserve. The right regiment had as its right boundary of its zone of action the right boundary of the division zone; the left boundary of the right regiment was to be the western edge of Vauquois Hill - Hill 207, inclusive, - La Forge Min and Cheppy, inclusive, - Heights east of La Buanthe River - Charpentry, exclusive - Exermont, inclusive. Zone of action of the left regiment was: right (east) boundary, the left boundary of the right regiment; left boundary, the left boundary of the division zone. (25)

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The 69th Brigade was to lead the attack. It had attached to it a battalion of the 70th Brigade, and a company and two platoons of Engineers for mopping up duty, wire cutters and mine blowers. (26)

Each front line battalion had a machine gun company attached to it. Likewise, each support battalion had a machine gun company attached to it.

(27)  
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The parallel of departure was about 500 yards in the front of the enemy trenches, as shown on accompanying map. The 70th Brigade (less 1 bn.) was to be used as division reserve. The artillery, divisional and attached was to be grouped in the woods just south of the line of departure to support the attack. The initial preparation was to begin at H minus three hours. At the jump-off a rolling barrage was to precede the infantry at the rate of 100 yards every four minutes, to include the hostile intermediate position Varennes - Cheppy. Light artillery was to move forward by echelon to be prepared to cover the advance and prevent counterattacks up to the Corps objective. One battery was to be attached to the first line to be used as forward guns. Particular attention was to be given to Vauquois and the Hostile Intermediate position Varennes - Cheppy. (27) (28)

(28)  
P E K

Combat liaison was to be maintained with each flank by a detachment of one company and one machine gun platoon to each flank division.

(29) Engineers not assigned to infantry brigades and tanks were to stand ready to repair roads and bridges across No-Man's Land. The Aviation group was to keep at least one plane over the division at all times. A liaison officer from the aero squadron to be at Division Headquarters at all times. The Balloon unit was given tasks of co-operating mainly for artillery efficiency. A balloon was to ascend at dawn and was to remain in constant observation until darkness prevented further operations. (29) (30)

H-35

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P E K

(31) Combat troops were to be in position on the line of departure at H minus four hours on D day. Infantry was to advance at H hour, in this case 5.30 A.M., Sept. 26th. (31)

H -35

(32) The Signal Communications plan was very comprehensive and provided for a double telephone circuit to each brigade Hq. to Division Headquarters, of which one circuit was to be for a purely operations orders use. One circuit was to be built from brigade headquarters to each regiment in line. The telephone and telegraph circuit from Corps to Division was to be built by Corps troops. (32) (33)

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P E K

(34) The machine gun units were given tasks of varying degrees according to their assignments within the division. Those not assigned to front line units were given missions of barrage and other supporting fire upon selected targets, while some were given anti-aircraft missions, all according to prepared plans. (34)

(34)  
H - 35

(35) The plan for Gas, plan for work of organization of conquered ground, plan for Intelligence, and plan for communication supply and evacuation were all prepared to meet most normal contingencies, and may be said to be most complete and well thought out. (35)

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(36) The Division Axis of signal communication was from Cote de Forimont-Vauquois-La Forge Moulin-Baulny -Fleville. Division Command Post, initially, in dug-out on Le Cotes des Forimont. (36)

P E K



## ORDERS.

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(37) The initial order of the division for the attack on  
P O September 26th (Field Orders No. 44) embodying the details of the  
foregoing plans may be said to be a very comprehensive and com-  
plete sample of an order of this kind. This order was issued on  
September 24th. (37)

(38) Brigade orders were issued before noon September 25.  
P E K Some of the regiments issued written orders, while others did  
not. During the later stages of these operations, orders both in  
the division and in lower units became less regular, less clear  
and proper, with too short time for delivery, and in many cases  
verbally, where some form of documentary order would have pro-  
duced much more satisfactory results. (38)

## OPERATIONS.

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(39) September 26th: At 2.30 A.M. September 26th the art-  
WCS illery preparation was opened by all the divisional and attach-  
P. 27 ed artillery). The preparation lasted until 5.30 A.M., at which  
hour the infantry went over the top. The attacking line extend-  
(40) ed from Boureuilles on the west to east of Vauquois, a distance  
P E K of approximately 2500 meters. The left flank was to follow in a  
general way, the Aire river, and as that river changes direction  
at Varennes to a northwesterly direction, the front at that  
point was broadened, with a consequent change of direction of  
advance for the left portion of the attacking force. (39) (40).

(41) The 69th Brigade led the advance with the 138th Inf.  
H - 35 on the right and the 137th Inf. on the left. Vauquois Hill and  
Bois de Rossignol, just to the north of Vauquois were passed by  
the leading elements and mopped up by the company and platoons  
of engineers and the battalion from the 70th Brigade. (41).

(42) A heavy mist covered all the low grounds, and while  
G-A it screened our troops from hostile fire and observation some  
P. 79 what, it increased the difficulty of maintaining direction, co-  
ordination, control, contact and communication. (42).

(43) The artillery barrage preceded the infantry advance  
P E K at the rate of 100 yards in 4 minutes. The 70th Brigade, less 1  
battalion, followed the leading brigade as divisional reserve.  
(44) Vauquois and the adjacent strongpoints were carried and the ad-  
W C S vance continued. As the fog lifted, the enemy artillery and M.G.  
p.28 fire became particularly harrassing, both from the front and  
flanks.

The initial artillery fire on our side, particularly  
by our divisional artillery, had been unusually effective. The  
infantry advance continued, though stubbornly and harrassingly  
opposed by the enemy, continued steadily until the line the por-  
(45) tion of the enemy defenses on the line Varennes - Cheppy. Heavy  
H-35 losses were suffered, especially in front of Cheppy. Many of the  
company and field officers had become casualties by the time  
(46) the advance had reached this line, where now the attack slowed  
W C S down and finally came to a standstill about 10.00 A.M. At this  
p.28 time, only one battery of the entire artillery force had succeed-  
ed in getting to a forward firing position. Most of the other  
light pieces had started their attempts at getting forward.

Due to the slowness of the infantry advance, the bar-  
(57) rage passed entirely too far in advance of the infantry to be  
P E K of much assistance to it, at least, the infantry did not get the  
maximum benefit from the barrage. The 138th Infantry on the ex-  
treme right began falling back after the advance had proceeded  
only 800 yards from the jump-off. Contact was soon lost both on  
(48) the right with the 91st Division and with the left regiment,  
W C S the 137th. Groups of men got lost and attached themselves to  
p.28 other units. Two companies, which up to this time had been alter-  
nately assault line and support line troops got away from the  
rest of the regiment and advanced through the fog to a point  
close to, and southeast of Charpentry, where they remained until  
nightfall and then rejoined their command.

The left regiment of the assault brigade, the 137th.  
got out of touch with the Brigade Commander early in the ad-

vance. While elements of the Signal Battalion accompanied the brigade from the very jump off, and ran lines behind the units these lines, these lines were constantly cut by enemy artillery and other interference, and other means were ineffective, the

(49) runners frequently got lost. Subordinate commanders nearly all  
W & S report having left their signal equipment in the rear areas on  
p. 29 account of lack of transportation. The Division Signal Officer  
(50) endeavored, with the Signal Battalion, and whatever equipment he  
P E K had, to maintain communication as far forward as regiments, but  
the personnel was untrained, command posts indefinitely located  
if located at all, and what lines were put in, were, in many in-  
stances cut by enemy shell fire and other activities.

(51) About the time the line was halted in front of the  
H-35 enemy position through Cheppy, the 139th Infantry had, without  
orders, consultation, or knowledge on the part of higher autho-  
(52) rity, passed through the 137th Infantry, and instead of being a  
P E K part of the Division Reserve, was now in the assault line. The  
division was mixed and scattered, and communication was poor, to  
say the least.

About 2.00 P.M. the Division Commander had a confer-  
ence with the two infantry brigade commanders in front of Chep-  
(53) py, and another attack was ordered, to be assisted by some tanks  
H-35 which had reached the front lines. Regiments were hastily reor-  
ganized, however, with the 139th still in the lead of the 137th.  
(54) and the attack resumed at about 3.30 P.M. As the artillery was,  
P E K by this time largely enroute to forward positions, very little  
assistance was given the infantry by the light artillery, the  
heavier artillery, being still in position back of the jump-off  
delivered some fire into rear areas.

This second attack, being thus deprived of most of th  
artillery support it should have received, was mainly opposed  
by artillery fire and fire from all types of smaller weapons  
from every point along the front. However, the advance continued  
and the assault line reached the high ground south of Charpen-  
try where the division dug in. — fourteen —



The division had reached the Corps objective, but at great costs in losses, in disintegration and in confusion. Fire was being received not only from enemy positions in front and on the flanks, but some reverse fire was received from hostile positions on the heights on the west bank of the Aire.

(55)

P E K

When the division dug in for the night most of the light and some of the heavy artillery had advanced about 5 Km. and were at or near positions from which they should render a full assistance to the attack the next morning. The Corps Chief of Artillery had estimated that only about two battalions of light and two of heavy artillery would be able to get forward the first day. Due to the congestion of traffic evacuation of sick and wounded was somewhat slow. There seems to have been no shortage of food and ammunition.

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The Command post of the 69th Brigade was now on Hill 201, northwest of Cheppy; command post of the 70th Brigade was in Cheppy. It will be noted that the brigade organization is at variance with what it was at the outset, due to the arbitrary passing through the lines of the 139th Inf., the 69th Brigade now, apparently consisting of the 137th and the 139th Infantry regiments, and the 70th Brigade consisting of the 138th and the 140th regiments, although no official recognition by Division Headquarters seems to have been made of this change, except by inference and force of circumstances.

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Division Command Post, and command post of the 60th Artillery Brigade remained at Cotes des Forimont, although an advanced command post of the division virtually existed in an enemy dugout at Cheppy, where the signal Battalion had established a telephone exchange, and where many of the higher staff officers and commanders had their rendezvous. During the afternoon of this day, the writer was informed by phone that the old Division Signal Officer had been gassed and evacuated, hence, the full duties of Division Signal Officer fell on the writer.

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P E K

Contact was now maintained on both flanks of the di-

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vision. The division was still in fairly good shape, although it had suffered heavily in casualties among company and field officers, men, and animals. Division Headquarters was not functioning at all systematically.

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September 27th: The Division Commander had planned to renew the attack at 8.30 A.M., as proper artillery support could not be secured before that time. But during the night 26-27 orders were received from the Corps to attack at 5.30 A.M. Reports state that in view of the artillery situation, and in spite of the Corps orders calling for the attack at 5.30, the Division Chief of Staff issued an order to attack at 8.45 A.M. However, as soon as the Division Commander discovered the conflicting features, he decided to follow the Corps order, and he, in person, went forward, between the hours of 1.00 A.M. and 4.30 A.M. visited the brigade and regimental command posts and delivered the orders for the 5.30 attack, as he says, in order to insure co-ordination and liaison.

(63)  
WCS  
p.33

It was quite natural that under these conditions, definite arrangements for proper artillery support were not effected. Only one battalion of artillery (129th) fired; two batteries firing a rolling barrage which started at Charpentry, and moved northward at the rate of 100 meters every 3 minutes; the other battery took Baulny as a target. The artillery position was on Hill 221, southeast of Varennes. Thus the shortest artillery range was 5000 meters. Reports of various infantry commanders indicate that this support was of little assistance to them; others report no assistance at all.

The 70th Brigade now took the lead and the 69th was in support. The 70th Brigade attacked with regiments abreast, each regiment with two battalions in front line and one in support. A machine gun company was assigned to each front line battalion, as were also tanks. The 69th Brigade, in support had reg-

(64) iments abreast and battalions in depth. The Divisional Machine  
W C S Gun Battalion (128th.) was attached to the 69th brigade. The day  
p.34 was dark and foggy, and quite cold.

(65) The right regiment (140th) moved out on time, 5.30 A.M.  
advancing and inclining somewhat west of north. It was stopped  
H-35 in the ravine about 1000 yards southeast of Charpentry, by M.G.  
fire from the left flank.

The left regiment (139th) waited for artillery fire  
support, suffering meanwhile from artillery and machine gun  
(66) fire from the enemy positions to its front and left flank. One  
W C S battalion finally went forward about 9 o'clock, and the other  
p.34 about noon, but no appreciable advance was made, and neither bat-  
talion accomplished much. The whole assault line of this regi-  
ment was finally held up. The artillery kept up a desultory and  
more or less ineffective fire.

About noon more tanks came up and another attack was  
(67) launched, but very little advantage was gained. Losses were very  
H-35 heavy, and especially among the officers, company and field, that  
is relatively. The line was still at Charpentry - Very, approxi-  
mately.

Later in the afternoon more tanks came up, and at 5.3  
(68) P.M. another attack was launched. More artillery, light and heavy  
W C S had now arrived in position near Cheppy, and a rolling barrage  
p.34 was started on the line Ecluisfontaine - Charpentry. By 5.15 P.  
M. the 130th Artillery had reached Varennes, and from 5.30 to  
6.30 fired on the line Apremont - Montrebeau Woods.

This attack (5.30 P.M.) while opposed stubbornly by  
enemy machine gun and artillery fire of all calibers, and from  
(69) all positions, front and flank, finally carried the line forward  
H-35 beyond Charpentry and Baulny, with advanced detachments in and  
near Montrebeau Woods. It was difficult to maintain cohesion  
and contact during the night advance, and considerable confu-  
sion and mixing of units again occurred. By 10 P.M. the two as-



sault regiments had gained contact to some extent. Regiments, as units were very much disintegrated, and there was scarcely any battalion organization intact; this was particularly true of the 139th which was greatly scattered and regimental organization was entirely lost when the Lieut. Col., now commanding the regiment broke up his command post at La Forge, leaving only 3 or 4 men there and with the remainder of his men went into the front line. He, himself finally got lost and ended up within the German lines. But he concealed himself, and eventually made his way into the area of the 28th Division. From there he called up his own division commander at 1.30 P.M. Sept. 29th, also giving, as he thought, the location of important enemy targets. The Commanding General, 35th Division sent this information to the Commanding General, 60th Artillery Brigade, with the directions to take countermeasures. The artillery commander replied that the orders would be complied with, but that he, the artillery commander, doubted the accuracy of this piece of information.

(70)  
W C S  
p. 35

When the Lt. Col. 139th Infantry went forward and got lost, his second in command was commanding a battalion some distance away and did not know of the regimental commander's disappearance, and consequently the regiment as a machine ceased to exist for a considerable time thereafter

(71)  
W C S  
p. 35

The 137th Infantry which was in support behind the 139th advanced rather closely behind. The Colonel had fallen out exhausted some time previously, and the regiment was commanded by a major who had relinquished his battalion to take command of the regiment. One battalion of the 137th passed on into the front line, passed Baulny, under some enemy opposition, and became intermingled with the 139th Infantry. This battalion of the 137th passed on forward to near the western edge of Chaudron Farm, but finding no friendly troops near, it fell back to the vicinity of Baulny, where it again became intermingled with the 139th Infantry. Both the 137th and the 139th remained near

(72)  
W C S  
p. 35

Baulny for the night. Both regiments were very much disorganized and only one regimental headquarters functioning, the 137th.

(73) During the second attack (5.30 P.M.) the 140th was in  
H-35 a formation similar to its early morning attack, i.e. First on  
the right, Second on the left in the assault line. The right bat-  
talion met considerable resistance, but in spite of this it ad-  
vanced much more rapidly than the left (Second) battalion, and it  
(74) finally halted about half a mile northeast of Chaudron Farm,  
P E K where it gained contact on its left with a battalion of the  
139th Infantry. It had, in the meantime, lost touch with the re-  
(75) mainder of the 140th, which was still some distance in the rear  
W C S and separated.  
p.36

(76) The 138th which had been in rear of the 140th at the  
H-35 beginning of this attack, made a slight advance but took no ma-  
terial part in the attack. It suffered considerable losses from  
enemy artillery fire. It remained for the night some distance  
northwest of Charpentry.

(77) The division had lost contact with the 91st Division  
W C S on the right. On the left there was contact with the 28th, but  
p.36 the latter had made scarcely any gain of ground, consequently  
the 35th Division was considerably in advance of the 28th, and  
as a result received much flanking and enfilade fire from the  
German positions on the west of the Aire.

(78) Most of the light artillery was now on, or in advance  
H-35 of the line Varennes - Cheppy. The heavy artillery was deli-  
vering fire on back areas from rearward positions. Rations and  
ammunition were brought forward as well as could reasonably be  
expected. No serious deficiency in supplies seems to have exis-  
ted, although some complaints of ration shortage were made. It  
is likely this was due to mixups in ration deliveries in the  
forward areas rather than failure to get rations and supplies  
to the forward areas. In some instances whole companies of in-

fantry went to the rear some distance as ration carrying parties. Signal communication was maintained constantly to Brigade command posts, and intermittently to regimental command posts.

(79) Due to the unstable positions of regimental and lower command  
P E K posts, and due also to enemy artillery fire and other activities, communication beyond brigades was very uncertain by the regularly established methods. Runners became the main means, but they very often got lost.

(80) During this day the enemy front was re-inforced by  
H -35 the 5th Guard Division in the front line, and the 52 Landwehr in reserve.

Division Headquarters was still at les Cotes de Fori-  
(81) mont, with advanced command post at Cheppy, where the Signal Bat-  
P E K talion maintained a telephone exchange. The 138th and 140th on the whole, were fairly well in hand; the 137th and 139th were disorganized and mixed.

September 28th: During the night 27-28 orders were  
(82) received from the Corps to renew the attack 5.30 A.M. on the 28.  
W C S This order directed that the division advance as far as the  
p.58 Fleville line regardless of the divisions on the flanks. In the 35th Division all orders for this advance seem to have been given verbally.

Early in the morning the enemy launched a counter-  
(83) attack from Montrebeau Woods. This attack was repulsed in good  
H - 55 order. While most of the artillery was now in forward positions it seems to have rendered very little assistance during this attack or prior to it.

The right column now consisting of the 138th and ~~the~~ the 140th was ordered to move out and protect the right flank of the 69th Brigade, now made up (from the mixup, but without any official designation in orders) of the 137th and the 139th. The 140th moved out on time, with the second Battalion leading, and



(84) the Third in support. The First Battalion was still at Chaudron  
W C S Farm, and out of touch with the regiment. It did, however, by ~~###~~  
p.39 accident and not through orders, attack in concert with the rest  
of the regiment. Though it encountered severe opposition by ~~##~~  
(85) the enemy, the 140th, with the assistance of some additional new  
H-35 tanks, advanced to a point about half a mile north of Chaudron  
Farm where it dug in. The 138th which was in support of the 140  
th, made only a slight advance, and both it and the 140th suffer-  
ed heavy losses from artillery and other fire from both front  
and flanks.

(86) After repulsing the early morning counter attack, the  
P E K left column finally advanced about 7.30 A.M. The 137th was gener-  
ally on the extreme left. The operations of the left column ~~###~~  
were more or less hit-and-miss, due to the mixup of units, the  
casualties among officers, and the difficulty of advancing thru  
areas swept by frontal and flanking fire. It finally reached  
(87) the general line of the right column, and made connection with  
H-35 it. The extreme left was still subject to flanking, enfilade and  
sometimes reverse fire from the German positions on the west  
of the Aire, as the division front was now making a pronounced  
salient with the fronts of the lateral divisions.

(88) During this day some improvements were made in the  
W C S regiments composing the left column. The colonel of the 137th  
p.39 had recovered and rejoined, and a new colonel came for the 139.  
The Division Intelligence Officer had, at times, during the past  
two days commanded the 137th, and now, he could return to his  
post of duty on the Division Staff. Considerable improvement  
was also made in reorganization within the 137th and the 139th.

However, by this time Corps Headquarters were begin-  
ning to show signs of dissatisfaction with the turn of events  
in the 35th Division. Both the Division Commander and the  
Chief of Staff were frequently away from the command post, at  
times both were absent simultaneously. Corps Headquarters also

felt that information from the division was gotten only when asked for. As we have seen before, G-2 had been away from the division command post most of the time, in fact, at one time he was supposed to have been killed. G-3 was in ill health, and on October 4th died from pneumonia, hence, the second section had hardly functioned; the third section had functioned poorly, and communications had been more or less unsatisfactory. An officer from the Corps Staff was ordered to the 35th Division as Chief of Staff, and this new officer reported on the evening of Sept. 27th. The former Chief of Staff was then sent forward to sur-~~vey~~ conditions, and if he found it necessary, to assume command of any particular regiment.

(89)  
W C S  
p.40

During the early part of the day the artillery had not accomplished much in material results. In the afternoon, however, both the divisional artillery and some additional artillery of heavy caliber became more active, and both barrages and counterbattery were conducted with considerable success. Some of the firing by the 35th Divisional artillery was on targets outside of the division zone. This appears to have been contrary to instructions from Corps, but in conformity with verbal agreements between the Commander of the 35th Division and the commanders of flank divisions. This day had been a particularly hard one for the division, but from reports, it had been equally strenuous for the enemy.

(90)  
W C S  
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The forward line on the evening of this day, as stated above, ran from the northern edge of Montrebeau Woods to the vicinity of l'Esperance. The right of the 28th Division was at Apremont. There was a considerable gap between the 35th and the 91st.. but both divisions were working hard to connect across it.

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H-35

There was no serious lack of ammunition or rations. Communications were well established to brigades, and intermittently to regiments. Machine guns and auxiliary weapons had not been effectively used. Headquarters 69th Brigade remained

at Baulny, Headquarters 70th Brigade at Charpentry. Division Command post and command post of the 60th Artillery Brigade had now moved to Cheppy.

(92)

W C S

p.43

September 29th.: The necessity for a complete reorganization had certainly existed long before this, and was desired by all, with the exception of the Division Commander, who, between the hours of 1.00 A.M. and 5.30 A.M. again made a personal visit to the front lines. After making this reconnaissance he was, however, convinced that reorganization must take place.

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The Army Commander had been at Division Headquarters late in the afternoon of September 28th, and had announced that an advance would be made on the morning of September 29th. Advance information to this effect had been received by the division, and preparations were started during the night 28-29 for the

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issuing of the order for the attack. This order was dated at 10. P.M. the 28th. The objective was the line Bois de Boyon-Exermon. This order also, for the first time, recognizes the provisional brigade formation adopted by force of circumstances, earlier in the operations.

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The light artillery was to put down a rolling barrage to stop one km. north of Exermon. The heavy artillery was to put down a standing barrage one km. north of Exermon, to cease when the rolling barrage reached the standing barrage position.

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One battery of the 129th Field Artillery was sent forward to Baulny for the support of the attack. This battery was not used by the 69th Brigade, and the battery returned to the location of the remainder of its battalion. The Divisional Engineer Regt. was re-inforced by machine gun companies, and was designated as divisional reserve, one battalion following each provisional brigade.

The artillery support finally furnished for the attack was delivered by three battalions of light artillery. The



rolling barrage started farther north than was originally intended. There is no record of any written orders having been issued by the 69th Brigade, although one is claimed to have been issued. The brigade, still forming the left column, attacked during the morning, time variously given as between 5.30 and 7.30 A.M., the 137th Inf. in advance, with two battalions in the assault line and one in support. The 139th was to follow 1000 m. in rear of the 137th infantry.

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The right, or provisional 70th brigade received the division order for attack at about 1.00 A.M. At about 3.00 A.M. a written order was sent out by the brigade. According to this order, the 138th, which up to this time had been in support behind the 140th., was to pass through the 140th and form the assault line, supported by the 140th., as well as some tanks. The Brigade commander went forward about 4.00 A.M. to establish a new command post at Chaudron Farm. Some time later, while preparations were made for the passage of the lines, the Commander of the 69th Brigade, and the ex-Chief of Staff arrived on the scene. About this time the divisional barrage started, and the ex-Chief of Staff and the commander of the 69th brigade were quite annoyed because the 140th, still in the front line did not advance. The Commanding Officer of the 140th informed them that the order called for the 138th to pass through and take

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the lead. The ex-chief of staff seems to have insisted, by virtue of his authority, that the 140th move out. The commanding officer of the 140th stated that in view of the orders and the situation, his regiment was not in condition and readiness to take the lead. However, the ex-chief of staff ordered the movement. Just then the commander of the 70th brigade came up, and the commander of the 140th appealed to him, stating that the 138th was then in sight, and according to 70th brigade orders was to lead; but the commander of the 70th brigade allowed the arbitrary orders of the ex-chief of staff to stand, and the 140

(101)

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(102) th was ordered to move out, this in spite of its unprepared con-  
W C S dition, and at the very moment when the support regiment was in  
p.46 sight and ready to take the lead. The First Battalion of the  
140th had already started out on direct orders of the ex-chief  
of staff. This occurred somewhere near 5.30 or 6.00 A.M.

(103) The attack along the entire division front was now  
P E K in motion. The left column, less one battalion 139th was along  
the line western edge Montrebeau Woods to the western edge of  
the division zone. In the right column, the provisional 70th bri-  
gade, the line extended from the eastern edge of Montrebeau to  
the east. In this zone was one battalion of the 139th, while it  
did some splendid work, was more or less of a "free lance".

(104) Enemy artillery and machine gun fire was constantly  
W C S increasing in intensity, and enemy machine gunners often work-  
p.47 ed around the flanks of the division. The enemy artillery fire  
came both from front and flanks and occasionally from the left  
rear, as the enemy still held the high ground on the west of  
the Aire. Several times, small detachments of the 35th division  
reached the environs of Exermont, but not being able to gain a  
firm footing, were driven back every time.

(105) In the meantime, the Divisional Engineers, who formed  
H-35 the reserve, had been preparing a defensive line north of the  
town of Baulny. The Division Commander had been near the front  
lines since shortly after midnight. Towards evening, he found  
that the division was too shattered, and the confusion so great  
that any further attempts without reorganization would be dis-  
astrous. He therefore ordered that the infantry fall back be-  
hind the line established by the engineers, after nightfall, the  
(106) withdrawal to be covered by the troops in Montrebeau Woods. As  
P E K the troops in advance of Montrebeau Woods had retired, the ones  
in Montrebeau Woods were to fall back. When the withdrawal took  
place, the enemy counterattacked, but the counterattacks were re-  
pulsed without much difficulty. The artillery seems to have as-

sisted materially during the later part of the day.

(107) During this day, the infantry troops were badly mixed  
W C S both during the fighting and during the withdrawal. Enemy artil-  
P E K lery fire caused great losses and disorders; but all units were  
P.47 finally assembled on, and in rear of the line established by  
the division engineers.

(108) During the withdrawal, some of the regimental comman-  
P E K ders did not seem, even at that late stage, fully to realize to  
what brigade they really belonged, one questioning the source  
of the authority for the order to withdraw. If such was the  
case, what could be expected of commanders lower down the chain  
(109) of command? The division front was now practically held by the  
W C S engineer regiment and some stray groups from the infantry bri-  
P.47 gades. Enemy artillery fire had been delivered from all points  
along the front and the flanks, and had been a very powerful  
(110) factor in the opposition to the division, particularly from the  
P E K west of the Aire. Army artillery did not fire on areas so far  
south, ostensibly, in anticipation of a general advance. Connec-  
tion with flank divisions was very poor. The front of the divi-  
sion now formed a re-entrant, instead of as before, a salient.

(111) Late in the afternoon some of our army artillery di-  
P E K rected fire into the front and the west flank areas; but the  
time this was needed was long since passed. It should have been  
done in the morning, when the infantry was fighting in the area  
near Exermont.

(112) Signal communications were now quite well establish-  
P E K ed, as far as the Signal Battalion was concerned. Within infan-  
try units, especially battalions, it was mainly by runners, as  
what equipment was brought into action, was now rendered inef-  
fective by rain, dampness, mud, and enemy fire.

Generally, the withdrawal was quite successfully ac-  
complished, considering the shattered and disorganized condi-



tion of the infantry. The wounded and sick were evacuated to the rear from Chaudron Farm, the advanced dressing station.

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No apparent shortage of ammunition and food existed. The personnel, generally, was very much exhausted, including the higher commanders. Many casualties among field officers had occurred. Division command post was now at Cheppy.

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September 30th.: This was a day of reorganization, not only for the division, but for the whole American Army. The line of resistance of the division was strengthened, and reorganization of units continued. The line ran along the ridge north of Baulny, with advanced detachments out in front. Supplies in food, ammunition, forage and signal material were collected in dumps near Baulny and Charpentry. Enemy artillery fire was persistent during the day.

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During the forenoon, the enemy launched a counterattack, but this was successfully repulsed, and lines maintained as established. Later in the day, orders were received that the division would be relieved the next day by the First Division. Division Command post at Cheppy. The infantry in the area near Baulny and Charpentry. The artillery in the area between Cheppy Baulny and Charpentry.

October 1st.:

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On this day, the main elements of the division were assembled near Charpentry and marched south to the Cheppy-La Forge Min area, having been relieved early in the day by the First Division. The Artillery and the Sanitary Train remained in the area with the First Division until October 2nd., when they also, were relieved.

Summary:

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H-35

During these operations, the total advance by the division was as follows: From line of departure to farthest point reached, about 12 kilometers; to line of resistance, as finally established, about 10 kilometers. It had stormed and taken Bois

(120) de Rossignol and Vauquois Hill, two of the strongest points in  
P E K the German defensive line, and it afterward took the formidable  
(121) positions near Cheppy, Varennes, Charpentry, and Baulny, finally  
H-35 ending up with Montrebeau Woods and Exermont. It remained in  
(122) the battle five days, executing five separate attacks, and re-  
Sec.A. pulsing counter-attacks, losing over six thousand officers and  
G.O.11 men. The Commanding General, First Army, commended the Division  
for its fighting spirit. During this five days battle the Divi-  
sion was opposed by some of the best divisions of the German  
Army, and from them captured over one thousand officers and men  
and large quantities of stores and material.

(123) During part of the time the division was in action,  
P E K a representative from G.H.Q. Major, then Lieut. Col. B. Magruder,  
took over the office of G-2 of the Division, when the regular  
official of that office went to the front lines and remained  
absent, and at one time was thought to have been killed. After  
Major Magruder took charge of the office, things functioned in  
a very satisfactory manner, as far as G-2 was concerned.

(124) Considering the commanding ground on both sides of  
P.O. the zone of advance, the task of the division was practically  
that of forcing a defile. This, added to the naturally strong in-  
terior features, and the elaborate artificial defenses of the  
enemy, make one wonder that the division fared no worse than  
it did.

#### Criticisms.

(125) Criticism might be summed up by saying lack of pro-  
P E K per training. However, such a statement would be too sweeping  
and too indefinite, although lack of training was at the bottom  
of all errors and defects. More specifically, the main critici-  
sms are: (a) Lack of proper functioning on the part of the ~~staff~~  
staff of the division (b) lack of functioning on the part of com-  
manders in leadership, communications, command posts, control, co-  
ordination, initiative, reorganization, etc. (c) lack of training

of communications personnel, both in infantry units and in the Signal Battalion. However, when it comes to criticizing communications, two factors must be considered (1) whether or not the agency responsible for the establishment and maintenance of signal communications properly performs its duty, and (2) if a reasonable, or suitable system is supplied by such agency, is it properly utilized by those to whom it is furnished. It is granted that in the case of this division, there were defects in a large degree in both, but the greater of the two was in failure (126) to use what was available to the various commanders. Signal personnel constantly complained to me that commanders invariably failed to establish fixed command posts, or, where command posts were established, they were soon abandoned without any preliminary notice or intimation to the signal personnel as to "where do we go next". (d) Lack of definite orders, distributed in ample time to enable commanders to act intelligently and with reasonable time for preparation; this applies particularly to the attacks, which followed one another so closely as practically to prevent a proper reorganization. (e) Too many changes in staff and commanders at the last moment; this could produce nothing but unsatisfactory results. It is true, some of them were beyond the Division Commander's control, as for instance, the relief of (127) the Chief of Staff, a day or two before the attack, while others were not. It is believed the division commander violated one of the principles of training management when he arbitrarily relieved both commanders of his infantry brigades. We are told that a leader should not be relieved just because he is "believed to be incompetent", but that he must be made to function. At the time, the Division Commander could not have had any other reason than his own belief that these officers were incompetent, in as much as the division had never had the test of real

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battle. The changes alone, caused in themselves, a weakening of the chain of command. These officers were officers of long experience, and should, at least have had a chance to prove if a change was, or was not necessary. (f) It is believed the Division Commander's remarks to his officers the night before the battle were out of place, to say the least. I have no doubt but what a serious purpose was in the mind of the Division Commander, he thought it was a well-aimed shot, but there was something wrong with its interior ballistics, and it did not hit the mark. I am quite convinced that the effect of his remarks was in no way the cause of any of the errors and miscarriages in the later activities of the division, but the remarks did no possible good, and could better have been left unsaid, true though they might have been. (g) I have referred to interference with signal communications as being caused by "other activities". By this I mean activities of our own troops. There was displayed, in this case, a decided carelessness, due to ignorance, no doubt, on the part of troops generally, as to the proper care and protection of lines. They were ridden into, driven into, and cut into without any apparent appreciation as to their vital importance to the troops whom they served. (h) Finally, it is believed the plan of attack can be criticized. Due to the two main obstacles in the first part of the zone of advance of the division, Vauquois Hill and Rossignol Woods, which were to be passed by the leading lines, the presence of Buanthe creek, and the additional broadening of the zone after passing Varennes, with an evident change of direction on the part of the left elements, a division of forces was practically forestalled at the beginning. This would point to the adoption of a formation of brigades side by side, instead of brigade column. A formation of brigades side by side would, at least, have prevented the extensive mixing of regiments in brigades that ultimately resulted.

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(1) The employment of infantry weapons (auxiliary) was unsatisfactory. They were used very little. Machine Guns were not used to their fullest effects, being dissipated among too small unit assignments, and their fullest use and general control were, in that way, lost. (j) Artillery support was not as effective as it should have been. This was partly the fault of the infantry in getting too far behind barrages; also it was due to failure to co-operate with the air service. It is a significant fact that the division had, at the start, a gun for every 17 meters of infantry front, in addition to Trench Mortars, and fire of Army Artillery. (k) Failure to maintain contact with flank divisions. This caused the division to get far in advance of its neighbor divisions, exposing its flanks to enemy flank, enfilade, and some times, it is believed, reverse fire from the enemy.

Lessons:

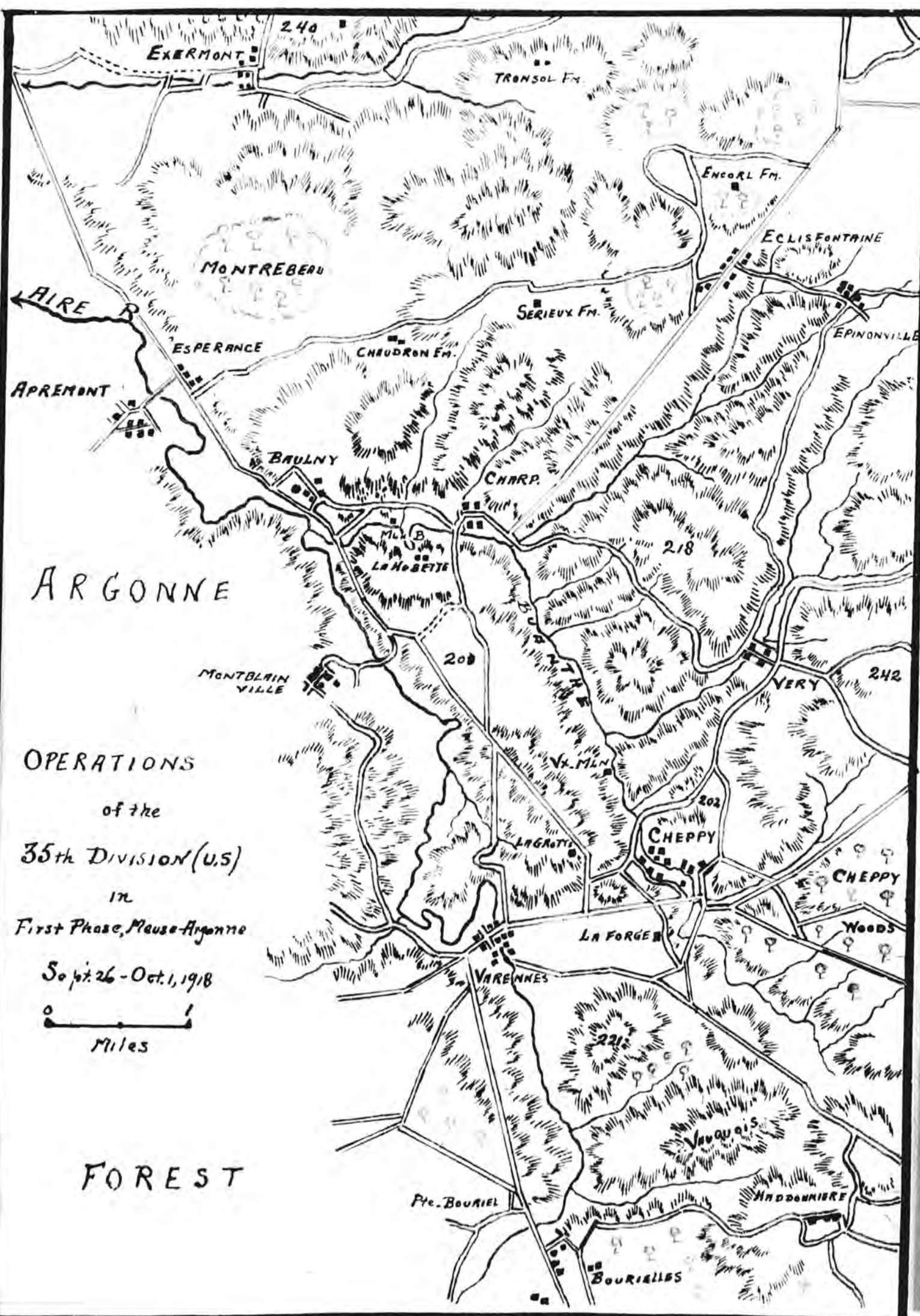
(131) In all of our wars, which have been forced upon us, we have, as a nation, entered absolutely unprepared, and the idea strikes one, why do we never learn our lesson, from such experiences, so costly in life and money? We have seen, in the study of the early history of the division, how, the condition of the division had been diagnosed as to training methods and of the results obtained. The very defective elements which apparently were very outstanding almost a year previous to this action, not having been remedied in the meantime, finally proved the downfall of the division as a thorough fighting unit. We might in this case, go on and enumerate lessons from proven violation of nearly tactical and other principle on the calendar, as a result of this study; however, this would simply parade before us our old friends. It requires no unusual stretch of imagination to realize that had this division had even a semblance of logical and systematic training along lines taught by our own schools today, or even of that day, things would not have taken

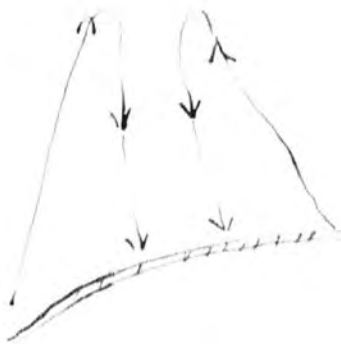
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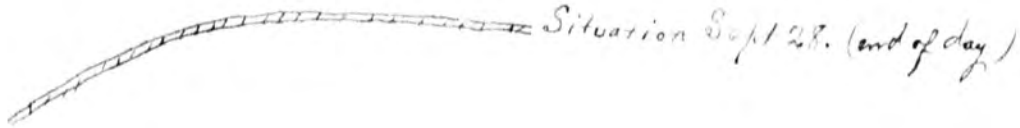
the turn they did. I want to bring out only one or two lessons from this operation; one that is particularly important to commanders of combatant troops, i. e., the necessity for instructing troops generally as to the vital necessity for protecting lines of signal communications at all times. The main lesson I wish to stress, as a result from this study is this, that one can not escape the sentence that always hangs over the heads of those who neglect training and preparation, the ghost that always stalks behind lack of training "failure", or at the very best, only a nominal success.



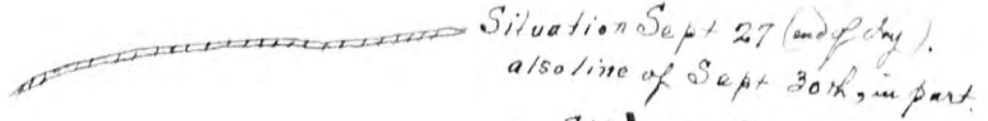




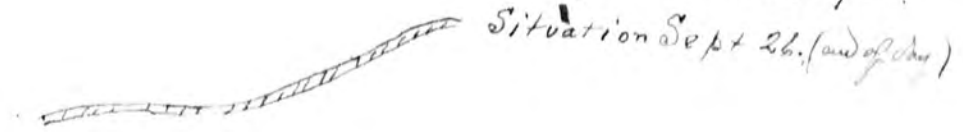
Situation, Sept 29, prior to withdrawal.



Situation Sept 28. (end of day)



Situation Sept 27 (end of day).  
also line of Sept 30th, in part.



Situation Sept 26. (end of day)

Line of departure Sept 26.

