

The 3rd Division at Chateau Thierry

July 1918

by

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GAS WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I

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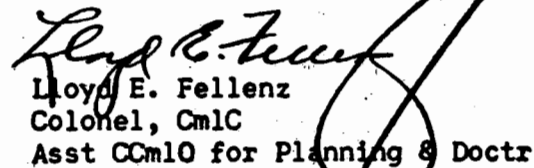
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THE 3rd DIVISION AT CHATEAU THIERRY

July 1918

The threat of disaster on the Western Front presented by the great German offensives in the spring of 1918 precipitated American forces, then training in France, into battle some months before they were considered ready. The 1st and 2nd Divisions, committed in April and June, and the 4th and 26th Divisions, put in the line early in July, did not meet any of these offensives head on. Only the 3rd and 42nd Divisions, at the Marne, had that experience. The present study records how the 3rd Division met the German offensive of 15 July 1918.

The tendency of higher headquarters during World War I to expect more of Regular Army divisions than of guard or draft divisions does not seem to have been justified in the case of the 3rd Division. Its Regular Army complement was not much greater than in National Guard or National Army divisions in the AEF. It was limited to the division and brigade headquarters staffs and to one Regular Army officer in each company.¹ And despite its Regular Army status, the division was probably less ready for combat than any other that had arrived in France up to that time. In addition, it had both leadership and discipline problems, graphically

1

History of the Third Division in the World War, compiled by Maj Frederic V. Hemenway, Div Hist (Andernach-an-der-Rhine, 1 Feb 1919), p. 1. This 397-page work by unit historians will be cited hereafter as History.

described by its highly articulate Chief of Staff.² These proved to be well-nigh insuperable factors in the performance of the division.

The event from which the 3rd Division seems never to have wholly recovered was the gas bombardment of 15 July 1918. That morning, in preparation for the fifth and last German offensive, the German Seventh, First and Third Armies put down a four-hour gas and high explosive bombardment on an attack front of almost 120 kilometers. It caught the 3rd Division on the extreme left flank of the front. Like the earlier preparatory bombardments that spring, that on 15 July was not intended by the Germans to destroy the defensive works of the enemy but merely to paralyze morale until the German infantry could break through.³

There seems little doubt that despite relatively few casualties as a result of the bombardment, the morale of 3rd Division was badly shattered by the shelling. The subsequent failure of the enemy attack in the 3rd Division sector, as elsewhere, resulted rather from events immediately prior to the bombardment and to inadequacies of the bombardment itself than to any heroic defense made below the Marne.

The present study describes the preparations of 3rd Division to meet the attack, the conduct of the division during the bombardment and the German attack that followed, and the experience of the division during its subsequent

2

See corresp atchd to Spec Rpt of Opns of 3rd Div, July 15 - 31 (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6).

3

See CWS Weekly Sum of Info, 19 Jun and 3 Jul (War Dept Hist Box 298).

advance above the Marne.

"On May 30th we stepped into history"

Maj. Gen. Joseph T. Dickman's 3rd Division as organized at Camp Green, Charlotte, N. C., on 27 November 1917, comprised the 4th and 7th Infantry, 5th Brigade, under Brig. Gen. Fred W. Sladen; the 30th and 38th Infantry, 6th Brigade, under Brig. Gen. Charles Crawford; the 10th, 76th, and 18th FA, 3rd FA Brigade, under Col. William M. Cruikshank; and the usual machine gun, engineer, medical, and signal components and supply trains.

The division landed in France in April 1918 and after little more than a month of retraining it bypassed its scheduled tour of duty in the trenches and "stepped into history." ⁴

On 27 May the German High Command launched its fourth offensive that spring, spearheaded by the Seventh Army driving from the Chemin des Dames. Four days later the point of the attack came to a halt at the Marne after a penetration of nearly forty miles (Map No. 1). Seventh Army had gone farther and faster than the German command had thought possible, and the advance could not be resumed until supplies and heavy artillery came up.

On 30 May, as the Germans continued to advance, Pershing put his 2nd and 3rd Divisions, the latter then training at Chateau Villain, a hundred miles southeast of Chateau Thierry, at the disposal of General

d'Esperay, commanding the French Group of Armies of the North. They were ordered to the XXI and XXXVIII French Corps areas of Duchesne's (shortly to be Degoutte's) Sixth French Army, in the Chateau Thierry region.

On the afternoon of the 30th, the motorized 7th Machine Gun Battalion of 3rd Division set out for Chateau Thierry, going into position the next afternoon along the river front in the town as the Germans entered its northern limits.⁵ The two infantry brigades entrained the night of 30 May and were almost a week arriving at the front.⁶ Meanwhile, on 2 June, as the French continued to fall back west of Chateau Thierry, the Germans advanced cautiously, taking Bussiares, Torcy, the Bois de Belleau, and Hill 204 before they came to a halt in front of the rallying French and the 2nd American Division. But from Chateau Thierry east, Seventh Army had already stopped, unable to cross the Marne without considerable preparation.⁷

On arriving in the Marne sector on 4 - 6 June, the 3rd Division infantry was dispersed by battalions among the elements of the 10th

5

Order 1306, 3rd Sec, Hq Gp of Armies of North, 30 May (3rd Div Box 18, 32.7); Maj John R. Mendenhall, 7th MG Bn, "The Fist in the Dyke," Infantry Journal (Jan 1936), pp. 13 - 23. When relieved on 4 Jun, the 7th MG Bn had suffered 32 casualties (Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 124, Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1).

6

FO 3, 3rd Div, 1450 hr, 1 Jun (3rd Div Box 12, 32.1).

7

See Rpt of Prisoner Interrogations by Fr LO, 5th Brig Hq, 3 Jun (3rd Div Box 30, 22.3).

Colonial and 20th French Divisions spanning the river front from Chateau Thierry to Dormans. To cover gaps in their lines and strengthen the Marne bridges, the French continued to shift the battalions about nervously all the next week. At one time the units of the division, some as small as platoons, were spread out across the front from La Fertesous-Jouarre to Courthiezy (Map No. 2).⁸

Once in the line, said the 6th Brigade commander, "we were not seriously molested by the enemy for six weeks, except by a raid or two and by desultory artillery fire. The German drive from the north had spent itself."⁹

The Division is Reassembled

The 3rd Division arrived at the front without a gas organization, although the troops had received some gas training early in May when Maj. Woodruff M. Somervell of the Engineers was appointed Division Gas Officer.¹⁰

⁸ History, pp. 3 - 4; Memo, G - 3 to CofS 3rd Div, 4 Jun, sub: Operations changes (with DORs in 3rd Div Box 20, 33.1); Gen Order of Ops 3261, 3rd Sec, 6th Fr Army, 10 Jun (3rd Div Box 18, 32.7).

⁹ [Brig Gen] Charles Crawford, Six Months with the Sixth Brigade (Kansas City, Mo. [1926]), p. 46.

¹⁰ For the unsatisfactory efforts at gas training in the States, see Progress Reports, Jan 1918, in 3rd Div Box 26, 56.2. 7th Inf hand receipts dated 14 and 16 May indicate that all companies were issued copies of the Army War College manual, Gas Warfare. Part II. Methods of Defense Against Gas Attacks, and Part III. Methods of Training in Defensive Measures. Part I, German Methods of Offense was issued only to regimental hq (3rd Div Box 36, 10.9; manual in War Dept Hist Box 205).

Until mid-June unit commanders appear to have been solely responsible for gas discipline and not until 19 June were the regiments directed to appoint regimental and battalion gas officers.¹¹

With what success division gas memos reached the widely scattered troops at the Marne can only be guessed. The most important of these memos, prepared on 8 June for all units, ordered the French M-2 mask turned in since the British small box respirator (SBR) was to be the only authorized mask in the AEF. The same memo defined the zones in the sector where the mask was to be worn at the ready and alert positions, warned that toxic effects of gas might be felt for several kilometers beyond the point of impact, and that the Germans had been known to fire mustard gas on areas as distant as 13 to 15 kilometers back of the front. All billets within 7 kilometers of the front line and all battery positions were to have a supply of chloride of lime for decontamination of the ground and bicarbonate of soda for decontamination of the eyes and skin.¹²

Prominent in the memo was an injunction made familiar by its appearance in one form or another in the orders of other divisions:

¹¹

G - 3 Order 25, 3rd Div, 19 Jun (3rd Div Box 14, 32.13). Gas personnel seems to have been designated on the spot. Two months later, in accordance with AEF GO 79, RGOs, BGOs, and gas NCOs who were "not AEF trained" were replaced or sent to school (Memo 125, 3rd Div, 23 Aug, 3rd Div Box 1, 10.2).

¹²

As happened elsewhere, Memo 103, 3rd Div, 7 Jul (3rd Div Box 1, 10.2), was issued to warn that chloride of lime was for neutralizing mustard gas shell holes and not for general disinfecting purposes.

FORÊT DE
VILLERS COTTERETS



LA FERTE-sous-Joué



The attention of all ranks is directed to the ever increasing importance of Gas Warfare....There should be no joking about gas. Men should not contract the habit of yelling "Gas," as a joke, even when they are away from the front, and should be summarily disciplined for this offense.¹³

And inevitably, a series of orders appeared saying that contrary to directives, officers and men were going about in the headquarters area, in the billeting areas, and even at the front without their masks, and in some cases without either masks or helmets.¹⁴

A week after coming into the sector, 3rd Division still had no certain identification of the enemy units on its front. Upon prompting by corps, patrols crossed the river repeatedly until one returned with prisoners, identifying the units of the 10th Landwehr Division occupying the three-kilometer sector between Chateau Thierry and Gland. The enemy forces were found holding a series of rifle pits along the edge of the Bois de Barbillon, with light machine guns between the pits and heavy machine guns on the flanks.¹⁵

In addition to the general dispersion of the 3rd Division along the Marne, on 13 June a battalion of the 30th Infantry, followed by one of the 4th Infantry, was sent to the temporary relief of French units trying to

13

Memo 96, 3rd Div, 8 Jun, n.s. (3rd Div Box 2, 10.2).

14

Memo, O CofS, 9 Jun (3rd Div Box 1, 10.2 and Box 3, 10.9); G - 1 Order 6, 16 Jun (Box 14, 32.13); G - 3 Order 83, 4 Jul (Box 13, 32.13); Memo, G - 1 to CO 6th Eng, 10 Jul (Box 2, 10.2).

15

SOI 12 and 15, 13 - 14 and 16 - 17 Jun (3rd Div Box 7, 20.1).

recapture Hill 204. Three days later the whole of the 7th Infantry was dispatched by Sixth Army to relieve the badly mauled Marines in the Belleau Wood-Bouresches sector. Belleau Wood, like Hill 204, proved to be "one huge machine-gun nest," and after less than a week the regimental units gratefully yielded their lines, almost intact, to the returning forces.¹⁶

With its units released by Sixth Army and by the 10th Colonial and 20th French Divisions¹⁷ as the front became stable, 3rd Division at the end of June was for the first time united. As the two French divisions shifted to the left and right, the 4th, 7th, 30th, and 38th Infantry, in columns of battalions, moved in on a nine-kilometer front along the river, from the east edge of Chateau Thierry to within a kilometer of Varennes (Map No. 3 and Overlay).¹⁸

On the night of 3 - 4 July the first elements of the 3rd FA Brigade came into the sector, joining the French batteries of 75's, 105's, and 155's

16

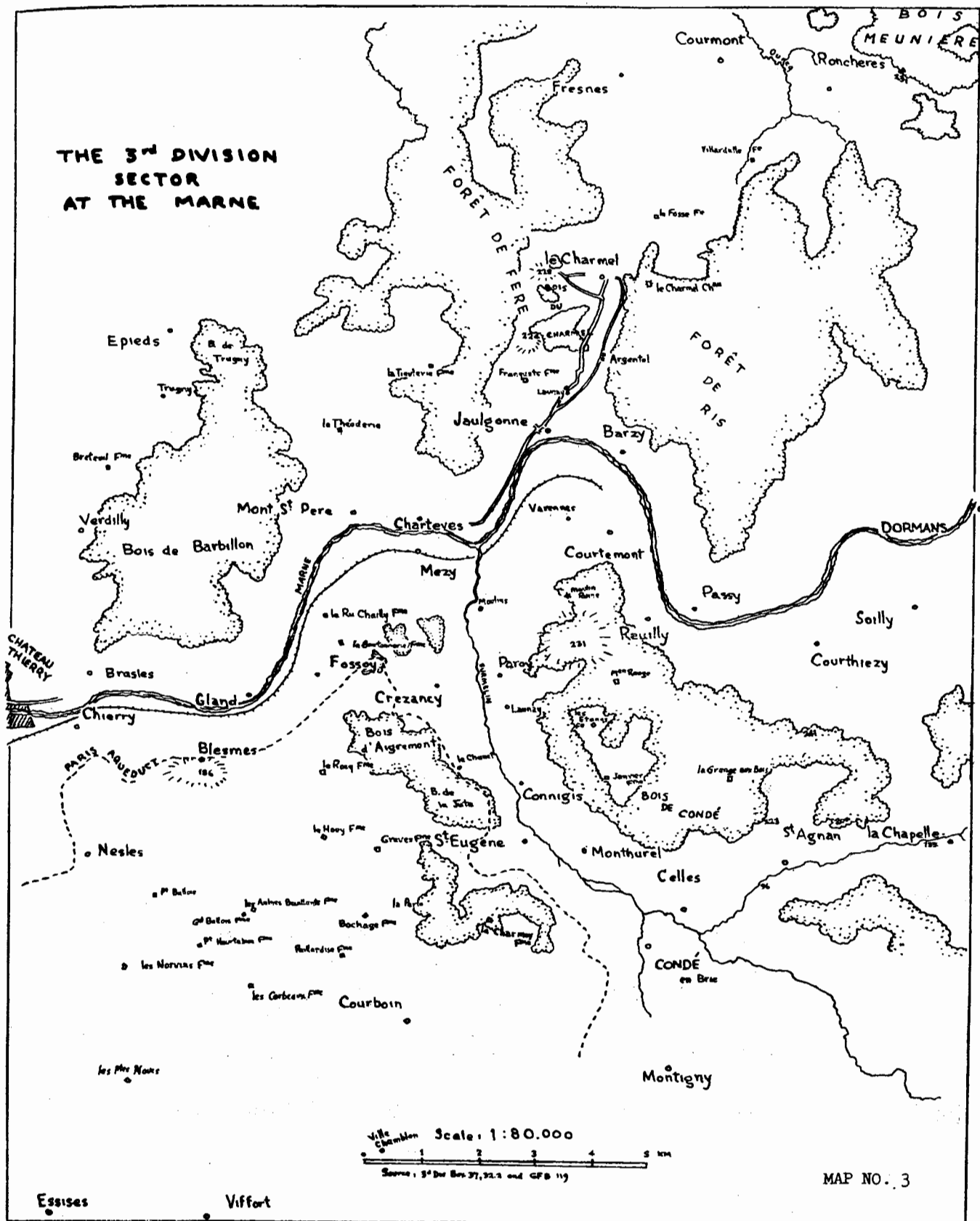
No casualties have been found for the 30th Inf; the 4th Inf battalion lost 13 killed, 34 wounded, 3 missing at Hill 204; the 7th Inf lost 51 killed, 265 wounded, 34 missing at Belleau Wood. Gas casualties were not distinguished. See History, pp. 81, 91, 135 - 36; Joseph T. Dickman, The Great Crusade (New York, 1927), pp. 56, 272; Col C. H. Lanza, Field Notes, "Action of 2nd Bn, 30th Inf. 6 - 7 June, on Hill 204," 3 Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 40, 18.2). Rpts of the action at Belleau Wood, described as wholly "attended by chaos," are in 3rd Div Box 39, 33.6.

17

These were soon to be replaced by the 39th and 125th French Divs, which were the units adjoining 3rd Div during July.

18

FO 6, 3rd Div, 2359, 18 Jun; FO 7, 1800, 2 Jul.



already there. Ten days later the divisional 155's arrived. The last battery of 155's never made it; it was smashed on the road during the bombardment that night.¹⁹

The strategic feature of the sector occupied by 3rd Division was the Surmelin valley, a natural gateway to the south. From above the junction of Surmelin brook with the Marne, the enemy in the Bois de Barbillon and Forêt de Ris had an unimpaired view ten kilometers to the south. Dominating the Surmelin valley, from the enemy's point of view, were the heights of the le Rocq plateau, crowned by the Bois d'Aigremont. The immediate obstacle to an advance down that valley to the plateau was the Marne, only about 50 yards wide on this front but quite deep and therefore hazardous for heavily equipped troops trying to cross it.²⁰

"Preparing by every manner of means"

For all his observation to the front, the enemy remained singularly unaggressive in the weeks before the attack. No one doubted that a new offensive was being prepared or the general area where it would fall. Throughout the period 3rd Division G - 2 reports were filled with the sights and sounds of attack preparations, the movement of wagons, caissons, and men, the unloading of hollow cylinders and the metallic pounding as of pontoons

19

Ltr rpt, CG 3rd FA Brig to CG 3rd Div, 18 Dec, sub: Opns Rpt, 14 Jul - 1 Aug (3rd Div Box 22, 33.6).

20

Dickman, The Great Crusade, pp. 62 - 63.

and bridge parts being put together in the woods beyond the Marne. Daily, scores of enemy planes crossed and recrossed the front, with as many as 108 planes counted one day.²¹

Again and again Division G - 3 reported on the "exceeding inactivity" of the enemy artillery. G - 2 reports for the 40 days between 4 June and 13 July indicate that the enemy fired less than 12,500 shells, an average of 200 - 300 shells a day, falling off just before the offensive to less than 100 shells a day. Probably less than two-thirds of the 26 killed and 87 wounded reported by G - 3 in this period resulted from enemy shell and shrapnel. The rest fell to snipers or were lost on patrols across the river. Only 7 of these 113 casualties are specifically identified as occurring at Hill 204; almost 400 others identified with the Chateau Thierry and Bois de Belleau operations in June are unaccounted for in 3rd Division casualty records.²²

In that month and a half fewer than 130 gas shells were counted in the sector, resulting in four gas casualties. In no instance did more than 20 gas shells fall on any one day, leading G - 2 to observe early in July:

21

SOI 25, 3rd Div, 26 - 27 Jun. G - 2 issued two sets of SOIs, an un-numbered set from 4 - 20 Jun in 3rd Div Box 9, 20.9, and a numbered set, SOI 9 - 41, 10 Jun - 13 Jul, in 3rd Div Box 7, 20.1. Thirteen reports are missing in the second set and no rpts have been found for the period 14 Jul - 12 Aug, when the 3rd Div left the sector.

22

Eleven reports are missing in the DORs between 3 Jun and 14 Jul (3rd Div Box 20, 33.1). See Analysis, p. 86.

It has been noted that the enemy is using against this division tactics similar to that which he has used against [other] new American Divisions in respect to the use of GAS. His procedure has been to send over during the first three weeks but a few shells and those of a harmless sneezing nature. This is done with the idea of producing a feeling of apathy in regard to GAS and to lull the troops into a sense of false security.²³

"The last week in June and the first two weeks of July were spent in preparing by every manner of means...to meet the onslaught that... all knew...was impending." ²⁴ To assist 3rd Division in its preparations, corps asked General Dickman to send some of his officers over to see and study the trenches prepared by the 125th French on the right. Dickman himself went, too,

and found that they had a very beautiful plan with all sorts of lozenges, beans, kidneys...and [other] various shapes of figures in different colors representing a very elaborate system of trenches. But upon inquiry...most of these trenches [proved to be], as the Spanish say, en proyecto, and... very little actual work had been done.....When the time came to make use of these French trenches, they made preparations for evacuation several hours before the bombardment came, and when the Germans let down their huge concentration, the 125th French Division promptly disappeared from the map.²⁵

23

SOI 34, 3rd Div, 5 - 6 Jul. Hospital lists (see Analysis, p. 89) show 24 gas casualties between 4 Jun - 14 Jul. Cf. Telg, DGO to CofGas Serv, 18 Jun (GAF - 3rd Div); Memo, DGO for G - 3 3rd Div, 19 Jun, n.s., and Ltrs, DGO to G - 3 3rd Div, 28 Jun and 6 Jul, sub: Weekly Report (3rd Div Box 28, 63.3), all reporting little or no gas activity.

24

History, p. 7. The file of French corps and army instructions on defense preparations is in 3rd Div Box 32, 33.6.

25

Pers ltr, Dickman, Hq Ft Sam Houston to Col P. S. Bond, Washington, D.C., 21 Feb 1919 (3rd Div Box 3, 11.4).

No single map of the defensive system in the 3rd Division sector has been found, and perhaps none was made. The four lines of defense that were prepared remained elementary since the constant shifting of units and of sector limits until early July left little time for construction (see Map No. 3 and Overlay). Along the river bank a series of rifle pits and machine gun positions were manned by platoons and half-platoons as the outpost line. The second line consisted of a more or less continuous line of riflemen along the railroad embankment. The main line of resistance or aqueduct line followed the slopes of the first hills south of the Marne, roughly along the Paris aqueduct that passed through the sector, and was not a line but a series of strong points. The support or woods line ran along the slopes of the second ridge below the Marne (the le Rocq plateau), extending east through the Bois d'Aigremont into the Surmelin valley. The reverse slopes of this ridge were organized by Sixth Army, with the 28th American Division in the rear of 3rd Division and the 73rd French, the counterattack division, on the right below St. Eugene, ready to attack either toward Gland or Passy.²⁶

Thus echeloned in depth, all units were to hold their ground when the attack came, beginning at the most advanced line. The foremost troops, corps said, were to fight "with their feet in the water, so to speak."²⁷

26

History, p. 8; Col C. R. Howland, A Military History of the World War (Ft Leavenworth, Kansas, 1923), p. 299; CG 29, 73rd Fr Div, 10 Jul (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7).

27

Ltr, CG 38th Fr Corps to CG 3rd Div, 11 Jul, n.s. (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7).

The field order governing 3rd Division at the time of the attack said that in case the enemy used artificial fog or gas, all groups and sentinels forward of the woods line (i.e., the support line) were to "await in their present positions the advance of the enemy." If the woods were bombarded with gas, the troops were to evacuate them at once, since "woods and valleys constitute gas traps." They were to take up defensive positions on the flanks, to block the enemy advance and his efforts at infiltration. The troops were also reassured that there was no danger of the enemy advancing through "gas poisoned areas." 28

A slight modification of this gas defense plan, made at the last minute, said that "In case of a gas attack combat groups [half-platoon units] will withdraw to the Railroad Line leaving their observation group on the river front. No other troops will withdraw...until ordered...by higher authority....Troops of the Railroad Line will hold out to the last. If the line is pierced and counterattacks fail the combat groups will hold out individually to break the enemy's formations." 29

The division was amply warned that the attack would unquestionably be preceded by "a violent and short preparation...with heavy and well organized use of gas shells," or as Col. Robert H. C. Kelton, Chief of Staff, phrased it, "to discomfort our troops" during his attempt to cross

28

G - 3 Notes on Conference, 5 Jul (3rd Div Box 14, 32.15); Annex 6, 6 Jul, to FO 7, 3rd Div, 2 Jul.

29

Plan of Defense, Gland Sector, 7th Inf, 12 Jul (3rd Div Box 38, 32.8).

the river, the enemy would likely use gas or smoke or both in the wooded areas along the river valley.³⁰

As early as 12 June Major Somervell, the Division Gas Officer, was instructed to submit for the division order for defense a draft of protective measures to be exercised in the event of a gas bombardment. The instructions appeared in a three-page order on 15 June, covering the necessity of daily gas mask drills and inspections, the wearing of masks during all bombardments, cautions in unmasking, treatment of gas casualties, evacuation procedures after mustard gas attack, preparation of gas attack reports, and a reminder that when a gas bombardment was over the troops were to fire "short bursts...from machine guns and rifles...to prevent corrosion" by the chemicals in the air.

Although the enemy might use gas projectors on this front, the order said, he was now relying on gas shell for almost 60 percent of his gas fire. The troops were reminded that 30 percent of gas casualties in the past had resulted from premature removal of masks. Because of the high percentage of casualties caused by gas, "strict gas discipline and constant watchfulness by commanding officers is necessary....Strict compliance with

30

Memo, CofS 3rd Div for Brig Comdrs, 1 Jul, and Memo 2476/1, 38th Fr Corps, 7 Jul (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7).

G - 3 Order 44, 3rd Div, 23 Jun (3rd Div Box 13, 32.13), reported on a study made by Third Fr Army of German tactics in the Montdidier-Noyon offensive of 9 Jun. CWS Weekly Sum of Inf, 27 Mar, 4 Apr, 5 Jun, 12 Jun, 19 Jun, 26 Jun, and 3 Jul contained reports on the gas bombardments for earlier German offensives. Bul of Intel Info 2, G-2 3rd Div, 6 Jul (3rd Div Box 7, 20.3), published the data in CWS WSI, 3 July.

the above [instructions] is enjoined upon all concerned and Commanding Officers will be held accountable for the number of gas casualties occurring in their command." 31

Although the 3rd Division issued instructions enough, a degree of ignorance, not to say helplessness, as to just what to do about a gas bombardment seems to have prevailed. This is implied in a statement without further explanation in the division history:

The use of gas and smoke [by the Germans] had been foreseen...but...was not yet sufficiently covered [by directives] so that proper precaution could be taken without loss in personnel and great confusion resulting therefrom.

The state of indecision seems clear from a report of the 7th Infantry Regimental Gas Officer a week before the bombardment, that daily gas mask drill was being held in the front lines, that the company in Fossoy had gas-proof cellars, and the dugout under construction for the regimental command post was to have gas curtains. But no other shelters in the sector were gas-proof or were to be made gas-proof except for a battalion PC that had requested and been issued gas blankets. 32

Anticipation of the bombardment by the troops was not allayed by the series of all-night alerts that began on 3 - 4 July. There was another on

31

Memo 16, Asst G - 3 3rd Div for Gas Officer, 12 Jun (3rd Div Box 2, 10.2); G - 3 Order 11, 3rd Div, 15 Jun (3rd Div Box 13, 32.13); Memo to officers inspecting front line trenches, 29 Jun (3rd Div Box 2, 10.2); Memo, 3rd Bn 7th Inf BGO to all companies, 3 Jul, sub: Preventive measures against gas (3rd Div Box 3, 10.9).

32

History, p. 9; Ltr, RGO to CO 7th Inf, 8 Jul, sub: Report (3rd Div Box 20, 32.9).

6 - 7 July, and from 9 July on the troops were kept constantly under alert conditions. The fears thus built up were to result in large numbers of gas-panic cases both during the bombardment and afterwards. And for two days during the attack the 7th Infantry was to imagine itself hard pressed on all sides by German troops, although none came within a kilometer of its positions.

Only after the attack did the Division Gas Officer learn that for some time past word had been circulating in the division that the respirator was only effective for ten or twelve hours and was useless after that. Too late, he ordered this impression corrected; the mask was fully effective "for a minimum of 40 hours in gas." He also learned too late that men had regularly been disciplined by being required to wear the respirator during setting-up exercises. Since "the mask is not issued for disciplinary purposes," he asked that this be stopped at once.³³

A gas defense effort in another direction seems to have proved more rewarding. For several weeks the Division Gas Officer and Chief of Staff sought permission to put gas, or at least interdiction fire, on the enemy traffic observed around Mont St. Pere and Charteves, as well as on suspected concentrations of minenwerfers and artillery building up in front of those towns and in the woods above them. But corps, to save its ammunition, refused permission, saying there was to be no fire along the Marne until

33

Memo, DGO for all unit gas officers, 18 Jul (3rd Div Box 2, 10.2).

the actual time of the attack.³⁴

Corps apparently relented, because from 8 July on the division artillery "began to be very active, shelling the enemy with gas nightly." The records of this fire are both fragmentary and contradictory, but indicate that the French and American batteries of 3rd Division may have fired 1,338 unspecified gas shells on the night of 8 - 9 July, another 7,000 the next night, and harassing bursts of mustard gas on the nights of 11 and 12 July.

Then on the night of 13 July, 1,408 gas shells were said to have been fired into the Bois de Barbillon, west of Mont St. Pere, and for the next night orders were prepared for a 3,300-round destructive fire on the accumulation of enemy material in the Mont St. Pere-Charteves area, during which "no special #20 shell will be used."³⁵ The inference is that all the previous fire had been with the new French yperite (mustard gas) shell, introduced in the field just the month before, a full year after the Germans

34

Ltr, DGO to G - 3, 6 Jul, sub: Report of Enemy Activity (3rd Div Box 28, 63.33); Memo, CofS for Div Comdr, 8 Jul, sub: Arty Conditions (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7). Petain, Note 23546, for Armies & Gps of Armies, 19 Jul (French Files Box 54, 30.1).

35

Daily Intel Rpts, 3rd FA Brig, 8 - 9, 9 - 10, 13 - 14 Jul (3rd Div Box 51, 20.9); DOR, 3rd Div, 11 Jul; FO 25, 3rd FA Brig, 13 Jul (Box 51, 32.1); Ltr, CO 10th FA to CG 3rd FA Brig, 24 Jan 1919, sub: Rpt on Gas Attacks (GAF - 3rd Div).

began using their yellow cross (mustard gas) shell.³⁶

Vapors from the mustard gas fired on the night of 12 July were reported to have "drifted across the river in spots, necessitating wearing of respirators in the 7th and 30th Infantry at low points along the river bank." The next night the troops were warned that the artillery would again fire gas "on both sides of Gland and on the north bank of the Marne," and they were to be alert for any change in wind direction.³⁷

German records were later to reveal that this fire, and particularly the yperite and HE fire put down by the French and American batteries on the night before the attack, resulted in irreparable damage to the operation.

German Plans for the Offensive of 15 July

While 3rd Division improvised sector defenses and the French Armies, with the lessons of the earlier German offensives before them, hoped to

36

This is confirmed by Gen. Mondesir, CG 38th Fr Corps, in his "contribution...to the history of the Marne Division," dated 1 Mar 1928, in which he said that on 8, 9 and 13 July a total of 32,000 75-mm. and 1,000 105-mm. yperite shells were fired by the arty of the corps into the woods and ravines north of the Marne ("The American 3rd Div in the Second Battle of the Marne," p. 5, French Files Box 107, 30.4). His accompanying map of the yperited areas has not been found. Cf. Note de Service 1814/3, Sixth Fr Army, 7 Jul (French Files Box 54, 30.1).

37

Ltr, DGO to G - 3 3rd Div, 13 Jul, sub: Rpt of Gas Bombardment with Mustard Gas (3rd Div Box 28, 63.3); Msg, PC 5th Brig to CO 8th MG Bn, 2020, 13 Jul (3rd Div Box 30, 32.16).

contain the new attack and even mount a counteroffensive of their own, the German High Command set in motion a grandiose scheme that was intended to annihilate the French and then the British on the Western Front and so end the war.

In the original plan, the attack on either side of Reims by Army Group German Crown Prince on 15 July was to be followed five days later by an offensive towards Amiens launched by Army Group Crown Prince of Bavaria, to smash the British along the Somme (see Map No. 1).³⁸ Both were to be decisive operations, both Friedenstürme or "peace offensives" that would end the war on German terms. But as the time approached for the Reims attack, difficulties in mounting a double offensive and intelligence that the French might themselves be preparing an attack, resulted in deferring the Amiens offensive to a later date.³⁹ The 15 July attack must first succeed.

For the attack the Germans assembled 47 divisions in three armies, approximately 650,000 men, on an 85-mile front from Chateau Thierry to the

38

Order Ia 8685, GHQ Field Army, 14 Jun, reproduced in The German Offensive of July 15, 1918 (Marne Source Book), compiled by Col C.H. Lanza, C G - 2 Sec, Gen Serv Sch (Ft. Leavenworth, Kan., 1923), pp. 11 - 12; Order Ia 836, Seventh Army to all Corps Comdrs, 24 Jun (pp. 147 - 48); Tel msg, Ludendorff to AGGCP, 4 Jul (p. 279).

Note: Almost two-thirds of this 910-page text (hereafter cited as MSB, for Marne Source Book) consists of German documents, most of them at corps, army, and army group level.

39

Rpt Ia 2629, AGGCP to GHQ Opns Sec, 10 Jul, sub: Elector (MSB, pp. 345 - 46).

Argonne Forest. Opposite were almost 1,000,000 French and Americans.

The object of the offensive by the Seventh, First, and Third Armies was to cut off and annihilate the huge body of French forces concentrated on the Reims plateau. While its right wing held absolutely, the center of Seventh Army would cross the Marne. The center and left wing of that Army were then to push forward on both banks of the Marne, connecting with the advancing First Army at Epernay. Seventh Army would then turn towards Paris, while First and Third Armies advanced towards Chalons. Swinging east from Chalons and down the west bank of the Aisne to St. Mihiel, these armies would squeeze out Verdun, as they had Reims, and France would sue for peace.⁴⁰

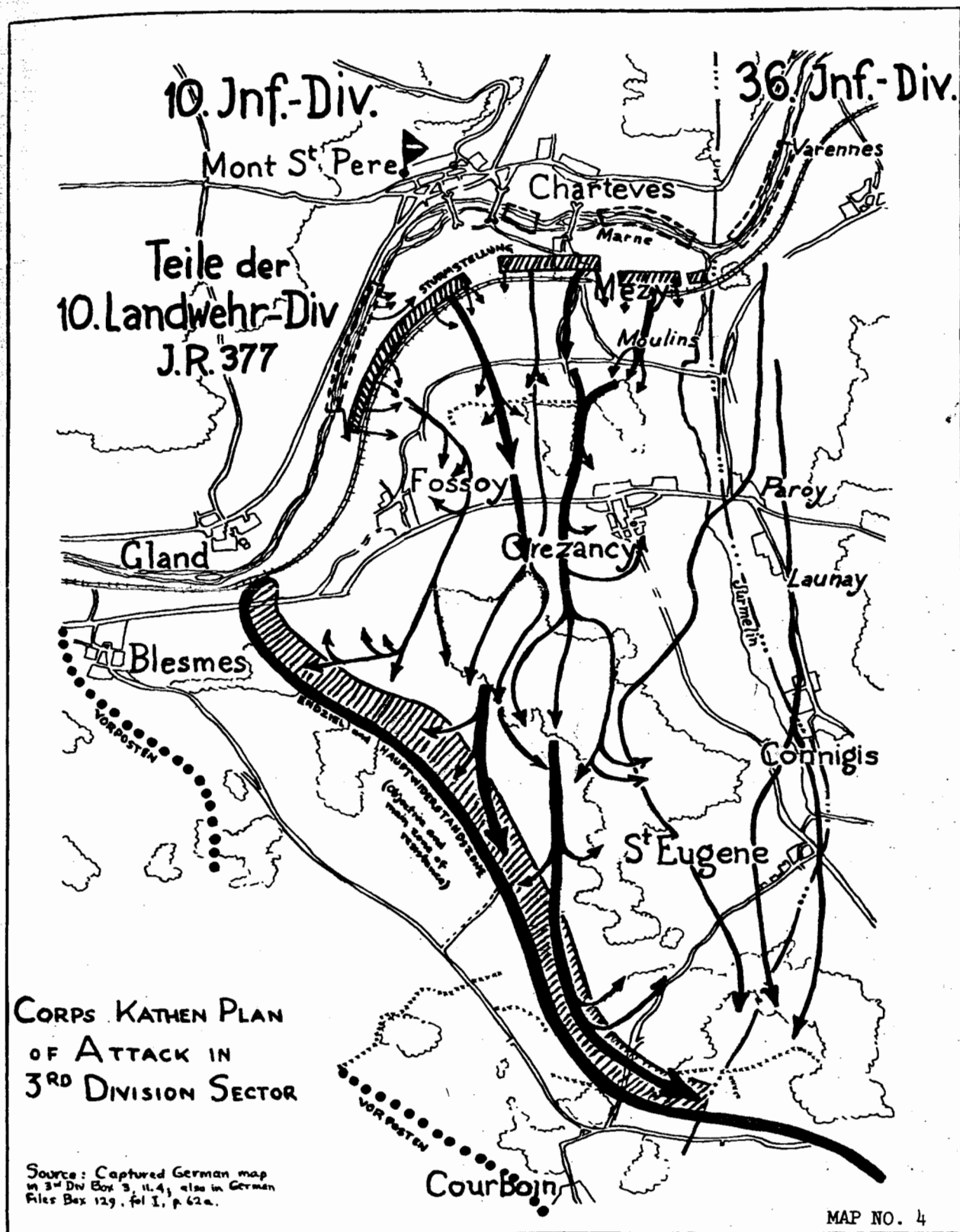
To secure its attack on Epernay, Seventh Army had to seize and hold the terrain west of Surmelin brook. Two assault divisions of Corps Katten were to cross at Charveves and on both sides of Jaulgonne, taking the line Gland-St. Eugene-Celles, in order to protect the right flank of the attack (Maps No. 3 and 4). Corps Wichura was to seize the hills north of St. Agnan and the La Chapelle valley, commanding the valley of the Surmelin, as the remaining corps of Seventh Army swept down and converged on Epernay.⁴¹

40

Army Orders Ia 2605, First Army, 21 Jun (MSB, p. 119); Army Orders Ia 844, Seventh Army, 25 Jun (MSB, pp. 154 - 58). The Chalons-Verdun opn is not in German records but in Lt Col Duffour's "The Battle of France in 1918," MSB, p. 440.

41

Rpt Ia 773, Hq Seventh Army to AGCCP, 17 Jun (MSB, pp. 35 - 36).



In a planning report to Army Group, First Army estimated that since the troops in the 27 May attack had advanced 18 kilometers the first day, and the terrain to the front this time was decidedly more favorable, it was probable that First Army would reach the Marne the first day - a penetration of 23 kilometers.⁴² Seventh Army, with the Marne to cross, hoped to advance 8 to 10 kilometers below the Marne on the first day. The success of the attack, as order after order cautioned, depended upon the maintenance of absolute secrecy of preparations and a maximum of surprise.

The volume of gas and HE to be fired by each of the three armies in the artillery preparation for the offensive appears to have been approximately the same, but the pattern of fire in Seventh Army differed from First Army because of the Marne crossing. On Seventh Army front the rear and distant areas would be gassed for a longer period than the immediate front, to neutralize the artillery and hold down reserves while the troops crossed the Marne and reformed on the south side.

Large quantities of blue cross gas (diphenylchloroarsine) shell were to be included in the intense ten-minute surprise fire that began the bombardment. Depending on the weather, this was to be followed by an hour of blue and green cross (phosgene) shelling or HE shelling. The close range batteries were then to concentrate blue and green cross or blue cross and HE on artillery positions for fifteen minutes, and for a second fifteen-minute period concentrate blue and green cross or HE alone

42

Rpt Ia 2501, Hq First Army to AGGCP, 16 Jun (MSB, p. 25).

on infantry positions. During the final two hours of the bombardment all guns and mortars of Seventh Army were to concentrate HE on near targets and blue cross and HE on targets in the rear. No mention was made of yellow cross gas (mustard gas) anywhere in the fire orders.

"The main point," said Seventh Army orders, "is to completely silence hostile artillery by reenforced artillery fire (gas)." "Green cross must be used only when the weather is favorable. In unfavorable weather green cross must be changed to blue cross or HE ammunition." 43

It is estimated that in the neighborhood of half a million gas shells were to be made available to Seventh Army for the preparation and attack, constituting two and a half days' fire, exclusive of green cross shell. Almost 397,000 of these gas shells were to be blue cross, 58,000 were to be green cross, in addition to more than 350,000 HE (principally shrapnel) shells.⁴⁴ What proportion of these shells actually arrived at the battery positions and how many were actually fired can only be estimated, but it seems probable that owing to the difficulties of supplying the Marne salient and to the interdiction of French fire considerably less was fired than for the earlier offensives.

43

Army Orders, Ia Arty 12968, AGGCP, Fire Orders, 26 Jun (MSB, pp. 165 - 171); Arty Order 3, Ia CofArty 435/18, Seventh Army, 26 Jun (MSB, pp. 177 - 186).

44

These figures are based on computations made for this study but not included in the study.

Seventh Army warned that it was "very probable that there will not be sufficient blue cross ammunition" to maintain the recommended rate of fire. And German after-action reports and war diaries of units on 3rd Division front complained repeatedly of insufficient ammunition, of receiving quantities of shell that did not fit the guns, and of a general failure of supply.⁴⁵

Also important, since it determined whether or not any green cross gas was fired, and influenced to some extent the use of blue cross gas, was the weather on the morning of 15 July. The war diary of the 3rd Division said the weather was "good" on both 14 and 15 July. But the regimental and brigade war diaries described those days variously as "fair" "cloudy," and even "rainy." The war diary of 10th Division reported the weather on the 15th as "Rainy, light fog, clearing up later. Bright weather during the day." The morning report of Seventh Army said: "The weather became better during the night so that fire under medium to best conditions could be executed." Its war diary, written up on the night of 15 July, was a complete contradiction: "The weather conditions during the night of July 14 - 15 offered no chance for gassing."⁴⁶ But gas was used in the preparation.

45

Arty Order 3, Ia 435/18, above; Lt Kurt Hesse, 5th Gren, 36th Div, "The Drama on the Marne, July 15, 1918" (MSB, p. 673 - 76). Crown Prince Wilhelm of Germany, My War Experiences (London [1924]), p. 330, describes the unsatisfactory supply of Seventh Army for the offensive.

46

3rd Div war diaries (MSB, pp. 683 - 85, 718 - 21); 10th Div WD (MSB, p. 508); Morning Rpt, Seventh Army (MSB, p. 507); Seventh Army WD (MSB, p. 529).

The real difficulty proved to be resupplying the guns.

Even more fatal to the operation was the near impossibility of mounting a tremendous offensive on a front where every man in the line opposite was looking and listening for its telltale signs. Although burlap and rags were wrapped around artillery wheels and horses' hooves before approaching the front, and assault troops and pioneer units were held in the rear until the night of the attack, Seventh Army was chagrined to learn on 2 July from a 3rd Division officer captured north of Blesmes that the increased traffic and artillery concentrations had been observed, signaling an attack somewhere east of Chateau Thierry.⁴⁷ More alarming still were the reports that came in to German headquarters beginning on 10 July of Allied preparations for a large-scale offensive against the Soissons-Chateau Thierry front. As a result, artillery and reserves, including sufficient troops to form a new defensive corps, Corps Etzel, had to be taken from the Marne front at the last minute.⁴⁸

Against all the evidence of prisoners and its own intelligence officers, Seventh Army said on the evening of 14 July: "Preparations for STRASSENBAU

47

Rpt of Intel Officer, AGCCP, 3 Jul (MSB, p. 277); Composite Bul of Info [for period 1 - 10 Jul], G - 2 3rd Div, n.d. (3rd Div Box 7, 20.3), described a likely German atk from the vicinity of Charleville to Reims, its objectives Reims, Epernay, and Chalons, before driving directly west to Paris.

48

Seventh Army WD, 10 and 11 Jul (MSB, pp. 362, 381); AGCCP WD, 10 Jul (MSB, p. 368); Tel msg, AGCCP to Ninth and Seventh Armies, 11 Jul (MSB, pp. 369 - 70); Army Orders Ia 187, Seventh Army, 11 Jul (MSB, pp. 373 - 75); Tel msg, Seventh Army to AGCCP, 11 Jul (MSB, p. 380).

["Road Construction," the code name for the attack] are complete. We think our offensive intentions have been kept secret. We expect to take the enemy by surprise." 49

The German bombardment was scheduled to begin at ten minutes past midnight, 15 July, the attack at 0400 hours. German prisoners captured during the week before revealed the probable night but not the hour of the attack. Acting on this information, Sixth Army ordered an yperite attack on enemy positions north of the Marne beginning at 2000, 14 July. At that hour the 3rd FA Brigade, furnished with 3,000 No. 20 yperite (mustard gas) shells, fired them into the edge of the Bois de Barbillon from Gland to the top of the wood.⁵⁰ Elsewhere along the whole of the German attack front similar concentrations of yperite fell on enemy battery positions and among the troops concentrating for the attack.

A few hours before this gas fire began, a German officer captured on the Fourth French Army front revealed the precise hour of the bombardment.⁵¹ Anticipating it by almost half an hour, at 2345 hours every Allied gun on the

49

Seventh Army WD, 14 Jul (MSB, pp. 422 - 23).

50

Ltr rpt, CG 3rd FA Brig to CG 3rd Div, 18 Dec, sub: Opns Rpt, 14 Jul-1 Aug (3rd Div Box 22, 33.6).

51

Msg, 6th Fr Army, n.h., n.d. (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6): "Army issues following information: Prisoners taken this evening by 4th Fr Army say artillery bombardment will start about one o'clock German time. Army therefore has decided to start the COP at once."

Marne front opened a thunderous 30-minute counteroffensive preparation on the German positions above the river, with orders to repeat the counterfire for 15 minutes at 0415 and at 15-minute intervals thereafter until daylight.⁵²

The experience of a gas projector unit of the 38th Pioneer Battalion above Barzy that night may be typical. The unit apparently escaped theyperiting, but as a result of the counteroffensive fire 13 men were killed and 40 wounded at the position and less than half its gas projectors were fired before the position was torn apart and had to be abandoned.⁵³

The Bombardment

Although the enemy troops coming into position and the artillerymen readying their pieces were stunned by the counteroffensive fire, at exactly ten minutes past midnight the German guns began to roar. Opposing the 31 batteries in the 3rd Division sector, 84 enemy batteries were said to have opened up on the Surmelin valley alone, their fire reaching as far back as Montmirail.⁵⁴

52

Ltr rpt, CG 3rd FA Brig, above.

53

Rpt 151/18, 38th Pioneer Bn, 17 Jul (36th Div records, German Files Box 187, fol I, pp. 50 - 57). Note: German Files Box will hereafter be abbreviated to GFB.

54

History, p. 157.

While 10th Landwehr and 36th Division fire followed closely the prescribed pattern, the bulk of the 10th Division preparatory fire had been ordered "concentrated on the penetration points Fossoy and Mezy, destruction of reserves in the wood to the east and the stream bottom south of Blesmes with blue cross and shrapnel. Gassing of the edges of Bois d'Aigremont and Bois de la Jute [is important]." 55

Destructive as the bombardment was in the 4th Infantry sector, in the 7th Infantry area it came down on the sector just as a battalion relief was being carried out in the front lines. Why it was in progress when the hour of the offensive was known is nowhere explained. Since there was shelter for only one battalion along the river and railroad, the "high explosives, gas and shrapnel, in terrific intensity...caused most severe losses." Losses were further aggravated by the fact that the reserve battalion of the 7th Infantry at Viffort had recently been moved up to Grèves and Houy Farms, to form a second line of resistance. These obvious targets, as well as le Rocq farm, the 3rd Battalion PC in the woods below the farm, and the village of Fossoy were among the most heavily shelled that night. 56

In the 30th Infantry sector the 1st Battalion was in the line along the railroad, rather than the river front, and the 3rd Battalion, with two

55

Rpt Ia 119/VI, Corps Kathen to ACK 7 [Seventh Army Hq], 29 Jun (GFB 128, fol I, p. 61).

56

History, p. 93.

companies of the 38th Infantry and a battalion of the 4th Infantry, was massed in support in the Bois d'Aigremont. Here too a relief was in progress when the bombardment began. The 2nd Battalion of the regiment, in reserve near Courboin, was coming up to relieve the battalion along the railroad embankment when it was caught on the south edge of the Bois d'Aigremont.⁵⁷ Told to seek shelter, "some of the men got detached from their organizations and ran into the open field toward le Rocq Farm." One company commander was "found during the bombardment in a dugout lying down with his leggins and shoes off," in a state of shock.⁵⁸

Within a minute of the time the German bombardment began, "the entire [30th] regimental area was filled with bursting shrapnel, high explosives and gas shells of all calibers....The Bois d'Aigremont...[was] turned into an almost impenetrable mass of brush by the terrific bombardment."

"Rapid fire continued," said a 38th Infantry report, "until about 1.55 a.m. and then a moderately heavy schedule began, including tear and sneezing gas shells on the forward area and lethal gas on the supports and reserves. By 12.15 every man in the regiment had adjusted his gas mask - to wear it for the next six or seven hours." ⁵⁹

57

History, p. 137.

58

Rpt of Opns of 2nd Bn, 30th Inf, 2 Aug (3rd Div Box 40, 33.6).

59

History, pp. 137, 157. Messages written during the night speak of "a little gas" at 0340 hrs, "some gas" and "fewer gas shells" at 0430, "moderate shelling" at 0600, "no gas shells" by 0710 (Box 32, 32.16).

An artillery report said that "The hostile shelling fairly combed the countryside to a depth of six kilometers. Interspersed with a mixture of high explosive and shrapnel was an expenditure of gas shells lasting four hours during the first stage of the battle. The attack continued without noticeable abatement until 8.30 A.M. of the 15th." Almost 2,000 gas shells fell in the vicinity of each of its batteries, the 10th FA reported, proving "very effective, with many casualties." But one 10th FA unit said that the first part of the bombardment, when gas was used, had "little effect as the gas seemed to be weak," and that after the early gassing nothing but HE and shrapnel had been fired. Yet the report concluded: "Impression is that the enemy artillery preparation was perfect." 60

The Division Surgeon was to say that the bombardment extended almost twelve kilometers back of the front, with gas effects pronounced as far as Essises and Pertibout.⁶¹ All agreed that within ten minutes wire communications throughout the division sector were completely destroyed and until late the next day all communication depended on runners.

The most vivid account of the bombardment is that of Maj. W. E. Boyce, medical officer of the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, who came up with his

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Intel Rpt, 1st Bn, 10th FA, 14 - 16 Jul (3rd Div Box 53, 33.1). History, p. 203; Ltr, CO 10th FA to CG 3rd FA Brig, 24 Jan 1919, sub: Rpt of Gas Atks (GAF - 3rd Div). For an account of two 155-mm. batteries smashed that night, see Ltr, CO Bty D 18th FA to TAG, 26 Aug 1925, sub: Data for Hist Purposes (3rd Div Box 54, 33.6).

61

Med Hist of 3rd Div (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1).

unit that night to join the 3rd Battalion in the Bois d'Aigremont, preparatory to relieving the 1st Battalion in the line the next night.

The night was ideal, said Major Boyce. It was cool, and there were stars everywhere overhead, but a heavy fog was coming in from the river. About an hour before midnight the troops passed the field battery positions, their fire producing an almost continuous violent thunder, accompanied by leaping sheets of flame, while over our heads there was the wild screech of shells speeding [over the Marne]. Not an enemy shell was falling.

The battalion reached the Bois d'Aigremont shortly before midnight and the men and the wagon train had just been disposed in the thick underbrush when the

air was suddenly filled with new and vicious sounds...the blood-curdling shrieks of incoming shell. There were thousands of shells in that first salvo - such a howling, followed by terrific explosions, while dirt and sticks, pieces of trees and debris were scattered everywhere. Great gaping holes opened up all around, while the earth shook and trembled under the force of the mighty detonations....

I lay there on the ground one hour while the sky was raining shells.... and there was no abatement....After a while I became aware of a different sound...the dull thud caused by gas shells. A moment later and I could smell the deadly poison. I reached for my trusted gas mask and, much as I dreaded to do so, pulled it on. The mask is safe, but it is the most uncomfortable thing I ever experienced. If [anyone wants to] know how a gas mask feels, let him seize his nose with a pair of fire tongs, bury his face in a hot feather pillow, then seize a gas pipe with his teeth and breathe through it for a few hours while he performs routine duties. It is safe, but, like the deadly poison which forced its invention, it is not sane....

Daylight came as a great relief but I hope I shall never witness another such spectacle. Five hours had wrought tremendous havoc and at this hour... [the fire actually] seemed to increase in fury. Dead animals lay everywhere in the tangled, broken woods...and everywhere were torn human bodies and the wounded....

The majority of the wounded were heroic....but we had many raving maniacs, psychoneurotics, so-called "shell shock" cases. Some of them cursed and raved and had to be tied to their litters; some shook violently...some trembled and slunk away in apparent abject fear of every incoming shell, while others simply stood speechless, oblivious to all surroundings.... At ten o'clock we had more than 250 men all severely wounded, lying on the ground awaiting evacuation.⁶²

The German gas historian, Rudolf Hanslian, said the bombardment, lasting seven hours, was carried out by the reenforced artillery of Corps Kathon, from an Army allotment [?] of 130,000 blue cross shells (diphenylchloro-arsine), 65,000 green cross shells (phosgene or diphosgene), and 5,000 yellow cross shells (mustard gas).⁶³ But it was not possible for Hanslian to say how many of these shells were fired since the war diaries of the artillery commands reported that the preparation was not carried out as scheduled, owing to "insufficient supply and strong enemy counter activity." The counterbattery fire had made it all but impossible to supply the battery positions as provided in orders, and Hanslian thought that no more than 75 percent or 150,000 of the 200,000 gas shells prescribed were actually fired.⁶⁴

62

Med History of 3rd Div, Apr 1, 1918 to Apr 1, 1919, pp. 113 - 114 (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1). This account is also found in 3rd Div Box 7, 20.4, and printed, under the title "Night of the Great Barrage," in the 3rd Div camp paper, The Watch on the Rhine, Andernach, 6 Jun 1919.

63

Hanslian does not cite his sources, but gives to corps alone what was more likely the Army allotment of gas shell--considering the difficulty of supplying the vast Marne salient.

64

Hanslian, "Gasangriffe an der Amerikanischen Front," n.d., p. 111 (MS in CMLHO).

This short supply is supported by Arko 130 (10th Landwehr Division), one of the three artillery commands of Corps Katheren, which reported on 13 July that its field guns would not be able "to fire gas to the ordered degree as we have been supplied with no yellow cross at all, only three-fifths of the blue cross, and four-fifths of the green cross needed to comply with the order." And on 15 July: "It was immediately apparent that we would not be completely successful in destroying the enemy artillery, partly because of inadequate intelligence in the Marne sector...and partly because we were not supplied with enough gas ammunition." 65

Ammunition consumption reports are not available for Arko 10 (10th Division) or Arko 36 (36th Division), but Arko 130 reported that on 15 July it fired 12,066 blue cross shells, 5,252 green cross shells, and 16,902 HE and shrapnel shells, the gas shells thus representing a little more than half its total fire. On 16 July it fired 2,656 blue cross, 300 green cross and 9,532 HE and shrapnel, all calibers; and on 17 July it fired 5,315 HE shells. 66

If the number of shells fired by Arko 10 and Arko 36 was comparable to that fired by Arko 130, then total fire on the 3rd Division and adjacent fronts

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Arko 130 WD, 13 and 15 Jul (10th ldw Div, GFB 162, fol II, pp. 89 ff).

66

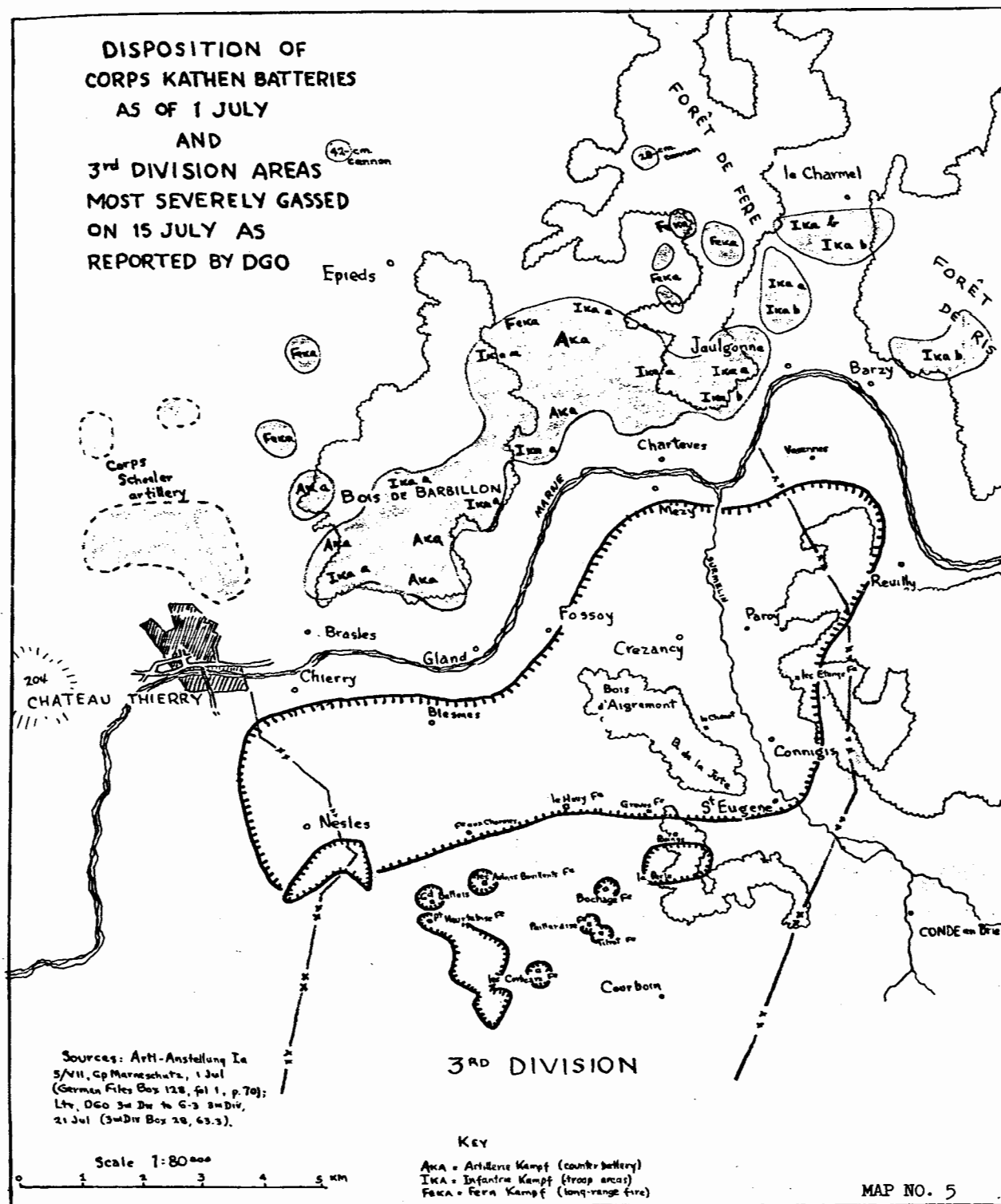
Arko 130 WD, 15 - 17 Jul, above. Note: Few of the war diaries and annexes of German arty comds, the usual source of ammo consumption rpts, were translated for the MSB or collected later by the Army War College historical section at the Reichsarchiv in Potsdam. Marginal notes in GFB 158, 161, and 187 list the records of Arko 10, Arko 130, and Arko 30 that were "examined but nothing pertinent found."

on 15 and 16 July was approximately 50,000 gas shells and 50,000 HE shells the first day and 9,000 gas shells and 30,000 HE shells the second day -- a fairly close approximation to the experience of the 3rd Division.

In his report of the bombardment, Major Somervell, the Division Gas Officer, said that a count of shell holes in the division sector indicated that about 1,000 gas shells per square kilometer fell during the first three hours of the bombardment, representing between 75 and 80 percent of the total shells fired into the sector. During the last three hours the percentage of gas shells dropped to 50 percent. The areas described by Somervell as most severely bombarded (Map No. 5) covered between 35 and 40 square kilometers, which suggests that between 50,000 and 60,000 gas shells (and between 40,000 and 45,000 HE or shrapnel shells) fell in the 3rd Division sector. On the basis of Arko 130 data, these would appear to be maximum figures.

An important question, since the conduct of the 30th Infantry after the bombardment hinges on the answer, is whether or not any mustard gas was fired into the division sector that night. Certainly, no German fire order mentions any gases but blue cross and greencross (diphenylchloroarsine and diphosgene) in the bombardment, and Arko 130 denied it had any yellow cross. Yet Somervell said that diphosgene, chlorpicrin, yperite (mustard gas), diphenylchloroarsine, and ethyldichloroarsine were the gases used, mustard gas shells falling only on rear areas, with none reported anywhere east of the line Fossoy-St. Eugene (i.e., in the Surmelin valley). An exception was the "Mustard or other persistent gases" put along the trail from the

DISPOSITION OF
CORPS KATHEN BATTERIES
AS OF 1 JULY
AND
3RD DIVISION AREAS
MOST SEVERELY GASSED
ON 15 JULY AS
REPORTED BY DGO



valley road at Le Chanet to a command post in the Bois d'Aigremont, which prevented "any movement...in the east of the Bois d'Aigremont and Bois de la Jute." ⁶⁷

Mustard gas was also reported in a memo written at noon on 15 July by the 30th Infantry adjutant: "We have been exposed to mustard gas, chlorine and chocolate gas⁶⁸ and if a good many of our men don't get their clothes off we are going to have casualties from Mustard gas."⁶⁹ Curiously enough, records show that the gas hospital at Ville Chamblon, ten kilometers south of Chateau Thierry, admitted four "gassed, mustard" cases from the 4th Infantry, one from the 7th Infantry, two from the 30th Infantry, two from the artillery, and one each from the engineers and machine gun battalions on 16 July, none from any unit over the next three days. It is just possible that the skin irritation caused by diphenylchloroarsine was mistaken at the

⁶⁷

Ltr, DGO to G - 3 3rd Div, 21 Jul, sub: Rpt on Gas Attack, July 14 - 15 (3rd Div Box 28, 63.3). This much reprinted report is also in GAF - 3rd Div; Spencer, I, 146 - 150; and partially reprinted in MSB, pp. 815 - 818; CWS Weekly Sum of Info, 7 Aug (War Dept Hist Box 298); and USA in the WW, V, Aisne-Marne (Washington, D.C., 1948), 72-74.

⁶⁸

German diphosgene had a chocolate odor.

⁶⁹

Rpt of Col Cromwell Stacey, 30th Inf, at Div FC, noon, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 40, 33.6). The 3rd Bn comdr in his Rpt of Opns, 12 Aug (3rd Div Box 40, 33.6), said that during the bombardment "there seemed to be more Phosgene than any other kind of gas." Daily Intel Rpt, 30th Inf, 14 - 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 40, 20.7), reported "mustard, lachrymatory, sneezing and chlorine gases." Cf. USA in the WW, V, 77, 79.

gas hospital for incipient mustard burns.⁷⁰ So much for the evidence.

As of noon on 16 July, the division hospitals had admitted 424 gas cases, said Somervell, of which 121 were from the 28th Division. But in his final count of gas casualties, misleadingly indicated as due to the 15 July bombardment, he included a large number that resulted from mustard gas bombardments put down on 18 and 19 July to cover the retreat of Corps Kachen. Without distinguishing between these offensive and defensive bombardments, he reported a total of 1,559 gas cases in 3rd Division and 408 in 28th Division during the period 15 - 20 July, and in a later report increased the 3rd Division total alone to 1,720 cases.⁷¹

Division G - 3 made no distinction between the gassed and wounded in its report on 17 July that the German offensive had cost 841 casualties in the 5th Brigade (155 killed, 648 wounded, 38 missing) and about 2,250 in the 6th Brigade, a total of almost 3,100. An actual count of casualties admitted to 3rd Division hospitals through 17 July shows 787 gas cases, 1,297 wound cases, and 58 marked "PN" [psychoneurosis]. A medical report of deaths shows 626 killed on 15 July, for a total of 2,768 casualties of

70

Gas hospital admission lists in Med Dept Box 3443. Med Dept... in the World War, vol. XIV, Medical Aspects of Gas Warfare, p. 416, said that diphenylchloroarsine produced intense hyperemia [sometimes manifested as a severe skin irritation] after six hours exposure.

71

See Analysis, pp. 87 - 88.

the bombardment and assault that day.⁷²

Major Somervell seems to have thought there was considerable feigning among those who reported themselves gassed as a result of the bombardment. In "going over hospital gas cases," he found that over 60 percent were so slight that in all probability they ought not to have been evacuated, except that AEF orders said those who reported in as gassed had to be evacuated. Not only did division medical officers agree with him on this estimate, he said, but the fact that there had been "only one authentic death from gas during the seven days since the attack" was evidence that the total admitted to the hospitals was "out of all proportion to those actually affected." Thus of "some 1680" evacuated [his own tally was 1559 for the 3rd Division], only 600 could be considered gassed and "not 50 were seriously affected."

Of the real gas cases, Somervell continued, 50 percent were unavoidable, resulting when masks were knocked off by nearby explosions, torn by brush, or deranged when men fell into shell holes. The next largest group of casualties, 25 percent, were caused when men removed their masks too soon, and 10 percent resulted when wearing the mask became unbearable or it was removed in order to see in the dark. Others became casualties because they were not warned in time, as a result of insufficient instruction of gas sentries and too few of them, did not recognize the odor of gas, wore equipment over their gas masks, or in the case of telephone linemen, removed their masks to speak.

72

DOR, 3rd Div, 17 Jul; Analysis, pp. 86, 89. Sixty ambulances and 20 trucks were kept going continuously on 15 and 16 July bringing in the casualties (Med Hist of 3rd Div, Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1).

Even though "the artillery gas preparation was quite as intense as those earlier," said Somervell, "the actual casualties were few [despite] the fact that the troops were not entrenched, that very few dugouts had been completed, and that all reserve and support positions were in wooded areas." Considering that a total of 28,500 men (in the two American divisions) were exposed to the bombardment, 600 or even 2,000 seemed to him remarkably few gas casualties.⁷³ Though Somervell did not say so, it was also a remarkable demonstration of the relative ineffectiveness of diphenylchloroarsine in producing casualties. But for the neutralization of troops, as the Germans intended, it was excellent.

Hanslian, accepting Somervell's count of 1,967 gas casualties in the 3rd and 28th Divisions, seems not to have been aware that probably little more than half this total represented casualties of the preparatory bombardment. The remaining casualties resulted from mustard gas shelling that began on the night of 18 - 19 July.

Two thousand gas casualties represented only fair results from the German expenditure of gas shells, said Hanslian, adding that since the Americans were well warned of the attack, "good protective measures could be adopted in advance, so that the casualties were kept within tolerable limits. The bombardment failed to prevent the enemy from opposing the German

73

Ltr, DGO to G - 3 3rd Div, 21 Jul, above. Casualties were proportionately much higher in the sector west of 3rd Div where mustard gas was used by Corps Wichura. See Study No. 4, "The 26th Div in the Aisne-Marne Campaign," pp. 14 - 16.

attack." 74

Neither Somervell nor Hanslian took into account the most damaging effect of the bombardment, the shattering of nerves and morale that was to affect the conduct of the division to the end of the campaign. One regimental commander was left "a nervous wreck" after the bombardment and had to be transferred to the divisional trains. Two of the other three were described as little better. Colonel Kelton, Chief of Staff, reporting this, also said that about 500 men "got out of line" the night of the bombardment. There were probably many more, for the medical officer of the 30th Infantry said later that there were few gas cases in his regiment on the night of the bombardment (115 admitted as of 17 July), but "one form of psychoneurosis, 'Gas Fright,' was very common."⁷⁵

The subsequent operations of the division were not unduly hazardous, but before the month was out a total of 566 officers and men were admitted as "psychoneurosis" cases (in addition to 7 shell shock cases). The instances among these where the original diagnosis of "PN" was subsequently changed to "Gassed" would seem to indicate the principal source of their breakdown. The reverse was also true, of course, for the Division Surgeon said he observed "relatively large numbers of cases who thought they were gassed

74

Hanslian, "Gasangriffe....," p. 111.

75

Pers ltr, CofS 3rd Div to Col Fox Conner, G - 3 GHQ AEF, 30 Jul, atchd to Spec Rpt of Opns of 3rd Div (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6); Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 117 (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1).

but who were really suffering from a mild form of gas fright."⁷⁶

The Attack

All units of the 3rd Division later agreed that they had been "badly punished by the bombardment," the 30th Infantry insisting that its "losses... in officers, men, and animals were very heavy, not from the Infantry attack, but from the preparation fire."⁷⁷ It was a damaging admission, but it was true.

With all communications out and runners taking three to four hours to go from the front to the rear, when they arrived at all, the regiments of 3rd Division on the morning of the 15th were on their own. With the exception of some men seen at Bochage Farm "not wearing gas masks" while gas shells were falling all about,⁷⁸ few stirred from where they hugged the ground or huddled in shelters until the bombardment let up slightly, sometime after 0500. Then, in the 30th Infantry at least, the walking wounded and gassed

⁷⁶

Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 73 (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1) and Analysis, p. 89.

⁷⁷

History, pp. 95, 139.

⁷⁸

Msg, CG, 6th Brig to PC 3rd Div, 0450, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.3).

were allowed to make their own way to the rear.⁷⁹

Although the shelling of 4th Infantry support and reserve positions lasted with great violence through the night, the relatively few shells falling on its front lines made it seem unlikely that the attack would come there. At 0430 the French on the right of the division reported that they were still under violent bombardment and no attack had come yet.⁸⁰

About 0500, from his OP on Hill 186 where he commanded a view of the division front, a 4th Infantry observer reported a dense cloud of smoke coming out of the south and east edges of the Bois de Barbillon and drifting down river to the right. The crossing was apparently going to be made from Gland to the east, beyond both the 4th and 7th Infantry fronts.⁸¹ But the enemy had actually begun crossing more than an hour before.

The 30th and 38th Infantry sectors proved to be the extreme right flank of the German assault. According to their schedule, the German shock divisions,

79

Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 105, above. Lanza, Field Notes, "The 30th Inf on July 15 and 16," Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 40, 18.2), said he found evidence that the 30th Inf "fully manned its trenches including the second line at the start of the bombardment." The 3rd Bn comdr, in his Rpt of Cpn's, 12 Aug (3rd Div Box 40, 33.6), said his companies were not ordered out of their dugouts to combat positions in the B. d'Aigremont until 0530.

80

Msg, CG 6th Brig to FC 3rd Div, 0515, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.3).

81

History, pp. 57, 94, and repeated in 4th Inf opns rpts.

the 10th and 36th, were to cross at Mont St. Pere, Charteves, and above Varennes at 0210, reach the railroad at 0230, and reform and wait there until the rolling barrage for the attack began at 0400. As a result of the demoralizing yperite and counteroffensive fire, the crossing began almost two hours late.

About 0330, said the 38th Infantry (contradicting the 4th Infantry observer), a 15-minute destructive fire was laid on its outposts at the water's edge and soon after under cover of barrage fire and smoke the enemy began hauling boats and pontoons into place for the crossing. 3rd Division artillery fire laid on the river destroyed many of the 18-man boats and rafts coming over the Marne, and the automatic rifles and machine guns in the 30th and 38th Infantry outposts caused enormous losses before the positions were overrun. It is reported that over 1,600 Germans were later buried in the wheat fields between Mezy and the Surmelin.⁸²

On the right of the 38th, soon after the first enemy troops had crossed, the French division there gave way, reportedly abandoning platoons of four 28th Division companies that they had interspersed with their front line troops.⁸³ Apprised of the open flank by the sudden enfilade fire on their

⁸² History, pp. 10, 158; Col Conrad H. Lanza, Field Notes, "The 38th Inf in the Second Battle of the Marne," Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 4, 18.8).

⁸³

Col Robt. H. Kelton, CofS, 3rd Div, Special Report of Opns (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6). Liaison Rpt, 1st Lt G. M. Stapleton, with 125th Fr Div, n.d. (3rd Div Box 23, 35.2), said that at 0915 the French line was back at Paroy-Bois de Conde-La Chapelle. See French defense of 125th positions with sketch, 18 Apr 1928, in Fr Files Box 107, 30.4. Cf. Situ Rpt, 17 Jul (USA in the WW, V, 39).

flank, the 38th Infantry rushed several companies to the hill east of the Surmelin, and from 0500 on battled there to prevent their entire position from being turned.

On the left, Germans streamed over a hasty footbridge in large numbers on the front of the 30th Infantry, fanning out around Mezy and climbing the wooded heights below the town. The 7th Infantry was to say its two companies at the railroad, though "practically wiped out," held fast, but that the 30th Infantry was forced to retire to the woods on the slopes north of Crezancy and near Fossoy.⁸⁴ Colonel Lanza, in a later study of the records as well as the terrain, found no evidence whatever that the enemy entered the 7th Infantry sector. At 1245 that day, he says, three companies of the regiment, ordered by Dickman to counterattack towards Fossoy and Mezy, were smashed by enemy artillery and planes near the Bois d'Aigremont. The effort "accomplished nothing except to further demoralize the command."⁸⁵

The 7th Infantry commander's admission that "by daybreak (15 July) the companies and battalions [were] thoroughly disorganized," and his statement that everyone on his right was "either forced back or withdrew up to the gates of Reims," suggests persistent hysteria. That few or none of the enemy

84

Pers ltr, Dickman to Col O. L. Spaulding, Hist Br GS, 8 Feb 1920 (3rd Div Box 3, 11.4), said the front line bn of the 30th Inf fell back and joined the 38th Inf after 600 out of 900 combatants became casualties, when the line was turned by the enemy crossing in force south of Mont St. Pere.

85

Col C. H. Lanza, Field Notes, "The 7th Inf in the Second Battle of the Marne," 5 Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 36, 18.2; also Field Notes in Box 5, 18.8).

entered the 7th Infantry sector seems borne out by Map No. 6. ⁸⁶

In the 30th Infantry sector, Colonel Butts, the regimental commander, became personally convinced that the river line was untenable and withdrew his riflemen shortly after the enemy crossed on his front, about 0600.⁸⁷ He would make his principal stand in the Bois d'Aigremont. With the retirement of the 30th Infantry and of the French on the right, both flanks of the 38th Infantry were thus simultaneously exposed. While two of its companies at once crossed the Surmelin to hold that flank, "kitchen personnel, clerks, runners and buzzer-phone operators were rustled together for a combined defense against 300 Germans who had worked their way around Mezy."

About 0800 the front line forces of the 38th Infantry were ordered to withdraw and they began falling back to the line Moulins-Hill 231.⁸⁸ Back

86

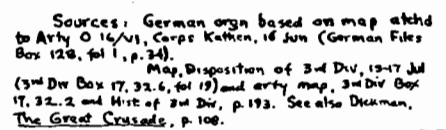
Ltr rpt, Col T. M. Anderson Jr, CO 7th Inf to CG 5th Brig, 20 Jul, sub: Rpt of Opns of Rgt, July 14 - 15; Ltr rpt, Col E. L. Butts [who relieved Anderson on 31 Jul], CO 7th Inf to CG 3rd Div, 4 Aug, sub: Opns Rpt; Ltr, CO Co F 7th Inf to CofS 3rd Div, 21 Apr 1919, sub: Recent pub'n in New York Times [13 Apr 1919] (all in 3rd Div Box 39, 33.6).

87

Msg, Crawford CG 6th Brig, 0700, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6), reported enemy advancing on Fossoy and Crezancy; Msg, Crawford to Div PC, 1100, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 32, 32.16), said 30th Inf had been driven back to B. d'Aigremont. See Col E. L. Butts, The Keypoint of the Marne and its Defense by the 30th Inf (Menasha, Wisc., 1930), p. 3, and map drawn by Hist Br, WPD, Aug 1921 (3rd Div Box 40, 33.6), showing B and C Companies withdrawn to B. d'Aigremont.

88

History, pp. 158 - 59; Lanza, Field Notes, "The 38th Inf in the Second Battle of the Marne," above.



OVERLAY TO MAP NO. 3

of the lines of these fighting, frightened men, enemy planes swooped in again and again, spraying the ground with machine gun fire wherever troops showed themselves.

Captured documents said that by 1040 hours the German infantry was to have been on the objective at Montigny, eight kilometers south of the river. But at that hour the 38th Infantry was still holding the entrance to the Surmelin valley through Moulins, a few machine guns and riflemen of the 30th Infantry commanded the wheat fields above the aqueduct line, and no enemy troops had been able to cross the Fossoy-Crezancy road. Ordered to retire still farther, to the Bois de la Jute, the 38th Infantry complied that afternoon, long after the French had abandoned Hill 231.⁸⁹

Sometime after 1500 on 15 July the battle was over.⁹⁰

The Situation on 16 July

In its war diary entry on the evening of 15 July, 10th Division said

89

Msg, CofS to CG 6th Brig, 1000, 15 Jul 3rd Div Box 32, 32.16), ordered the 38th Inf to B. de la Jute if support on right gave way. Msg Dickman to CO 38th Inf and CG 6th Brig, 1030, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6): "Germans counterattacking St. Agnan and above Janvier Farm. Connection must be maintained with 125th Div at Paroy. Corps prevents sending you assistance."

90

Telg, CofS 3rd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 1857, 15 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.3): "Germans took Fossoy and forced our center back about two kilometers from river. Our right held....Situation at 3 p.m. satisfactory....Our casualties probably large including gas."

that "The enemy was prepared, the attack having been betrayed." At 1930, Seventh Army ordered Corps Kathen to go over to the defensive and pull back the remains of 10th Division. The division was to leave machine gun sentries along the railroad to protect its withdrawal, while 10th Landwehr troops took over the advance positions above Fossoy-Mezy-Moulins.⁹¹

On the morning of 16 July, scattered German troops still held the ground opposite Gland and Mont St. Père and were massed in the Jaulgonne bend down to Hill 231 and southeast in the Bois de Condé. Still farther to the right, below Dormans, the enemy had penetrated eight kilometers before being stopped. During that day, while the enemy consolidated his small gains, 3rd Division tried to reestablish communications, and by evening had troops digging in from the Marne at Chateau Thierry to Mezy, south to Crezancy, and east to the top of Launay, connecting with the French at Maison Rouge.⁹²

Taking little part in this effort apparently was the 30th Infantry which on the morning of the 16th had nineteen companies, including three of the 4th Infantry sent the previous morning, all crowded into the Bois d'Aigremont. This was more than enough "to overcome ordinary opposition," said General Dickman, ordering both the 7th and 30th Infantry to return to their original

91

10th Div WD, 15 - 18 Jul (MSB, pp. 508, 551, 581, 595); Seventh Army WD, 15 Jul (MSB, p. 529); Corps Kathen WD, 15 Jul (GFB 128, fol I).

92

DOR, 3rd Div, 16 and 17 Jul (3rd Div Box 20, 33.1). Msg, CG 6th Brig to G - 3 3rd Div, 1520, 16 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.3), said the 73rd Fr counterattack from Bois de la Jute to Paroy the previous night had been repulsed. The div was then at Maison Rouge and St. Agnan, pushing the enemy east and north of Condé.

lines on the front.⁹³ But both officers and troops in the 30th Infantry sector seem to have been thoroughly demoralized. The signal detachment with the regiment reported that its "men were going to pieces" and was relieved that morning by 40 signalmen from the 28th Division, and Colonel Butts, feeling he had endured enough, asked for and got the 111th Infantry, 28th Division, to relieve his entire regiment. At 1100 hours he reported to brigade: "As fast as Bns. of the 30th are replaced, they are being sent to Essises to be deloused." ⁹⁴

This remarkable message is explained in the personal diary of the commander of Company G. With his company, he was taken by truck from Corboin to Essises that morning, and there "We were deloused, and most of us were red all over, but did not know it was gas. I believe every man had it." ⁹⁵ In conjunction with the statement at noon on 15 July that the regiment had been exposed to mustard gas (p. 39, above), it would appear that Colonel Butts thought every one of his men had been gassed and sent them all to Essises to be decontaminated. His claim that the bombardment and attack

93

Quoted in Msg, CG 5th Brig to CG 6th Brig, n.h., 16 Jul (3rd Div Box 30, 32.16).

94

Msg, CO 30th Inf to CG 6th Brig, 1100, 16 Jul (3rd Div Box 32, 32.16); History, p. 290.

95

Extracts from Pers Diary of [Capt] F. M. Lasseigne (3rd Div Box 41, 33.61). Lasseigne himself returned to the front [i.e., to la Chapelle] the next day. Why he returned and why to la Chapelle he did not say.

cost him 25 officers and 1,400 men is denied by hospital records which show 148 killed, 72 gassed, and 249 wounded as of the evening of 16 July.⁹⁶

No record of the request for relief, or of General Dickman's or General Crawford's agreement to it, has been found in 3rd Division files. The evidence that wholesale mustard gas contamination was the reason Butts gave, necessitating the relief of his regiment is admittedly slender, but no other reason seems possible. Certainly, delousing was no excuse, when the enemy was believed preparing to resume his attack at any moment.⁹⁷

There is no question that the 30th Infantry, unit by unit came out of the line on the 16th and remained out for six days. Its complete withdrawal from the line on the morning of 16 July as effectively removed that regiment from action as though all 3,000 officers and men had been legitimate gas casualties. Gas casualties of the bombardment of 15 July in the 3rd Division sector were therefore nearer 5,000 than the 2,000 reported by Major Somervell.

The admission of the 30th Infantry that most of its losses resulted from the German artillery preparation, not from the infantry attack, was also true of the 4th and 7th Infantry. It seems probable that the 38th Infantry which took fewer gas and wound casualties than either the 7th or

96

History, p. 139; Analysis, pp. 86, 89.

97

The 7th Inf comdr said that "the two days following the barrage [was] a period of crisis" (History, p. 95).

30th Infantry -- perhaps because it was not making a relief at the hour of the bombardment -- was engaged in the most serious fighting that occurred in the division sector on the 15th, against the 6th Grenadiers of 10th Division (see Map No. 6). This is borne out by the available casualty statistics of the units opposite 3rd Division

In the period 1 - 10 July, the 10th Landwehr Division, holding the front opposite 3rd Division prior to the offensive, reportedly lost 26 officers and men killed, 93 wounded. For the period 11 - 20 July, losses were reported as 115 killed, 614 wounded, and 28 missing, most of them the result of the counter-offensive fire on the night of 14 - 15 July. Losses in the special assault division, the 10th Division, for the period 11 - 20 July were said to have been 241 killed, 1,158 wounded, and 972 missing, almost all these casualties occurring on the night of 14 - 15 July and on 16 July.⁹⁸

The 6th Grenadiers, 10th Division, attacking in the 38th Infantry sector, suffered losses of 36 killed, 227 wounded, and 608 missing as a result of the attack or almost three times as many men as either of the other two regiments in the division. On 17 July the strength of the grenadiers was reported as 14 officers and 234 men, a loss of almost three-quarters of its original force.

If the losses in the 398th and 47th Infantry, 10th Division, were not higher, it was because a battalion in each had been routed by the bombardment

98

Rpts of losses to AOK 7 in GFB 9, fol I, pp. 24, 31, 36 - 38.

above the Marne and their remaining elements so disorganized that after crossing the river much of their effectiveness was gone. Only isolated elements entered Fossoy and then were withdrawn.⁹⁹ No comparable casualty reports have been found for the other shock division, the 36th, most of whose units met the platoons of the 28th Division and the French to the right of the 38th Infantry.

Yperite (mustard gas) casualties are available only for the 10th Landwehr Division. These were reported on 16 July (probably for the previous day) as 9 officers and 96 men, in addition to 34 killed and 125 wounded during the counteroffensive fire. Over the next two days another 32 gas cases were reported.¹⁰⁰ Gas casualties in the 10th Landwehr thus represented over 40 percent of total casualties of the French and American bombardment. Subsequent French reports, based on the interrogation of prisoners, said that yperite losses in the 10th Landwehr amounted to 30 percent of the division. The shock regiments of the 10th and 36th Divisions (the 5th and 6th Grenadiers), though harassed by the gas fire, were not directly subjected to the yperite and therefore took relatively few gas casualties.¹⁰¹

99

Extracts from 10th Div WD, 13 Jul (MSB, pp. 508 ff, and 3rd Div Box 40, 22.9).

100

Corps Kachen WD, 16 - 18 Jul (GFB 128, fol I, p. 10); 10th Div Annexes (GFB 158, fol II, pp. 109, 112).

101

French Interr of Prisoners reports, in French Files Box 107, 20.9

XXXVIII French Corps was to credit the repulse of the enemy attack on its front to the gas and counteroffensive fire along the edges of the Bois de Barbillon and Forêt de Fère before the enemy bombardment began, to the barrage fire on the river during the crossing, and to the skilful use of machine guns along the front, holding the enemy at the outposts. Citing a captured document, corps said its fire had resulted in "indescribable confusion of [enemy] units" as they assembled for the attack.¹⁰² The attack had been blunted before it started.

It was obvious to Army Group German Crown Prince as early as the evening of 15 July that the objective of the attack, the junction of Seventh and First Armies at Epernay, could not be attained. Any further attack without a most intensive artillery preparation, requiring at least a day to prepare, since ammunition must be brought up, had little hope of success. "We had to count on the [initial] attack south of the Marne affording a material...success." ¹⁰³

On 16 July Ludendorff ordered Seventh and First Armies to continue the attack, and Seventh Army at once directed its artillery to locate and

¹⁰²

Rpt 7053/2, 2nd Bur, 38th Fr Corps, 22 Jul, sub: German Attack on the Marne along Front of 38th A.C. (French Files Box 107, 20.9).

Note: The shock unit, 10th Div, was replaced by 10th Ldw as soon as Corps Katten went on the defensive. Although depleted, 10th Div was rushed north on 18 Jul to join newly formed Corps Etzel, to stem the counteroffensive below Soissons (10th Div WD, 17 - 18 Jul, in MSB, pp, 581, 595).

¹⁰³

AGGCP WD, 15 and 16 Jul (MSB, pp. 540, 571).

"neutralize hostile batteries on the west bank of the Surmelin brook, to sweep the Surmelin valley, and to interrupt traffic at Chezy-sur-Marne, Viffort and Montlevon. Plenty of yellow cross should be used!" 104

But late the next day, Ludendorff stopped the attack. It was making little or no progress and just wasting men and material. In order to salvage something from the immense preparations on the Western Front, Army Group Crown Prince of Bavaria was ordered to begin its offensive against the British at Amiens as soon as possible. But this too had to be cancelled hours later when the French suddenly launched their counteroffensive at Soissons on the morning of 18 July. As Seventh Army concluded in an account of the series of miscalculations in the plans for the great "peace" offensive: all the "assumptions were wrong." 105

Some time on 16 July, General Dickman asked for at least two "fresh and unshaken" battalions from corps reserve (28th Division) and a French unit or two with which to counterattack in the direction of Reuilly and clean out the Jaulgonne salient. But corps said the 73rd French was at St. Agnan and advancing, and it would be enough for 3rd Division to organize firmly against further attack the front opposite Chartèves, the Surmelin valley between

104

Tel msg, Ludendorff to AGGCP, 12.40 A.M., 16 Jul (MSB, pp. 543 - 44); Seventh Army Orders Ia 1023, 16 Jul (MSB, p. 546).

105

Seventh Army WD, 18 Jul (MSB, pp. 611 - 13).

Crezancy and Paroy, and the left bank of the Surmelin.¹⁰⁶

3rd Division was kept busy enough the next several days with salvage, repair, and replacement problems. In the 7th Infantry sector, and probably in the 30th and 38th Infantry sectors as well, "all of the stock and a great part of the transportation...were in or near the front lines and were destroyed by the bombardment," and all forward ration dumps of the regiments were badly gassed, their large stocks of food -- all except the trench rations in iron cans -- completely spoiled. While the trains worked to restore the supply lines, 600 infantry replacements that arrived were used to police the entire sector. They collected and turned in to salvage almost 300 truck loads of Quartermaster property, ordnance and other equipment.¹⁰⁷

On 18 July, as Mangin's Tenth French Army struck the west face of the Marne salient in a great counterstroke to cut off von Boehn's pocketed Seventh Army, the extreme left flank of Degoutte's Sixth Army advanced with the attack (Map No. 7). The 3rd Division, its line now established from Chateau Thierry to the east of Mezy -- through Moulins -- the woods northeast of les Etangs Farm -- thence southeast, still had orders "to bar the passage of the Marne and defend the Surmelin valley." ¹⁰⁸

106

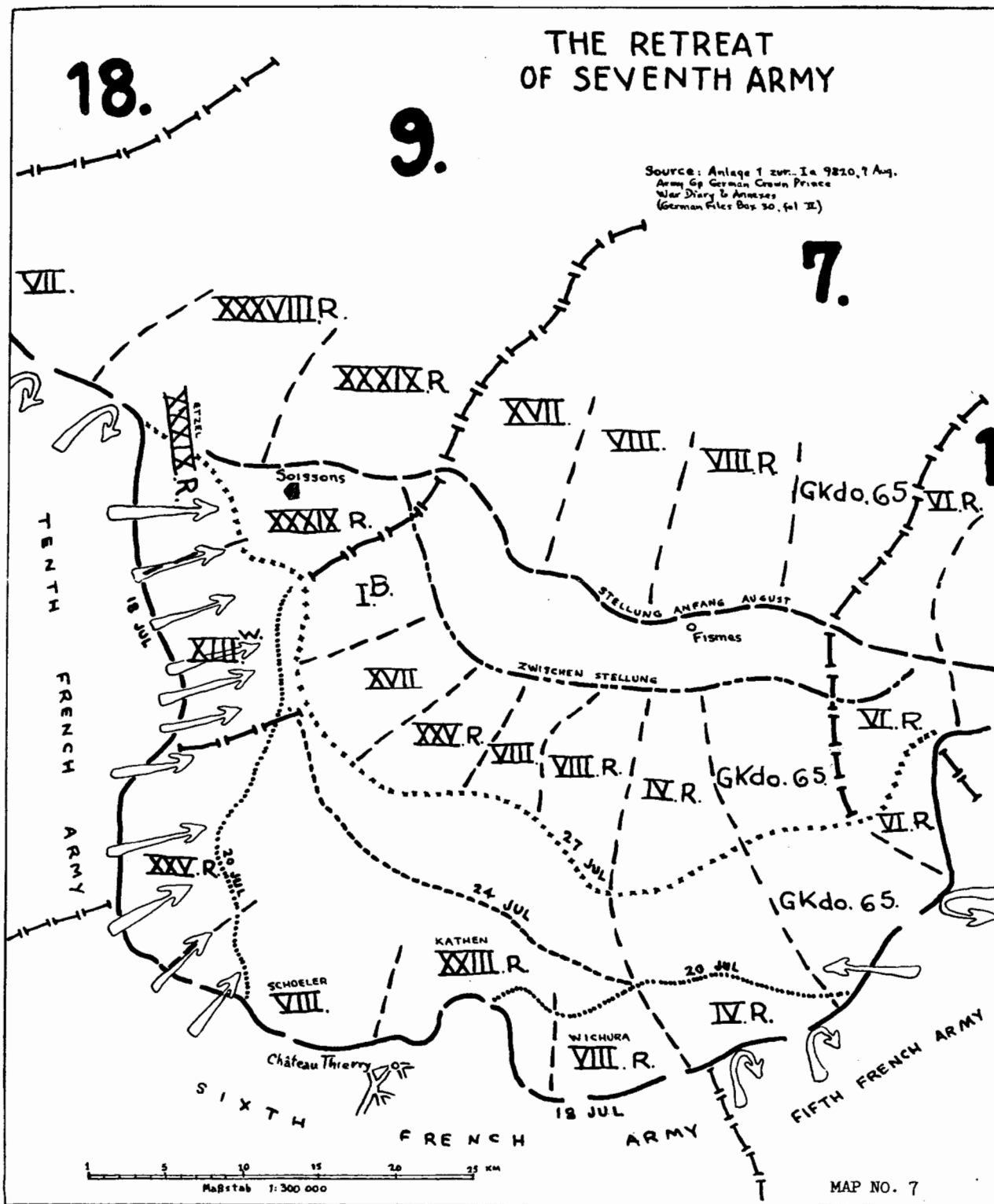
Gen Opns Order 149, 38th Fr Corps, 0930, 16 Jul (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7); History, p. 12.

107

Lanza, Field Notes on 7th Inf, 5 Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 36, 18.2); History, pp. 340 - 341.

108

FO 8, 3rd Div, 0100, 18 Jul.



After repeated requests to make the Reuilly attack, permission was finally secured to use the 4th Infantry, but by then, on 20 July, it was too late. The Germans had begun recrossing the river.¹⁰⁹

"To keep the enemy masked"

On 17 July the Seventh Army juggernaut set about reversing itself as troop units, guns, and supplies behind its foremost lines were pulled back across the Marne. On Corps Kathen front that day, the 10th Landwehr was ordered to take over all counter-battery and long-range fire to protect the withdrawal of the 36th Division and the right flank of Corps Wichura. Large quantities of yellow cross (mustard gas) were being brought up rapidly, but until it arrived blue and green cross gas (diphenylchloroarsine and phosgene) were to be used in counter-battery fire.¹¹⁰

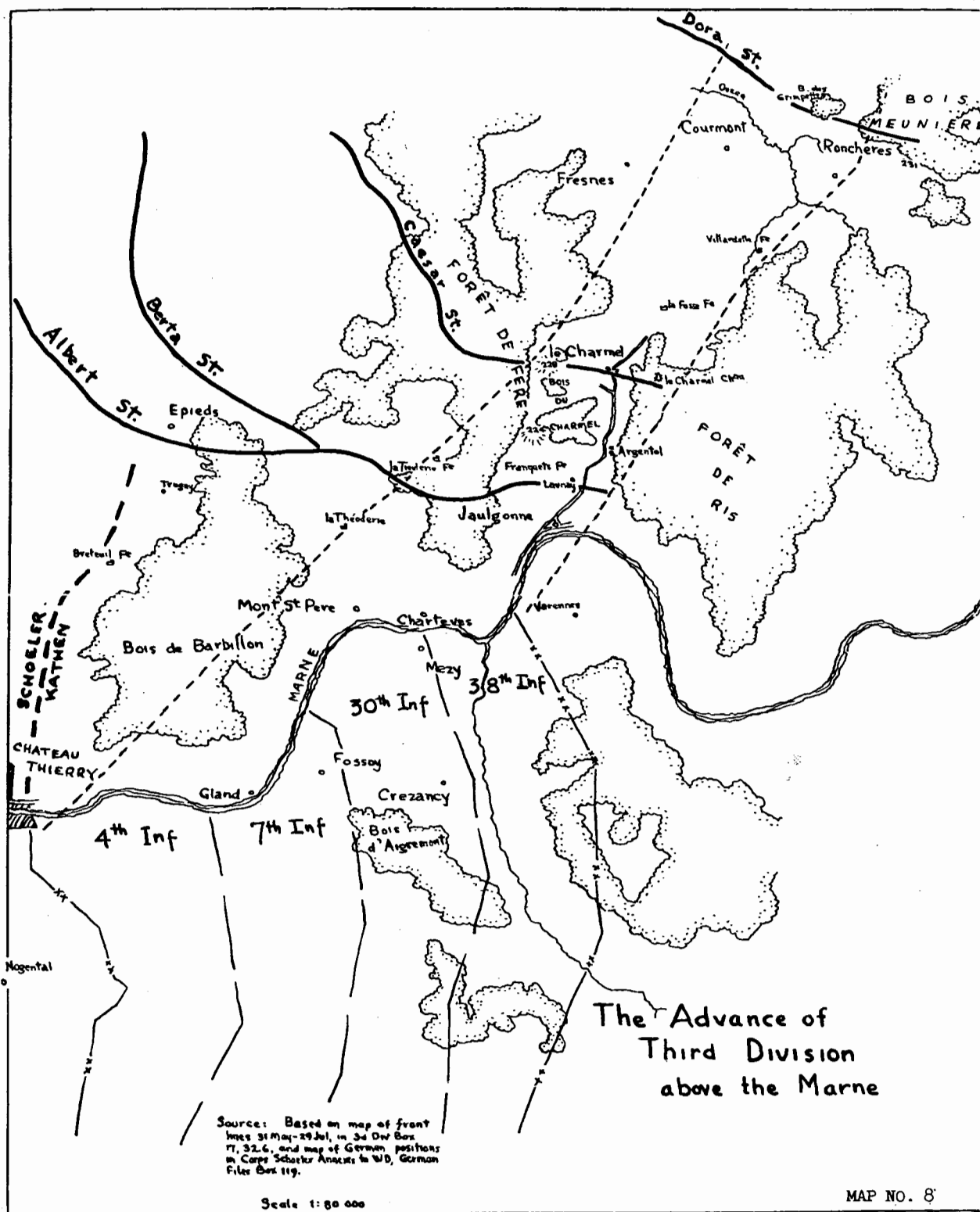
On the night of 18 - 19 July, all artillery and troops not required for defense were ordered to prepare for the first stage of the withdrawal, to the "Albert-Berta" position hinging on Jaulgonne (Map No. 8). In the coming operations, Seventh Army would "endeavor [to withdraw the] troops by echelons, to gradually contract the arc, and force the enemy to new concentrations

109

History, p. 12; Memo, CofS 3rd Div for Div Comdr, 19 Jul, sub: Proposal for attack...to Reuilly (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7).

110

Corps Kathen Order Ia 3131 to Artillery, 16 July (GFB 138, fol I, p. 96).



and consequent loss of time." 111

Beginning in the evening of 18 July, the first of the "planned yellow cross shoots on [allied] battery positions" was carried out by Corps Kathen artillery. Up to midnight of 18 July, assisted by 36th Division and Corps Wichura artillery, 10th Landwehr reported that a total of 8,084 yellow cross and 249 HE shells had been put down on 3rd Division battery positions along the south edge of the Bois de la Jute, on le Houy Farm, Grèves Farm, Paillardise Farm, and between Courboin and Longeard (Map No. 9).¹¹²

The yellow cross fire continued through the early morning hours of 19 July as gun positions in the Bois de la Jute and elsewhere, as well as the town of Crezancy, were contaminated with 4,130 rounds of yellow cross, mixed with 1,485 HE shells.¹¹³

On 20 July, as the 10th Landwehr artillery withdrew northward its gas fire was confined to 100 green cross (phosgene) shells, and on 22 July to

111

Tel msg, Seventh Army to Corps Kathen and Conta, 18 Jul; Seventh Army WD, 19 Jul (MSB, pp. 600, 638).

112

Arko 130 Order 3, 18 Jul (GFB 161, fol I, pp. 103 - 104); Arko 130 WD, 18 Jul (GFB 162, fol II).

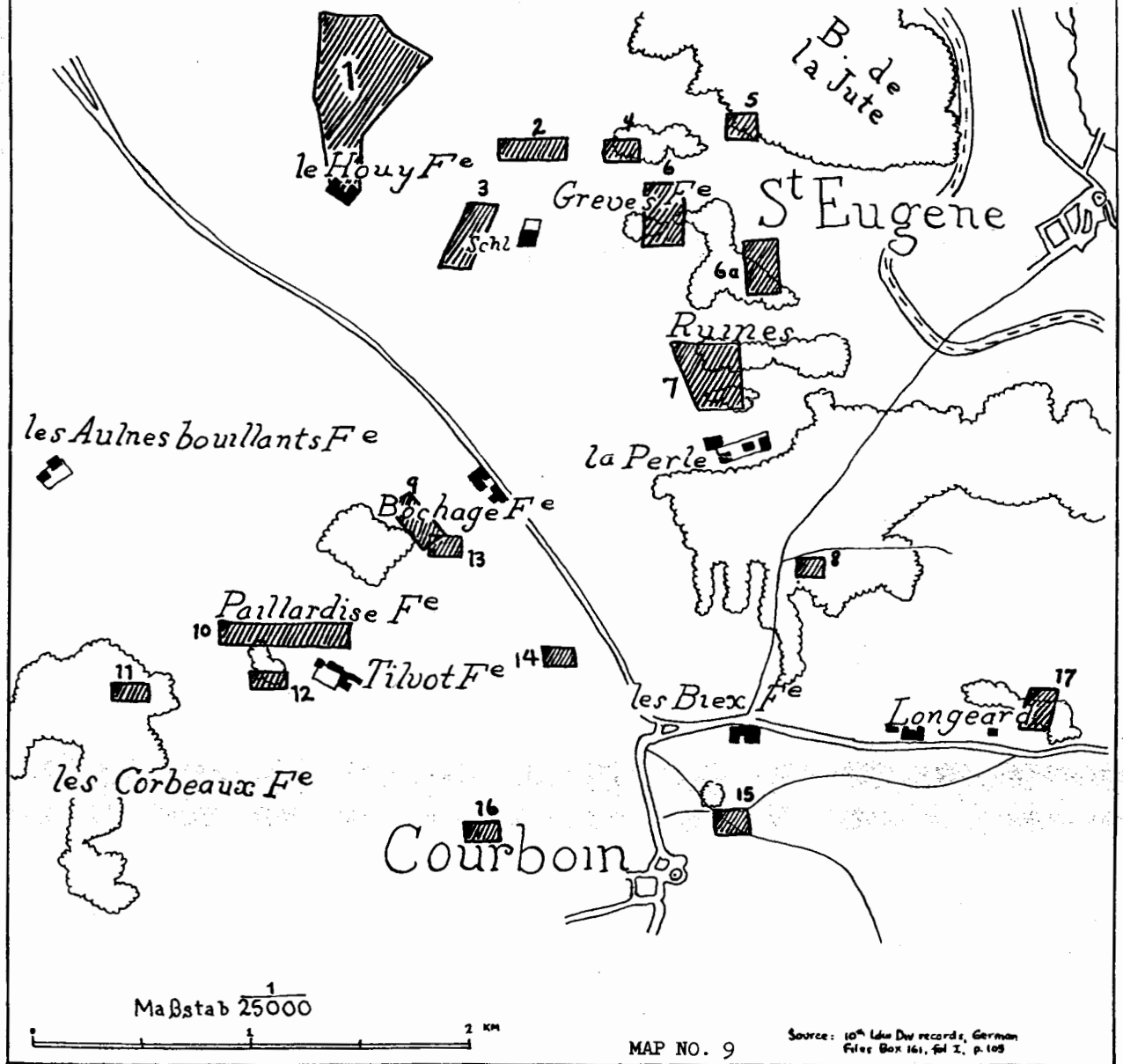
113

Arko 130 WD, 19 Jul. Corps Kathen WD, 19 Jul (GFB 128, fol I), reported only 2030 yellow cross shells fired by 10th Ldw.

See also Arko 36 WD, 17 Jul (GFB 187, fol II, p. 180); Corps Kathen WD, 18 and 20 Jul; 10th Ldw WD, 18 - 20 Jul (GFB 161, fol I, pp. 1 - 15).

Vergewöhnungsschiessen

YELLOW CROSS (MUSTARD GAS) TARGETS DESIGNATED
IN SKETCH ATCHD TO ARKO 130 ORDER 3, 18 JULY 1918



100 yellow cross. All else was high explosive fire. As ordered, the battery positions in the 3rd Division sector had been "systematically covered.... over a period of time...to keep the enemy masked as long as possible and hinder the abandoning of the positions." 114

3rd Division unit records reveal little or nothing about the German gas-sing between 18 and 22 July, although gas hospital lists show a total of 509 gas admissions in that period. In his report of the bombardment of 15 July, the Division Gas Officer recorded gas casualties through 20 July without distinguishing between those caused by the bombardment and those resulting from the interdiction fire. A better distinction was made by the Division Surgeon: Of special interest is the fact that..the symptoms [of the early patients] were to a great extent traceable to sneezing and vomiting gases; later Phosgene gas cases arrived; and when the enemy began his retirement, Mustard gas cases were the rule.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, 3rd Division waited for the attacking elements of Sixth Army on the left to advance, and for its own attack orders. But the 167th French, 26th American and 39th French were stopped within a kilometer or two of their jump-off positions by the enemy gas and HE fire put on their fronts. Their advance was not resumed until three days later, on the morning of the 21st, when at dawn it was discovered that the Germans had everywhere disappeared in the night.

114

Arko 130 WD, 20 - 22 Jul; Arko 130 Order 3, 18 Jul, above.

115

Analysis, p. 89. Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 33 (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 1), quoted in MSB, p. 812, and History, p. 318.

The 10th Landwehr, in front of 3rd Division, reported its own retirement that night:

The withdrawal of the right wing of the division [into the Albert-Berta position] was carried out without losses during the night. The artillery commander received orders to take the Bois de Barbillon under heavy fire and to gas it.

Beginning at [4.30 a.m.] 21 July, [in order to permit the withdrawal of 36th Division elements,] Arko 130 will prepare fire protection for the entire [corps] sector from the east edge of Chateau Thierry to Passy, exclusive.¹¹⁶

Learning from captured prisoners that the French and Americans planned to "launch a large night attack at 2 a.m., 21/22 July" that might overrun their new position, Corps Kather ordered "concentrated waves of annihilation fire from midnight on against villages, roads, traffic areas, etc. Large quantities of yellow cross are to be fired."¹¹⁷ The German records of this fire have not survived, nor can it be distinguished in 3rd Division records.

With the Germans gone, the French division on the immediate left of 3rd Division crossed the Marne on 21 July, advancing west of the Bois de Barbillon. In the early afternoon 3rd Division received its orders to cross. It was to invest the Bois de Barbillon at dawn and advance in the direction of les

¹¹⁶

10th Ldw WD, 21 Jul; 10th ldw Order Ia 5003, 19 Jul; 10th Ldw Order Ia 5006, 20 Jul (GFB 161, fol I, pp. 29 - 30).

¹¹⁷

Corps Kather Order Ia 3231 to 10th Ldw, 23rd, 6th Bav Res Divs, 1020, 21 Jul (in 10th Ldw records, GFB 161, fol I, p. 34).

Franquets Farm to le Charmel, forcing the enemy to continue his retreat.¹¹⁸

"From this date until the Division was relieved in the line, the fighting assumed a more or less open character and consisted almost entirely of machine gun fire and flanking movements...upon positions assumed by the rear guard of the enemy." ¹¹⁹ After line duty of a month and a half, a terrifying bombardment for an offensive, and an enemy attack followed by mustard gas shelling, the troops were tired and wholly dispirited. To add to the confusion, several thousand replacements had come into the sector, without ammunition and large numbers of them without gas masks.¹²⁰ With these green troops the division was now to engage in open warfare tactics for which neither the men nor their leaders had been trained, and to face the skilful tactics of a deperate enemy in retreat, for which none were prepared.

"The unfortunate attack"

On the evening of 21 July the 4th Infantry crossed on pontoon bridges at Chierry and marched through the Bois de Barbillon to Mont St. Père, the

¹¹⁸

Ordre General 3561, 6th Fr Army, 2020, 20 Jul (French Files Box 54, 30.1); Gen Opns Order 155, 38th Fr Corps, 0915, 21 Jul (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7); FO 9, 3rd Div, 1400, 21 Jul.

¹¹⁹

History, p. 12.

¹²⁰

Memo, Div Adj, 31 Jul, sub: Replacement Requisition (3rd Div Box 3, 12.3) and p. 77 - 78, below.

7th Infantry, crossing above Fossoy, on its right. There they halted and while the 38th Infantry and a portion of the artillery crossed during the day of the 22nd, the lines were reformed, spanning Breteuil Farm-la Theoderie-Jaulgonne-Barzy, and preparations were made for a corps-wide attack. That night the 30th Infantry, which had been out of the line for decontamination, reorganization, and reequipment since the 16th, came up behind the 38th on the heights between Charteves and Jaulgonne.¹²¹

After a ten-minute artillery preparation on the Bois du Charmel and Tieulerie Farm at 0345 on 23 July, the 7th Infantry, with the 4th Infantry in rear, was to strike out toward le Charmel, while the 38th and 30th Infantry, also in column, advanced up the Jaulgonne-le Charmel road (see Map No. 8).¹²² A Roman phalanx could not have been more closely packed than the 3rd Division was in that narrowing corridor.

But corps was at the enemy's "Albert-Berta" line, and there was little advance made on the 23rd. By 1000 hours the 38th Infantry was stopped cold below les Franquets Farm. "It was Indian warfare with modern weapons," the division history said, with machine guns in the bushes, in concealed slit trenches, and in the trees. A battalion of the 4th Infantry, sent to extricate the 38th, was almost wiped out, and all suffered intensely from

¹²¹

DOR, 3rd Div, 22 Jul.

¹²²

FO 10, 3rd Div, 0010, 22 Jul; DCR, 3rd Div, 23 Jul.

the shell fire that rained across the front throughout the day.¹²³

In a report dated 23 July, the Division Gas Officer said nothing about mustard gas being encountered in the Bois de Barbillon or about any other enemy gas fire or gas attack, only that

Gas cases are constantly coming in to the hospitals, owing to the intensity of the operations under way....[They are] mostly mustard cases...to a great extent unavoidable....Many cases are from the artillery, who seem to receive much mustard gas in anti-battery fire. As material comes in reports will be sent in promptly.

The rest of the report complained of the poor visibility and great discomfort of the gas mask.¹²⁴ It is the last report of its kind by Major Somervell that has been found.

On the night of 23 July, suffering from gas mask exhaustion and incessant artillery fire, the troops were ordered to take up defensive positions along the line la Theoderie - Tieulerie Farm - north edge of Jaulgonne - east edge of the Foret de Ris. Another attempt to advance would be made the next morning.¹²⁵

A second order on the night of 23 July indicated that General Dickman did not think there was much fight left in his troops. After a ten-minute

¹²³

History, pp. 59, 160.

¹²⁴

Ltr, DGO to C Def Serv CWS, 23 Jul, sub: General report (GAF - 3rd Div).

¹²⁵

FO 11, 3rd Div, 1930, 23 Jul.

preparation at 0355 on the 24th, the 5th Brigade was to advance west of les Franquets Farm, the 6th Brigade assaulting the farm directly. The 30th Infantry was to make the principal attack, taking over from the 38th Infantry, which was ordered to retire from its present positions and move towards Nogental, to get out of the flanking fire.¹²⁶ "To maintain the strength of the troops" in the attack the next day, said the order, they were "to halt and entrench about noon unless the enemy withdraws."¹²⁷

But during the night the German forces on that front abandoned the "Albert-Berta" position for their previously prepared "Caesar" position, through le Charmel, leaving behind sacrifice machine gunners and using bombing planes to cover the evacuated ground and slow up their pursuers (Map No. 10).¹²⁸

It was 0800, 24 July, when the 4th and 7th Infantry resumed the pursuit, as the 30th Infantry on the right advanced through Franquets Farm into the Bois du Charmel. Moving through the Forêt de Fere, the 5th Brigade forces got within two kilometers of le Charmel before enemy outpost gunners brought

¹²⁶

Nogental was below Chateau Thierry, almost 15 kilometers to the south. Argental was probably meant.

¹²⁷

FO 12, 3rd Div, 1100 [2100?], 23 Jul.

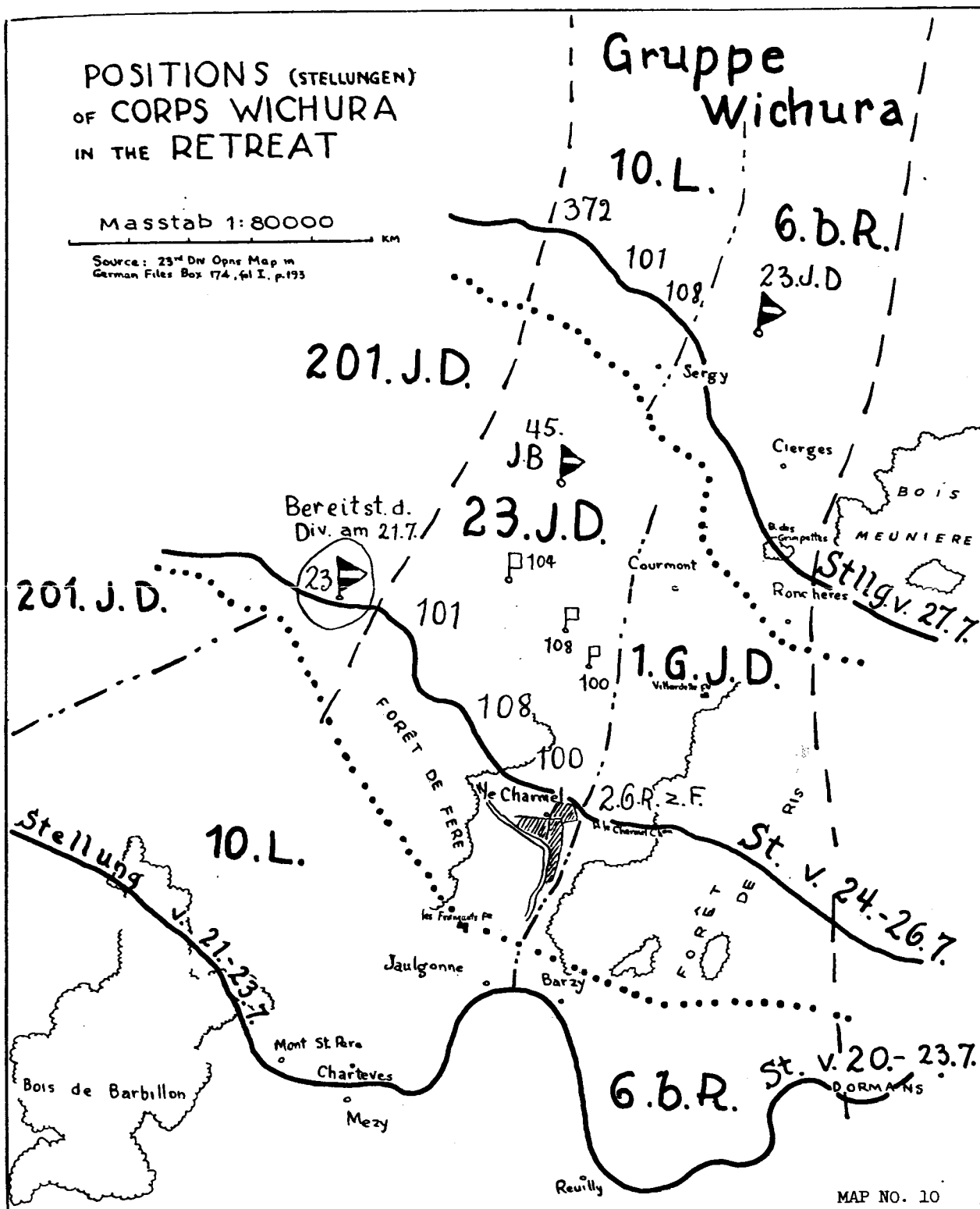
¹²⁸

During this move, Corps Kathen was phased out, its 10th Ldw Div going to Corps Wichura reserve and its 36th Div to Corps Schoeler. As the 3rd Div crossed the enemy front on a diagonal, it confronted the 1st Guard Div of Wichura.

POSITIONS (STELLUNGEN) OF CORPS WICHURA IN THE RETREAT

Masstab 1:80000

Source: 23rd Div Opns Map in
German Files Box 174, fol I, p.193



MAP NO. 10

them to a halt.¹²⁹

On the night of the 24th, certain that the enemy would continue his retreat, corps ordered the division to go through le Charmel, on to Villardelle Farm, and then to Roncheres. The brigades in column were to take up the march at dawn, with the 5th Brigade in the lead. An order later that night said the 6th Brigade would remain in place; the 38th Infantry had been used up the day before, and the 30th, claiming losses of 12 officers and 700 men since crossing the Marne, could go no farther. The 5th Brigade, passing through the 30th Infantry, would carry on the pursuit.¹³⁰

On the morning of 25 July the 5th Brigade was along the line Hill 224-Argentol. Through "lack of initiative...from division headquarters down to battalions," only two battalions of the 4th Infantry made any advance that day, reaching le Charmel and clearing it in the late afternoon. "Judging

129

In the valley at Argentol, 3rd Div found a German projector battery of some 300 155-mm. rifled tubes and quantities of green cross projectiles with their fuses drawn. "The whole position had been knocked about by our arty fire" on the night of 14 - 15 July (Ltr, DGO to CWS, 6 Aug, sub: Rpt on German Gas Material, GAF - 3rd Div). This was one of three projector installations, above Barzy, Soilly, and Dormans, installed the night of the attack. Less than half the projectiles, or 247, were fired at Barzy before "flanking fire" forced evacuation (Rpt 151/18, 38th Pioneer Bn, 17 Jul, in 36th Div records, GFB 187, fol 1, pp. 50 - 57). See also p. 50 above.

130

38th Fr Corps Order 1852/3, 1600, 24 Jul, Instructions pour la Poursuite (French Files Box 107, 30.1); FO 13, 3rd Div, 1845, 24 Jul; FO 14, n.h., 24 Jul; History, pp. 140 - 41.

from the graves on the ground," the advance cost 500 men.¹³¹ The support battalion of 4th Infantry, after suffering a violent enemy bombardment of gas and HE at les Franquets Farm at dusk, was ordered up to le Charmel to relieve the unit holding the town.¹³² It arrived to find the streets of le Charmel swept by enemy machine guns firing from le Charmel Chateau, to the east of the town.¹³³ The 7th Infantry was ordered to take the chateau the next morning.

"The unfortunate attack" of the 7th Infantry against le Charmel Chateau on 26 July failed when, reportedly, the French in the Forêt de Ris were unable to advance. More accurately, on the night of the 25th the assault battalion "suffered heavy losses from high explosives and [mustard] gas while forming in the [Bois du Charmel] for the attack and when the village [of Argentol] south of the town of le Charmel was reached, the battalion was reduced to two hundred men and five officers" and "so disorganized that [it was useless for] further action." Because of the bombardment, neither of the two remaining battalions of the 7th Infantry in the Bois du Charmel, which was also occupied by "almost half of the 30th Infantry," were in condition to make the attack. When the bombardment came they were simply ordered to dig in.

¹³¹ Lanza, "The Attack of the 3rd Div at le Charmel on 25 Jul," Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 4, 18.2).

¹³²

Daily Intel Rpt, 4th Inf, 25 - 26 Jul (3rd Div Box 33, 20.7), said woods at 93.0-64.5 [nw of Franquets Fme] was heavily gassed with phosgene and mustard gas during the night, causing "a number of casualties."

¹³³

DOR, 3rd Div, 25 and 26 Jul; History, pp. 60 - 61.

There was no attack on the chateau on the 26th.¹³⁴

On the night of 26 July, Sixth Army ordered a day's rest for all troops. Army would attack again at 2140 on the 27th, after another of its ten-minute artillery preparations. In view of the depleted ranks of 3rd Division, the brigade of the 28th Division that had arrived from the Marne would make the next advance, to Courmont and Roncheres, with the 39th French and 3rd Divisions cleaning up the rear. The corps order for the attack concluded with the instruction: "During the advance and until daylight, the attacking troops will be absolutely forbidden to fire any rifle or revolver shots; all fighting should be done with cold steel only."¹³⁵ But none of this was carried out.

Again leaving behind sacrifice machine gun units, the enemy drew back during the night of 26 - 27 July almost three kilometers to the "Dora" position on the line of the Ourcq, taking up outpost positions on the high wooded ground

134

History, p. 98; DOR, 27 Jul; Ltr rpt, CG 5th Brig to CG 3rd Div, 6 Aug, sub: Opns, July 14 - 31 (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6). Co B 8th MG Bn, with the brigade, reported 1 man killed and 2 officers and 22 men burned by mustard gas that night (History, p. 122). Here as elsewhere the hospital admission lists (Analysis, p. 89) fail to support the History or any other records.

The only German record of the gassing is Rpt, Wichura to Seventh Army, 26 Jul (GFB 120, fol I, p. 69); "During the night our artillery carried out the yellow cross shoot according to plan."

Lanza, "The Attack of 3rd Div...July 26 to July 29," n.d. (3rd Div Box 4, 18.8), says nothing about the gas attack, only that le Charnel Chateau should have been neutralized by the division 155's and was not.

135

Gen Opns Order 164, 3rd Bur, 38th Corps, 2350, 26 Jul (3rd Div Box 19, 32.7).

around Ronchères. For the new battle, said Corps Wichura,

The artillery must render the approach of the enemy as difficult as possible.... When the enemy deploys in wooded areas [where regular harassing with HE] is difficult [and less effective], it is important to shell continually with yellow cross all traffic points and approach routes. Yellow cross will be brought up in sufficient quantity. By continual activity of this kind the infantry can best be protected from enemy artillery. Long-range guns must continue harassing the Marne bridges.¹³⁶

From its new positions the enemy guns were to keep the oncoming troops under constant gas and HE fire as they edged forward.¹³⁷

The day of rest was short-lived. With the enemy gone, corps at noon ordered the 5th Brigade (not the 28th Division) to take up the pursuit at once and reach the line, north edge of Forêt de Ris - Ronchères - southwest corner of Bois de Meunière (Hill 231) by nightfall. But at noon, with 393 casualties of the previous day's fighting brought into the advanced dressing station, three of the six battalions in the brigade were declared totally "unfit for further action." Both regiments, said the brigade commander, were so worn out that "the reputation of 3 Div will suffer if...further demands are made on them." There is evidence that in the seven days since crossing the Marne the division had taken well over 1,250 gas casualties in addition to its machine gun and high explosive casualties.¹³⁸

¹³⁶

Corps Wichura Ia 1468, 26 Jul, sub: Instructions for the battle in the D[ora] Stellung (GFB 120, fol I, p. 72).

¹³⁷

See DORs, 3rd Div, 26 - 30 Jul.

¹³⁸

FO 15, 3rd Div, 1300, 27 Jul; DOR, 26 - 27 Jul; Msg, CG 5th Brig to CofS, 1245, 27 Jul (3rd Div Box 15, 32.16); Analysis, p. 89.

With little opposition on their immediate fronts, the French on the left were reported pushing toward Courmont and Cierges and the 4th American Division, which had relieved the French on the right the day before, was said to be advancing rapidly through the Forêt de Ris. The 3rd Division order that afternoon directed the 6th Brigade, for several days too worn out to move, to retire behind the Marne. The 5th Brigade, less the 7th Infantry, was to keep going. Thoroughly disorganized, the 7th Infantry was directed to assemble around the regimental PC and regroup. At dusk, the 4th Infantry reached Villardelle Farm.¹³⁹

It was a misnomer to speak of brigades or even regiments now, so badly scattered were the units of 3rd Division and so incapable of effective action. Furthermore, despite the front represented on Map No. 8, the division sector had actually contracted so that a single battalion could span it.¹⁴⁰ Only the 4th Infantry could muster such a unit, and it was probably provisional.

On the morning of the 28th, corps and Army reported the enemy to be in full retreat and 5th Brigade was ordered to regain contact with the enemy immediately. It was to advance to the Vesle, reaching the vicinity of

139

FO 15, above; DOR, 3rd Div, 27 - 28 Jul; History, p. 162; G - 3 Order 158, 3rd Div, 1230, 27 Jul (USA in the WW, V, 607 - 609).

Arko 130 WD reported putting heavy fire on the Fresnes-Courmont area and 447 yellow cross shells on Favière Farm in the 4th Div sector on 27 Jul and 150 blue cross and 195 yellow cross on that front on 28 Jul.

140

G - 3 Order 158, above.

St. Gilles that evening-a distance of almost 25 kilometers.¹⁴¹ Moving out of Villardelle Farm at 1100, by 1530 hours the 4th Infantry had crossed the Ourcq and entered Roncheres. The line cautiously advanced about a half kilometer above the town and halted for the night. It was not the advance the French had in mind.

The next morning a single battalion of 4th Infantry advanced to the attack, only to hit the ground about 200 yards from the Bois des Grimpettes as massed machine guns in Grimpettes and in the Bois de Muniere put down an almost solid curtain of fire. The brigade could go no further.¹⁴²

At midnight on 28 July, elements of the 32nd Division arrived at Villardelle and Fosse Farms with orders from corps to relieve the 3rd Division regiments in the line "in two rushes, in the morning and in the afternoon, so as to keep the forward movement continuous." ¹⁴³ Corps apparently had little knowledge of the disposition of 3rd Division. It was noon on 30 July before the 32nd Division could complete the relief, owing to the enemy's harassing fire the previous day and night.

141.

FO 16, 3rd Div, 0545, 28 Jul.

142

FO 18, 3rd Div, 2310, 28 Jul; Lanza, "The Attack of 3rd Div...July 26 to July 29," above.

143

Ordre Particulier 1923/3, 3rd Bur, 38th Fr Corps, 1850, 28 Jul (3rd Div Box 18, 32.7).

On the night before the formal relief, the 4th and 7th Infantry started on their way back to the Marne. Crossing, they joined the rest of the division in the towns and farms they had left just the week before.¹⁴⁴

G - 3 had long given up trying to report or even estimate daily casualties, but on 30 July, admitting that no count was yet possible of the killed and missing, reported that the division field hospitals between 15 and 28 July had evacuated for all causes (wounded, gassed, sick, injured, and shell shocked) a total of 193 officers and 5,253 men.¹⁴⁵

"Reconstruction of a shattered Division"

The 3rd Division, its morale seriously shaken by the bombardment of 15 July and in poor shape for the rigors of pursuit, had not made a good showing in the advance to Roncheres. Instead of being relieved at the Marne, it had received replacements -- almost 4,000 of them -- and had been shoved into an action for which it was not prepared.

G - 1, calling for infantry and machine gun replacements after the great bombardment, said that the division lost almost 3,000 men between 15 - 17 July. In another call on 27 July, G - 1 said the division had evacuated 4,917 men since 15 July and that killed and missing approximated 800. The

144

FO 19, 1930, 29 Jul; History, pp. 63 - 64. On 31 Aug the commander of the 7th Inf was trfd to the 3rd Div trains and Col Butts of the 30th Inf took over the 7th, his adjutant replacing him (History, p. 100).

145

DOR, 3rd Div, 28 - 29 Jul.

division had received 3,864 replacements but still needed another 1,853. Four days later, as the division completed a hurried count of its losses, the requisition was increased from 1,853 to a total of 191 officers and 3,448 men, exclusive of artillerymen.¹⁴⁶

On 30 July, Colonel Kelton, Division Chief of Staff, wrote in a personal letter to Col. Fox Conner, G - 3 GHQ AEF:

I am enclosing a copy of Divisional Order 161 which shows you the first necessary steps in the reconstruction of a shattered division. No one yet has any accurate knowledge of our total losses. I only know accurately that we have evacuated from the battle field 193 officers and 5,243 men since July 15th for wounds, gas or shell shock and that 78 of these have died since evacuation.... In the case of Butt's [30th] regiment, one big shell destroyed not only all of the regimental records, but killed practically all of the headquarters personnel.¹⁴⁷

The order he referred to, issued that same day, called for lists of replacements from all units, a statement as to the completion of the reorganization of units and of their records, detailed operations reports of action since 15 July, reports of casualties and of prisoners and materiel captured -- all reports to be expedited and unit records to be reorganized "with the greatest dispatch in order to put the division in condition to take up the question of training and to prepare for its return to duty in the line." ¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶

Telgs, G - 1 3rd Div to G - 1 I Corps, 17 and 27 Jul; Memo, Div Adj, 31 Jul, sub: Replacement Requisition (3rd Div Box 3, 12.3).

¹⁴⁷

Ltr, Col Robt. H. C. Kelton to Col Fox Conner, 30 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6).

¹⁴⁸

G - 3 Order 161, 3rd Div, 1600 hr, 30 Jul (3rd Div Box 13, 32.13).

Two days later, General Dickman called a conference of his staff and unit commanders to discuss immediate training problems and review the lessons of the campaign.

The first thing we want is some daily close-order drill to reestablish cohesion, to realize the formation of units...and to renew the spirit of obedience and discipline....after a period of comparative disorder...We shall, of course, want to re-equip the units....

Speaking of the advance above the Marne, he said:

When we went across and started north, General De Mondesire told me: "There's your sector -- nice, easy, open country...." I don't think he meant to be sarcastic. But we realized very soon that...it was impossible to advance in that country. That was the reason I gave you directions to work through the woods -- working in the wooded area would have saved the lives of a good many men.

Indirectly answering General Dickman, an unidentified colonel a few minutes later said that "At le Charmel....they put gas in the woods where they had seen our troops."

Both Colonel Kelton and General Dickman raised the question of alleged looting by the French of packs that were left behind in the advance, a subject, with other animadversions on the French, that Kelton also covered in great detail and invective in personal letters to Col. Fox Conner at AEF headquarters.¹⁴⁹ Kelton concluded the conference by saying that he had not

149

Kelton, Spec Rpt on Opns of 3rd Div, 15 - 31 Jul, n.d., and atchd corresp (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6). The persistent and highly vocal anti-French sentiment finally led to III Corps GO 13, 4 Aug, published as Memo 116, 3rd Div, 6 Aug (3rd Div Box 1, 10.2), which said that officers and men must "scrupulously refrain from any criticism of the military conduct or methods of... our Allies."

To the end of the war "the opinion prevailed among all ranks of the division that the French assigned the meanest and most difficult sectors to the American troops." Ltr, Maj Gen Robt. L. Howze, CG, 3rd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF,

yet seen anything from organization commanders as a result of Order 161, although replacement lists were needed immediately, particularly in order to requisition officers and men for specialist duties and for schools of instruction in the division. After reconstructing personnel and refitting, the division would resume the training program interrupted by its hurried entry into battle.¹⁵⁰

But at that point plans for reconstruction and training were interrupted, not to be resumed until 18 August.¹⁵¹

"The horrors of the Vesle"

On 2 August the German Seventh Army reached the north bank of the Vesle, some 30 kilometers above the Marne. That day Sixth French Army ordered the 6th Brigade of 3rd Division up from the Marne to the Vesle, to support the III French Corps thrust above the river.¹⁵²

149 (continued)

19 Dec, sub: Confidential Report (3rd Div Box 22, 33.6). Cf. Pers ltr, Dickman to Spaulding, Hist Br GS, 8 Feb 1920 (3rd Div Box 3, 11.4).

150

Remarks by General Dickman at 3rd Div Conf, 1 Aug (3rd Div Box 25, 50.1).

151

G - 3 Order 168, 3rd Div, 6 Aug, sub: Standing Orders to August 5 (3rd Div Box 13, 32.13), with a long section on gas defense measures, seems to have been especially prepared to replace copies lost during the campaign. Later resumption of tng is described in Tng Memos 32 - 34 on 18, 22, and 28 Aug (3rd Div Box 25, 50.4).

152

FO 21, 3rd Div, n.h., 2 Aug. The day was also memorable for an attack by German planes with almost 2,000 bombs along the railroad from Chateau Thierry to Mezy. "No damage reported," said DOR, 3rd Div, 2 Aug.

Reaching Roncheres at dusk on 4 August, the 38th and 30th Infantry, in column, paused briefly and then resumed their march in driving rain to the front, 21 kilometers away. Orders directed the relief of French infantry forces in and around St. Gilles, but "between it and the column [as it approached] were a million flashes on the ground where German shells of high explosive and gas were striking." No French guides appeared to lead the column in and it was the night of 5 August before the 38th moved through St. Gilles up to Villette, where its advance units were met by a German raiding party from across the river.¹⁵³

On 7 August, after a day of reorganizing, the 38th Infantry was ordered to cross the Vesle, in broad daylight and in the wake of an eight-minute barrage, and establish bridgeheads three kilometers to the north. "It might have been possible for the artillery, by laying down a smoke screen, to have assisted the operation, but no such attempt...was made."¹⁵⁴ Two platoons of the 1st Battalion got over the river, only to be driven back with severe losses, and after hours of battering by enemy artillery fire the battalion had to be relieved the next day. Meanwhile, its support battalion, "drenched with gas" below Villette the night before, had been put out of action, and the reserve

153

History, p. 163. On 4 Aug G - 3 reported that the 6th Brig would function as a division, and with that 3rd Div DORs ceased.

154

Field report, Lanza, "The 6th Brigade at the Vesle," 7 Apr 1919 (3rd Div Box 30, 18.2).

3rd Battalion was all that was left.¹⁵⁵

On the night of 8 - 9 August, coming up to make the relief "through a severe gas bombardment of the heights to the south, which...rolled the mustard and phosgene back down into the valley, the Third Battalion began its share of the horrors of the Vesle."¹⁵⁶ By the night of the 9th all three battalions of the 38th Infantry were in shambles and the supporting 30th Infantry was ordered up to continue the attack on the morning of 10 August.

Just two platoons of the 30th were in position at the hour of attack and though they tried to cross, they could not make it. The following morning the whole of the 6th Brigade was relieved by French units and by nightfall it was back over the Marne.¹⁵⁷

A week after the fiasco at the Vesle, the 3rd Division was in bivouac at Gondrecourt getting ready to complete the training program interrupted three months before. There it was observed that "Although the injurious effects of the poisonous gas used by the enemy left some of the men in

155

Msg, LO 32nd Div at 6th Brig Hq to G - 3 32nd Div, 0815, 7 Aug (3rd Div Box 21, 33.3).

156

History, p. 165.

157

FO 24, 3rd Div, 1825, 12 Aug, withdrew the division from the Marne sector. See Rpt on Opns of 30th Inf, CG 5th Brig, n.d. (3rd Div Box 32, 33.6). In this report and in History, p. 142, the 30th Inf said it lost 5 officers and 310 men at the Vesle.

poor health for a short time, the great majority of them regained their strength very soon and gradually the full training schedule was resumed." 158

If the effects of three weeks of gas were shaken off, the experience was not, as later wholesale straggling in the division proved. It was probably by design that General Dickman, commanding IV Corps in the St. Mihiel operation, kept his former 3rd Division in reserve during the campaign. On 29 September, thoroughly rested, it was sent to relieve the 79th Division in the Meuse-Argonne Battle.159

ANALYSIS

3rd Division Casualties

Colonel Kelton, Chief of Staff, was certain that during the battle of 15 July over 15,000 Germans crossed the Marne in the 3rd Division and 125th French Division sectors, and that on the morning of 16 July more than 5,000 Germans lay dead on the 3rd Division front, at a cost to the division of almost 3,000 officers and men.

By 30 July, following the advance above the Marne (21 - 29 July), division casualties exceeded 7,000, said Kelton. More than 4,000 men had fallen

158

History, p. 64.

159

History, pp. 101 - 102. Concerning the straggling in October, see Analysis, p. 101.

because

The French Command forced us far beyond anything they might expect to obtain with their own troops....The machine gun resistance, coupled with artillery fire [during the advance] cost us as many, if [not] a little more, casualties than the big fight of the 15th and the subsequent shelling which continued during the 16th, 17th and 18th.¹⁶⁰

Kelton's figures are excessive for the periods he reports but are relatively accurate for the entire campaign, including the casualties at Chateau Thierry, Hill 204, and Bois de Belleau in June and the cost of the insult at the Vesle in August. Thus the division history (pp. 363 - 64) reported the cost of the Aisne-Marne campaign as 7,971 officers and men (Table No. 1).

Table No. 1

LOSSES OF 3rd DIVISION IN ALL CAMPAIGNS

	Aisne - Marne		St. Mihiel		Meuse - Argonne	
	Off	Men	Off	Men	Off	Men
Killed	53	1043	0	2	51	1218
Wounded	141	4692	0	9	211	5130
Gassed	42	1735	0	0	55	1182
Missing	3	228	0	0	4	456
Prisoners	2	32	0	0	1	66
	241	7730	0	11	322	8052

¹⁶⁰

Pers ltr, Kelton to Conner, G - 3 GHQ AEF, 30 Jul, and Spec Rpt of Opns of 3rd Div, 15 - 31 Jul (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6).

The Battle Monuments Commission study of the 3rd Division said that in the Aisne-Marne campaign, between 31 May and 13 August, the killed and wounded (including gassed) amounted to 7,177 officers and men.¹⁶¹

The figure of 7,177 is in fair agreement with the official Medical Department total of 7,193 killed, gassed, and wounded in the campaign,¹⁶² and with the total of 7,105 killed, gassed, wounded, and PN (psychoneuroses) found by an actual count of casualties in available division hospital admission lists. This latter count, with 28th Division casualties included, is represented in Table No. 2.¹⁶³ The deaths in Table No. 2 are from a 3rd Division compilation which is further broken down in Table No. 3 to show the incidence of deaths by units (see report in Med Dept Box 3432).

161

The 3rd Div Sum of Opns in the World War (Washington, D.C., 1944), p. 53.

162

Compiled from data in Med Dept of the U.S. Army in the World War, vol. XV, Medical and Casualty Statistics (Washington, D.C., 1925), pp. 1048 - 1169. The count shows 1182 killed, 3843 wounded, and 2168 gassed between 1 Jun and 20 Aug.

163

Compiled from lists of FH 5 (Med Dept Box 3443), FH 7 (Med Dept Box 3447), FH 26 (Med Dept Box 3448), and FH 27 (Med Dept Box 3450). 28th Div casualties are from lists of both 3rd and 28th Div field hospitals in Med Dept Boxes 3443, 3450, 3637, and 3640.

Memo, Div Adj for CofS 3rd Div, 2130, 4 Aug, sub: Casualties in 3rd Div (MSB, p. 818), reported 917 killed, 3261 wounded, 1762 gassed, and 47 missing, a total of 5986, as of that date.

Table No. 2

CASUALTIES IN DIVISION HOSPITAL RECORDS

	Gassed	Wounded	PN	Killed	Total
3rd DIVISION					
4 - 30 June	15	164	8	-	187
1 - 14 July	9	37	-	28	74
15 - 17 July	789	1297	56	690	2832
18 - 31 July	1078	1421	517	326	3342
1 - 6 Aug	13	-	3	-	16
7 - 14 Aug	242	300	14	98	654
	<u>2146</u>	<u>3219</u>	<u>598</u>	<u>1142</u>	<u>7105</u>
28th DIVISION					
15 - 17 July	378	285	56		719
18 - 31 July	615	818	265		1698
1 - 2 Aug	99	75	7		181
	<u>1092</u>	<u>1178</u>	<u>328</u>		<u>2598</u>
	<u>3238</u>	<u>4397</u>	<u>926</u>	<u>1142</u>	<u>9703</u>

Table No. 3

REPORT OF DEATHS, 3rd DIVISION

Date	4th Inf	7th Inf	30th Inf	38th Inf	Others	Total
1 - 14 July	3	2	3	5	15	28
15 July	19	162	148	182	115	626
16 - 31 July	120	75	62	53	80	390
1 - 17 Aug	7	2	9	63	17	98
	<u>149</u>	<u>241</u>	<u>222</u>	<u>303</u>	<u>227</u>	<u>1142</u>

Of these 1,142 deaths, 16 were attributed to gas, 196 to gunshot wounds, 130 to shrapnel, 644 to HE shell, and 156 were "unknown."

Two sets of figures in Table No. 2 seem suspect, those for the periods 4 - 30 June and 1 - 6 August. In June there were at least 64 killed and 331 wounded in the units assisting the 2nd and 39th French Divisions (narrative, pp. 5, 9-10), of which no record appears in 3rd Division hospital lists. And the casualties for 1 - 6 August are contradicted by the Division Surgeon who reported 25 gassed, 11 wounded, and 14 PN in that period.¹⁶⁴

More interesting, in view of the complete absence of gas attack reports to substantiate it, is a monthly gas casualty report by Major Somervell that shows 24 gas casualties in the period 1 - 14 July, 1,217 in the period 15 - 17 July, and 2,030 in the period 18 - 31 July -- a total of 3,271 gas casualties during July. In his long account of the 15 July bombardment he had reported 1,559 gas casualties, based on 3rd Division hospital returns, as represented in Table No. 4.¹⁶⁵ Later, when he made up the monthly return, these totals, exclusive of 28th Division figures, were revised to 70, 608, and 1,042, for a total of 1,720.¹⁶⁶

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Memo, Div Surg to III Corps Surgeon, 6 Aug, n.s. (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 6).

165

Ltr, DGO to G - 3 3rd Div, 21 Jul, sub: Report on Gas Attack, July 14 - 15 (3rd Div Box 28, 63.3).

166

DGO, Monthly Rpt of Gas Casualties, July, 1918, signed by Major Somervell. The data of this rpt appears in Ltr, CGO III Corps to C CWS, 10 Aug, sub: Monthly Report (both in War Dept Hist Box 297, 12.3).

Table No. 4

DIVISION GAS OFFICER REPORT

Unit	Hospital Admissions as of		
	Noon 15 Jul	Noon 16 Jul	16 - 20 Jul
4th Infantry	3	15	181
7th Infantry	4	66	233
30th Infantry	2	40	160
38th Infantry	4	20	123
6th Engineers	21	36	236
8th & 9th MG Bns	4	6	72
Field Artillery	17	48	177
Medical train	3	5	45
Other elements	3	6	29
	<u>61</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>1256 = 1559</u>
28th Division	18	103	287
	<u>79</u>	<u>345</u>	<u>1543 = 1967</u>

The total of 1,967 gas casualties (in Table No. 4) resulted, said Major Somervell, from "the compulsory evacuation of all cases which reported in as gassed...which thus inflated the hospital lists...to a preposterous degree." By comparison with that of the daily admission lists of the field hospitals, this total was to become even more "preposterous" by the end of the month. It is not possible, with present knowledge, to do more than represent, in Table No. 5, the daily gas casualties shown in the field hospital admission lists; the daily casualties separately reported by FH 5, the division gas hospital (in the first brackets); and the daily totals

Table No. 5

DAILY HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS, 15 - 31 JULY

Date	4th Inf			7th Inf			30th Inf			38th Inf			MG Bns		
	Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN
15 Jul	3	5		4	13	2	5	12		3	9		5	6	
16 Jul	44	21	1	113	235	12	67	237	4	35	172	2	24	43	1
17 Jul	42	29	1	38	141	27	43	61	2	23	66	3	18	5	1
18 Jul	17	2		4	19	5	15	12		17	9	6	5		1
19 Jul	18	2	1	3	17	8	2	13		4	10	15	5	1	2
20 Jul	3	5		8	6	2	1	6	1	7	25	9	2	1	
21 Jul	8	13		6	1	2	4	9		44	3	3	3	3	
22 Jul	2	19		1	4	2	3	4	2	31	20	3	5	2	
23 Jul	25	37	5	2	27	3	2	2		20	117	14	9	11	4
24 Jul	11	127	43	6	46	11	2	11	10	9	51	9	14	22	8
25 Jul	14	37	33	1	5	4	48	123	15	17	12	5	4	5	7
26 Jul	66	51	45	17	43	9	50	58	22	27	10	4	15		
27 Jul	47	24	33	49	97	32	45	7	20	13	2	4	11	1	1
28 Jul	42	28	4	3	12	5	7	1	3	2	1	1			3
29 Jul	23	3		2		2	5	3	1	2					
30 Jul	11	33		4	4	3	1	1	2	1	1		1	1	
31 Jul	17	37	26	4	12	8	10	2	13	6	3	4		1	2
	393	473	192	265	682	137	310	562	95	261	511	82	121	102	30

Artillery			Engineers			Others			TOTALS		
Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN	Gas	GSW	PN
21	51		25	24		7	10		73	51	70
81	56		72			34	38		470	605	608
25	14		53	22	1	2	27	1	244	259	539
13	16	2	14	2	1	8	1		93	97	344
3	2	1	10	3	1	2			47	48	99
19	3	1	4			2	1		46	51	60
41	5		8	2		1	2		115	189	125
6			2	6		3	2	2	50	124	129
	1			1		3	2		61	66	123
2	17	4			3	6	6	4	50	54	86
	25	2	1	3		2	1		87	77	107
3	2			1		13	4	2	191	181	304
4	1	1			1	9	5		178	200	397
2	3			1	1				56	63	153
4	18			1		1			37	16	39
2	1		4	1		2			26	30	55
2	4	2	1	1	7	3	1		43	-	9
228			194	68	15	95	101	9	1867	2111	3247
										2718	573

NOTE: "GSW" stands for "gunshot wound" and usually refers indiscriminately to wounds caused by artillery shell and shrapnel, by rifle, mortar, machine, or other high explosive weapons. "PN" is psychoneurosis.

reported by Somervell in his monthly gas report (in the second brackets).¹⁶⁷

Of the 1,867 gas casualties admitted to the hospitals (Table No. 5), the lists indicate that 1,333 were diagnosed simply as "gassed," 229 were tagged "mustard gas," 287 "gas inhalation," and 18 "phosgene." This uncertainty of diagnosis in the field hospitals was even more marked at the regimental level, as witness the wholesale decontamination of the 30th Infantry the day after the bombardment (narrative, pp. 52-53). A member of the 30th Infantry Battalion Aid Station said:

Gas cases were the most difficult of all to handle. It is impossible for the surgeon to properly diagnose his cases. One has no means of knowing whether he is dealing with delayed gas poisoning or with a simple case of Gas Fright ...[but] all palpable cases of gas poisoning were immediately evacuated, taking precedence over other cases.¹⁶⁸

Similar confusion reigned in the regiment apparently least affected by the gas, the 4th Infantry. With only 89 gas cases reported in hospital lists, the regimental surgeon nevertheless reported that "The handling of the enigmatical gas cases presented the difficulty of selecting from the vast numbers of gas-affected the seriously from the slightly gassed." ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷

Data for Table No. 5 from same source as Table No. 2; from Rpt of American gas patients received at FH 5, n.d. (Lt Col T. L. Ferenbaugh, Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 32, in Med Dept Box 3431, fol 1); and from DGO Monthly Rpt for July.

Memo, Div Surg for CG 3rd Div, 28 Jul, sub: 3rd Div patients through Div FHs, July 18 - 31 (Med Dept Box 3430, fol 6), differs slightly from Table No. 5, showing 2755 wounded, 1761 gassed, 540 PN.

¹⁶⁸

Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 117.

¹⁶⁹

Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 79.

There seems little question that the principal effect of the gas bombardment during the week of 15 July was to instill a sense of gas apprehension in the division that endured to the end of the campaign. It is not known when the following event occurred in the 30th Infantry, but it was probably during the advance above the Marne.

One form of psychoneurosis, "Gas Fright," was very common but most cases could be restored to the lines after a few hours' rest. One instance occurred where an entire platoon of machine gunners developed this form of psychosis. These men were eating their meal just before dark when a shell fell and burst at a distance of about 100 meters. They continued eating and many of them had finished when someone yelled Gas! and said their food had been gassed. All the men were seized with gas fright and a few minutes later made their way to the Aid Station. To an inexperienced eye they could have easily been diagnosed as gassed patients. They came in in a stooping posture, holding their abdomens and complaining of pains in the stomach, while their faces bore anxious, frightened expressions and some had even vomited. After reassurance, treatment with tablets of sodium bicarbonate and a night's rest they were quite well again.¹⁷⁰

Other manifestations of apprehension which appear to be attributed to the gas fire experienced by the division are described by an officer of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion:

Gas, greatly feared at first, proved to be dangerous only in the immediate vicinity of a shell burst, and such areas could usually be avoided. But it was a different matter indoors [where delay in masking or escaping to the open was almost certain to result in casualties].

Shell fire and a general sense of insecurity worked [the division] into a high state of nervous tension, evidenced by sharp commands, impatience bordering on intolerance, and inability to grasp new situations quickly. Orders not carried out as issued jeopardized the mission.¹⁷¹

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Med Hist of 3rd Div, p. 117.

171

Mendenhall, "The Fist in the Dyke," Infantry Journal (Jan 1936), p. 18.

Still another indication of the effect of gas is revealed in a medical report that an epidemic of dysentery that ran through the division between 4 and 14 August was attributed in part to the fact that "many men had inhaled poisonous gas in small quantities [since 15 July], thus lowering their resistance and making them easy victims of any infection that might be prevalent." More rationally, another medical officer ascribed the epidemic simply to the utter filth encountered everywhere north of the Marne.¹⁷²

Blue Cross Casualties

The results of the gas and HE fire on 15 July do not lend themselves to statistical purposes since blue cross gas (diphenylchloroarsine) was not used so much to achieve casualties as to neutralize troops, by keeping them masked, making them temporarily ill, and apprehensive lest they inhale any lethal agent that might be mixed with the blue cross fire.

Blue cross shell, containing half high explosive and half solid diphenylchloroarsine, was more likely to produce HE casualties than gas casualties against masked troops. This is evident from the proportion of casualties on 15 July. Table No. 2 indicates 1,167 gas cases and 1,582 wound cases in the 3rd and 28th Divisions, as a result of approximately 50,000 blue cross and 50,000 HE and shrapnel shells, or a casualty for every 36 shells.

¹⁷²

Med Hist of 3rd Div, pp. 140, 145.

Artillery shell was not usually this effective except against unprotected troops. The narrative makes it clear that the 3rd and 28th Division were not entrenched, had few dugouts, and were densely massed in the wooded areas of the sector, the latter condition aggravated by the fact that two reliefs were being carried out at the time of the bombardment.

As might be expected, the German bombardment of 15 July was more effective against the green troops of 3rd Division, though fewer shells were fired, than either the bombardment for the offensive of 27 May against the British at the Aisne or that of 9 June against the French on the Montdidier - Noyon front.

On 27 May, three exhausted divisions of the IX British Corps were subjected to a four-hour bombardment with equal quantities of explosive blue cross and HE shell, with some proportion of yellow cross 1 (ethyldichloroarsine) and green cross (phosgene) mixed in the gas fire. The entire corps area was covered with "a continuous invisible cloud of low concentration," and its effects were noticeable eight miles back of the front. The sector, with an organized trench system, was well provided with gasproof dugouts and as a result less than 200 casualties out of 15,000 (?) troops were evacuated. Nevertheless, the "most important function of the gas...to cause neutralization and to depress morale...appears to have been attained."

On 9 June, a similar gas and HE bombardment, lasting four hours, fell on the French between Montdidier and Noyon. Again, it was impossible to estimate the number of shells, but the bombardment was described as "an

uninterrupted fire at the cadence of drum-fire." As in the earlier bombardment, the use of slight amounts of phosgene, which even in low concentration may have serious delayed effects, presented "an immediate tactical advantage comparable to that of casualties." Of 100,000 men in the Third French Army sector under attack, 1,673 gas casualties were evacuated during the week following the bombardment, most of them suffering from arsenical poisoning. In the First French Army sector, west of Montdidier, where mustard gas was used, 639 French and 477 Americans (1st Division) were evacuated that week.¹⁷³

Assuming that the relative proportions of gas were approximately the same in all three bombardments (although the weight of gas shell on 15 July was unquestionably less than the weights fired earlier), the ratio of evacuated casualties to men exposed in the three bombardments was 1.33 to 100, 1.67 to 100, and 3 to 100. Exhausted British troops and war-weary French survived blue cross bombardments with fewer casualties than the inexperienced Americans.

French and German Statistics

A comparison of casualties in the 39th French and 3rd Divisions, made by XXXVIII Corps on 16 July and again on 1 August, proved enlightening but was hardly fair. With the 28th Division, these were the three units of the corps. But the 39th French, at Hill 204 and in Chateau Thierry, was not in

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Spencer, "History of Gas Attacks upon the AEF," 15 Feb 1928, III, 598 - 610 (in CMLHO).

the attack zone on 15 July, and was not subjected to the great blue cross bombardment, but to a lesser yellow cross fire.

On 16 July corps reported that 3rd Division losses the day before approximated 2,500, 39th French losses were said to be 33 (4 killed, 7 wounded, 22 gassed, "la plupart yperités"). Nothing was said about 28th Division losses, nor those in the French corps to the right (125th and 73rd French Divisions).¹⁷⁴

The cumulative losses in the two divisions of XXXVIII Corps were highlighted in a later corps report that covered the last two weeks of July but overlooked the difference in sizes of the two divisions (approximately 9,000 vs. 25,000) and the difference in their experience.¹⁷⁵

3rd American Division
14 - 31 July

Wounded, gassed, shell shock, sick.....180 officers, 5244 men
Killed or missing.....1200 officers and men
[Gassed.....1762]

39th French Division
16 - 25 July

Wounded, gassed, shell shock, sick.....25 officers, 1025 men
Killed or missing..... 3 officers, 229 men

The total of 6,624 casualties in the American division, in contrast to the 1,282 French casualties, indicated that the American division had taken

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38th Fr Corps Jnl of Opns, 16 Jul (French Files Box 108, 30.6).

175

Comparative Losses sustained by 3rd Amer and 39th Fr Divs, 38th Corps, 1 Aug (French Files Box 108, 30.1).

more than five times as many casualties, though it was only three times as large as the French unit. Corps did not comment on the figures but the implication was obvious that corps suspected American inexperience, carelessness, or even negligence as the reason for the disparity.

No figures have as yet been found showing the total French and American casualties during the July 15 offensive, the cost of the counteroffensive on 18 July, or of the Aisne-Marne campaign as a whole, which lasted from 15 July to 10 September. German statistics on the 15th July offensive are as usual fragmentary and open to question. The only divisional data are those for the 10th and 10th Landwehr Divisions (narrative, pp. 54 - 55) which indicate losses of 3,128 killed, wounded, and missing up to 20 July.

From a German Field Army headquarters report of losses that covers the month of July, it is possible to construct a chart of daily casualties in Seventh Army which gives some idea of the cost of the campaign through 30 July (Table No. 6).¹⁷⁶ No prisoner data are given and no deaths, though the latter may have been as much as half the wounded or even more, if we are to believe Colonel Kelton's report of the German dead on the 3rd Division front.

It can be assumed that Seventh Army losses were considerably in excess of those in Third or First Army, since in addition to its casualties from the counteroffensive fire on 14 June and during the attack, Seventh Army

¹⁷⁶

Rpt of Losses, June 1 to Nov 9, GHC Field Armies, All Fronts (GFB 9, fol I).

Table No. 6

SEVENTH ARMY CASUALTIES 1 - 30 JULY 1918

Date of Casualty	Date of Report	Walking Wounded	Ambulance Cases	Non-Transportable	Gassed	Total
1 July	4 July	100	315	17	27	459
2 July	5 July	136	240	14	36	426
3 July	8 July	143	285	9	22	459
4 July	7 July	88	190	4	14	296
5 July	8 July	52	103	8	33	196
6 July	9 July	76	125	7	47	255
7 July	10 July	82	153	9	67	311
8 July	11 July	58	182	7	32	279
9 July	12 July	78	265	14	163	520
10 July	13 July	45	112	2	217	376
11 July	14 July	42	122	9	43	216
12 July	15 July	41	126	13	13	193
13 July	16 July	44	82	9	26	161
14 July	17 July	738	518	37	92	1385
15 July	18 July	2508	2814	122	370	5814
16 July	19 July	1587	2062	159	426	4234
17 July	20 July	1588	1650	100	324	3662
18 July	21 July	1273	1671	129	307	3380
19 July	28 July	636	944	26	99	1705
20 July	25 July	804	1104	59	102	2069
21 July	28 July	991	1317	79	101	2488
22 July	28 July	782	1017	53	59	1911
23 July	28 July	930	1186	62	185	2363
24 July	28 July	468	956	36	127	1587
25 July	1 Aug	521	745	22	41	1329
26 July	1 Aug	253	440	29	33	755
27 July	1 Aug	296	405	19	96	816
28 July	1 Aug	232	443	30	23	728
29 July	1 Aug	433	1101	47	539	2120
30 July	4 Aug	331	517	41	223	1112
		15,356	21,190	1,172	3,887	41,605

suffered heavy losses in the French counteroffensive at Soissons on 18 July. No estimate of total casualties is possible, but Ludendorff said that in the offensive and defensive operations between 15 July and 1 August losses were "so heavy that we were compelled to break up about ten divisions and use their infantry as reserves for others." 177

Lessons Learned

In a report of operations dated 5 August, the Chief of Staff of 3rd Division included a section of lessons learned in the period 14 July - 1 August:

1. "The full importance of trenches as protection against shell fire was not fully realized by the members of the command." In the future, he said, these must be dug and occupied in case of bombardment. 178
2. "No new lessons were to be learned in the use of gas."
3. "The smoke screens attempted by the enemy largely failed...having been foreseen and provided against." Although it was not done, said Kelton, smoke screens can be met adequately by immediately strengthening the forward

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Ludendorff's Own Story (New York and London, 1919), II, 322.

178

For Gen Mondesir's comments on the long holes filled with straw that he found in the 3rd Div sector, see his report, "The American 3rd Div in the Second Battle of the Marne," 1 Mar 1928 (French Files Box 107, 20.4). See also rpts of 25 Jun and 10 Jul in USA in the WW, III, Training, pp. 565-66, 586.

line.

4. Remembering efforts on the morning of 15 July to answer calls for help or relief, particularly in the 7th and 30th Infantry sectors, Kelton said it had been "found impossible to maneuver reserves over open ground during a bombardment."
5. With telephone liaison completely out within ten minutes and all other mechanical means of communication rendered impossible soon thereafter, the division had had to depend entirely upon runners. The division, said Kelton, should have been provided with large numbers of carrier pigeons.
6. In the advance above the Marne, the division learned that "frontal attacks against machine gun nests were costly and in most cases futile." The nests should have been taken by flank maneuvers of small groups.

Despite its imperfect understanding of these lessons, said Kelton, 3rd Division had nevertheless "effectually stopped the German divisions opposed to it" and so rendered possible the halting of the great drive. Furthermore, the later advance of corps to the Vesle had been "in no small measure due to the advance of 3rd Division up the Charmel valley." 179

The most remarkable of these lessons, perhaps, was that nothing new

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Rpt of Opns, 3rd Div, 5 Aug (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6). For other lessons, see Col de Poumayac, Fr LO at Hq 3rd Div, "Observations made during the 3rd Div Offensive, 19 - 29 Jul," 1 Aug; "Observations made in the 3rd Div sector during...June and July," 3 Aug (3rd Div Box 21, 33.6).

had been learned about enemy use of gas. The division staff had all available information on the nature of the earlier German gas bombardments for an offensive, and in this respect there was nothing new. But the statement itself was another confession of helplessness where gas was concerned (see narrative, p. 18).

The only experience the division had of gas prior to the bombardment was approximately 100 scattered gas shells over a period of a month and a half. On the basis of that brief experience, the commander of the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, was to say after the bombardment of 15 July: "There were only very few gas casualties in this battalion due solely to the fact that the men have encountered gas before and realized its dangers." 180 Yet it was the 30th Infantry that went in a body to Essises on 16 July to be decontaminated, under the conviction, or excuse, that it had been exposed to mustard gas (narrative, p. 52).

The most important lesson 3rd Division might have learned from the bombardment was the demoralizing effect of blue cross (diphenylchloroarsine) gas. Apart from its HE content, which made the gas shell difficult to detect by its burst, the agent in the blue cross shell in small concentrations induced violent sneezing and vomiting, forcing removal of the mask so that the men were without protection against the green cross (phosgene) that was usually fired in some proportion with blue cross.

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Rpt of Opns of 2nd Bn, 30th Inf, 2 Aug (3rd Div Box 40, 33.6).

they would have met any organized opposition from 3rd Division.

A word may be said about the five German offensives in the spring of 1918, each of them said to have been preceded by a gas and HE bombardment of approximately equal intensity. The offensives on 21 March, 9 April, and 27 May were the most successful owing to the element of surprise with which they were launched, to the failure of adequate allied artillery retaliation, and to the effectiveness of the penetration tactics of the infantry.

In the last two offensives, on 9 June and 15 July, all those elements were countered. Expecting further attacks, the French had learned to recognize the signs of secret preparations. Yperite (French mustard gas) which arrived in the field less than a week before the 9 June attack, was used in sufficient quantity against the enemy's assembly areas and batteries then and again in July to upset his final preparations, and the counteroffensive fire at the very hour of the offensive on 15 July threw the attacking forces into "indescribable confusion." Finally, the French learned by June to construct their defenses in depth, so that the new German penetration tactics were largely nullified by successive thin lines of defense and the attacking forces were spent when they reached the main line of resistance.

In the case of the 3rd Division, its main line of resistance, the so-called aqueduct line, was breached only slightly in the Surmelin valley area. The numbers of German infantry who crossed on that front were neither sufficient nor fresh enough to advance farther. Behind the river and railroad defenders who stopped those that crossed that morning lay the bulk of

the division, smothered by the gas and HE bombardment.

The performance of the division during its advance from the Marne to the Ourcq would indicate that incompletely trained troops, overly aware of the dangers of gas, and led by officers who were little more confident than the men themselves, were no match for an enemy skilfully retreating by means of the use of gas and machine gun fire.

The division should have been relieved at the Marne, to complete its training and establish discipline through that training, letting the reserve 28th Division make the advance above the river. The rapid exhaustion of all units in that advance was probably as much owing to the apprehension, confusion, and crowding in that narrow sector as it was to the difficult terrain and the enemy's gas and machine gun fire.

The experience of the 30th and 38th Infantry at the Vesle was wholly anticlimactic. The regiments were no more equal to that assignment than were the 4th, 7th, and 30th Infantry at Hill 204 and in the Bois de Belleau two months earlier.

An element of farce concludes the story of the 3rd Division at the Marne. On 10 October 1919, War Department General Order 116 awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to Colonel Butts, commander of the 30th Infantry, the citation reading: "...his regiment...[withstood] successfully the principal shock of the German attack and [drove] the enemy back across the Marne by the brilliant counterattack which he planned." The records nowhere support the citation.

This and an article in the New York Evening World on 21 August 1919 entitled, "Rock of the Marne was 30th Infantry," seem to have precipitated a controversy that raged until at least 1936, as to whether the 30th or 38th Infantry deserved the title "The Rock of the Marne." General Mondesire of XXXVIII Corps and General Petain agreed with Colonel Butts that his regiment had stopped the attack on the flank of Sixth Army. A German barrage map and attack map (the latter represented here as Map No. 4), reprinted in the Evening World and in Butts' book The Keypoint of the Marne and its Defense by the 30th Infantry, were offered in proof, since they showed the focus of the barrage on the 30th Infantry sector and the principal attack directed at taking the Bois d'Aigremont. The newspaper account of 5,000 German dead, 600 prisoners, and 10,000 enemy wounded in the 30th Infantry sector, out of an attack force of 24,000 Germans in three divisions, proved the "30th U. S. Infantry [to be] Chateau Thierry's Real Heroes."

On the other hand, Chief of Staff Kelton, Colonel Lanza in his post-war field notes, and General Pershing all awarded the distinction to the 38th Infantry, and on May 1920 Congressman MacArthur made his famous speech in the House of Representatives acclaiming the 38th Infantry as the real "Rock of the Marne." 184 It is probable that the controversy echoes somewhere

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For the 30th Inf side of the controversy, including press clippings, see 3rd Div Box 40, 11.5 and Ltr, Col E. L. Butts to TAG, 20 Oct 1919, sub: History of defense of the Marne, in 3rd Div Box 41, 33.61.

For the 38th Inf story, see 3rd Div Box 1, 3.8; Box 3, 11.4; Capt J. W. Woolridge, The Rock of the Marne (New York, 1919), a 23 - page booklet, in 3rd Div box 46, 33.6; Infantry Journal (Sep 1920), pp. 221 - 227; Jennings C. Wise, The Turn of the Tide (New York, 1920), pp. 123 - 125.

even to this day. The present study does not claim to settle it.

184 (continued)

The concluding corresp with Pershing in 1936 concerning his praise of the 38th Inf in the serialized version of his book, My Experiences in the World War, and the revision made when it was published in 1931, appears in 3rd Div Box 40, 11.4.