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‘BROTHERS IN ARMS’?: The American and British Coalition on the Western Front,
1918

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines in detail, the organisation, training and operations of the 27th and 30th American Divisions during the period of Summer 1917 to the announcement of an armistice in November 1918. Particular emphasis is placed on the two divisions after they were attached to the II American Corps, especially their experience with the British Expeditionary Force in 1918, and the training received under the supervision of British officers.

The II American Corps was unique in that it spent its entire service in France in the British sector. Originally it was composed of 10 divisions, but eight of these were removed by the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, Gen. John. J. Pershing. The divisions were transferred to the First American Army and operated entirely independent of II American Corps. The two American divisions that remained with the British, the 27th and 30th, relied heavily upon their coalition partners for advice in training, supplies, equipment, food and more importantly, tactical leadership. Although General Pershing forbade American divisions from being amalgamated into Allied armies, in reality, the 27th and 30th Divisions became part of the BEF, especially the Fourth Army during the final campaigns of the war. Despite its attachment to arguably the best fighting force on the Western Front in 1918, the II American Corps suffered heavy casualties during its limited operational experience and, in many ways, failed to take advantage of lessons learned by the British Army during its campaigns of 1916-1917.

This dissertation concludes that the relationship between the two American divisions and their British ally was in the end result a success. By allowing the 27th and 30th Divisions to remain behind with the BEF, Pershing provided the British with more than 50,000 able American troops to use at the front. Thus the two allies became Brothers-in-Arms.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF MAPS	vii
APPENDIXES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Secondary Sources (BEF)	3
Secondary Sources (AEF).....	9
Primary Sources.....	14
Chapter Summaries.....	16
1. THE SUNNY SOUTH	24
Mobilisation of the National Guard	24
The Amalgamation Issue, Part.1	30
The 1917 Offensives	32
Amalgamation, Part 2	34
Haig and Pershing Meet for the First Time.....	37
Training in the United States	38
Observing the Allies	44
Training Continued-Open warfare Versus Trench Warfare.....	45
1917 Offensives continued.....	55
Inspections	57
The Amalgamation Issue Continues	59
2. WAITING TO GO OVER	67
Amalgamation.....	67
The Organization of II Corps.....	73
Training in the United States	80
Planning for 1918.....	84
Spring Offensives	86
The Final weeks of Training	97
Overseas Deployment	102
3. CARRIED OVER	109
Sailing to France	109
Arrival.....	113
Preparation for Training Continues.....	117
Entering the British Sector	118
Training Begins.....	123
Training with the British.....	124
The Amalgamation Issue Returns	132
Division Training.....	133
Removal of American Divisions.....	136
Changes in command.....	137
Training with the Dominions	142
The Reality of Training.....	145
4. WE HAVE FOUND EACH OTHER AT LAST	152
Period A Training Continues	152
The Hamel Operation.....	155
The Battle Plan.....	158
Pershing Intervenes	159
The Operation	161
Aftermath.....	163
Period B Training Delayed	164
Entering the Line.....	165
Training Continues.....	168
Visit by Pershing.....	170

	Period B Training Begins.....	172
	The British Take the Offensive.....	176
	II Corps is Reduced.....	177
	Defining Moment.....	182
	The Line.....	184
	Learning Curve.....	187
5.	ALONE WITH THE BRITISH	193
	Forward into Battle.....	193
	In the Rear.....	201
	Lessons.....	202
	Training.....	206
	Training with Tanks.....	207
	The British Front.....	209
	The Next Operation.....	210
	The Americans.....	213
	The Battle Plan.....	214
	Plans for the Preliminary Attack.....	219
	Advance Toward the Line, 18-24 September 1918.....	221
	The Americans Move Forward.....	224
	Preparations for the Operation.....	227
6.	THE AIR WAS A TORTURING SOUND OF HELL	239
	The Americans Enter the Line.....	239
	Plans for a Preliminary Operation.....	241
	The Preliminary Operation Commences.....	244
	Preparation for the Main Operation.....	248
	Main Operation, 29 September 1918.....	251
	Attack in the 30th Division Sector.....	262
	News of the Operation.....	266
	Elsewhere on the British Front.....	266
	Assessment of American Performance.....	267
	The Americans Evaluate Their Performance.....	270
	Epilogue.....	274
7.	BACK TO THE FRONT	282
	The BEF Continues the Offensive.....	282
	Americans Re-Enter the Line.....	284
	A Minor Operation.....	285
	The Advance Continues.....	287
	The 30 th is Withdrawn and the 27 th Enters the Line.....	292
	The Last Offensive.....	295
	Reflections on the Selle Operation.....	304
	Retirement.....	305
	The War Ends.....	307
8.	CONCLUSION: THE BROTHERS-IN-ARMS	312
	The Coalition.....	312
	The Issue of Amalgamation.....	314
	Relations with the British.....	315
	Lessons Learned.....	320
	Contribution of II American Corps.....	321
	The National Guard Issue.....	323
	In Comparison.....	324
	Epilogue.....	327
9.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	332

Maps

Attack on Hamel, 4 July 1918.....	After p.161
Ypres and Vicinity.....	After p. 166
Ypres-Lys Operation, 18 August- 1 September 1918.....	After p. 196
Operations of the III British Corps, September 1918.....	After p. 221
Preliminary Operation, 26-27 September 1918.....	After p. 244
Attack on the Hindenburg Line, 29 September 1918.....	After p. 251
Selle River Campaign, 10-20 October 1918.....	After p. 291

Appendices

Appendix I: Staff: II American Corps (29 September 1918)

Appendix II: Order of Battle: 27th and 30th American Divisions (10 August-1 September 1918)

Appendix III: Order of Battle-29 September 1918

Appendix IV: German Army (Second and Eighteenth Armies) Order of Battle, 29 September 1918, North to South

Appendix V: Comparative Strength of American and British Divisions, 1918

Introduction

The relationship between the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF)¹ divisions serving with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1918 offers an opportunity for a much-neglected case study of the Anglo-American battlefield alliance. Although the commander-in-chief of the AEF, Gen. John J. Pershing, rejected demands for full-scale amalgamation by insisting upon an independent army, two of his divisions, the 27th and 30th, spent their entire service on the Western Front with the British Army. These borrowed units were among the 10 AEF divisions (the others were the 4th, 28th, 33rd, 35th, 77th, 78th, 80th and 82nd) sent by Pershing to the British sector for training.² In order to retain administrative control of his units under British command, he organised them into the II American Corps. The British supervised the training of their English-speaking comrades, transported them overseas, and in many instances, provided them with the necessary equipment, arms and food.

The British Tommies³ took the American doughboys⁴ under their wing when they arrived in June 1918, but the two never developed a strong camaraderie. One reason may have been the cultural differences existing between the two Allies, while another explanation is that recently arrived American soldiers could in no way relate to the hardships and sacrifices already made by the veteran British soldiers, whose exhaustion from battle contrasted with the eagerness and high spirits displayed by the fresh-faced Yanks.⁵ Regardless of the disparity and the complex partnership that evolved, the Americans and the British were fighting together to achieve a common goal, the defeat of the German Army. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, enthusiastically proclaimed the

two Allies 'Brothers in Arms.'⁶ Together the BEF and the two attached AEF divisions attacked the German Hindenburg Line on 29 September 1918, during the Hundred Days Campaign and the following month pursued the German forces to the Selle River. This was a defining moment for both armies as this offensive hastened the end of the war.

Despite the significance of the American-British relationship, the training and operations of II American Corps are rarely mentioned in the historiography of World War I. While this alone is sufficient reason to undertake a full-length study of its attachment to the BEF, there is another significant rationale. The present military relationship between the United States and Great Britain can trace its origins to the Western Front in 1918.⁷ This relationship deepened in World War II and has grown steadily since then. For historians, the 1918 alliance is an important, but overlooked, aspect of both the U.S. and British Army's heritage. This study fills that void. It emphasises the formation of the 27th and 30th Divisions and their training in the United States, then examines the training and tactical co-operation with the British in the summer and autumn of 1918.

The II American Corps was in the line on only three occasions, but made a valuable contribution to the operations in which it participated, despite losing a disproportionate number of officers and men. This study examines these operations in some detail with an emphasis on the battlefield performance of the American divisions. Tangential to the training and operations was the issue of amalgamation and General Pershing's struggle to compromise with the British to meet the strategic needs of both the AEF and BEF. This thesis draws heavily on a wide range of primary and secondary sources that were

consulted over the course of the research. The following is a select annotated bibliography of the more significant published works and manuscript and archival collections that helped provide the foundation for this study.

Secondary Sources (BEF)

The historiography of the BEF far outnumbers that published on the AEF. It began shortly after the war ended and has continued to grow at a steady pace in recent years as result of a renewed interest in the First World War. A focal point of the research scrutinises the leadership of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and the BEF's performance during the last two years of the war. Haig has been the subject of more than a dozen biographies since his death in 1928. He himself is partially responsible for the interpretation of his legacy. He made his diaries available to the Official Historian, and as a result the publication of the *Official History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Belgium (1937-1947)* stand as a lasting legacy to Haig.⁸ Despite its flaws and proven bias, this reference work is a remarkable publication for its detail of the operations of 1914-1918. One of the first to utilise Haig's diary was Duff Cooper, whose two-volume biography, *Haig (1935-1936)* is very sympathetic to its subject.⁹

Although Haig did not publish his memoirs, a portion of his diary was edited and made public four decades after his death. *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919 (1952)*,¹⁰ by Robert Blake, offers scholars a glimpse into his personality through a selection of his correspondence to staff officers and his wife. In 2005, John Bourne and Gary Sheffield published a more comprehensive collection of Haig's diaries and letters,

Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters: 1914-1918 (2005).¹¹ Despite the extraordinary efforts of Blake, Bourne and Sheffield, I found it necessary to examine the original papers at the National Library of Scotland for specific references to the Americans that were understandably overlooked in the edited collections.

Ten years after Haig's death, David Lloyd George published his two-volume *War Memoirs* (1938)¹² which not only attacked the former BEF commander-in-chief, but also one of his staunchest supporters, Maj. Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice. The former prime minister's accusations were based around Haig's conduct on the Western Front, particularly the Third Ypres Campaign.¹³ Lloyd George's comments were not surprising since he often clashed with Haig over command decisions.

The bashing of Haig and his subordinate BEF officers continued through the publication of books by popular historians, such as Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* (1961), and *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One* (1988), by John Laffin.¹⁴ Both books, and many others like them, suggest that the senior and middle-level officers were incompetent, and that thousands of British lives were lost because of their obstinacy. 'From the time of his appointment as Commander of British Armies in France,' suggests one historian, 'Haig has been a central, controversial figure of the First World War.'¹⁵ One of the first to restore Haig's reputation was John Terraine. His books, *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (1963) and *1918: To Win a War* (1978)¹⁶ came to the BEF commander's defence by suggesting that he was indeed a professional with an offensive strategy during the 1916-1917 offensives, which formed the only possible course of

action that the circumstances would allow. By 1918, Terraine argues, the BEF was well prepared to finish off the worn-down German Army.

Taking an opposing view is Tim Travers. He counters that Haig's military doctrine did not shift much throughout the war to adapt to changes in technology. In his two important and controversial works, *The Killing Ground* (1987) and *How the War Was Won* (1992), Travers insists that based upon what Haig learned at the Staff College, and as a cavalry officer, he was too conservative and narrow-minded on the battlefield. BEF success in 1918, Travers contends, was based upon German Army tactical errors and high casualties.¹⁷ Influenced by this same analysis, Gerard DeGroot proposes in his book, *Douglas Haig, 1861-1928* (1988), that 'although it was impossible to deny that in the end Haig won the war, his victory should not be interpreted as a vindication of his methods or an exoneration of his character.'¹⁸ This analysis reached its climax with the publication of *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (1991),¹⁹ by Denis Winter. The historical community has dismissed this controversial book, and identified Winter as the self-appointed 'Witchfinder General of the Great War.'²⁰

During the past decade historians have started to revise these interpretations. The recent studies of the BEF, as condensed by one historian, essentially conclude 'the years 1914 to 1918 saw the British Army change from a small force of riflemen backed by insubstantial artillery to a large group of five armies, with a force of artillery which could enable it to break through any defensive position it wished.'²¹ A more balanced biographical study

on Haig is Andrew W. Weist's *Haig: The Evolution of a Commander* (2005)²², which incorporates much of the preceding scholarship.

Another example is *Forgotten Victory: The First World War Myths and Realities* (2001),²³ by Gary Sheffield. He describes how 'a reference to the First World War is often used as shorthand for stupidity, blind obedience, failures of leadership, appalling physical conditions and deadlock.'²⁴ Through a careful investigation of the recent historiography along with primary research, Sheffield does much to correct this misconception of the BEF. He concludes that the British Army benefited from a steep learning curve after the Somme offensive of 1916, and had indeed adapted to the new technology of the war. As a result, it became the most effective army by autumn 1918. The learning curve was initiated with the fresh, inexperienced troops, as documented in an earlier work, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of New Armies, 1914-1916* (1988),²⁵ by Peter Simkins. It should be noted that similarities exist between these men and the American soldiers of 1917-1918.

A breakthrough study of the BEF on the Western Front is *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1914-1918* (1992),²⁶ co-authored by historians Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson. Their book is not a typical biography of the Fourth British Army commander, but a treatment of the BEF's effective command and control coordination of the new battlefield technology that utilised available manpower. *Amiens to the Armistice: The BEF in the Hundred Days' Campaign, 8 August-November 1918* (1998)²⁷, by Paul Harris and Niall Barr, is a detailed insight into the final campaigns

of the war in the British sector. The authors make a case that the final months of the war were the most significant to understanding the BEF since it had become the dominant army on the Western Front in 1918.

Also of great importance to this study are the Dominion divisions serving with the BEF on the Western Front, in particular, the Australian Corps under the command of Lieutenant General Sir John Monash. The relationship between Australian and American soldiers was in some ways a stronger bond than that between the British and American soldiers as my research will show. Ten years after the war, Monash published his account of the Hundred Days campaign. As the title indicates, *The Australian Victories in France, 1918* (1920)²⁸, largely credits his own troops for the successful final campaigns of the war, while criticising the Americans and British. An impartial view is Peter Pedersen's biography, *Monash as Military Commander* (1985).²⁹ It is a thoroughly researched insight into the Australian Corps commander's intellect, as well as his stubbornness on the battlefield.

In the volumes of *The Official History of Australia in the War* (1929-1942) written by C.E.W. Bean,³⁰ the author perpetuated the popular interpretation of the Australian Digger. He helped develop the stereotype that the Diggers were undisciplined, hard-drinking and hard fighting soldiers from the rural areas of Australia. Historian Peter Simkins credits Bean 'as the creator and greatest exponent of the 'everyman at war' approach, with his emphasis on the tactical side of operations and the inclusion of personal details about individual participants.'³¹

Eric M. Andrews, in *The ANZAC Illusion* (1993), and Dale Blair, in *Dinkum Diggers* (1998)³², do much to dispel these stereotypes. Andrews' book is study of the military, political, economic and psychological relationship between Britain and Australia, and the author goes to great lengths to suggest that the myth of the ANZAC suited both countries for their own purposes. Blair, on the other hand, examines the experiences of one ANZAC unit, the First Battalion, at Gallipoli and on the Western Front through their diaries and letters. His conclusions are much the same as Andrews in that the legend of the Australian Digger was in some ways accurate, while in other instances contradictory to the truth.

Although the Canadian Corps had little actual interaction with the II American Corps, its experiences under British command are, in some ways, similar to those of its North American neighbours. The Canadians did briefly train some American units, but the two Allies did not fight side by side. The British Army had provided supplies and artillery to the Canadian Corps as it did to II American Corps. The Canadians were also not responsible to the British government, but to the government of the Dominion of Canada. Through political pressure its divisions were not split up, but served together in their own corps. Most useful to this study was the *Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last 100 Days of the Great War*, by Shane Schreiber. The author concludes that the success of the four Canadian divisions during the 100 Days Campaign was due to its ability to 'develop its own doctrine, training schools, organization, and operational procedures.'³³

Secondary Sources (AEF)

In the 1930s, the most important book on the AEF was published, General Pershing's *My Experiences in the World War* (1931). Pershing waited more than 13 years after the U.S. entered the Great War to write his memoirs. They are based upon diaries that he and his aide maintained on a daily basis during the period of 1917-1919. Although the two-volume work was highly anticipated by those who served with him in the military and the general public, *My Experiences in the World War* was poorly received after its publication.

Much like Haig, Pershing remains one of the most controversial figures of the war. One of his biographers, Frank Vandiver, suggests that 'Haig and Pershing were wrapped in the veil of command on a lonely peak of their own.'³⁴ The main criticism of Pershing's memoirs is that he failed to confront the real difficulties encountered by the AEF and how they were addressed. Also, the volumes lacked deep analysis when it came to the fighting ability of the U.S. Army. What especially bother his critics of *My Experiences in the World War*, particularly those in the military, was that Pershing rarely acknowledged the assistance and hard work of his staff officers and corps and army commanders. His memoirs gave the impression that he alone conducted the war on behalf of the United States. Pershing did, however, try to give equal recognition to all of the combat units in France. In the case of II Corps, there are eight pages devoted to its operations with the British.³⁵ Despite its inadequacies, Pershing's diary entries and personal revelations provide insights into the allied relationship that cannot be found elsewhere.³⁶

The publication of *My Experiences in the World War* touched off a minor battle of memoirs. Firing the next shot was General Peyton C. March, who often clashed with Pershing when he was the Army Chief of Staff during the war. It took March only a year to write *The Nation at War* (1932), which tells the War Department's version of the war, while taking a number of terse shots at Pershing. Specifically, March charged that Pershing lacked the ability to command a large army and was insubordinate on numerous occasions. While Pershing never directly responded to the accusations, his close friend, General James Harbord, answered March in *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (1936). Harbord refuted much of what March claimed and went to great lengths to restore Pershing's reputation.³⁷

General histories of the AEF are largely absent among the historiography of the First World War. Immediately after the war, journalists produced a number of forgettable single-volume histories for a mass audience. They highlighted the heroic deeds of the American Army through newspaper accounts and General Pershing's *Final Report of the AEF* (1919). Not until the fiftieth anniversary of the final campaigns of the war were the first true scholarly works on the AEF published for a general audience. Still the most significant is *The War to End All Wars* (1968), by Edward M. Coffman.³⁸ His research utilised many of the available AEF records, along with other primary records, such as interviews with former World War I veterans. Coffman devotes an entire chapter to the training and operations of the Americans in the British Sector, more than any other general study of the AEF.

Also published in 1968 was *President Wilson Fights His War: World War I and the American Intervention*, by Harvey DeWeerd.³⁹ The title is misleading since only half the book focuses entirely on the American participation. DeWeerd also made use of the primary AEF records, but not to the same extent as Coffman, and he also ignores the II American Corps. Both historians accept General's Pershing's view that the AEF was the deciding force by the fall of 1918, and the U.S. was correct in insisting upon fighting as an independent army. Since the publication of the DeWeerd and Coffman books, there have been a number of articles and full-length studies that revise their analysis.

The most noteworthy are *Pershing: General of the Armies* (1986), by Donald Smythe; *Test of Battle: The American Expeditionary Forces in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign* (1987), by Paul Braim and *The AEF & Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918* (1993), by David Trask.⁴⁰ All three books suggest that the AEF was poorly trained and inadequately led during much of the final offensive of the war. Smythe goes as far as to suggest that Pershing might have been relieved of his command had the war continued past the autumn 1918 offensives, while Braim argues that plans generated at higher AEF staff levels were too simplistic to manage and support a modern army in the offensive. Trask concurs with each thesis and insists that the AEF would have been better utilised had it been amalgamated into the British and French armies. In his concluding chapter, the author makes an intriguing suggestion that 'the performance of the American First Army, created only three months before the armistice, was less impressive than those of the amalgamated divisions.'⁴¹ This statement is not supported with analysis or documentation. It alone helps make the case for a comprehensive study of II Corps.

Not nearly as critical as Smythe, Braim, or Trask is James J. Cooke in *Pershing and His Generals: Command and Staff in the AEF (1997)*.⁴² He suggests that the AEF had come a long way in 18 months from a poorly trained and led army to a competent fighting force that successfully resolved its command problems. Cooke also firmly believes that Pershing was the ideal commander-in-chief, and would have remained with the AEF, no matter how long the war dragged on. Since one third of the AEF consisted of National Guard divisions, two particular works on this subject are notable: *The History of the Militia and the National Guard (1983)* by John Mahon, and Jerry Cooper's *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia, 1865-1920 (1997)*.⁴³ Both contend that the National Guard units were an integral part of the AEF and contributed significantly on the battlefield.

Recent scholarship that relates directly to the American/British relationship includes very little that concerns the II American Corps. There is one scholarly article, 'Maconochie's Stew: Logistical Support of American Forces with the BEF, 1917-1918,'⁴⁴ which focuses upon the American Army's reliance on the British supply system. Addressing the strategic relationship of the British and Americans at the highest level, that of Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George, are David Woodward's three books: *Trial by Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917-1918 (1993)*, *Lloyd George and his Generals (1983)* and *Field Marshal Sir William Robertson: Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the Great War (1998)*.⁴⁵ In these studies, the author asserts that because both political leaders had a different strategic objective for their respective nation, the Anglo-American relationship was doomed from the start.

A fresh addition to the scholarship on Allied relations is *A Fraternity of Arms: America & France in the Great War*, by Robert Bruce.⁴⁶ It concludes the Americans and French had the more significant alliance. Although his is not an entirely original thesis, the author makes a persuasive argument by showing that the French trained, supplied, armed, and even commanded a greater proportion of American units than the British. The French commanders encouraged an independent sector for the AEF, while the British were more insistent upon amalgamation. This, however, in no way diminishes the contributions of the 27th and 30th Divisions and their service with the British Army.

Unlike the other allied armies, the United States Army never published an official history of its operations in the First World War. Instead, the War Department produced several useful monographs and publications to highlight various achievements of the AEF. Among these are the *Operations of the 2nd American Corps in the Somme Offensive* (1921) and *Field Orders: 2nd Army Corps* (1920).⁴⁷ They are essentially a verbatim duplication of the Corps unit histories, operations reports and orders, with a brief introduction.

During the Second World War, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) produced a *Summary of Operations in the World War* (1944) for each of the AEF combat divisions, which complements its revised *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (1937).⁴⁸ After the war, the U.S. Army expanded on this work by compiling the *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919* (1947).⁴⁹ This 19 volume collection consists of AEF and allied records relating to all facets of the American participation in World

War I, and of course includes many significant II American Corps training and operations documents.

The first two decades after the war saw the publication of unit histories. The most useful for II Corps is *The Story of the 27th Division*, written in 1921 by its commanding officer, Maj. Gen. John F. O’Ryan. This is a first-person account that provides great insight into the division’s experiences in the British sector, and also responds to critics of the American battle performance of September 27-29, 1918.⁵⁰ The 30th Division’s history, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (1936)⁵¹, is not as detailed as O’Ryan’s work, but offers some useful analysis of the American/British relationship. But this history is based mostly on the official records and lacks the personal feel of the 27th Division history. Almost all of the two division's infantry regiments and machine gun battalions published a unit history in one form or another soon after the war. Most recent is an excellent history of the 107th Infantry Regiment, *Duty, Honor, Privilege: New York’s Silk Stocking Regiment and the Breaking of the Hindenburg Line* (2001). Its author, Stephen L. Harris, successfully revises the regiment’s tarnished image through the use of contemporary letters and diaries.⁵²

Primary Sources

Despite the paucity of secondary works specific to II American Corps, there is no shortage of primary documentation. The main repository of AEF records, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), has among its holdings a significant body of unit histories, operations reports, orders and casualty files, among other documents

generated by II Corps and its attached divisions. This includes the documents contained in *The United States Army in the World War*, as well as numerous other operations reports, correspondence. Also, NARA holds an important collection of BEF training memorandums, war diaries and operations reports reproduced from the British War Records Office during the inter-war period by historians representing the United States Army War College. The Library of Congress Manuscript Division holds the personal papers of many important First World War figures. Among them are John J. Pershing, James G. Harbord, Newton D. Baker, Tasker Bliss and George S. Simonds. Sadly, the personal papers of II Corps general officers such as George W. Read, Edward M. Lewis and John F. O’Ryan are no longer extant.

Another pertinent Federal Government repository for the study of the First World War is the United States Army Military History Institute. Among its holdings are more than 80 questionnaires answered by veterans of the 27th and 30th Divisions. The questionnaires are supplemented, in some cases, by personal diaries submitted by the respondents.⁵³

When used in conjunction with the official records at the NARA, they offer the researcher a valuable first-person primary source. At the local level are the state repositories in New York, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. Since the 27th and 30th Divisions were composed of National Guard regiments from these states, letters, diaries and newspapers were found in the various state archives.

Research for the British aspect of my dissertation required visits to several repositories in the United Kingdom. Among the resources I have identified are the personal letters,

diaries and unpublished manuscripts written by British officers and enlisted men housed in the Department of Documents at the Imperial War Museum. The official War Office correspondence, diaries and reports, not duplicated at NARA, are held at the National Archives (formally the PRO) of Great Britain. The diaries and private papers of Sir Douglas Haig are at the National Library of Scotland. Other important repositories for personal papers are the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at Kings College, London and the National Army Museum. For the Australian Corps aspect of my dissertation, I mostly relied upon the operational records and personnel papers at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Although the above-mentioned sources are only a selection of the primary documents, they serve, along with the growing literature on the First World War, as an analytical framework for the study of American training and operations under the British. While the task assigned to the II American Corps to break the Hindenburg Line was clearly the most significant event in the organisation's history, this achievement was only one aspect of its experience on the Western Front. In order to understand the 27th and 30th Division's as a successful combat organisation, there are several factors to consider and they are addressed in the following chapters.

Chapter 1: The Sunny South discusses the background, organisation, and training of the American Army in 1917, especially the National Guard units that made up 27th and 30th Divisions. It also provides insight into the fragile relationship between the Regular Army and the National Guard by looking at the federalisation of the latter during the Mexican

Punitive Expedition and shortly after America's entrance into the First World War. The chapter also commences discussing the issue of amalgamating the American soldiers into Allied armies and the pressure placed upon General Pershing to use his troops as replacements. Within this chapter is an overview of the American tactical doctrine, particularly the controversial open warfare that Pershing insisted upon. This is contrasted with the doctrine used by the British Army and introduced to the Americans by officers of the British Mission, who lectured at the training camps in 1917-1918.

Chapter 2: Waiting to Go Over continues to look at the training of the 27th and 30th Divisions up to their departure overseas in spring 1918. This includes inspections of the training by the War Department and the efforts to keep the divisions at full strength through voluntary recruitment and conscription. The amalgamation issue is further discussed in much greater detail, as well as the agreements made between the Americans and British to train certain AEF units. These matters are examined as they related to the German spring offensive of 1918.

Chapter 3: Carried Over takes the 27th and 30th overseas to France and cover their assignment to the British sector, and the organisation of the II American Corps. This chapter begins to examine the interpersonal relationships that developed between the American and British officers and enlisted men, as well as the American and Australian camaraderie.

Chapter 4: We Have Found Each Other at Last delves further into the training of the two divisions with the British and the first experience of combat in Belgium. Also, the controversial Hamel Operation of 4 July 1918 is discussed in some detail. Although neither the 27th nor 30th Divisions were involved, it provides an interesting example of the struggle between the AEF and the BEF on how to utilise the American troops. This chapter shows how II American Corps became an almost separate entity of the AEF, particularly after the U.S. First Army was organised in August 1918.

Chapter 5: Alone with the British discusses the planning for the Hindenburg Line attack on 29 September 1918, which was spearheaded by the two American divisions. It provides an opportunity to discuss the American and Australian relationship since the Australian Corps operated alongside the Americans and helped prepare them for the assault.

Chapter 6: The Air Was a Hell of Torturing Sound is an operational analysis of the Hindenburg Line operation from the II American Corps perspective, including an assessment of the American combat performance in its first major operation. Research in this area shows that the Americans performed much better than was previously thought and that a flawed battle plan was the main reason for the difficulties experienced by the Americans.

Chapter 7: Back to the Front discusses the use of the Americans for the next Fourth British Army offensive, which was to drive the German Army away from the Hindenburg

Line. The Americans and British would eventually fight in the vicinity of the Selle River. This was the final operation in which II Corps took part and afterward it returned to the rear for additional training, which concluded shortly after the armistice

Chapter 8: Conclusion: The Brothers-in-Arms offers an assessment of the American-British relations on the Western Front in 1918 through the eyes of the American officers, who were surveyed after the armistice. Among the sources used for this chapter will be a collection of questionnaires completed by officers of II American Corps. These were ordered by the AEF G.H.Q. to analyse the relationship with the Allies. The questions were intended to gauge the success of the coalition. In 1942, the U.S. Army commissioned a monograph on American-British relations during World War I, which is based almost exclusively on these surveys.⁵⁴ Central to understanding the combat capability of the II American Corps is how the officers and enlisted men from both armies were able to relate not just as soldiers, but as human beings with the same focus and common goals. This concluding chapter reviews the entire First World War experiences of the 27th and 30th Divisions in the United States and on the Western Front and places their contribution within the larger context of the AEF successes and failures in 1918.

¹ The military units sent overseas by the United States Government were designated as the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in 1917. The AEF is often cited incorrectly as the American Expeditionary Force. The AEF consisted of American troops not only on the Western Front in France, but also in Great Britain, Italy, Poland, and Russia. Hence the reason for the use of the word Forces.

² U.S. War Department, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces, II Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), 127, and Charles R. Shrader, ' " Maconochie's Stew": Logistical Support of American Forces with the BEF, 1917-1918,' In R.J.Q. Adams, editor, *The Great War, 1914-1918: Essays on the Military, Political, and Social History of the First World War* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1990), 101.

³ The nickname of Tommy for the British soldier allegedly derives from Tommy Atkins, the name filled in by the Duke of Wellington on the first sample soldier's pay book. Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 86. and Philip J. Haythornwaite, *The World War One Source Book* (London: Arms and Armour Press), 401.

⁴ The origin of the nickname Doughboy for the American soldier is questionable. One definition claims that the term dates to the Civil War when the cavalry derided the foot soldier, or because their globular buttons resembled flour dumplings. On the other hand, Laurence Stallings in his book *The Doughboys* (New York, 1963, p.15) claims that "there can be little dispute as to the derivation of the name. In Texas, U.S. Infantry along the Rio Grande were powdered white with the dust of adobe soil, and hence were called 'adobes' by mounted troops. It was a short step to 'dobies', and then, by metathesis, the word was Doughboys."

⁵ James Cooke, "The American Soldier in France, 1917-1919," in Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle, editors, *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 250.

⁶ John Terraine, *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier*, (London: Hutchinson, 1963), 473. Lloyd George made this comment after learning of the successful final assault to drive the Beaurevoir Line on 5 October 1918. The pursuit to the Selle was in progress by 10 October 1918.

⁷ The United States Government and the British Government had their first military alliance during the China Relief Expedition, or Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901). An American force of 100 U.S. Marines and 2,500 U.S. Army soldiers operated along with troops from Britain, Japan, Russia, France and Germany helped put down the Boxer uprising in Peking. According to historian Andrew J. Birtle, in his book *the U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency: Operations Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1998), "the U.S. Government, jealous of its national sovereignty and suspicious of European motives, refused to place its forces under international control." (p.150). Also see Victor Purcell, *The Boxer Uprising* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963). Jehuda L. Wallach, *UNEASY COALITION: The Entente Experience in World War I* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 1, suggests, 'no clear-cut and satisfactory definition of coalition warfare can be in either encyclopedias or lexicons.'

⁸ Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1914-1918*, Volumes I-V (London: Macmillan, 1937-1947).

⁹ A.Duff Cooper, *Haig*, 2 vols. (London: Faber and Faber, 1935-1936).

¹⁰ Robert Blake, editor, *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952).

¹¹ Gary Sheffield and John Bourne, editors, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters: 1914-1918* (London: Weindenfeld and Nicolson, 2005).

¹² David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 6 vols. (London: Oldham Press, 1933-1936).

¹³ Niall Barr and Gary Sheffield, "Douglas Haig, the Common Soldier, and the British Legion," in Brian Bond and Nigel Cave, *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 Years On* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1999), 234-236.

¹⁴ Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (London: Hutchinson, 1961) and John Laffin, *Butchers and Bunglers of World War One* (Stroud: Sutton, 1988).

¹⁵ Keith Simpson, "The Reputation of Sir Douglas Haig," in Brian Bond, editor, *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 141.

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- ¹⁶ John Terraine, *Haig and 1918: To Win A War* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited, 1978).
- ¹⁷ Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground* (London: Routledge, 1990) and *How The War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, 160-161, and Gerard DeGroot, *Douglas Haig 1861-1928* (London, 1988), 6.
- ¹⁹ Denis Winter, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (New York: Penguin Group, 1991).
- ²⁰ J.M. Bourne, 'Haig and the Historians,' in Bond and Cave, *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 Years On*, 3.
- ²¹ Andy Simpson, *The Evolution of Victory: British Battles on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (London: Tom Donovan Publishing LTD, 1995), 140.
- ²² Andrew A. Wiest, *Haig: The Evolution of a Commander* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2005).
- ²³ Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory, The First World War: Myths and Realities* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2001).
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, 3.
- ²⁵ Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of New Armies, 194-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).
- ²⁶ Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
- ²⁷ J.P. Harris and Niall Barr, *Amiens to the Armistice: The BEF in the Hundred Days' Campaign, 8 August- November 1918*, (Washington: Brassey's, Inc., 1998).
- ²⁸ Sir John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1920).
- ²⁹ Peter A. Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985).
- ³⁰ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War, 1914-1918*, six volumes (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942-1949).
- ³¹ Peter Simkins, 'Everyman at War,' in Brian Bond, editor, *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 305-306.
- ³² Eric M. Andrews, *The ANZAC Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Dale Blair, *Dinkum Diggers: An Australian Battalion War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).
- ³³ Shane B. Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last Days of the Great War* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 140.
- ³⁴ Frank Vandiver, 'Haig and Pershing,' in Cecil and Liddle, editors, *Facing Armageddon*, 67.
- ³⁵ Pershing, John J., *My Experiences in the World War*, 2 vols., (reprint edition, Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania: Tab Books Inc, 1989), 1, 127, 129, 137, 220, 294, 304, and 353. (hereafter cited as Pershing, *My Experiences* and volume number).

³⁶ Donald Smythe, in *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 288-295, and "The Battle of the Books," *Army* (September 1972), 30-32, provide excellent discussions of *My Experiences* and the controversy with March and Harbord.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

³⁹ Harvey A. DeWeerd, *President Wilson Fights his War: World War I and the American Intervention* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1968).

⁴⁰ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* and Paul F. Braim, *The Test of Battle: The American Expeditionary Forces in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), and David Trask, *The AEF & Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993). It should be noted that Trask's previous book, *The United States in the Supreme War Council: American War Aims and Inter-Allied Strategy* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), is also an important study of U.S. policy and strategic goals.

⁴¹ Trask, *The AEF & Coalition Warmaking*, 175.

⁴² James J. Cooke, *Pershing and his Generals: Command and Staff in the AEF* (Westport, CT.: Praeger Publishers, 1997).

⁴³ John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and National Guard* (New York: MacMillan, 1983) and Jerry Cooper, *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia, 1865-1920* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

⁴⁴ Shrader, 103.

⁴⁵ David R. Woodward, *Trial By Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917-1918* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993), *Lloyd George and his Generals* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), *Field Marshal Sir William Robertson: Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the Great War* (Westport: Praeger, 1998).

⁴⁶ Robert B. Bruce, *A Fraternity At Arms: America & France in the Great War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ U.S. War Department, *Operations of the 2nd American Corps in the Somme Offensive: 8 August to November 11, 1918*, Monograph No. 10, (Washington: Historical Branch, War Plans Division, General Staff, 1920), and *Records of the World War: Field Orders, 2nd Army Corps* (Washington: GPO, 1921). (hereafter cited as *2nd American Corps in the Somme Offensive* and *Field Orders, 2nd Army Corps*)

⁴⁸ American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), *Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1944) and *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (Washington: GPO, 1937).

⁴⁹ United States War Department, *U.S. Army in the World War*, 19 volumes (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1947). (hereafter cited as USAWW and volume number).

⁵⁰ Maj. Gen. John F. O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford, 1921). (hereafter cited as O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th*).

⁵¹ Elmer A. Murphy and Robert S. Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto: Old Hickory Publishing Company, 1956).

⁵² Stephen L. Harris, *Duty, Honor, Privilege: New York’s Silk Stocking Regiment and the Breaking of Hindenburg Line* (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey’s, 2001).

⁵³ U.S. Army Military History Institute, *World War I Manuscripts: The World War I Survey* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: USAMHI, 1986).

⁵⁴ Lt. Col. Calvin C. Goddard, “Relations Between the American Expeditionary Forces and the British Expeditionary Forces, 1917-1920,” June 1942, *Entry 310, Historical Section Files, Army War College*, Entry 310, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs (Record Group 165), National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as Entry, RG and NARA).

Chapter 1: The Sunny South

Mobilisation of the National Guard

When the 27th and 30th U.S. Army Divisions entered the British line in 1918, they were a far cry from the military force that the nation mustered in the first months after it entered the war on 6 April 1917. At that time, the Regular Army numbered a paltry 5,791 officers and 121,707 enlisted men. Three months later, President Wilson called up the National Guard, which added 110,000 officers and men. Even with the National Guard and the tens of thousands of young men who enlisted at the outset, this would not be enough to field a fighting force.¹ The Western Front in France had already consumed hundreds of thousands of young men; the armies of the Allies and Central Powers comprised, for each nation, millions. After three years the war in Europe was complex. It was breathtaking in its detailed ways of fighting, and in the equipment necessary to fight effectively.²

The Selective Service Act of 3 May 1917 gave Wilson the authority to mobilise the National Guard; this was the second time in a year he had called it into federal service. The first was in June 1916, when he sent National Guard units to the Mexican border during the punitive expedition against the bandit Pancho Villa. The 110,000 National Guard troops sent to the southwestern United States (Texas, Arizona and New Mexico) were, by many accounts, ineffective. They arrived under-strength, poorly trained, and lacking equipment and arms. Some units had only wool uniforms and sweltered in the heat of the region, which sometimes reached 110 degrees Fahrenheit. One unhappy National Guardsman called the environment 'the

most forsaken country the Lord ever made.' Furthermore, he said. 'We ought to clean up Mexico, and, for punishment, make them take back this part of Texas.'³

Expecting to participate in the chase of Villa, the National Guardsmen instead fought the brutal heat and annoying scorpions, and spent their days drilling and marching on long-distance manoeuvres. The War Department did not intend to send the National Guard into Mexico to join Gen. John J. Pershing and the Regulars.⁴ For five months, it served as a police force under the watchful eye of the General Staff, whose officers considered the state troops more of a liability than an asset. 'It is a pity the militia could not have been called out two months ago,' the disgusted Pershing wrote, 'so that its hopeless deficiencies might have been shown up to Congress in their true light. To attempt to put dependence upon the militia is absolutely absurd and ridiculous.'⁵

One National Guard formation, however, did impress the Regulars – the New York Division. Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan's 19,000-strong 6th New York Division. Stationed in McAllen, Texas, from 6 July to 14 December 1916, it was the only National Guard division on the border. Arguably, it was the pride of the National Guard because of thorough training and efficiency. The professional demeanour of the 6th Division ranked with the best units of the Regular Army. It represented the entire state of New York and included members of New York City's most prominent families, who served alongside farmers and labourers from the more remote northern and central areas. Despite their disparate economic and ethnic backgrounds, the men bonded well. Discipline was rarely an issue because O'Ryan kept them busy with constant training and physical fitness.

Lt. Gen. Robert Lee Bullard, later an AEF divisional and army commander, met O’Ryan on the Mexican border and was enormously impressed. A ‘trim, well-proportioned athletic man,’ remembered Bullard, ‘who was supple, springy, and energetic in his movement, punctiliously neat, and up to the mark in his dress and personal appearance.’⁶ During a second encounter in 1917, Bullard observed ‘from the training period at Spartanburg, South Carolina, O’Ryan’s thoughts seemed turned very much upon his men... and this feeling of comradeship continued and grew. O’Ryan held himself approachable to his men, showed himself ever thoughtful of them, not only for their comfort, supply and training, but for their personal interests.’⁷ At an early age, he had prepared himself for a career as an army officer. Allegedly, he signed some of his schoolbooks: ‘John F. O’Ryan, Major General, U.S. Army.’⁸

Although he attended law school as a fallback career, in 1899, O’Ryan accepted a commission in the New York Guard. His connections with the now famous Rough Riders, Theodore Roosevelt and Leonard Wood⁹ helped him rise through the ranks and receive attention from the War Department in Washington. Wood nominated him for the Army War College, which O’Ryan attended in 1914, and, in subsequent years, he participated in Regular Army camps and manoeuvres. Also in 1914, he published his first book, *The Modern Army in Action*, which warned of the dangers of military un-preparedness. It was O’Ryan’s belief that the National Guard would play an important role in the next conflict.

The National Guard had a long military tradition that dated to the colonial period, when militia units were called to put down uprisings by Native American tribes. During the Civil War, militia units served alongside regular volunteer regiments in

both the Union and Confederate armies. A decade after this conflict, the militia had evolved into the National Guard, which meant it received financial assistance from state governments. Along with money came some standardisation and control enforced by governors and legislatures. From 1877 to 1903, governors called upon the National Guard 700 times to preserve order in industrial disputes. In half these cases, it performed strike police duty.¹⁰

Unhappy with its role as a law enforcement agency, the National Guard sought to evolve as a volunteer reserve. It was given this opportunity during the Spanish-American War, but state units failed to impress the Regular Army. Most units reported to camps grossly unprepared, and, as a result, only a few went overseas. During the next five years, congressional legislation brought the National Guard under tighter Federal control. Although state units were happy to have federal aid, the preference was to remain under the states, where the National Guard could select its officers and set the size of regiments. However, the General Staff insisted that the National Guard comply with Regular Army tables of organisation. This meant balanced divisions of infantry, cavalry, artillery and auxiliary units.¹¹

The state units and the War Department were at an impasse. State adjutant generals were reluctant to increase the size of their National Guard regiments unless the General Staff provided additional funding, and the War Department would not do so unless it could have greater control. In an effort to resolve the dilemma, the 'Dick Act' of 1903¹² established the Division of Militia Affairs (Militia Bureau) as a branch of the General Staff. Among its provisions were increased funds for the militia and federal pay when the militia participated in manoeuvres with the Regular Army. It

also attempted to standardise requirements for National Guard officers. The most noteworthy components of this law were that the organised militia was now designated as the National Guard, and its officers would have to meet more stringent obligations. Despite its best efforts, the Militia Bureau could not prevent a tug of war between the National Guard and the War Department. It took the National Defence Act of 1916 to allow the War Department to force the National Guard to comply with its mandates.¹³

The National Defence Act ensured that the Guard would be the country's main reserve force. Four hundred thousand men were to be raised over a unspecified number of years, and the law authorised the U.S. Government to provide financial support. The law was not one-sided; National Guardsmen would have to take a dual oath upon enlistment. They were in the service of the U.S. Army and the state Guard. In summarising the new law, an historian of the National Guard claims it 'settled the issue of War Department authority to organise the National Guard according to General Staff dictates, and, at the same time, the National Guardsmen lost the ability to shape their units or select officers according to their own interests, while the Secretary of War could refuse federal funds if states failed to comply with the law.'¹⁴

An example of the animosity Regulars had towards the National Guard appeared in an unflattering newspaper article shown to O'Ryan. It quoted three unnamed Regular officers, who referred to the militia as 'little better than 'Kitchener's Mob': O'Ryan took offence to such talk and responded with a letter berating the editor for 'the hostile matter that is being circulated by the press... a wilful attempt to discredit the service.' Although the article did not mention the New York Division, O'Ryan

bolstered his response with statistics revealing the infrequency of venereal disease among his men and bragged that they had the lowest sick rate on the border.¹⁵

As previously indicated, on 15 July 1917, 100,000 National Guard troops were included in the President's troop call-up order, far more than the ill-prepared War Department could handle. To ease the problem, the National Guard was mobilised in two increments. The first call-up, on 25 July, affected units in 11 states, and the remaining units were mobilised more than a week later. Among those called up in the first wave were regiments from New York, Tennessee, and North and South Carolina.¹⁶

Eventually one-third of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) was composed of National Guard divisions. Owing to lack of training camps, it would be three months before National Guard units could begin training as part of the Army. To keep state regiments busy and out of trouble until the War Department was ready, the President ordered that they watch over the vital bridges, waterways and munitions factories susceptible to sabotage.¹⁷

The Quartermaster Corps was the War Department agency charged with constructing and supplying the camps. It was woefully unprepared when war was declared. In circumstances reminiscent of the transportation and supply problems during the Spanish-American War in 1898, the agency was under-strength and under-funded to contend with a rapidly expanding army. An immediate concern was the construction of cantonments for the National Guard units. A Cantonment Division was created, and with the assistance of an advisory organisation, The Committee on Emergency

Construction. its board selected 1 September 1917 as the target date to have camps ready.¹⁸ Among other difficulties facing the Quartermaster Corps was finding enough clothing for the troops. It blamed the General Staff with failing to provide troop schedules so that sufficient uniforms and supplies could be on hand. To remedy the situation, factories in the east worked around the clock to reach the quotas, but many troops waited weeks before being issued uniforms.¹⁹

The Amalgamation Issue, Part 1

Three thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean, the British Government observed the growing pains of the U.S. Army, the same process its own army had gone through over the previous three years. In 1914, the British Army entered the war with a small standing force of 247,432, supplemented by 300,000 reserves and territorials.²⁰ In January 1916, the British Government introduced conscription with the Military Service Act. Unmarried men between 18 and 41 were required to register, and in May 1917, the act was amended to include married men. Then in April 1918, a second Military Service Act raised the age limit to 50. The drafted troops were necessary to supplement a successful volunteer enlistment campaign organised by Secretary of State for War Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. Over 54 million recruiting posters were distributed throughout Great Britain, and by 1916, over two million men had volunteered for military service.²¹

With the U.S. declaration of war, the main interest in the British War Office was to convince the Americans to send troops to the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The British Army General Staff addressed this issue when drawing up plans for 1917.

American troops 'could best be employed with the British Armies,' they determined. 'and so fight with men of the same language and temperament.'²²

Maj. Gen. Tom Bridges, who travelled to Washington with Sir Arthur Balfour's British Mission, hoped to outflank the French, who had representatives pressuring the White House to amalgamate American troops into their army. Bridges told U.S. Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Hugh Scott, 'If you ask me how your force could most quickly make itself felt in Europe, I would say by sending 500,000 untrained men at once to our depots in England to be trained there, and drafted into our armies in France.'²³

Although Scott's response is not recorded, he clearly ignored the suggestion. The newly appointed commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), Maj. Gen. John J. Pershing, was under orders from President Wilson and Secretary of War Newton D. Baker that his troops would fight independently.²⁴ 'It was necessary at all times to preserve the independence and identity of the American forces,' Baker said, 'so that they could never be anything but an instrument of the policy of the United States.'²⁵ Initially, the Allies sought only munitions from the United States. But as the war dragged on and casualties increased, there was a great need for manpower.²⁶ On the Western Front, the British and French were in the midst of a new series of offensives, and if they echoed the previous campaigns of the Somme and Verdun, both armies would suffer heavy losses.

The 1917 Offensives

The forthcoming campaign had been planned during meetings between Allied political and military leaders, even as the costly Somme campaign was winding down. It was concluded that a Franco-British offensive would take place on a broad front, with the French attacking between the Oise and the Somme Rivers, while the British were to operate between Bapaume and Vimy Ridge. The plans changed course a short time later when French Commander-in-Chief Gen. Robert Nivelle, who had replaced Marshal Joseph Joffre, suggested an alternative plan. Nivelle wanted the British and French to carry out preliminary attacks between Arras and the Oise, to lure the German reserves from the main French attack on the Aisne River. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the BEF, was interested in a Flanders operation, but was ordered by the British War Cabinet to accept Nivelle's plan. The BEF was reduced to a supporting role, although Haig was assured that a Flanders attack would be next if the French plan lived up to expectations.

Haig's reluctance to serve as Nivelle's subordinate was indicative of the uneasy coalition between France and Britain. Politically, the two European powers were long-standing rivals. This point was summed up during a private conversation between Maj. Paul Clark, the AEF liaison to French headquarters, and Captain LeBleu, a secretary at French General Headquarters (G.H.Q.). The latter revealed France had 'the least affection for the Germans, and after them, for the English.' Although LeBleu appreciated the excellence and magnitude of the British effort, he reminded Clark that they had been 'traditional enemies throughout the last several centuries... and the British have always worsted the French in diplomatic negotiations.'²⁷ Of course, LeBleu was exaggerating his country's relationship with

Great Britain, but the tension between Haig and Nivelle was real and clouded the planning of future operations until the latter commander was relieved after the failure of his offensive.

Due to a severe winter in 1917, the attack was delayed until spring. This proved a mistake since the German Army, ignoring the harsh conditions, started withdrawing troops to a new defensive position, the Hindenburg Line, in mid-February. Haig, exhibiting keen military logic, was concerned the Germans would take advantage of the shift of his divisions to Nivelle's offensive, and use their reserves to attack Ypres and cut off the BEF's communications with the Channel coast.²⁸ Instead, the Germans stayed on the defensive in France, but launched a major attack against Russia on the Eastern Front during most of 1917. This was made easier by the construction of the Hindenburg Line, which extended from east of Arras to east of Soissons. The Germans completed their retirement to this portion of the line in April. On the 9th of that month, the British Army commenced preliminary operations at Arras with a five-day artillery barrage that preceded an attack on a 14-mile front. On the first day, the Canadian Corps, with four divisions, took Vimy Ridge.

East of Arras, the Third British Army at first made excellent progress, but as the attacks continued in the coming weeks, the offensive turned into 'another slogging match,' as one historian described it.²⁹ The daily losses averaged 4,070 men until the operation ceased on 17 May, with total casualties around 159,000 men. In the south, French attacks were disappointing. A massive artillery barrage only affected a lightly held German first line, and an attempt to penetrate the second position was met with heavy machine-gun fire. By the third week in April, French casualties numbered

96,000, and there was no decisive breakthrough. Additional French attacks during the first week of May made modest gains, but the heavy casualties and subsequent mutinies within the French Army resulted in Nivelle's removal on 15 May: he was replaced by Gen. Henri-Philippe Petain.

Amalgamation, Part 2

At the end of May 1917, while the death toll mounted on the Western Front, Pershing and a small contingent of hand-picked officers departed from New York Harbour for Europe. Pershing would not return to America for two years. Among the 58 officers and 131 clerks, translators and orderlies sailing with him on the *Baltic* were future generals – Fox Connor, Hugh Drum, George Patton and James Harbord. Two weeks later, the party and its Navy escort reached Liverpool, England. There, Pershing boarded King George V's private railway carriage and travelled to London for lunch at Buckingham Palace, and to meet Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), General Sir William 'Wully' Robertson. Pershing was impressed by Robertson, whom he described as a 'rugged, heavy-set, blunt soldier of Scottish descent.'³⁰

The CIGS wasted little time after formal introductions to explain Britain's proposal for amalgamating American troops in its army. Pershing listened patiently as Robertson detailed how the British Army could establish a training, procurement, equipment and logistical infrastructure, and have Americans ready to fight in nine weeks, as opposed to the 18 months it would take to organise the U.S. Army into a separate force. While Robertson sipped tea, Pershing quietly responded with the American plan to establish an independent army. He compared the American

Government's attempt to increase its small Regular force and National Guard with new enlistments and conscripts to Britain's expansion effort two years before. What he did not tell Robertson was that President Wilson feared that American influence at peace negotiations would be diminished unless his army provided its own expeditionary force. Robertson and Allied leaders, however, already suspected this fact.³¹

The American commander did confess a stumbling block to bringing troops to Europe – a lack of shipping – and suggested that the British help out. Robertson replied that this was out of the question because his own government was struggling to find vessels to suit its own purposes. He was referring to the German U-boat menace of unrestricted submarine warfare that had cost Britain 520,000 tons of shipping in March, and another 860,000 tons the following month.³²

Pershing understood Robertson's dilemma, but would not back down. Now both sides were in a stalemate regarding amalgamation and would so remain for months.³³ Pershing left the meeting for France, where he established headquarters in the Hotel de Crillon in Paris.³⁴ There, he began the first step in creating the American Expeditionary Forces by appointing staff officers. At this point, he was a commander with only a token division, since the National Guard and National Army men were just beginning their training, which would take at least nine months.

The U.S. Army was very active in May 1917. Besides Pershing's departure for Europe, Col. Chauncey B. Baker of the Quartermaster Corps was ordered to Britain, France and Belgium to visit camps and other establishments to observe Allied

training, transportation, operations, supply and administration. Several officers from the various Army branches accompanied him and this was known as the Baker Mission. It included Regulars from the General Staff, cavalry, infantry, field artillery and engineers. Among the infantry officers was Maj. George S. Simonds, the future II Corps chief of staff. Pershing had no authority over the mission, and its itinerary did not include a visit to the AEF commander. However, Baker, an old friend and West Point classmate of Pershing, requested a meeting with him before returning to the U.S. They met on 7-8 July, and Pershing listened to Baker's recommendations, which mostly agreed with his own.³⁵

The Baker Mission spent a month investigating the facets of Allied forces and submitted a report to the chief of staff upon return to the United States. Major General Scott received recommendations on how to adopt their findings within the American Army. Many important suggestions were made related to training; two of them are worth noting. First was the establishment of a school system in both the United States and France to instruct officers in the use of liaison, machine guns, gas, and trench mortars. Also significant, the mission recommended that French and British officers and non-commissioned officers should serve as advisors to American officers, who subsequently would be assigned as instructors in the training schools.³⁶

The chief of staff sought to implement both of these suggestions, but ran into stubborn opposition from some officers on the General Staff. They feared an intrusion into the American tactical doctrine of open warfare from the foreign officers, who might intentionally influence the naïve American officers towards the British and French thinking on trench warfare. Taking a contrary view was Col. William Lassiter, the

American military attaché in London, who had seen the British Army training on many occasions and thought highly of its officers. He wanted to impress upon his superiors in Washington the value of having British instructors. 'The British have an excellent army now, and that excellence is due, among other things, to schools.'

Colonel Lassister emphasised. 'They have evolved a school system that has the effect of establishing a common doctrine throughout the Army. To prevent training in our Army from proceeding on divergent lines, I urge that some such system as this be put in practice.'³⁷ After much debate, the new chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Tasker H. Bliss, recommended to Secretary of War Newton Baker that French and British officers be brought to the United States and serve as advisors at the training camps.³⁸

Haig and Pershing Meet for the First Time

On 20 July, Haig and Pershing met at BEF headquarters in Montreuil, a little walled town a few miles to the south of St. Omer, and many miles from the front lines.

Haig's personal quarters were located outside town.³⁹ Accompanying Pershing were three staff members that sailed with him two months earlier: Col. Benjamin Alvord, Lt. Col. James Harbord, and Capt. George S. Patton. Haig wrote that he was 'much struck with his [Pershing's] quiet, gentlemanly bearing – so unusual for an American. Most anxious to learn, he fully realises the greatness of the task before him.' He was less impressed with Alvord and Harbord, who he described as 'men of less quality, and... quite ignorant of the problems of modern war.'⁴⁰

Pershing also took pleasure in his first visit with Haig. Four pages of *My Experiences in the World War* are devoted to his discussions with the BEF commander-in-chief, and General Robertson, who made a point of visiting Montreuil the day Pershing and

his staff arrived. Most of the conference with Haig and Robertson focused on current operations and the high number of casualties at Arras. Haig felt comfortable with Pershing and confessed to him his lack of confidence in Nivelle and the failure of the French to cooperate with the British on various occasions. 'His remarks,' Pershing sensed, 'entirely confirmed the belief that I had long since held that real teamwork between the two armies was almost totally absent.'⁴¹

During the remainder of their visit, the AEF officers listened to BEF Assistant Chief of Staff Major General Butler explain the procedures for organising a headquarters general staff. Pershing left BEF headquarters, fully realising that the task of organising the AEF was to be more difficult than he ever imagined.⁴² His visit with Haig was one of the few times the two men would have such an intimate and cordial discussion. From this point on, the issue of amalgamation caused a great deal of tension between the two commanders.

Training in the United States

Back in the United States, mobilisation and training were in full swing. The AEF was to consist of the National Guard, the Regular Army, and the National Army. The Regulars were, of course, professional soldiers, and men of the National Army were those selected in the draft. National Guard divisions were assigned numbers 26-75, although fifty would never be formed. Divisions below 26 were Regular Army; those above 75 were assigned to the National Army. Because of this numbering system, O'Ryan's 6th Division was federalised as the 27th Division, and the southern National Guard units in North and South Carolina and Tennessee formed into the 30th Division.⁴³

True to its word, the Quartermaster Corps completed the cantonments by the end of the summer of 1917. The General Staff sent the National Guard regiments to camps constructed in the warm climate of the southern, southwestern and western states. There, troops were sheltered under canvas, with semi-permanent structures for utilities. Each tent was large enough to hold a squad (10 or 11 men) and was set over a wooden floor with wooden sidewalls. A wood-burning, cone-shaped Sibley stove (a Civil War invention by Confederate Gen. Henry Sibley) stood in the middle, with its chimney through the top.⁴⁴ Some unlucky soldiers were assigned tents without floors, so when it rained, as it often does in the south during the warmer months, their inhabitants were surrounded by mud. The Army did provide the men with canvas cots.⁴⁵ Regular and National Army regiments were housed in more permanent barracks, which were lavish compared to National Guard tents.⁴⁶

O'Ryan's division began arriving at Camp Wadsworth in Spartanburg, South Carolina, during the first week of August. Close to Asheville, North Carolina and within sight of the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains, the camp was named in honour of Gen. James S. Wadsworth, a former U.S. senator and Union Army officer killed at the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864. Spartanburg's 1917 population was 27,000, many of whom were employed in the cotton industry. Merchants welcomed the soldiers and assured them courteous and fair treatment. Posters gave the announcement that no overcharges to men in the uniform of the United States would be tolerated.⁴⁷

The naive doughboys learned quickly that few shop owners abided by this credo. This was particularly true for the black 369th Infantry (formerly the 15th New York Infantry), which shared Wadsworth as a training ground. The regiment was not

attached to the 27th Division because of the Army's strict segregation policy, but was commanded by white officers. The citizens of Spartanburg treated the black doughboys poorly, and the regimental commander referred to it as 'a region hostile to coloured people.' The 369th had endured racial insults and fights, until the War Department removed it from the unfriendly environment and sent the unit to France. There, it was eventually placed in the incomplete 93rd Division and later distinguished itself in several battles.⁴⁸

The other New Yorkers cheered when they learned training was to take place in the sunny South. The opportunity to escape the expected bitter cold northeast winter was great news. But the warm South Carolina climate, about which these northern soldiers had heard so much, was a misnomer. When winter arrived in December, ice, sleet and snow were more prevalent than clear skies and balmy conditions. 'It was the coldest goddam winter they had in the history of South Carolina,' insisted one soldier.⁴⁹ Fuel was scarce and doled out for cooking purposes only. Some of the more desperate soldiers took matters into their own hands and stole wood and other burnable materials from the Quartermaster depots. 'Nights were bitterly cold,' recalled Pvt. William F. Clarke of the 104th Machine-Gun Battalion, 'but the sun would be scorching hot during the day.' He vividly remembered coming back from either 'a day on the drill field or from a 10-mile hike, perspiring profusely, and then almost freezing to death at night.'⁵⁰

Camp Sevier in Greenville, South Carolina was designated as the training cantonment for the 30th Division. Located at the foot of Paris Mountain, part of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Greenville, in 1917, was a town of 16,000 inhabitants. The camp was

named in honour of John Sevier, a hero of the 1780 Battle of Kings Mountain and the first governor of Tennessee. The division called itself Old Hickory, after President Andrew Jackson.

The first units sent to Camp Sevier met barren conditions and were enlisted to help with construction. Company K of the 3rd Tennessee Regiment arrived on 15 August 1917, and found that before the men could pitch tents, a cotton field had to be uprooted. Then they had to build a company street and clear a road for supplies.⁵¹ One unit spent so much time clearing trees for drill grounds that it referred to itself as 'The South Carolina Land and Development Company.'⁵²

Nine different general officers commanded the 30th Division from 1917-1919. For the first part of 1917, it was under Maj. Gen. John F. Morrison, who had replaced Maj. Gen. Charles D. Townsley. Before taking command of the division, Morrison had been a respected tactics instructor at Fort Leavenworth, and Townsley was superintendent of West Point. They were typical of most general officers, having graduated from the military academy and served in the Philippines. Although its troops had served on the Mexican border, the 30th Division did not have the experience of the 27th Division, nor did its regiments carry special nicknames. But, according to the 30th Division's official historian, the regiments 'were organisations whose history reached far back into the early period of our nation's life.'⁵³ The men came from communities like Lenoir, Gastonia, Orangeburg, Crossville, and Etowah, or cities such as Raleigh, Ashville, Knoxville, Nashville, Charleston and Columbia.

Generally Scots-Irish, their ancestors emigrated to America, for economic reasons, in the early to mid 1700s, and inhabited the southern United States. Added to the mix were English, German, Huguenots and Welsh, who settled around the same time to escape religious persecution.⁵⁴ Although unaware of this in 1917, the Old Hickory Division would eventually fight alongside soldiers who may have shared the same bloodlines.

During the middle of September, the War Department sent psychological specialists to the training camps to test personnel in the divisions for mental and nervous durability. Each man was examined and any peculiarities noted. If an examiner deemed a soldier was likely to break down under the nervous strain of battle, he would either be transferred to a non-combatant unit, or, if the condition was severe, discharged. According to O’Ryan, the medical officer’s report indicated that examinations revealed ‘the men of the 27th Division as the finest body of men seen at any of the camps.’⁵⁵ He had every reason to be proud of the physical condition of his men, since over 15,000 men were medically discharged from the Army in 1917.⁵⁶

One serious issue the doctors failed to mention was venereal disease in all the army camps. Both Sevier and Wadsworth were affected with high rates. In his report to the Secretary of War for 1917, the Surgeon General briefly touched upon venereal disease and was quick to point out that most cases were pre-existing. He suggested that men from large cities, such as New York, Charlotte and Memphis, had contracted the disease before enlistment. There was a slight decrease in the following weeks, which proved his theory correct. The arrival of recruits and draft men caused the number of

cases to rise again. For O’Ryan, this must have been troubling, since he had bragged about his division’s low rate on the Mexican border.⁵⁷

In an effort to control this problem, prophylactic stations were maintained in the camps, and in nearby towns like Greenville and Spartanburg. Medical officers and social workers were dispatched to the camps by the Committee on Training Camp Activities (CMTC) to lecture about vice and show the men upbeat films like ‘Fit to Fight.’⁵⁸ The War Department tried to instil a feeling of kinship, which was threatened by immoral acts, such as drinking and consorting with prostitutes. However, along with the camaraderie of serving with hometown friends came problems of discipline. Officers often had friends and acquaintances under them, who sometimes refused to obey ‘home folks.’ Each unit had a nucleus of old soldiers and new officers, so that an enlisted man might have more knowledge of manoeuvres than his commander.⁵⁹

Keeping alcohol away from the men was another issue with which the divisional commanders had to contend. The straight-laced O’Ryan got an early jump on the potential problem. Before departing for South Carolina, he issued a plea for sobriety to his division: ‘You will notice in reading this letter that no reference is made to the effect upon your morals of the use of liquor or uncommendable associations. You are largely the custodian of your own morals.’⁶⁰ This may have been prompted by a report, from the construction crew at Wadsworth, that a liquor still had been found only a few feet from where O’Ryan’s headquarters was to be located.⁶¹ After the New Yorkers arrived in Spartanburg, he assigned 50 men from his military police company to stand continuous post in the city’s streets as a deterrent to would-be

drunks.⁶² Ironically, the soldiers who developed a taste for alcohol in France were later forced to give up drinking in the United States when prohibition was introduced in 1920 with the Volstead Act.⁶³

Observing the Allies

On 22 September 1917, O’Ryan was ordered from Camp Wadsworth with two 27th Division officers and sent to France to observe the British and French fronts.

Although the War Department was months away from sending divisions to the British for training, the trip would prove to be a valuable training lesson.

O’Ryan’s observations provide insight into the Allied armies, and, at the time, influenced his own theories on command. The party spent most of its time with General Sir Hubert Gough at Fifth British Army headquarters, and with the 29th and 31st Divisions on the front lines. While in the trenches with the 29th Division, O’Ryan learned the importance of duckboards, essential for movement to forward lines over terrain of slippery mud, so prevalent in France and Belgium. At the front, O’Ryan saw a number of German prisoners, and was surprised at their poor stature and physical condition.

The discipline in the British Army greatly impressed O’Ryan. ‘The main manifestation was quietness,’ he wrote. ‘Neither in the front trenches nor in the back areas did I ever hear, among the thousands of soldiers I saw, any soldiers shouting or cursing at their horses or mules, or, in fact, shouting or calling in a loud voice to other men.’⁶⁴ O’Ryan also made a favourable impression upon the British.

Every American officer who spent time with them and was evaluated by the British. and the comments were forwarded to Pershing. Major General O'Gowan of the 31st British Division was one officer who made note of O'Ryan's visit. He considered him 'a keen and capable officer, with considerable knowledge of his profession, and a facility for mastering the detail of trench warfare and the administration of a division.'⁶⁵

The last week was spent with the 38th French Division, headquartered in Soissons. Although he did not witness any French Army attacks, O'Ryan was privy to the forthcoming operation. His final day in the French sector was at an Army school where 'training seemed to be thorough. There was continued evidence of snap and ginger in everything that was done.'⁶⁶ Upon O'Ryan's return to Wadsworth, the 27th Division immediately began to implement what he had learned on the Western Front.

Training Continued – Open Warfare Versus Trench Warfare

By the second week of October, there were 35,000 men at Camp Wadsworth. The 27th Division had the luxury of being 7,000 over the authorised strength of 28,000 for a short period. However, the strength of the 30th was only 17,557 officers and men in mid-October, and not until 10,000 more were posted in was it was at full strength. Through the last part of summer, the health of both divisions was reasonably good. In the case of the 30th Division, less than one percent had to be hospitalised. However, the temperature turned cold at the end of October and remained so for the next four months. A measles epidemic broke out. Men were forbidden to leave camp for fear of spreading measles, and anyone caught violating the order was punished. At

Wadsworth, the Spartanburg newspaper reported that ‘a guy went to town from the quarantine a few nights ago and got for his troubles six months in the guard house.’⁶⁷

The change in the weather was not the only reason for this outbreak. The failure of the Quartermaster Corps to provide warm uniforms (the men were still wearing the light, khaki variety) and the fact that men were sleeping in crowded tents, were partially to blame. Yet, the Quartermaster had a legitimate excuse for the problem. After the debacle in 1898, the Quartermaster General requested appropriations from Congress to purchase large reserves of clothing, but was refused each time. When the National Guard was mobilised in 1916, the meagre stocks on hand were depleted. A final attempt to secure appropriations also failed when Congress adjourned on 4 March 1917, before it could vote on the legislation.⁶⁸ Concerns over the clothing shortage prompted the head of the Chattanooga branch of the National League for Women’s Service to press the governor of Tennessee to buy warm underwear for the cold soldiers at Camp Sevier. But the lack of a war contingency fund prevented the state from helping out, although Governor Thomas Rye promised to write to the 30th Division commander on behalf of the League.⁶⁹

Training was also complicated by the War Department demands on divisions for specialists. If a soldier was skilled in pneumatic riveting or fluent in French, he was considered a valuable commodity, likely to be transferred. The 27th Division lost officers through this process and paid a terrible price in combat with inexperienced, replacement line officers. None of the replacements had seen action in Mexico since National Guard units were not allowed across the border; therefore they lacked tactical skills.

National Guard units were also depleted by the training schools established in France. The schools provided courses for field officers, as well as lower grades. It was the intention of the Army not to take experienced officers away from commands, but this occurred anyway, particularly during the final offensives of the war. The War Department realised the hardship caused by breaking up National Guard units, but made it clear that there was no choice.⁷⁰

To prepare for war, the War College Division overhauled the Army's current structure.⁷¹ Large divisions (approximately 28,000 men), twice the size of those of the Allies, were created after consultation with the British and French General Staffs.⁷² A division was now square since it had two infantry brigades, with two regiments in each (See Appendix V). The realignment worked well for the Regulars, but created havoc among the National Guard divisions, which they were now forced to meet the new tables of organisation. State units, for example, had an excess of infantry and a shortage of artillery. As an expedient, the War Department switched units between arms of the service. Infantry regiments became artillery regiments or machine-gun battalions, and, in some cases, two regiments became one.

National Guard cavalry units were also abolished since both the Allies and Central Powers had learned that barbed wire and machine guns reduced the need for cavalry. By 1918, horses remained numerous and used for transport to the front, but tactically they were replaced mostly by tanks.⁷³ Secretary of War Baker encouraged the chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs to empower the President to deploy cavalry units as foot regiments. Congress passed legislation federalising National

Guard cavalry regiments as artillery and machine-gun units.⁷⁴ Both the 27th and 30th Divisions converted cavalry regiments to machine-gun battalions and trench-mortar batteries. As historian Jerry Cooper pointed out, ‘Many field-grade infantry officers lost their commands, while others were placed in charge of units for which they had no training.’⁷⁵ With the realignment, the heritage of some National Guard units was threatened, and resentment toward the War Department developed. Protests from various state military and political leaders prompted Secretary Baker to urge Army officers commanding National Guard divisions to make every effort to preserve the identity of the oldest regiments. He also ordered Chief of Staff Bliss to make a public statement on the necessity of reorganising the National Guard.⁷⁶

Men in units of the North Carolina National Guard lived in the central and Piedmont, or mountainous, sections of the state and mobilised on the U.S.-Mexican border near El Paso. At Sevier, the 1st and 2nd North Carolina units were re-designated as the 119th and 120th Infantry Regiments, and formed into the 60th (Tar Heel) Brigade under Brig. Gen. Sampson L. Faison, a Regular from North Carolina. The historian of the 120th described his unit as ‘a thoroughly American organisation’ that had inherited the ‘best tradition of a fighting stock, which had proven its worth in the War of the Revolution and the War Between the States.’ Veterans of the regiments referred to their recently graduated reserve officers as ‘Sears and Roebuck Lieutenants.’⁷⁷ The fresh officers reminded one of new clothes purchased from one of America’s best-known department stores.⁷⁸

To their dismay, units of the National Guard received drafted men from all over the United States. This resulted in the state units losing their local flavour. To some in

the National Guard system. this was a deliberate attempt by the War Department to weaken the states' authority in wartime.⁷⁹ The 30th Division received recruits representing practically all of the United States. One soldier from Indiana wrote to his mother how the 'southern boys are very nice' ... and that 'it sounds kind of funny to hear them talk... just like a coloured fellow talking.'⁸⁰ Local men enlisted for a variety of reasons. Cpl. Joe Thompson from Goldsboro, North Carolina joined the 119th because his 'home was broken up through the death of his parents. and he had nowhere else to go.' Thompson fitted in quite well amongst the National Guardsmen because they were like him: farmers who 'accepted discipline easily.'⁸¹

As O'Ryan and other National Guard officers recognised, the War Department depleted locality pride by sending replacements.⁸² During the Civil War, the Army learned that units formed from the same home towns fought better for the simple reason that men feared word of misbehaviour would likely trickle back to their families and friends. After the war, Major General O'Ryan testified to what Congress referred to as an unfortunate replacement system, flawed because it allowed new troops to destroy the unity local units produced. The Allied armies, he suggested, were more sensitive. 'Certainly the Scotchmen would not be willing to serve in any other commands than Scotch divisions, and I believe the Australians would refuse to serve in any part of the British Army, and would serve only with Australian units.'⁸³ O'Ryan's comments were carefully noted by the committee, but he was incorrect. In late 1915 and during the first half of 1916, the British Army began to transfer men from New Army and Territorial Force units to ostensibly Regular battalions. This was in response to the perceived poor performance of two New Army divisions as Loos.⁸⁴

Despite what was learned from other conflicts like the American Civil War, the British eventually proved that strong local identity of units was not the secret of success, whereas better tactical methods and weapons systems were the key.⁸⁵ For the Americans, O’Ryan’s testimony did little to affect how the National Guard would be used in future conflicts, as the same problem occurred in World War II.

During the first month at camp, divisions concentrated on the schooling of the soldier – disciplinary drills and physical exercise.⁸⁶ Training was difficult because not all men were issued a full complement of equipment. The commanding general of the 30th Division complained to the War Department that he went two months before all units had rifles, which prevented them from instruction in the Army’s most relied upon weapon.⁸⁷ The standard-issue United States service rifle was the U.S. Magazine Rifle, Calibre .30, Model 1903, also known as the ‘Springfield ‘03,’ the ‘03,’ or the ‘Springfield.’ The weapon weighed 8.69 pounds, with an overall length of 43½ inches and a 24-inch barrel, and it has been called ‘the finest bolt-action military rifle of all time.’⁸⁸

The infantry rifle was the heart of what Pershing preached in his open warfare doctrine. He was openly critical of both the British and French Armies because they had ‘become mired in trench warfare,’ and, as a result, their offensive capabilities were diminished to a defensive posture on the Western Front.⁸⁹ Pershing was fearful that if his own army adopted trench warfare, it would also lose the offensive spirit. He envisioned aggressive movement and pursuit that would force the enemy into the open. His thinking drew from experiences of the army on the frontier during the Indian wars, when part of infantry consisted of expert marksmen and scouts.

On the Plains and in the Southwest, there were no trenches in which to take cover. Development of the aggressive, self-reliant infantry was his training goal.⁹⁰ Pershing did not create this doctrine. It was based on the tactics prescribed in the Army's Infantry Drill Regulations (IDR), particularly the 1914 edition. The IDR was first published in 1907 and remained the Army's doctrinal bible well after this World War. One of Pershing's biographers describes open warfare as 'fluid, open-ended, and flexible... Oriented to the earth's surface, rather than its bowels, it is inclined to go around strongpoints rather than into them.'⁹¹ This doctrine resembles the infiltration tactics used by the British, French and Germans. But in the U.S., training of troops focused on trench warfare, as opposed to the open warfare tactics Pershing insisted upon. He repeatedly cabled the War Department about his concern that training with the rifle was not being sufficiently stressed at home. He was correct; when the doughboys arrived in France, they had to be re-trained. Historian Timothy K. Nenninger has called this 'tactical dysfunction.'⁹²

The armies in France were equipping their soldiers with rifles and bayonets, but these weapons were used in conjunction with mortars, grenades, machine guns, artillery and tanks.⁹³ Pershing also failed to appreciate that the British were using a 'bite and hold' tactic, where the attacker attempted to occupy a section of the defender's front before it could respond. Then the attacking unit would revert to a defensive posture to oppose the likely counterattack. 'This procedure,' according to historian Paddy Griffith, 'was always perfectly possible on the Western Front and was repeatedly performed successfully.'⁹⁴

At Camp Wadsworth, an elaborate, specially constructed trench system covered a front of 700 yards, while its length totalled eight miles. The system included shelters and bomb-proof dugouts. 'It afforded opportunity for every unit to engage in practical instruction in the use of pick and shovel, trench sanitation, the construction of listening posts, barbed-wire entanglements, saps, mines, machine-gun emplacements, and lines of communications.'⁹⁵

Soldiers entertained themselves by attending stage shows at the camp theatre, a visit into town, quiet time reading and writing letters (at a Y.M.C.A.-maintained building), or enjoying a home-cooked meal at a Hostess House. They most looked forward to the coveted weekend leave or furlough, issued in rotation, so that every man would be granted a Saturday and Sunday holiday at least once every six weeks.⁹⁶

In late October 1917, the French and British armies began to send instructors to America. Eventually, 286 French officers, predominately artillery specialists, and 261 British officers, primarily for training in gas warfare, physical fitness and bayonet drill, spent several months in the United States. Through a special congressional appropriation, the War Department set aside funds to pay the foreign officers \$10 a day, plus train or bus fare, when they travelled and had to find accommodation in a city or town. When British and French officers stayed on an Army post, this extra pay was reduced to \$6 per day.⁹⁷

British instructors spent more time than their French counterparts at Sevier and Wadsworth, and greatly influenced the way the 27th and 30th Divisions trained. Physical training, the British Army had shown, was essential to both the minds and

muscles of soldiers. Maj. J. B. Sharp was ordered to Wadsworth to serve the 27th Division as an adviser in physical and bayonet training. A member of the Buffs (The East Kent Regiment), he impressed the Americans with his 'high standard of disciplined efficiency' and devised games that tested a soldier's physical ability. When lecturing American officers, Sharp claimed that experience proved groups of fighting men were most effective when trained to respond as a team. This was particularly true during the height of noise and confusion in combat.⁹⁸

Physical fitness, it was reasoned, would 'tighten the relation between the mind and muscle, so that the latter would become automatically and instantaneously responsive to the former, and the former instantaneously resourceful in applying methods to aid the latter when hard pressed.'⁹⁹ British officers encouraged squads from each regiment to specialise in a branch of warfare. Hence, one squad may have been proficient in grenade throwing; another may have had special skills with machine-gunning. This was enshrined in the British doctrine in early 1917. Manuals such as the *Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action* (SS 143) provided four areas of concentration: Lewis Guns, Hand Grenades, Rifle Grenades and Rifles.

The physical training schedule devised by British officers consisted of exercises – three hours of drill in the morning and three in the afternoon. Lectures for non-commissioned officers were held each evening. Also sent to Wadsworth was Sgt. Maj. William Tector of the British Army Gymnastic Corps, who displayed tremendous skill as a physical and bayonet instructor, and became popular among the men.

As training progressed, other components of soldering were emphasised, such as the bayonet, Chauchat machine gun, and instruction in adjustment and use of the small box respirator, or gasmask. Gas drills were held until every man could don and adjust his mask in less than six seconds. At the end of gas training, all infantry regiments were put through a gas chamber in the camp, with actual, non-lethal, gas filling the room. This was supposed to simulate an attack of this nature while on the front line.¹⁰⁰

Maj. H.D. Matson, a British specialist in machine-gun training, was sent to Camp Sevier to instruct the 30th Division.¹⁰¹ Along with other British instructors in the United States, Matson helped establish schools in bayonet, bombs, Stokes mortar, sniping and scouting. Classes formed for special courses in tactics. During later weeks of training, scarcely a man had not been a student at one of these special schools. Essentially, Matson was following the British training doctrine prescribed in SS 143.

Officers serving with the British Mission refrained from openly criticising their American pupils; however, they told their superiors in England their true feelings. Lieutenant Colonel Murray of the British Training Mission in the United States wrote to his commanding officer in England that the training had been difficult. Each American division exceeded 20,000 men, and the five officers assigned to each of the camps were overwhelmed. Murray addressed the weak discipline between American commissioned and non-commissioned officers. He hoped the British instructors 'affected a great deal in the required direction, and that the necessity for strict discipline is now understood.'¹⁰²

Not surprisingly, the American officers found reason to fault their well-intentioned British instructors. ‘Intolerable and overbearing,’ commented Lt. Kenneth Gow, a machine-gun company commander in the 27th Division. ‘There is only one way which is right – their way.’ He much preferred French instructors because they were ‘considerate, polite, and will always take suggestions.’¹⁰³ Lieutenant Gow may not have felt this way if he knew that in seven months time, he would be sharing trenches with many British officers in France.

1917 Offensives Continued

In 1917, the BEF refused to wait for American officers like Gow to come to its aid, and planned its next major operations. They were split into two phases, with the first to consist of an attack on the Wytschaete-Messines Ridge. This phase commenced when Gen. Sir Herbert Plumer’s Second Army ordered an artillery bombardment with 756 heavy pieces against Messines Ridge, a feature that dominated the southern flank of the Ypres salient. Then, on 7 June, 19 mines detonated under the German positions, essentially ending the attack in one day. The fighting continued until 14 June, with British losses at 25,000. Many casualties resulted from German shelling that pulverised the infantry crowded on the ridge.¹⁰⁴

Next, the British conducted an operation known as the Third Battle of Ypres or Passchendaele, which lasted from the end of July until the middle of November. British losses reached about 260,000 during the campaign. Pilckem Ridge was the most significant gain, where on 31 July, nine divisions of the Fifth Army advanced, with five divisions of the Second Army covering their right and two French divisions

on the left. Excellent artillery support followed by effective infantry tactics allowed successes at Menin Road Ridge from 20-25 September and Polygon Wood. 26 September-3 October. German counterattacks were eliminated by artillery and machine-gun fire. During the fighting it began to rain, and the ground turned so muddy that operations had to be halted. The rain and mud worsened in the continuing days, ensuring that Passchendaele would always be remembered for its terrible conditions.¹⁰⁵

On 20 November, Lt. Gen. Sir Julian Byng's Third Army launched an offensive on the Cambrai front, where eight divisions and a thousand guns faced two German divisions. The battle involved the first large-scale use of tanks (481) employed in masses without a preliminary artillery bombardment, while overhead were 289 aircraft. The British also employed the tactic of predicted fire by its artillery to achieve surprise and avoid churning ground. At 6:20 A.M., 300 tanks moved forward and caught the Germans by surprise. It took only four hours to overrun the Hindenburg Line and advance four miles, capturing 10,000 prisoners. The British did not have the manpower to support these gains, and a German counterattack on 30 November won back nearly all ground lost, capturing 10,000 men and 200 guns.

Casualties on each side numbered 80,000. A British board of inquiry blamed the reverse on poor training, and the three corps commanders became scapegoats.¹⁰⁶

The 1917 campaigns did, however, result in the British Army making advances in doctrine. Lessons from the Somme campaign were converted into new tactics, and many historians recognise this period as the start of a steep learning curve that continued through the final year of the war. The key development was the artillery

barrage, protection for the advancing infantry, rather than simply bombardment. firing before an attack. With cover from a combination of guns, mortars, machine guns, tanks and aircraft, the infantry could move in short advances.¹⁰⁷ These tactics were evident at Vimy and Messines.

Some of the success can be credited to the efforts of G.H.Q. to disseminate lessons from 1914-1916 operations, particularly in artillery and small-unit tactics. The results were introduced in the influential *Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action*, SS 135 (December 1916) and the previously mentioned *Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action*, SS 143 (February 1917).¹⁰⁸ These publications and many others were shared with the Americans and sent to each camp for the officers to study.¹⁰⁹ It is doubtful that brigade and regimental officers understood the value of these works, and the War Department never made an attempt to find out if they did. It was more interested in learning if officers were training the enlisted men for overseas duty.

Inspections

To gauge the effectiveness of divisions during training, the General Staff ordered inspections. Officers from geographical commands (Camps Sevier and Wadsworth were part of the Southeastern Department), acting on behalf of the Office of the Inspector General, were to conduct two inspections of each division. The first was to be completed before Christmas 1917, and the second prior to the division's embarkation overseas. The inspections of the National Guard divisions were 'thorough and generally critical,' according to the Inspector General's Office historian. 'reflecting, in part, the bias of Regular Army inspectors' completing the

first round. After completing the second inspections, senior inspectors were to return to Washington to discuss their findings and rate the National Guard units, from the most to least deployable. Among rating factors were evaluation of training, strength, administration, discipline, and quality of commander and staff.¹¹⁰

The first inspection of the 27th Division took place on 23 November 1917 by Col. Eli A. Helmick, and his conclusions were far from impressive. He noted a number of deficiencies, in uniforms and overall neatness, but the most severe criticism pertained to instruction of the soldier, squad and company. Targets were the regimental and company commanders. According to Helmick, drill schedules were not followed, or officers would change 'drill to suit themselves.' He commented further about one brigade's straggling and lack of discipline.¹¹¹

On 20 December 1917, Col. J.B. McDonald inspected the 30th Division. He criticised officers for not being 'efficient instructors or disciplinarians.' The most disturbing conclusion was that the division still had a shortage of woollen clothing and training equipment. McDonald concluded that the division was not prepared to fight and would require three months with better-trained field officers before it could be recommended for overseas service.¹¹²

The mention of lax discipline in the inspection reports is not surprising since the 27th and 30th Divisions had received large numbers of new soldiers, normally a cause for decline in efficiency. Still, there were enough minor infractions to keep court-martial boards busy for both divisions. Offences included petty theft, desertion, writing bad

checks, disorderly conduct, and sleeping on post. Depending upon the findings, sentences were forfeiture of pay or confinement with hard labour.¹¹³

The Amalgamation Issue Continues

By the end of 1917, only four American divisions (1st, 2nd, 26th and 42nd) plus logistical support, numbering 175,000 men, were on French soil. Their strength was far from the target of one million men that Pershing wanted by June 1918.¹¹⁴ The military outlook for 1918 appeared perilous, as there were indications that the German Army planned a spring offensive. With the collapse of Russia and defeat of the Italians at Caporetto, the Germans redeployed divisions from the Eastern Front to the west. The exact date of the expected offensive remained a mystery, but the need for Allied reinforcements was crucial.

As 1917 ended, the British and French pressed for amalgamation during meetings of the recently formed Supreme War Council.¹¹⁵ Getting nowhere with Pershing and other American representatives in Europe, the Allies appealed directly to President Wilson. Although Robert A. Bruce's study of French-American relations, *A Fraternity of Arms*, suggests Pershing feared that Wilson would cave in to Allied pressure, this assessment is far from the truth. Throughout the war, the President left matters of military importance completely in the hands of the AEF commander. As Pershing's biographer Donald Smyth reminds us, 'Perhaps no field commander in history was ever given a freer hand to conduct operations than was Pershing by Wilson.'¹¹⁶

An urgent Christmas Eve cable from Secretary of War Baker arrived at Pershing's Chaumont headquarters the following day, supporting this point.¹¹⁷ It informed

Pershing that ‘both the English and French are pressing upon the President their desires to have your forces amalgamated with theirs by regiments and companies.’ Baker also indicated that ‘we do not desire loss of identity of our forces, but regard that as secondary to the meeting of any critical situation by the most helpful use possible of the troops at your command.’ He added that ‘The President desires you to have full authority to use the forces at your command as you deem wise in consultation with French and British commanders-in-chief.’¹¹⁸ After receiving Baker’s cable, Pershing waited almost a week to respond.

Despite the tense relationship with the Americans regarding the amalgamation issue, Field Marshal Haig remained enthusiastic about the AEF officers he met. Haig wrote his wife in December 1917 ‘our idea of what American men are like is quite wrong. Those we are working with are quiet, unassuming fellows--entirely unlike the fashionable Yankees we used to see in London following in the wake of some loud-voiced Yankee beauty! Personally, I am finding the American men connected with the U.S.A. Forces very much like our own officers. I need give them no higher recommendation.’¹¹⁹ As amalgamation became more of an issue between the U.S. and Britain, Haig’s high regard for the Americans would diminish somewhat.

¹ The U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department, 1917, Report of the Secretary of War* (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 1918), 7.

² Allan R. Millett, ‘Over Where? The AEF and the American Strategy for Victory, 1917-1918,’ in Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts, editors, *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 235.

³ Unkown Author, ‘From a National Guardsman,’ *Outlook*, CXIII (August 2, 1916), 773.

⁴ Although the state units were officially designated as the National Guard, many of the Regulars still referred to them as the militia.

⁵ John J. Pershing to Joe Breckons, 23 May 1916, Papers of John J. Pershing, Box 34, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter, Pershing Papers, LOC). See also Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1973), 261.

⁶ Robert Lee Bullard, *Fighting Generals: Illustrated Biographical Sketches of Seven Major Generals in World War I* (Ann Arbor: J.W. Edwards, 1944), 290.

⁷ *Ibid*, 285.

⁸ *Ibid*, 289.

⁹ Roosevelt and Wood organized the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, also known as the Rough Riders, during the Spanish-American War.

¹⁰ Peter Maslowski and Allen R. Millett, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 247-249.

¹¹ Jerry Cooper, 'The National Guard Mobilizations of 1916 and 1917: The Historical Importance,' in John Votoaw, editor, *Cantigny at Seventy-Five* (Wheaton: First Division Museum, 1995), 38-39.

¹² Named for Congressman Charles W. Dick of Ohio, the chief creator of the legislation for this bill. See Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 320-321.

¹³ Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1969), 286-287.

¹⁴ Cooper, 38-39.

¹⁵ John F. O'Ryan to Oswald Garrison Villard, *New York Evening Post*, 2 October 1916. Oswald Garrison Villard Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The remark about 'Kitchener's Mob' refers to the 'New Armies' of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. This will be covered briefly in Chapter 3. Also, this is a book by James Norman Hall, *Kitchener's Mob: The Adventures of an American in the British Army* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1916). The author enlisted in the 9th Royal Fusiliers of the 36th Brigade, 12th British Division and served as a machine-gunner. Later he joined the Lafayette Escadrille.

¹⁶ Michael D. Doubler, *I Am The Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, Department of the Army, 2001), 171-172.

¹⁷ Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: 1775-1939* (Washington, D.C.: Centre of Military History, United States Army, 1989), 605-608.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 617-619.

²⁰ Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, 95.

²¹ For a comprehensive study on the recruitment drive of 1914-1916, see Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

²² War Office, 'General Staff Appreciations for the War Cabinet,' January-March 1917. The National Archives (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO) WO106/311 (hereafter TNA: PRO).

²³ Tom Bridges, *Alarms and Excursions* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1939), 180, and Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 8.

²⁴ Although Pershing was a major general, his appointment to command the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) gave him the temporary rank of 'general.' He was now the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. Army, even though he was not the most senior officer. That was actually Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, who was not chosen to command the AEF for a variety of reasons. See Trask, *The AEF & Coalition Warmaking*, 11.

²⁵ Thomas G. Frothingham, *The American Reinforcement in the World War* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1927), xxx.

²⁶ Coffman, 19.

²⁷ Maj. Paul H. Clark to the Commander-in-Chief, 'Military Situations,' 17 May 1918, Papers of General John J. Pershing, Entry 22, RG 200, NARA (hereafter Pershing Papers, NARA).

²⁸ David French, *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 58.

²⁹ Peter Simkins, *The First World War: The Western Front, 1917-1918* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 31.

³⁰ Meirion and Susie Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917-1918* (New York: Random House, 1997), 116-117.

³¹ *Ibid.*, and John J. Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol. I, 187-190.

³² *Ibid.*, 144. For more detailed analysis, see Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

³³ Harries, 116-117, and David R. Woodward (editor), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson CIGS, December 29-25 February 1918* (London: Bodley Head/Army Records Society, 1989), 7.

³⁴ Pershing stayed in Paris until 6 September 1917. Because there were too many social distractions and constant interruptions from visitors, he moved AEF headquarters to Chaumont, 150 miles east of Paris on the upper Marne. Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

³⁶ Baker Board Report, 28 May 1917, *The United States Army in the World War*, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), 55-56, and 76.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Memorandum on British Mission, 30 September 1917, #10071-24, War College Division, Entry 296 (hereafter WCD), RG 165, NARA.

³⁹ Brian Bond and Nigel Cave, editors, *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 Years On* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1996), 16 and John Terraine, *Ordeal of Victory* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1963), 177-178.

⁴⁰ Blake, 245.

⁴¹ Pershing, 111-116.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ War Department, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces, 1917-1919, Part III* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 677-678.

⁴⁴ D. Colt Denfeld, 'World War I Mobilization Camps,' *The Journal of America's Military Past* (Volume XXVIX, Fall Winter 2002), 28-54.

⁴⁵ Earl Mitchell to his family, Letters of Earl Mitchell, 118th Infantry Regiment, n.d., World War I Miscellaneous Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives (hereafter referred to as Mitchell letters).

⁴⁶ Denfeld, 28-54.

⁴⁷ Robert Stewart Sutcliffe, *Seventy-First New York in the World War* (New York, 1922), 49-50. and Maj. Gen. John F. O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 99-115.

⁴⁸ Stephen L. Harris, *Harlem’s Hell Fighters: The African-American 369th Infantry in World War I* (Dulles: Brassey’s, 2003), 120-132.

⁴⁹ Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance: Living Memories of the Doughboys* (New York: Arbor House, 1978), 205.

⁵⁰ William F. Clarke, *Over There with O’Ryan’s Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 22-23.

⁵¹ Worth P. Stewart, *The History of Company K, 117th Infantry in the Great War* (Tennessee, 1919), 6-7.

⁵² Murphy and Thomas, 33.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 20.

⁵⁴ The East Tennessee Historical Society, *First Families of Tennessee: A Register of Early Settlers and their Present-Day Descendants* (Knoxville: The East Tennessee Historical Society, 2000), 25-26.

⁵⁵ O’Ryan, 86.

⁵⁶ The War Department, *Report of the Surgeon General, 1918* (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 1919), 335. Although this report is for 1918, it covers the calendar year of 1917 through 30 June 1918.

⁵⁷ ‘Medical History of Camp Wadsworth,’ File 314.7, n.d. Entry 25, RG 112, NARA.

⁵⁸ ‘Medical History of Camp Sevier, South Carolina,’ File 314.7, n.d. Entry 25, RG 112, NARA.

⁵⁹ Murphy and Thomas, 14.

⁶⁰ ‘General O’Ryan Appeals for Sobriety in Army.’ *The Spartanburg Herald*, 12 August 1917.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 9 August 1917.

⁶² ‘Much Interest in Military Police,’ *The Spartanburg Herald*, 8 September 1917.

⁶³ Robert H. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson & World War I, 1917-1921* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 189-190.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ Officers’ Reports – Reports by British on American Officers Visiting British Front, Maj. Gen. John F. O’Ryan, 2 February 1918, , Entry 23, Pershing Papers, NARA.

⁶⁶ Maj. Gen. John F. O’Ryan to the Chief of Staff, AEF, 31 October 1917, ‘Report of Observations,’ #7396-C, Entry 9, RG120, NARA.

⁶⁷ Letters of Mack Slagle, 2 December 1917. Shared with the author by Edward Slagle, Falls Church, VA.

⁶⁸ Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967), 366.

⁶⁹ Ada Clark to Governor Thomas Rye, 22 November 1917, Governor Thomas Rye Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁷⁰ The Adjutant General of the Army to the Commanding Generals of all National Guard Divisions, 'Necessity for reorganizing the National Guard divisions,' WCD, 4 October 1917, #9625-50, , RG 165, NARA.

⁷¹ The War College Division was one of the sections of the General Staff established in 1903. Among its many tasks, it was charged with the study and planning for war and reported directly to the Chief of Staff of the Army. See Elizabeth Bethel, *Preliminary Checklist of the Records of the War Department General Staff: Record Group 165* (Washington, D.C.: The National Archives, April 1965).

⁷² Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 37.

⁷³ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, 102.

⁷⁴ Murphy and Thomas, 22-23.

⁷⁵ Cooper, *The Rise of the National Guard*, 169.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 170.

⁷⁷ John Otey Walker, *Official History of the 120th Infantry "3rd North Carolina" 30th Division from August 5, 1917, to April 17, 1919, Canal Sector, Ypres-Lys Offensive, Somme Offensive* (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell Company, 1919), 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷⁹ Cooper, 169.

⁸⁰ Mitchell letters.

⁸¹ Joe Willoughby Thompson, Response to '30th Division Army Service Experience Questionnaires,' interview conducted on 11 October 1986, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

⁸² Testimony of Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, 'Reorganization of the Army,' *Hearing before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate* (Sixty-Sixth Congress, First Session, 1919), 511-544.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 512.

⁸⁴ Historian Peter Simkins to Author, 10 March 2006.

⁸⁵ Historian Peter Simkins to author, 8 November 2004.

⁸⁶ 30th Division Historical Records, 'Training History,' n.d., File 54.9, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 19 September 1917, File 474.1.

⁸⁸ Bruce N. Canfield, *U.S. Infantry Weapons of the First World War* (Lincoln: Andrew Mowbray Publishers, 2000), 64-69.

⁸⁹ Pershing, Volume 1, 153.

⁹⁰ William O. Odom, 'The Spirit of the Bayonet: Offensive Doctrine in the U.S. Army, 1917-1941. Paper presented at the 2000 meeting of the Society of Military History, Quantico, VA. For a larger discussion of this issue, see William O. Odom, *After the Trenches: The Transformation of U.S. Army Doctrine, 1918-1939* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999) and James W. Rainey,

'Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I.' *Parameters*, Vol. 13 (September 1983).

⁹¹ Donald Smythe, 'The Wisdom of a Separate Army,' in John Whiteclay Chambers II and G. Kurt Phieler (editors), *Major Problems in American Military History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 263.

⁹² Timothy K. Nenninger, 'Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918,' *Military Affairs* (October 1987), 177.

⁹³ Douglas V. Johnson II and Rolfe L. Hillman, Jr., *Soissons, 1918* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999), 32.

⁹⁴ Griffith, 32.

⁹⁵ O'Ryan, 134.

⁹⁶ Murphy and Thomas, 42-43.

⁹⁷ WCD, 31 October 1917, #10071-35.

⁹⁸ Sutcliffe, 42-43

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gerald F. Jacobson, *History of the 107th Infantry, U.S.A.* (New York: Seventh Regiment Armory, 1920), 13-15, Lt. Kenneth Gow, *Letters of A Soldier* (New York: Herbert B. Covert, 1920), 142-143, and O'Ryan, 117-128.

¹⁰¹ WCD, 12 November 1917, #11071-55.

¹⁰² Lt. Col. Murray, Military Attaché, 'Information on the American Army,' n.d., WO 106/474, TNA:PRO.

¹⁰³ Gow, 237.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Holmes, *The Western Front* (London: BBC Worldwide, 1999), 143, and Peter Simkins, *The First World War: The Western Front, 1917-1918* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 32-33.

¹⁰⁵ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, 167-184. For a more detailed account of Messines Ridge, see Ian Passingham, *Pillars of Fire: The Battle of Messines Ridge, June 1917* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2000).

¹⁰⁶ G.D. Sheffield, "The Morale of the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918: A Case Study in the Importance of the 'Human Factor' in Twentieth-Century Total War," in Geoffrey Jensen and Andrew Wiest, *War in the Age of Technology: Myriad Faces of Modern Armed Conflict* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 120-123. Also see Andy Simpson, *The Evolution of Victory: British Battles on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (London: Tom Donovan Publishing, 1995) and DeWeerd, 192.

¹⁰⁷ Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

¹⁰⁸ Simkins, 36-41. Also see Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁹ O'Ryan, 121.

¹¹⁰ Joseph W.A. Whitehorne, *The Inspector General of the United States Army: 1903-1939* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Inspector General and Center of Military History. United States Army, 1998), 123-124 and 134-135.

¹¹¹ Col. Eli A. Helmick to the Inspector General of the Army, 'Training,' 19 December 1917, 27th Division correspondence, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹¹² Ibid, 'Inspection of the 30th Division,' 27 December 1917, Camp Sevier, SC, 30th Division Correspondence, File 230-66.1, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹¹³ General Court-Martial Orders (1917), 27th and 30th Divisions, Entry 1241, RG 120. NARA.

¹¹⁴ Timothy K. Nenner, 'American Military Effectiveness in the First World War.' in Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray's (editors), *Military Effectiveness, Volume I: The First World War* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 137.

¹¹⁵ The Supreme War Council was formed on 7 November 1917 with a mission 'to watch over the general conduct of the war,' and to coordinate military operations on the Western Front. The prime ministers of England, France and Italy headed it. Because President Wilson was in America and unable to attend, the soon-to-be-retired Chief of Staff, Tasker Bliss, was appointed as the American representative. See Smythe, 60.

¹¹⁶ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Bruce, 151.

¹¹⁸ Baker to Pershing, 24 December 1917, File #14903-19, Entry 11, RG 120, NARA.

¹¹⁹ Blake, 272.

Chapter 2: 'Waiting to Go Over'

Amalgamation

'The winter of 1917-1918 was the most severe of the war,' General Pershing remarked in his memoirs.¹ He was, of course, referring to the freezing temperatures and heavy snows that tormented both France and the United States. Yet, he easily could have meant the frigid relations that formed between him and senior British and French commanders over the amalgamation issue. Not only were they pulling him in opposite directions, but his own government also was beginning to question his reasoning for withholding troops from the front.

On 1 January 1918, Pershing finally replied to the Christmas Day cable by writing to Maj. Gen. Tasker Bliss, not Secretary of War Baker. His long message assured Bliss: 'I do not think an emergency now exists that would warrant our putting companies or battalions into British or French divisions.'² Pershing echoed his long-held conviction that if American troops were amalgamated, they would lose their national identity, and that the methods of instruction in the Allied armies might interfere with AEF training doctrine. 'Attention should be called to prejudices existing between French and British Governments and Armies,' he wrote, 'and the desire of each to have American units assigned to them, and the exclusion of similar assignment to the other.'³ A cable to Bliss three days later indicated that he was beginning to soften his views, albeit slightly. He was now entertaining the idea of the British transporting and assisting in the training of American troops, as long it was 'strictly supplementary to our own regular programme'

of fielding an American army. Pershing recognised that British help was needed to transport troops to France, and it was up to him to make a concession.⁴

Sir William Robertson (and two aides) met with Pershing on 9-10 January 1918. The two men had last conferred in November 1917, but that discussion accomplished little. Now it was a new year and a fresh start for both. Robertson brought a proposal that offered to transport 150,000 troops (150 battalions) from divisions still in the United States that were not already scheduled for overseas duty. He also suggested they could be broken up as the British had done with some Territorial Force and New Army divisions in 1915 to supply reinforcements and lines of communication troops. The proposal, he reiterated to Pershing, related only to infantrymen and machine gunners. They would be used to reinforce under-strength British units. He also sought to reassure Pershing by reminding him that he in no way wished to interfere with the build-up of an independent American army.

The British were willing, temporarily, to forgo the shipping used for importing food and raw materials from abroad, and use it to provide the immediate transport of American troops, if only Pershing would approve. Sensing that Pershing was not going to accept the proposal, Robertson told him that unless the Americans provided men to fill up their decimated divisions, the British Army could very well exhaust its manpower and the Allies would lose the war.⁵

Pershing later recalled that he was bewildered that the British suddenly offered to transport troops, when previously he had been told that no shipping was available. In addition, he remembered, it bothered him that Robertson's current proposal was not current at all; it was essentially the same as that submitted to Lloyd George by the House Mission a few weeks earlier.⁶ However, Pershing was clearly overreacting, because the British, particularly Robertson, were in no way trying to be deceitful. On the contrary, it was an attempt to be amenable by offering to sacrifice tonnage to bring the Americans to Europe as soon as possible.

After Robertson finished outlining his proposal, Pershing responded that instead of carrying 150 battalions, the British should bring over full divisions. He reasoned that if they could find shipping for battalions, they could certainly find space for divisions. Robertson expected this reaction and had a ready answer: the infantry battalions were needed badly, not the support units. He left the meeting without obtaining a firm answer. The American general did not let on that the proposal had actually attracted him. On 13 January, Pershing cabled the War Department: 'This whole question seems to me to be one of necessity, and we must consider the probability of strong German attacks in early spring and summer... the emergency requires this temporary supply of men for the British.'⁷

The War Department naturally agreed with Pershing, and a recommendation was submitted to President Wilson, who approved, but with caution. Sounding much like Pershing, he warned: 'Whatever they may promise now, the British will, when it comes

to the pinch, in fact, cut us off from some part of the tonnage they will promise us for our general programme in order, themselves, to make sure of these battalions, or will promise us less for the general programme than they would otherwise have given, had their plan for these reinforcements for their own front not been accepted.⁸ Wilson was, of course, greatly concerned with how America's role on the battlefield would affect the peace negotiations.⁹

A few days later, Pershing was having second thoughts and wrote to Bliss on 21 January: 'We should be very guarded in making any concessions to the British.'¹⁰ Four days later, he again met with Robertson, this time in Paris. Here Pershing broke the news to him that he would not approve the shipping plan. Robertson was shocked... and with good reason. As Robertson knew, less than a week before, Pershing had met with General Haig and General Petain, and expressed no dissatisfaction with the proposal. But Pershing now reiterated that he felt it was in the best interest of the American Army that the British transport whole divisions, not individual battalions. Once the divisions arrived in France, the British would supervise training, and, should the need arise, the troops could have limited use in combat. All this was news to Bliss, who favoured the British plan and made his feelings known to Pershing. The two met privately and Pershing stressed to Bliss the importance of a unified front to the Allies, and that the transport of complete divisions was the only acceptable course. Bliss reluctantly agreed. Now Pershing needed to persuade the British to come aboard, which they did a week later.¹¹

Accordingly, Pershing and Bliss met with Lloyd George, Lord Milner, Robertson and Haig on 29-30 January 1918, and after two days of tense discussion, both sides accepted an 'agreement between the commanders-in-chief of the American and British forces in France regarding the training of the American troops with British troops.'¹² They settled on the American plan for the British to transport six complete divisions, less artillery, to France for a 10-week training programme. The artillery units would be trained in American camps located in the French sector. The British would be responsible for feeding and supplying the Americans. Pershing emphasised that the American divisions were on loan to the British Army and could be recalled at his discretion.¹³

The agreement contained several strongly worded clauses outlining how training would proceed. The most important proviso stated that once platoons, companies, battalions and regiments of each division completed training, they would be designated ready 'to take the field... and would then be handed over to the American commander-in-chief, under arrangements to be made between the various commanders-in-chief.'¹⁴ This gave Pershing the assurance he insisted upon – that American divisions were only temporarily assigned to the British. The British also enhanced the agreement by proposing that American commanders and staff officers be attached to corresponding British headquarters for additional instruction. This clause was also to Pershing's benefit since it gave his inexperienced officers the training they never would have received in the U.S.

On 4 February 1918, the American and British representatives met again and finalised the training agreement, but only after Pershing insisted upon a few changes. Among them

were that the six divisions would form an American corps, and the training programme was to be designed by the Americans after consulting the British. To the latter, these revisions were of little concern, and on 12 February 1918, the arrangement became official. In a memorandum to Haig the same day, Pershing promised 'my full and earnest cooperation in ensuring successful execution.'¹⁵ Although the training agreement would undergo many minor changes in coming months, it set in motion a relationship between two armies that had a profound effect on how the war was fought.

The French reaction to the British proposal was one of disappointment. Since December 1917, Petain had requested transfer of AEF divisions in France to his army for amalgamation. He was anxious to strengthen his divisions before the impending German attack. Pershing, of course, rejected this request. Nevertheless, he had great fondness for Petain and wanted to ensure that good American-French relations continued.

As a matter of courtesy, Pershing had met with Petain on 21 January to inform him of the British proposal. He did not tell him why troops were to be sent to the British, but he did indicate that he hoped this decision in no way would hurt their friendship, or show any lack of respect toward the French Army. It was a necessity to accept the British offer to transport troops since the Americans lacked shipping, he explained. Pershing promised that his troops would undergo advanced training with the French Army, and that he would immediately place some regiments with French divisions for training. True to his word, Pershing sent the four black infantry regiments of the 93rd Division to the French. This included the 369th Infantry, which had trained briefly at

Wadsworth until racial tension with the citizens of Spartanburg forced the unit from the Jim Crow south. In France, the 'Harlem Hell Fighters,' as they were called by the French, would distinguish themselves in the fighting during the spring and summer of 1918.¹⁶

The Organisation of II Corps

With the amalgamation issue behind him, Pershing could put his energy into organising his much-sought-after army. An important move in this direction was the creation of the corps. He formed II U.S. Army Corps on 20 February 1918 to establish administrative control and supervise the training of the six American divisions scheduled to arrive in the British sector over the next two months.¹⁷ Pershing chose Lt. Col. (later Brig. Gen.) George S. Simonds as its chief of staff. It was a wise selection because Simonds already knew many BEF staff officers from his work with the Baker Mission the previous year. Also, he was a good officer, as his already-impressive career had shown.

After graduating from West Point in 1899, Simonds was commissioned in the 22nd Infantry and took part in 11 engagements and expeditions during the Philippine Insurrection, before helping suppress the Boxer Rebellion. His superiors thought highly of him, one rating Simonds 'an excellent, conscientious and painstaking officer, capable and fitted for any duty.'¹⁸ During the years before the U.S. entry into World War I, he served mostly as a training officer. After returning from France with the Baker Mission, Simonds was appointed the 26th Division chief of staff, remaining with the 'Yankee

Division' only a short time before being transferred to AEF G-3 staff (Operations). His fluency in French probably had some bearing on his return to France.¹⁹

As a corps chief of staff, Simonds now 'faced with aplomb the tremendous task of formulating training programmes,' as one historian points out, 'solving logistical problems, and adapting American principles of organisation and administration to those of the British.'²⁰ Since Pershing did not immediately select his corps commanders, Simonds, for a short time, was the highest-ranking American officer in the British sector. He reported to Brig. Gen. James G. Harbord, by this time the AEF chief of staff.

Two days after Simonds' appointment took effect, Harbord presented him with a two-and-a-half-page directive outlining his duties. It gave him the background on arrangements to bring divisions to France--when they would arrive, and how long they were to train with the British. More importantly, it made clear that Pershing had the authority to determine the disposition of each division after training was completed.²¹

Such tight control over administrative matters was typical of Pershing. As AEF commander, he continually managed the minutest details and was not averse to relieving staff officers if they did not follow his orders. In this case, it can be understood why Pershing was not willing to relinquish control, after experiencing difficult negotiations with the British. Simply put, Simonds was to carry out Pershing's proposals and ensure the British did not exceed their authority. This was unfortunate for Simonds because the limited power often hindered his performance as a corps chief of staff.

Recognising the difficulties Simonds was about to confront, Harbord offered some much-needed advice. He urged Simonds not to rush into the job, but to take his time organising a staff at the AEF headquarters in Chaumont. After all, the first of the six divisions was not scheduled to arrive until early April, so there was plenty of time to sort out the administrative details with the British. Although appreciative of Harbord's suggestion, Simonds was anxious to start working. It would be more prudent, he thought, to schedule a visit to British G.H.Q. and discuss the training programme with Haig's staff before selecting corps staff.

Simonds departed Chaumont on 20 February 1918 with two aides and arrived at the rail station near Montreuil the following morning. Several British officers and the chief of the American Mission at British G.H.Q., Col. Robert Bacon, enthusiastically greeted him at the train. Bacon, one might add, as a lawyer, banker, diplomat, and now a soldier, would work well with Simonds. He and Pershing were also long time acquaintances, and, for that reason, as well as his 'intimate knowledge of the French people, and his tact and discretion,' Bacon was a natural for the job.²²

Simonds and his greeters moved on to Montreuil, where he 'found great excitement and enthusiasm about the American troops coming to the British front.'²³ After the usual formalities, they went to work in a conference attended by the British deputy chief of staff, the director of training, the quartermaster, and the heads of the various supply branches. Shortly into the conference, it soon became apparent that two problem areas

existed in making the preliminary arrangements for American divisions: logistics and training. Complicating the second and more important of the two was the apparent misunderstanding by British staff officers over their role in supervising training.²⁴ Practically ignoring Simonds, the British officers openly discussed plans to train the Americans at the battalion level, then place squads, platoons and companies in line. Simonds did not expect such frank discussion, and he was unprepared to talk about these matters so soon. For the moment, he kept quiet. Yet, he knew, from his briefing with Harbord, that only American officers were to supervise training, and it was his responsibility to ensure that arrangement.

As the meeting ended, Simonds addressed some of the issues brought to the table. Regarding supplies and equipment, he was able to talk candidly. The supply officers in attendance told Simonds the British were quite willing to provide the Americans with whatever they needed, as long as resources were available. In turn, Simonds promised to make their task less complicated by creating supply and equipment tables, and to adapt the British items and system of issue to the American organisations.

When it came to training, Simonds still avoided the sticky question of who would instruct the Americans. He did request that the British turn over one of their training areas to each American division, warning that at a later time, he might require an increase and modification of the areas to suit the needs of the American training system.

Overwhelmed and tired from travelling and recognising the task at hand, Simonds had done enough talking for now and asked that they meet the following day, when he

promised to be more prepared. He then retired to his temporary corps headquarters in Colonel Bacon's office, 'a dingy little building' at Montreuil. There, he and his aides were supplied with transportation, clerks, typewriters and batmen.²⁵

The next day's conference was more productive. Simonds was well organised and started off the agenda with a plan that the British supply II Corps with all items except the distinctive articles of uniform: overseas caps, overcoats, blouses and breeches. He recognised that accommodating an additional 150,000 troops was going to be a burden on the already-stretched British supply system. To complicate matters, the British Army did not have organisations that corresponded to an American regiment and, therefore, would have to adjust accordingly to the AEF system. To the British the infantry brigade was the regimental equivalent. Therefore, the components of a regimental headquarters 'seemed to them like excess baggage.'²⁶

To comply with the American regimental tables of organisation, the British supply system would have to provide for such units as the headquarters company, machine-gun company and supply company. Another issue was horse transportation for combat units. Here, Simonds was willing to compromise. British tables of organisation also gave a greater proportion of personnel to animals than the Americans, and he agreed that his units would conform to the British practise of handling and care for animal transportation.

Simonds was beginning to see the need to adjust and compromise over certain issues. As the meeting continued, much progress was made regarding supplies and equipment,

but Simonds had yet to broach the sensitive issue of training. When this subject was finally raised, the meeting intensified. British staff officers repeatedly questioned Simonds' authority, and, in response, he had to remind them that direction, supervision and control of training were done at II Corps headquarters. These were the instructions given to him by AEF G.H.Q. Any arrangements for training were to be handled by him until he appointed a G-3 (Operations) officer.

The British seemed happy to accommodate Simonds for general training, as well as provide an area for short-range rifle training, but they refused to make provisions for open warfare and long-range rifle practise. Both were integral components of American training doctrine and part of an issue Simonds knew could not be compromised. So, he arranged a conference with the staff of the Second British Army, scheduled to assist in training the first American formation, the 77th Division. 'After a somewhat lengthy and spirited discussion,' he was promised that American specifications would be met 'in so far as time and conditions would permit.'²⁷

Now that the foundation for training had been set, Simonds could breathe a bit easier and start to build his staff with officers from Chaumont. The British provided him Château Bryas, at St.-Pol-Sur Ternoise, for his headquarters. It was centrally located near the divisional training areas, about 70 kilometres from the front in the direction of Arras. He spent most days attending more conferences, and inspecting training areas and the ports of Calais and Le Havre, where newly arriving troops would disembark. One of the

British officers who conferred frequently with Simonds was Lt. Gen. Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, the BEF director of training.²⁸

Bonham-Carter was 42 years old, and his background was typical of most First World War general officers of the British Army. He had been educated at Sandhurst and the Staff College at Camberley, before serving in the South African War in 1900. Prior to his appointment as training director, he was a staff officer of the 50th Division in 1915. A year later he was promoted brevet lieutenant-colonel and appointed GSO1 to the 7th Division. Afterward, he went to G.H.Q. as training officer, and from there, he served on the staff of III Corps for seven months before being chosen by Haig to set up a new training section in early 1917, where he was to produce manuals and develop tactical doctrine.²⁹ Previously, training was not standardised, but conducted as seen fit by the various army, corps, division and brigade commanders.³⁰ Although he was still learning his job, Bonham-Carter would prove a great asset to II Corps, especially as a liaison between Simonds and the British staff officers charged with supervision of the American training.

As the weeks passed, other American officers were seen in the British sector. Most were students of the General Staff College established by Pershing in September 1917 at Langres. Its mission was 'to train selected officers for staffs of divisions, corps, armies, and lines of communications.'³¹ Many of its instructors were British and French, who lectured on subjects such as military map reading, staff organisation and intelligence. After graduating, the American officers were ordered to observe British and French

divisions at the front, and some officers were also attached to New Zealand battalions for up to six days. Confidential reports on the Americans were then compiled by the hosting officers and submitted to Pershing's staff. An AEF officer was deemed 'very keen and energetic during his attachment,' and another 'showed intelligent and critical interest in what he saw.'³²

Training in the United States

With the start of the new year came the continuation of Period B training for the 27th and 30th Divisions. Brutal temperatures like the ones experienced on the Western Front were a regular occurrence in South Carolina.³³ The chilly weather naturally brought on sickness in the camps. Company H of the 119th Infantry was quarantined for smallpox, and training schedules were amended because of a mumps outbreak. Pneumonia also took its toll throughout the 30th Division. At Sevier, one officer and 29 enlisted men died from the disease.³⁴ The same diseases debilitated the 27th Division at Wadsworth, as well as an outbreak of spinal meningitis, which also quarantined some of the New Yorkers.³⁵

Training varied, depending upon the type of unit. Engineer regiments, for example, spent a significant amount of time practising the construction of wire entanglements and bridges. Like infantry troops, engineers also received training in combat firing.³⁶ This proved a necessary skill to have in France since engineers constructing or repairing roads often would be the target of German artillery or indirect machine-gun fire. As late as February 1918, training was still hampered by lack of equipment. At Sevier, units of the 30th Division were still badly in need of ordnance accoutrements like cartridge belts and

bayonet scabbards; even helmets were in short supply. Despite constant pleas to the War Department, many of the men would not become fully equipped until they arrived overseas.³⁷

During the final months of training, internal unit evaluations were conducted at Wadsworth and Sevier to assess readiness for overseas service. Most evident in the 30th Division was low morale. There was one main factor that contributed to this dilemma. Unlike the 27th Division, by spring 1918, the 30th had been commanded by four different generals since its organisation in August 1917. The division was now under the temporary command of Brig. Gen. Samson L. Faison. A former tactics instructor at West Point, the 60th Brigade commander took over the division for three months when Maj. Gen. Clarence P. Townsley was detailed to detached service at the Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, New Jersey.³⁸ Another related and complicated morale issue was that a large number of officers and men were detached from duty and sent for instruction elsewhere, further depleting the camaraderie of National Guard units.³⁹ It was a fact of life among all U.S. Army divisions since there were so few competent officers, and those displaying ability were often transferred where the War Department felt they were needed most. Despite the morale problem, discipline remained good, and there were no major infractions reported to the War Department.

In an attempt to improve morale, Faison ordered the men to adopt a division insignia. They responded by choosing a blue, elliptically shaped letter 'O' on its side. It surrounded a blue letter 'H' with blue Roman numerals XXX inside the crossbar of the

‘H,’ which was superimposed on a maroon field. This was in honour of the division nickname, ‘Old Hickory.’⁴⁰

At Wadsworth, inspections of the 27th Division also exposed a number of problems. Foremost was discipline within regiments. During an inspection of the 106th Machine-Gun Battalion, O’Ryan was appalled to see men in one company wearing ‘nondescript clothing,’ such as sweaters and overalls. He observed half the company drilling, while the other half slept in cots, or played games in the street. There appeared to be little supervision since the captain of the company was in his quarters, leaving two lieutenants in charge. ‘There was an entire absence of steam, snap and punch,’ O’Ryan complained. On the same day, he inspected Company H of the 106th Infantry and found their dugout ‘in disorderly and unsatisfactory condition. Mess kits, books, papers and equipment were scattered about.’⁴¹

As punishment, O’Ryan ordered the delinquent captain to report before an efficiency board, where he was reprimanded, but allowed to stay with his unit. To the division commander, the 27th may have appeared more like a collection of amateur soldiers, and less like the professional outfit that impressed the Regulars on the Mexican border the previous year. But, there was little that could be done at this point in the training. In reality, discipline within the 27th Division was quite good. An examination of the divisional court-martial orders is telling in that few cases went to trial. Drunkenness and unauthorised absences were the main infractions, and they were dealt with by regimental

commanders as was the case in the 30th Division: there were no general court-martial hearings reported that winter or spring.

Further testament to O’Ryan’s strict command style was reflected in an incident that occurred in early January. The two main British trainers, Tector and Sharp, held a séance at Wadsworth. Although the two officers were clearly enjoying a humorous moment with a group of naïve New Yorkers, O’Ryan found this less than amusing. He immediately issued a general order that made it known there would be ‘no more indiscriminate hypnotism in this camp.’⁴²

During a routine inspection in February, the 27th Division almost lost its commanding officer. O’Ryan rode to the artillery range at Glassy Rock Mountain, 25 miles outside of camp, accompanied by the 52nd Artillery Brigade commanding officer, Brig. Gen. Charles Phillips. When the two were seven miles from the range, one of guns fired. The tremendous noise scared the general’s horse as he led it up a mountain pass, and the startled animal kicked O’Ryan so hard in the stomach that he was unconscious for 15 minutes. The party was far from the first aid station at the range, and it was feared the 27th Division commander might die before receiving medical attention. However, the physically fit O’Ryan surprised everyone, and after several days of rest and nursing, he was back at work.⁴³

One can only speculate on the effect O’Ryan’s death would have had on the division. He had done so much to shape the 27th up to this point. The affection of the men of the 27th

Division for O’Ryan can hardly be overstated. This became evident when he solicited ideas for the division insignia. The men unanimously voted in favour of an elaborate insignia that consisted of the letters NYD (New York Division) monogrammed within a red-bordered black circle, along with the stars of the constellation Orion. This was a tribute to their commanding general.⁴⁴

After several months of training, the division was still not at full strength. It was undermanned by 800 men after losing so many highly qualified officers and men to other units. It received 1,200 men in late March, but O’Ryan had another solution for increasing the strength of his division. He organised recruiting parties within the division and sent them to their home localities in New York State. They were told that any man wishing to join up would be considered. Especially needed were specialists, such as mechanics, musicians, saddlers and cooks.⁴⁵ O’Ryan’s plan proved a great success. Maj. Tristin Tupper, an aide to O’Ryan and head of the recruiting parties, reported at the end of April that more than 2,000 men had signed up to join the division. One-third of them were rejected, but eventually 1,200 were transported to Spartanburg and placed in a separate camp for special intensive training.⁴⁶

Planning for 1918

While Pershing and the Allied leaders tangled over amalgamation in the early part of the new year, there was relative quiet on the battlefields of the Western Front. Other than raids, and mortar and artillery attacks, there were no major confrontations between the Allies and the Central Powers. Yet, tension still existed between the British Prime

Minister (Lloyd George), the CIGS (William Robertson), and the BEF commander (Field Marshal Haig). Haig wanted to renew the offensive in France and Flanders in January 1918, but the Supreme War Council (SWC) ceded to pressure from Lloyd George and agreed to postpone the next major operation there until 1919. By then, it was hoped, the American Army would be in place and it could be used in conjunction with the tanks, aeroplanes and guns being brought together by the Allies.⁴⁷

Lloyd George wanted an offensive in Palestine, where he hoped a successful operation would improve his country's bargaining power during the peace conference. Also, delaying an offensive on the Western Front, he could minimise the loss of life, which had reached appalling numbers during 1916 and 1917. Haig and Robertson, however, insisted that victory could only be won on the Western Front, and for this to occur, more troops were necessary. The BEF commander requested 334,000 replacements, but in spring 1918, he received only about half that number.⁴⁸

Most British divisions were reduced from twelve battalions to nine. The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and other dominions retained their divisions at 12 battalions. The commander of the 3rd Australian Division, Maj. Gen. John Monash, thought they would eventually 'follow the lead of the British Army and cut down our brigades to three battalions each.'⁴⁹ He was referring to the consequence of the conscription referendum defeat in Australia, which destroyed any immediate possibility for large numbers of replacements. Monash considered the realignment of troops a temporary dilemma and thought 'that the British Army will be able to restore its four-battalions-per-brigade

strength by absorbing one U.S. battalion in each brigade. This will be an excellent arrangement for both sides if it can be worked out.⁵⁰ He was obviously not privy to the recent arrangements made between Haig and Pershing that strictly forbade amalgamation.⁵¹

The friction within the British command came to a climax when Robertson was forced to resign as CIGS on 16 February 1918. His downfall had been brewing for some time. With Russia now out of the war and the Germans massing troops in the west, Robertson had called for a general reserve of British and French divisions. He wanted the British divisions under his control, but Haig and Pétain both balked this suggestion; neither the British nor the French had divisions to spare. Prior to this Lloyd George had limited Robertson's power by appointing Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Wilson as British representative on the Executive War Board of the SWC. Robertson countered by refusing to go to Versailles as British Permanent Military Representative, or to remain as CIGS in a reduced role.⁵² He also lost the support of his usual ally, Haig, who sided with Lloyd George, instead of threatening to resign, and reminded Robertson of his duty to the government. Robertson then reluctantly accepted the Eastern Command in the United Kingdom. Two days later, Lloyd George appointed Wilson as CIGS.⁵³

The Spring Offensives

The Western Front erupted on 21 March, a foggy Thursday morning, when the Germans launched an attack that has been called Ludendorff's last hope of victory.⁵⁴ Code-named 'Michael,' it started with a five-hour artillery barrage – the greatest of the war so far – at

4:40 A.M. against the British defences near St. Quentin. Reportedly, the guns could be heard as far away as London. The Germans fired 3.2 million shells on the first day, one-third of which were gas. 'It seemed as though the bowels of the earth had erupted,' recalled a private in the 24th British Machine-Gun Battalion.⁵⁵

Although poor visibility affected the accuracy of the barrage, the Germans were still proficient. The creeping barrage was designed to move forward on a fixed schedule, but because of poor communications, it was difficult to modify or stop once it started. The St. Quentin attack depended on the infantry advance complying with the creeping barrage. Because there was little flexibility in adjusting the firing schedule, some infantry units would have to run to keep pace.⁵⁶ One reason the Germans were initially so successful was the utilisation of the newly developed storm trooper tactics that OHL (Oberste Heeresleitung) published in January 1918. *The Attack in Position Warfare* called for destruction of enemy position, as opposed to 'nibbling away at the enemy front lines.'⁵⁷

Five hours after it started, the creeping barrage moved forward under cover of fog, and the infantry followed closely behind. The Germans pushed forward enormously fast, as 62 divisions left the defences of the Hindenburg Line and attacked the Third and Fifth British Armies on a 50-mile front between Cambrai and La Fere. The Third Army, under Gen. Sir Julian Byng, held its front after being slightly pushed back, but Gen. Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army retired 10 miles back toward the Somme. The reaction to the German attack among the ranks was one of disbelief. An Australian soldier, H.G. Taylor,

overheard some troops in his battalion complain that the 'territory that has taken months of hard fighting to acquire had now been recaptured by the Germans in a matter of a few days.'⁵⁸

The OHL had begun to seriously consider an offensive in October 1917. Ludendorff was optimistic that if the general situation of the war stabilised, and enough troops could transfer from other theatres, an assault, or *Kaiserschlacht* ('Imperial Battle'), was possible against weak British positions. The object was the separation of the British and French Armies, and capture of the Channel ports. He considered three possible locations for attack: Flanders, where the ports were vulnerable; the Somme, where British and French lines met; and the south, against the French positions. With Russia and Romania having suspended hostilities in December 1917, the Germans had been able to transfer 33 divisions to France and Belgium by the end of the year.⁵⁹

The Germans were also helped by the fact that the British were caught by surprise when the main thrust of their attack came in the Fifth Army zone. With light machine guns, satchel charges, flamethrowers and stick bombs, 62 German divisions attacked 26 British divisions. The offensive eventually penetrated 40 miles, after confusing the Allies over the location of the main thrust. Using elaborate deception measures, the Germans made it seem that the main attack would be in the French sector, near Rheims. Haig also expected an assault further north and concentrated on strengthening the Flanders front to protect the Channel ports, the lifeline of the BEF, and counted on the French to cover the south.⁶⁰ Instead, the major thrust was directed against the British positions east of

Amiens. The Fifth British Army bore the brunt of the attack and took terrific losses before falling back. It also seemed that the French capital was in peril. In Paris, more than half of the population left the city after tiring of the frequent German air raids. One historian estimates that 20,000 tickets were issued at the main rail station, which was more than double the usual number of departures.⁶¹

After achieving a tactical success in breaking through the British lines, the Germans suffered immense casualties, causing their offensive to stall at the end of March around Arras. Typical of the German General Staff, the original operations plan diverted from its strategic aims, and now the objective was the important railway centre at Amiens.⁶²

According to historian Dave Zabecki, by 26 March OHL accepted the fact that Operation Michael had stalled.

Amiens became an ad hoc tactical objective for all the wrong reasons. The Germans wanted to take the city so at least they would have something tangible to show for their efforts. They were unaware of how bad they could hurt the BEF by taking Amiens as one of the two key choke-points in the entire British rail system.⁶³

After Michael officially ended, the Second German Army sent OHL a telegram requesting some additional OHL-level, very heavy artillery batteries to try to neutralize the rail center. Within a day Ludendorff sent a telegram back denying the request, stating that OHL had higher priority missions for the guns.⁶⁴

Because II American Corps headquarters was situated in the British sector, Simonds became an eyewitness to the German offensive. He was ordered by Harbord on 23

March to serve as a special observer of the battles, and then send a weekly bulletin to Chaumont. For two weeks, Simonds visited a portion of the front to the east of Amiens, and was able to get as far as brigade headquarters, frequently even to battalion headquarters. In one bulletin, he wrote about the impressive use of machine guns by the Germans, which were sent forward in large numbers with their infantry units. An American doctor assigned to a British hospital informed Simonds that most of the wounds he was treating were the result of machine-gun fire, the highest number he had encountered since coming to France. He also reported on how the British used automatic weapons to great effect, and that one or two Lewis guns supported small units of infantry, which 'time and again held up German infantry until the guns could be pulled out and gotten away.'⁶⁵ Later bulletins sent by Simonds were less optimistic about Allied success. One reported that stories from men at the front told of 'determined rear guard actions where men and guns simply stayed until they were engulfed by the oncoming masses of Germans.' Simonds saw firsthand the withdrawal of tired divisions that 'show the effects of what they have been through. 'The companies are small and the survivors look worn out he reported.'⁶⁶

Each day, when Simonds returned from the front, he read the numerous intelligence communiqués sent by the British. They were summaries of information that provided the economic, military and political conditions of each of the Allied and Central powers. He found the ones written by the Italians particularly amusing because they frequently contained such phrases as 'retreating for strategical purposes,' or 'being covered with glory.' To break the monotony of his everyday routine and relieve the tension of the

military situation, he wrote his own bulletin that parodied the Italian style of reporting. There was much to report since the German drive into British territory caused some of the training areas allocated for the American divisions to be moved further west to the vicinity of Calais to south of the Somme.⁶⁷

Simonds was also forced to relocate his headquarters from Château Bryas to Farges, closer toward the coast. He wrote a sarcastic account of the movement of headquarters by informing Chaumont that 'II Corps has this day retired 75 kilometres. The move was a great success. Our brave clerks, stenographers, batmen, and other camp followers would have defeated the enemy with great loss had he dared attack. The move was ably supported by our noble allies.'⁶⁸ The bulletin circulated throughout G.H.Q., and the amused staff responded by sending Simonds congratulatory notes on the success of the move.⁶⁹

At the insistence of Haig, an emergency session of the Supreme War Council was convened at Doullens on 26 March to discuss the crisis. Haig now recognised that a unified command was necessary to counter the growing threat from the German Army. One outcome of the conference at the Hotel de Ville was the selection of Gen. Ferdinand Foch to coordinate the tactical operations on the Western Front, thus taking pressure off Petain and Haig.⁷⁰ However, Foch's appointment did little to immediately improve unity of command among the coalition partners since he had no real authority over his subordinates.⁷¹ As Gary Sheffield points out, Foch was a 'coordinator rather than a true commander.' Even within the French Army, he was not the field commander as Petain

remained in this position. Rather, Foch, as Sheffield suggests, 'behaved as a true coalition commander, placing himself above narrow national interests.'⁷²

The following day, the military advisory committee of the SWC met, and the main topic, as proposed by the new British representative, Gen. Sir Henry Rawlinson, was the temporary use of American units in Allied army corps and divisions. Pershing, not surprisingly, refused. He suggested that the Allies amalgamate their under-strength divisions and place them in line, and also promised that as soon as his new divisions arrived in France, they would serve as replacements.⁷³

The committee was not impressed with this idea. Bliss, in particular, opposed Pershing in this matter, urging the other representatives to adopt Rawlinson's plan and send it to the SWC as Joint Note #18. It directed that 'only American infantry and machine-gun units be brought to France.' Pershing, 'very much surprised at the attitude of Bliss,'⁷⁴ held tight and refused. The note was passed to Secretary of War Baker, in Europe at the time, who approved its contents and made the recommendation to President Wilson. By then, the President had received cables from Lloyd George and Foch, who told him that if the Allies were to hold the enemy, they must have American troops. Wilson said yes, but there was a clear failure in communication. Joint Note #18 requested preferential shipment of infantry regiments and machine-gun battalions; it did not mention numbers, or when they would arrive. Wilson claimed to have informed Allied leaders that his government 'would send troops over as fast as we could make them ready.'⁷⁵ The details of the arrangement, however, were to be handled by Pershing at his discretion.

It took almost a month of negotiations between Pershing and the British representatives, mostly the Secretary of State for War, Alfred Lord Milner, before an accord was signed on 24 April in London. Known as the London Agreement, it stipulated that during the month of May, infantry and machine-gun units of six divisions were to be shipped first by the British and trained in their sector. If additional shipping could be found, the remainder of the divisions would be brought over as well. Essentially, it was the same agreement made by Pershing and Robertson three months before. The only difference was that Pershing would not receive complete divisions all at once. Still, the Allies were not entirely happy with this agreement and continued to press Pershing for more troops. On 2 May, the SWC met in Abbeville, and Pershing suggested a compromise that the London Agreement would be extended through June. Desperate for an increased American presence on the battlefields, the British had to accept Pershing's offer. This meant they would transport 130,000 infantry and machine-gun units in May, and another 150,000 in June. American shipping be used to transport artillery, engineer, auxiliary, and other units for the American Army.⁷⁶

Pershing was a frequent visitor to II Corps headquarters that spring, and often queried Simonds about infantry tactics being used at the front. During one discussion, Simonds remembered, Pershing paid close attention to his explanation of how the 'Germans appeared to be extremely skilful in manoeuvring their small units in the open.' The British, Simonds described, 'fought with great bravery and tenacity as long as they were in the trenches, but when forced or manoeuvred out of them, they appeared to be lost until they got into another prepared position.'⁷⁷ To summarise his point, Simonds used

the analogy that the bewildered British troops were 'something like that of a naked man who suddenly discovers he is out in the open with a lot of people looking at him.'⁷⁸ He did not report whether the normally serious Pershing laughed. The AEF commander, however, was certainly happy to hear the potential of open warfare. and when he returned to Chaumont that evening, he sent a cable to the War Department, urging more training with the rifle and bayonet.⁷⁹

The morale of the British troops was surprisingly high, Simonds recorded. A July 1918 censorship report on soldiers' letters corroborated his observation. The report revealed that although there was a general sense of war weariness and distrust towards politicians and the higher command, the combat soldiers' spirits remained high. By examining a sample of censored soldier letters, it was concluded that overall, the British soldier believed his army would prevail in the end. Recent historiography confirms that even though the Fifth Army took tremendous casualties, 'morale was sound enough to allow it to fight the German Army to a standstill.'⁸⁰

Not so surprising was that morale in the German Army was failing. After a week of continuous fighting, its troops were tired. Most could not even take the time to change clothes or remove their muddy boots. The OHL battle plan encouraged constant moving, which meant little time to bring in reserves to rest troops at the front. The supply lines and transport broke down because of the difficulties in traversing a shell-pocked battlefield. Water was scarce and of course need for drinking. This meant the troops had to forgo bathing. It appeared to the German soldier that the chance for victory had

passed; the end of the war was not going to occur soon. Casualties were over 200,000, and unlike the Allies, who were relying on the Americans for replacements, the Germans had none.⁸¹ Most of the German casualties were storm troops, who were replaced by less-skilled men from other divisions.⁸²

Despite now-declining morale, the Germans had taken 1,200 square miles of territory by the time the spring offensives temporarily stalled on 5 April, as stubborn resistance by Allied soldiers inflicted those enormous losses on the attackers. 'In sheer scale,' according to one historian, 'these battles rate as the greatest British defensive victories in history.'⁸⁴ But British losses were staggering, with about 164,000 casualties, including 90,000 men taken prisoner. The BEF also lost 200 tanks, 1,000 guns, 4,000 machine guns, 200,000 rifles, and 70,000 tons of ammunition.⁸⁵

On 9 April, the Germans commenced another offensive, this time to the south of Ypres in the area of the Lys River. In Operation Georgette, the Sixth German Army struck the First British Army in an advance to take the rail junction of Hazebrouck. Like Operation Michael, the attack started with great intensity. The next day, the Fourth German Army enjoyed an advantage over the under-strength British Second Army and seized Armentières. Further gains forced General Plumer to abandon Messines and Wytschaete, which his men had fought so hard to occupy a year earlier. The desperate situation prompted Haig again to request assistance from the French. Foch, now generalissimo of the Allied Armies, had introduced a system of rotation that allowed British divisions to move to quiet French sectors and be replaced by French reserves. But, he was unable to

coerce Petain into releasing his reserves. On 10 April, Haig told Foch that the German offensive had now extended from La Bassée Canal to Messines, and that the British Army needed the French to take immediate steps to relieve some part of the British front, and actively participate in the battle.⁸⁶ Foch relented, and although he refused to relieve British forces in Flanders, he did order the V and X French Armies to the north of the Somme to relieve British positions in this section of the front. Also, he promised to send troops to Arras, but they did not reach this zone until three days later.⁸⁷

When news of the latest attack reached Chaumont, Simonds again was ordered to observe the fighting. On his way to the front, he and his driver got caught in part of the action. The Portuguese Corps (1st and 2nd Divisions) was holding a large portion of the line between Armentières and the La Bassée Canal when nine divisions of the Sixth German Army attacked. It received the brunt of the assault, and during the hasty withdrawal of the Portuguese, the automobile in which Simonds was a passenger became mired up in the confusion. Fearful of capture by the onrushing Germans, his 'chauffeur had to make some time and do some skilful driving to keep up' with the fleeing Portuguese troops in order to reach the safety of the rear.

By 11 April, the Germans were within five miles of Hazebrouck, and on this day, Haig issued a special order that told his men they had their 'backs to the wall. Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement.'⁸⁸ His troops heeded the warning, and two days later, the tide turned slightly in favour of the Allies when the Germans suffered heavy losses after being battered by the British artillery. On the Lys,

stiff resistance from the 5th and 33rd British Divisions, supported by the 1st Australian Division, stopped the German drive, and even recaptured some of the lost ground. The Germans were now the desperate army and launched another attack on 24 April towards Amiens at Villers-Bretonneux, but it too ran out of momentum and was halted by Australian and British troops. Five days later, Ludendorff called off Operation Georgette.⁸⁹

The Final Weeks of Training

Across the Atlantic, the coming of spring in South Carolina brought a welcome relief to the troops training at Camps Wadsworth and Sevier. With the difficult winter behind them, the men were no longer cooped up indoors. They had their fill of watching such films as 'The Training of a Soldier,' and were now anxious to be outside. The warmer climate helped reduce the sick rolls, and morale noticeably improved.⁹⁰ Free time was spent playing baseball and other sports that had been neglected during the past few months. The men were also in high spirits for another reason – rumours spread throughout the camps that they would soon be heading overseas. In the case of the 30th Division, it was more than a rumour. Its commanding general learned from the War Department on 14 March 1918, 'that your division will be prepared to embark for overseas service late in May and will undergo a 10-week course of training with the British Army in France.'⁹¹ It was among the six divisions, along with the 77th, 82nd, 35th, 28th and 4th, chosen for transport on British vessels as part of the training agreement with Pershing. Similar news was not received at Wadsworth, and it would be some time before O'Ryan would learn the dates of embarkation for his division.

At Sevier, the 30th Division needed to be brought up to strength before departure. Therefore, new recruits were obtained from Camp Dodge, Iowa and Camp Jackson, South Carolina. The men had previously been assigned to depot brigades, which were formed to train men who needed special help and were deemed unready for assignment to a combat unit. These organisations supplied manpower to under-strength combat divisions throughout 1918. The men arriving at Sevier were immediately placed at the mercy of non-coms and taught the rudiments of soldiering and other skills, which at the time seemed foreign.⁹²

With overseas service on the horizon, the remainder of March and the entire month of April saw intense training for both divisions. Despite Pershing's call for training in open warfare, men were spending up to three days at a time in the trenches at Sevier and Wadsworth. Infantry units also spent a great deal of time training with the artillery in the mountains where O'Ryan had his accident. An enlisted man in the 107th Infantry marvelled at the fact that after reaching the artillery range, 'you could see all over the country for miles.' Even more fascinating to Private Pierce were the stereotypical local mountaineers, who he guessed 'shave only once a year.' Furthermore, 'they think it is a wonderful sight to see a company of soldiers,' he observed. 'They all flock to the front door as if the world had come to an end.'⁹³

Officers away attending schools, such as the one for brigade commanders and field officers at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, were now brought back to the camps. There, they were educated in map reading, training methods, guard duty and military law.⁹⁴ Back at

Sevier and Wadsworth, the divisions concentrated on the fundamentals of machine-gun instruction and gas training. In the latter, infantry battalions were taken company by company and instructed in the use of respirators as gas clouds passed by.⁹⁵ A private in the 30th Division described the ordeal of gas training. The troops were taken into the woods where shots were fired. Officers told the men it was gas and instructed them to put on their gas masks. 'You clamped your nose, so you had to breathe through your mouth, through chemicals in your mask,' Private Clodfelter recalled. 'It kept the gas from getting in your lungs.'⁹⁶

At Wadsworth, gas training was even more sophisticated. The men marched to the trenches, where an elaborate system of bells and iron bars were used as alarms. As soon as the smell of gas was detected, a sentinel at the head of the stairs leading down into the trenches would kick a pail. The noise was intended to be the first warning to the men to put on their masks. Another soldier would then ring the bell or beat on the bars to alert the others of an attack. If a more general attack was suspected, then warning was sent from the headquarters by telephone.⁹⁷

Additional training was conducted by the newly arrived Allied instructors, including 15 Canadians, some of whom were veterans of Vimy Ridge, to teach the raw Americans the correct way to operate a machine gun. All of this training, according to a major in the 27th Division, was 'to make the American soldier the best-trained, most self-reliant and thorough soldier the world ever knew.' After becoming skilled with the bayonet and rifle, he would become a 'dangerous foe to combat.'⁹⁸

Despite being kept busy with training, the New Yorkers at Wadsworth were growing impatient. Soldiers wrote home complaining that the division was being ignored and told families that perhaps it was destined to sit out the conflict. This prompted Senator J.W. Wadsworth of New York, a descendent of the family after which the training camp was named, to write the War Department that the ‘delay in sending the 27th Division abroad has received considerable notice, especially when the quality of it is compared with the other divisions already gone over.’ Assistant Secretary Benedict Crowell replied that: ‘We fully appreciate the excellence of the 27th Division, and it is far from forgotten. The officers and men, and their friends at home, can rest assured that the War Department intends to use the division to full advantage.’⁹⁹

Finally, on 15 April, O’Ryan received orders for overseas deployment. The instructions were extremely vague; they made no mention of when the New Yorkers were to leave Wadsworth, or what would happen once they arrived in France. One part told O’Ryan to ‘prepare various parts of your division for shipment overseas by June 1 and the remainder a month later, since there was not enough shipping available to take the entire division over at one time.’ On the other hand, O’Ryan was told to ‘be prepared for movement to concentration camp at any time for possible earlier shipment.’ Four days later, another telegram ordered O’Ryan to ‘send advance detachment of 314 officers and men, designated therein for your division, reported ready and equipped for overseas duty.’¹⁰⁰ All of this meant he had about two weeks to prepare his men.

The decision of when the 27th and 30th were to be deployed was based largely upon the reports filed from the first round of inspections in late 1917. They were reviewed at the War Department, and a ranking system rated the divisions from the most to least deployable, based on remarks by the inspectors. Although a second round of inspections was scheduled for the spring, these would have little bearing on when the divisions were to be sent overseas. The General Staff assumed that any deficiencies could be corrected in the training areas in France. Still, the Inspector General's Office took the next inspections seriously, as evidenced by the reports filed on both the 27th and 30th Divisions.

Brig. Gen. Eli Helmick, who had conducted the first round of National Guard inspections at the end of 1917, again was charged with visiting the training camps. He made no effort to hide his disdain for the state units and wrote detailed reports on their alleged problems. He arrived at Wadsworth on 2 May and found most of the camp nearly deserted. One unit that had not yet headed north for embarkation, the 106th Infantry, received a thorough review. Helmick's report was particularly hard on the regiment's officers. He wrote that the camp was 'lacking definite control on the part of the officers, which is an index to good discipline.' Helmick noted that the 106th's problems ran deep, and his only suggestion to alleviate its troubles was for the regiment to get extensive training before being allowed to enter the front lines. He was proved correct four months later when the 106th engaged the enemy during its first major offensive and suffered significant casualties, largely the result of poor leadership on the battlefield.¹⁰¹

Helmick inspected the 30th Division on 10 May, but by then Maj. Gen. George W. Read, who had taken command of the division and most of its two infantry brigades, from Faison, had left for the port of embarkation. Thus, Helmick's inspection was largely based upon interviews with the few officers remaining in camp and internal reports left behind. He and two assistants spent five days at Sevier and admitted afterward that a full inspection could not be made. As a result, he was unable to 'arrive at any definite, just conclusions as to the training.'

However, in an angry tone, Helmick wrote that he was 'satisfied training was defective, and discipline was far from satisfactory. It would not be possible for me to attempt to fix the responsibility for this condition.' He concluded that 'numerous changes of division commander made it practically impossible to hold any one officer responsible for the training and discipline.' Furthermore, it was his opinion that it 'will take from 30 to 60 days intensive training for the infantry regiments, after they get abroad, to become ready for active service in the field.'¹⁰²

Overseas Deployment

The thrill of finally going overseas was evident throughout Sevier and Wadsworth. At the latter, Sgt. Judson W. Dennis, of the 119th Infantry, noted such excitement in his correspondence. He wrote home from South Carolina for the last time on 28 April. Dennis and the rest of his company were placed in quarantine, a standard procedure for troops preparing for overseas duty, he told his mother Minnie, living in Tip Top, Tennessee. However, the night before was a different story. 'The girls of Greenville

gave the soldier boys a farewell reception at all the dance halls in Greenville last night.' Dennis proudly told her, and 'they sure did treat us so nice.' He then turned serious and reassured his mother:

Don't be uneasy or worry about me, for we are going to make it alright. We are willing and ready to sail, for we feel it is our duty and a debt we owe to our country to be loyal sons. We feel that we are going to be cared for and someday return to our own native land of the free.¹⁰³

Dennis also wrote to his brother, Tom, on the same day, to say that his company was 'longing for the time to come for us to see sunny France. We want to see the front and go over the top.'¹⁰⁴ Sadly, Dennis would have the chance to write his mother and brother only a few more times throughout the next six months. He was killed near the Selle River in late October.¹⁰⁵

¹ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol. 1, 315.

² General Pershing to Chief of Staff, 1 January 1918, File #14903-20, Entry 11, RG 120, NARA.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Reports of Commander-in-Chief to the Chief of Staff, AEF, 1 January and 3 January 1918, Folder #21, Entry 22, RG 120, NARA.

⁵ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 74-77.

⁶ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol. 1, 287-289.

⁷ Reports of the Commander-in-Chief, 13 January 1918. 'Relations with the British,' Entry 22, RG 120, NARA.

⁸ Arthur Link, editor, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁹ David M. Esposito, 'Woodrow Wilson and the Origins of the AEF,' *Presidential Quarterly* (Volume XIX, Number 1, Winter 1989), 127-129.

¹⁰ Pershing, 105.

¹¹ David Trask, *The United States in the Supreme War Council* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 73-79.

¹² 'Agreement between the Commanders-in-Chief of the American and British Forces in France regarding the training of the American troops with British troops,' 31 January 1918, File #14903, Entry 11. RG 120, NARA. (hereafter cited as #14903).

¹³ William B. Fowler, *British-American Relations, 1917-1918; the Role of Sir William Wiseman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 130-135 and 145-153.

¹⁴ File #14903.

¹⁵ Pershing to Haig, 'Papers Relating to American Troops Serving with the British,' 12 February 1918, Folder #284, Entry 267, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁶ Robert Bruce, 159-161.

¹⁷ Historical Section, Army War College, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces, General Headquarters, Army Corps, Services of Supply, and Separate Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937), 223. This general order also established I, III and IV Corps, which eventually served under the AEF First Army.

¹⁸ George S. Simonds, 'General Correspondence,' # 205667, Entry 25, RG 94, NARA.

¹⁹ Henry Blaine Davis, Jr., *Generals in Khaki* (Raleigh: Pentland Press, 1998).

²⁰ Shrader, 107.

²¹ George S. Simonds, 'Confidential Stenographic Notes of a Talk by Brig. Gen. George S. Simonds on Operations of II Corps, AEF, Given at Historical Section, AWC, 14 October 1931,' #5436, Entry 310C.RG 165, (hereafter Simonds, Notes).

²² Pershing, 23.

²³ Simonds, Notes.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Lt. Gen. Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, 'Diary 9 April-21 May 1918,' Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge University.

²⁹ John Bourne, 'Letter to Author,' *Charles Bonham-Carter*, 17 May 2005.

³⁰ Simon Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front, 1914-18: Defeat into Victory* (Oxon: Frank Cass, 2005), 136-137.

³¹ Brig. Gen. James McAndrew and Lt. Col. Alfred W. Bjornstad, 'The Plan for the General Staff College,' 1 November 1917, Entry 567, RG 120, NARA, and James J. Cooke, *Pershing and His Generals: Command and Staff in the AEF* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 34-35.

³² Maj. Gen. Sir A.H. Russell, New Zealand Division, 'Attachment of Officers of the United States Army,' February 1918, WA 22 6 23, New Zealand National Archives.

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- ³³ File #14903.
- ³⁴ Worth P. Stewart, *The History of Company K, 117th Infantry in the Great War*, 100.
- ³⁵ War Department, *Annual Reports of the Surgeon General*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 404-406.
- ³⁶ Headquarters, 105th Engineer Regiment, 'Schedule of Work for the Week Beginning at Guard Mount, 21 April 1918, File 230-504, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁷ Col. Jay J. Morrow, Corps of Engineers, to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, through the Commanding General, 30th Division, 'Inspection of 105th Regiment of Engineers and Engineer Train,' 21 February 1918. File 230-66.1, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁸ Murphy and Thomas, 10-11. Townsley had taken over command of the division on 15 October 1917 from Maj. Gen. William S. Scott, who had taken temporary command from Maj. Gen. John F. Morrison on 23 September 1917.
- ³⁹ 30th Division, 'First Weekly Survey,' 24 February 1918, Entry 378, RG 165, NARA.
- ⁴⁰ Murphy and Thomas, 49.
- ⁴¹ Report of the Adjutant General, 27th Division, File 333.1, 7 March 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴² 'When the Soldiers Came to Town,' *The Spartanburg Herald*, 8 January 1918, and General Orders 4, 6 January 191, Entry 452, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴³ *New Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 6 February 1918, Section 8-E, page 3.
- ⁴⁴ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 411-412.
- ⁴⁵ Commanding General, 27th Division, to the Adjutant General of the Army, 'Recruitment of this Division,' 5 January 1918, 27th Division Historical Files, File 341.8, Entry 1291, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴⁶ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 97.
- ⁴⁷ Simkins, 45-46.
- ⁴⁸ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, 81-83.
- ⁴⁹ War Letters of General Monash, 16 March 1918, Volume 11, 3DRL/2316, Series 1, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (hereafter AWM).
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² Brock Millman, *Pessimism and the British War Policy, 1916-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 166-169.
- ⁵³ David French, *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 216-219, and Simkins, 45-48. For further insight into Robertson during this period, see Woodward, *Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, 187-201* and David R. Woodward, 'Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig,' in Haig, *A Reappraisal On 70 Years*, Bond and Cave, 74.

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- ⁵⁴ Unknown author, *The Army Quarterly* (Volume XLI, Number 2, January 1941), 263.
- ⁵⁵ Martin Middlebrook, *The Kaiser's Battle* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 151.
- ⁵⁶ David T. Zabecki, *Steel Wind: Colonel George Bruchmuller and the Birth of Modern Artillery* (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 53-56 and 72-76. Historians debate as to which army actually invented the creeping barrage; we do know that the Germans used a variation in the east in 1915, while the Allies did the same in 1916.
- ⁵⁷ Timothy T. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Change in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981), 49.
- ⁵⁸ H.G. Taylor, *The Mob That Shot the Camel* (AWM 8863), 137, AWM.
- ⁵⁹ Martin Kitchen, *The German Offensives of 1918* (Gloucestershire: Tempus Books, 2001), 53-55. Also see Dave Zabecki, (Cranfield University, 2003).
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, 60.
- ⁶¹ Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People* (Dover: Berg Publishers, 1983), 312-313.
- ⁶² Ibid, 49-53.
- ⁶³ Dave Zabecki to Author. 2 December 2005. 'Comments on Operations Michael and Georgette.'
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ George S. Simonds to AEF, G-5, 'Bulletins 3 and 7,' 28 March 1918 and 1 April 1918, #1511-1 and -2, Entry 7, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Simonds, Notes.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Gary Sheffield and John Bourne, editors, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters, 1914-1918* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 394. Diary entry of 26 March 1918.
- ⁷¹ French, 226-227.
- ⁷² Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, 69.
- ⁷³ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 357-364.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid.
- ⁷⁵ Smythe, 104.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid, 115-117.
- ⁷⁷ Simonds, Notes.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Smythe, 110.

⁸⁰ G.D. Sheffield, 'The Morale of the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918: A Case Study in the Importance of the "Human Factor" in Twentieth Century Warfare,' in Geoffrey Jensen and Andrew Wiest, editors, *War in the Age of Technology: Myriad Faces of Modern Armed Conflict* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 125-127.

⁸¹ Kitchen, 56.

⁸² Passingham, Ian, 'The Kaiser's War,' *Military Illustrated* (September 2003), No. 184, 38.

⁸⁴ Kitchen, 57-58, and Sheffield, 195-196.

⁸⁵ Smythe, 96.

⁸⁶ Kitchen, 103, and Blake, 302.

⁸⁷ Kitchen, 103.

⁸⁸ Terraine, *Ordeal of Victory*, 432-433.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 106-108, and Simkins, 54.

⁹⁰ Morale Reports, 30th Division, Entry 368, Record Group 165, and The Adjutant General of the Army to the Commanding General, 30th Division, Camp Sevier, Misc. File, 14 March 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁹¹ The Adjutant General of the Army to the Commanding General, 30th Division, Camp Sevier, 14 March 1918, 30th Division Correspondence, File 370.E.E. Entry 124, RG 120, NARA.

⁹² Stewart, 10.

⁹³ Pvt. Fred Elston Pierce, 'Letters,' 4-17 March 1918, <http://www.oryansroughnecks.org/letters.html>

⁹⁴ War Department, Office of the Chief of Staff, 'Memorandum for the Director, War Plans Division,' files of the Brigade and Field Officers School, for Sam Houston, Entry 310, RG 165, NARA.

⁹⁵ Stewart, 10.

⁹⁶ R. Jackson Marshall III, *Memories of World War I: North Carolina Doughboys on the Western Front* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1998), 19.

⁹⁷ Gow, 13 February 1918.

⁹⁸ Sutcliffe, 53.

⁹⁹ Acting Secretary of War to the Honourable J.W. Wadsworth, Jr., 12 March 1918, #10766-25, Entry 296, RG 165, NARA.

¹⁰⁰ The Adjutant General to the Commanding General, 27th Division, Camp Wadsworth, 15-17 April 1918, War Department Cables, RG 407, NARA.

¹⁰¹ Whitehorne, 165.

¹⁰² Brig. Gen. Eli A. Helmick, N.A. Inspector, to the Adjutant General of the Army, 'Report of Inspection, 30th Division,' #97-8-64, Entry 296, RG 165, NARA.

¹⁰³ Sgt. Judson W. Dennis, Company L, 119th Infantry, American Expeditionary Forces, 28 April 1918, <http://www.pastvoices.com/usa/jud19180428.shtml>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Judson W. Dennis, 'Burial File,' Entry 1942, RG 92, NARA.

Chapter 3: Carried Over

Sailing to France

The advance party of the 30th Division left Camp Sevier on 30 April 1918 and moved north for embarkation overseas. It was customary for an officer and small detachment to sail ahead so that arrangements could be made in France for reception of the division. Other elements of the 30th departed shortly thereafter, and by the end of May, the entire division had left South Carolina. Typically, it took two days by train to reach the embarkation ports of the Northeast. Cheering crowds greeted the troops when they passed through the towns of North Carolina and Virginia, and during stops in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, Red Cross workers served them coffee and sandwiches.¹

For the men of the 30th Division, many of whom had spent their lives in the rural south, the departure combined fear and excitement. A soldier from the 119th Infantry noted that when the train approached New York City, the sight of the Statue of Liberty in the distance 'did much to ease his nerves.'² Sergeant Dennis, also from the 119th, was overjoyed by the hospitality his unit received. 'Don't spend another year in the south,' he wrote his brother. 'Come to the northern states. They are the garden spot of the world.' Dennis was impressed by a 'big reception' given by the New York City YWCA where the girls 'sport diamonds as common as an old shoe' and 'are the friendliest people I ever met.'³

The War Department conducted the movement with detailed efficiency. Because so many men were heading to terminals in New York and New Jersey at the same time, trains going north moved at a slow pace so they would not all arrive at the same time. This gave ample opportunity to write letters or sleep. Men rode in comfort: they rested in passenger or overnight sleeping cars, while company cooks took up residence in baggage cars that had been converted to kitchens.

Upon entering the New York City area, men were assigned to an embarkation camp – either Camp Mills on Long Island or Camp Merritt in New Jersey (17 miles north of Hoboken). Merritt was the larger and busier of the two camps, and by the Armistice, more than 578,000 men had passed through there.⁴ Facilities included a base hospital, 39 warehouses, and a bakery that produced 22,000 loaves a day. Troops were expected to stay in the camps a few days before movement to the port at Hoboken.⁵

Days were marked by inspection, instruction in behaviour aboard ship, and indoctrination. For officers, it was a busy time, as they had to ensure that service records were in order, and that men were issued clothing and equipment. For soldiers, there were woollen puttees and caps, instead of canvas leggings and campaign hats. As a grim reminder of war's potential consequence, each soldier was issued two aluminium identification discs that contained his name, rank, unit designation and serial number. In the event of death, one disc remained around the neck of the deceased man when buried, while the other was sent to the Graves Registration Service headquarters for inclusion in the casualty file.⁶

Soldiers also received their final pay before leaving the U.S. The War Department recognised that converting foreign currency might be a problem, so to eliminate unnecessary money changing; soldiers were paid in either French francs or British pounds. The Army encouraged families to visit loved ones, and through efforts of the YWCA, hostess houses provided relations with meals and lodging. Commanding officers were discouraged from issuing leave passes in an effort to keep men from the vices of New York City.⁷

Before a soldier was allowed to board the transport, there was a final physical examination, and anyone diagnosed with a contagious disease was not allowed to sail. To prepare for what lay ahead, there were motion pictures about lifeboat drills, along with lectures about the threat of German U-boat attacks. Soldiers were required to sign and address cards to next of kin indicating that 'the vessel on which they sailed had arrived safely.' The cards were kept at the port of embarkation and mailed when a ship was reported arrived.⁸

By the time the entire 30th Division reached France on 2 July 1918, it had used 25 transports to take it across the ocean. Most transports were British, although the 105th Engineers was 'carried over' on the *Talhybius*, a 'leaking and dirty' Canadian transport that was once used as a cattle boat.⁹ Before any of the ships left the docks, precautions were taken to prevent sabotage. Portholes were closed, and all men, with the exception of guards, were sent below deck. Once the transports entered open water, the troops were assigned submarine observation duty. Each ship had a specific place for observation,

with posts connected to a central station by telephone.¹⁰ Ships were equipped with 6-inch guns and travelled in a convoy, normally with 10 others and a group of Navy destroyers. A zigzag course was developed in an effort to confuse and dodge the prowling enemy submarines.¹¹

Although none of the transports carrying either 27th or 30th Division troops encountered danger, U-boat attacks were a serious threat, as shown by the sinking of the *Tuscania* on 12 February 1918. On its way to Le Havre with 2,013 men aboard, the transport was struck by the two torpedoes fired by UB-77, and it sank seven miles north of Rathlilin Island. The attack cost 230 lives. Despite stringent efforts to protect the ships, the *Tuscania* was the first of several transports attacked in 1918.¹²

A typical voyage was that taken by the 119th Infantry, which sailed on the *Haverford*. The transport was accompanied by a school of porpoises that joined the convoy and unknowingly provided entertainment during the slow trip across the Atlantic.¹³ It took 12 days to reach England – average time for a transport. Ships to France took two days more. Seasickness was prevalent, and when a man was well enough to eat, he was fed British fare. Instead of fried chicken, pork chops, hot biscuits, and other American delicacies, a meal might consist of mutton and orange marmalade. ‘Six meals a day – three up, three down’ is how one soldier described the difficulty of eating.¹⁴

Transportation of the 27th Division was similar to that of the 30th Division, except that a few of its regiments sailed from Newport News, Virginia. It was a minor port compared

to Hoboken, and prior to sailing, the men were housed at Camp Stuart – smaller than Merritt and Mills. The 107th Infantry spent a week here, where men slept in ‘warm, comfortable barracks, furnished with spring beds instead of canvas cots.’¹⁵ They travelled aboard the USS *Susquehanna*, a captured German vessel previously named the *Rhein*. Slightly larger than other troop transports, men called their quarters ‘The Black Hole of Calcutta’ because they were located so far below deck. The 107th had shown stamina during its months of training at Wadsworth, but General O’Ryan was concerned they would go soft during the voyage.¹⁶ He therefore issued orders for the regiment to continue physical exercise aboard the ships. It was to be done as long as it did not interfere with the policing of quarters, guard duty, administration, and kitchen policing.¹⁷

To help pass the time on board, newspapers printed wireless news and ship gossip. The *Calamares*, which transported the 53rd Brigade and the 104th and 105th Machine-Gun Battalions, produced *The Sea Serpent*. It attempted to bring humour into the boring passage. The paper announced the weather forecast as ‘dry – until we reach France,’ and indicated the regulation uniform would be ‘life belts – day and night.’ Another transport called its paper the *Mid Ocean Comin’ Thru*; still another named its publication the *Rail Splitter*, in honour of the ship’s name, the *President Lincoln*.¹⁸

Arrival

Units of the 30th Division, such as the 117th Infantry, docked in Liverpool, England and remained there for a day before being transported by train to Dover, England for the passage to Calais, France. As the train passed through London, people waved flags and

handkerchiefs to welcome the Americans. After a two-hour trip aboard a channel steamer, the regiment reached Calais. Instead of cheering crowds, the doughboys heard distant artillery fire that told them they were now in a war zone. The nighttimes brought further reminders of what war was about, in the form of air raids by the Germans.¹⁹

At Calais, the men had their first look at the devastation of four years of war. When a soldier from the 105th Engineers wandered through the city, he was shocked by the sight of ‘hundreds of little children on the streets all day begging,’ and how the roads were ‘narrow and dirty, with a few street cars in operation, manned by women conductors and motor women.’²⁰ Over many years, Calais had seen its share of destruction. Twenty-two miles from the English coast, it was once the eighth largest port in France, known for factories that processed silk and cotton tulle. In 1347, the city put up a heroic stand before capitulating to the English, and it took more than two centuries before the French recaptured it. By 1918, they still maintained control of the city, but numerous German air raids had laid much of it in ruins.²¹

The 27th Division had not yet received its training orders, and, therefore, sailed directly to France and disembarked at Brest. The port city dates back to the Romans, and it had a population of 90,000 just before World War I. In 1918, the U.S. Army and Navy took over Brest, including its famous château.²² Sergeant Jacobson, along with two other men from the 107th Infantry, went sightseeing one day during their brief stay in the city. After ‘turning the corner of a particularly beautiful avenue,’ Jacobson recorded, ‘we forgot the warbling birds and the idyllic quiet of the sleeping city (Brest). We saw our first

Germans! We beheld perhaps 50 prisoners marching between blue-clad poilus. Never could one imagine a motlier crew. They were unkempt of hair and person, shockingly in need of razoring [sic], and their uniforms were of every cut and colour ever issued in Germany.’²³

A more frequent sight in Brest and other French ports was troops on leave. For the right price, a meal, hot bath, or female companionship could be found. The brothels in France were in great demand, as witnessed by British Capt. Robert Graves. On one occasion in Calais, he passed by a brothel and saw a ‘queue of 150 men waiting outside the door, each to have his short turn with one of the three women in the house.’²⁴ They were probably visiting one of the houses licensed by the French. Even though legal prostitutes were supposedly inspected on a weekly basis, British and French authorities still recorded high numbers of venereal cases. This was of no surprise to Col. Hugh H. Young. The Johns Hopkins urologist witnessed some of the medical examinations of prostitutes. He was appalled by the unsanitary methods employed and advised General Pershing to keep Americans away from the houses.²⁵

Pershing had previous experience with organised brothels during the Mexican Punitive Expedition. In 1916, he had established a fenced-in compound where prostitutes were kept and routinely examined. Upon entering the area, soldiers were examined, and when they left, they were given a tube of prophylactic ointment. There were no documented cases of disease during the expedition. Despite the success in Mexico, Pershing never seriously considered a similar operation in France, for the simple reason that he did not

want families back in America to think he condoned immorality in the AEF. Whereas the Punitive Expedition was conducted with Regulars, the Army was now overwhelmingly citizen soldiers.²⁶ Pershing issued three general orders in 1917, warning the troops already in France, and as a preventative measure for those soon to arrive.

The first order urged officers to lecture men on the virtues of staying clean, and instructed medics to conduct examinations every two weeks. Pershing established prophylactic stations in every command, and any soldier who failed to get treatment within three hours of infection was subject to court-martial. He issued another order that established regimental infirmaries so soldiers could be at the front for treatment with their units and not crowd hospitals in the rear. The third order was more severe in that it demanded that officers 'give personal attention to matters pertaining to the prevention of venereal disease. No laxity or half-hearted efforts in this regard will be tolerated.' Pershing declared houses of prostitution and saloons off limits; limited passes and a report of infection rate were required in ports such as Brest and Calais.²⁷

While some commanders turned blind eyes while their men consorted with prostitutes, O'Ryan paid close attention to the commander-in-chief's third general order. Wherever the 27th billeted in France and Belgium, he ordered military police to stand picket in front of houses of ill repute to discourage his men from visiting.²⁸ This measure apparently worked since only five men from the 27th were reported infected at the end of June. The 30th Division was even healthier, with only three reported cases that month.²⁹ In both

instances, it is likely that some of the cases were contracted before the men left the United States.

Preparation for Training Continues

Units of the 30th Division left Calais during the final week of May and moved south to the Eperlecques training area. Afterward, the first overseas training camp was established at Inglinghem in Belgium, where units were affiliated to the 39th British Division. This division was originally composed of locally raised battalions, mainly from the south of England, and like many British divisions on the Western Front, it had suffered enormous casualties during the Somme Offensive, and at Third Ypres. The 39th was reduced to a cadre in May 1918 and never reconstituted. Before departing for the training area, the current division commander, Major General Read, issued a general order to help protect the men of the 30th against the dangers they might encounter. 'Where troops are in tents, it is not necessary to pitch tents in regular order,' he warned. 'They should be pitched under trees and alongside hedges, where as much concealment can be secured as possible. Furthermore, embankments, 3 feet high and 2 feet wide at the top, will be thrown up around each tent, in order to give protection from bursting bombs. This work will be done at once.'³⁰

The 27th Division departed Brest during the first week of June, and any concern O`Ryan had about the physical condition of the men was put to rest. Regiments hiked through one village after another, carrying packs, ammunition, and rifles weighing about 80 pounds, without a soldier lagging behind.³¹ At this time, the division received word that

it was going to be trained by the British in the Rue-Buigny area. O’Ryan looked to this decision with pride and told his men: ‘Without a doubt, our division was selected for cooperation with the British not only because of its military excellence, but also the well-known intelligence of its personnel and their ability as New Yorkers to get along with strangers under any circumstances.’³²

O’Ryan’s division commenced training on 10 June 1918, attached to the cadre of the 66th British Division, which had been designated the 66th (2/East Lancashire) Division and formed from Second-line troops of the Territorial Force units in the 42nd Division. It supplied drafts to overseas units before heading to France in March 1917, where it fought with distinction. The 27th Division commander knew from the inspections at Wadsworth that his division had some minor disciplinary problems, and these would have to be addressed immediately, before training with the British got underway. On 9 June 1918, Bulletin #39 ‘was issued to each squad in the division armed with the rifle... to be frequently read and discussed by the men of the squad.’ Among the points covered in almost three pages, he stressed: ‘Be disciplined; shoot to hit; preserve your morale; never be surprised; know your gas defence; and finally, read and follow orders governing personal hygiene, sanitation, rules of the road, and march discipline.’ He promised: ‘Do these things and the enemy will always fear the 27th Division.’³³

Entering the British Sector

Assigned temporarily to the American divisions were the British officers and other ranks who had accompanied them from the United States after serving as instructors in the

camps. The British General Staff granted special permission 'for them to remain with the American divisions during their period in the back area since they may be of use to assist in the general training.'³⁴ Once the Americans were ready to enter the line, the British were to go back to England for reassignment.

The first words of advice given to the newly arrived Americans dealt with the frequent danger of air attacks. Lights were not permitted at night, they were told: even the lighting of matches outside of tents was prohibited. However, such precautions did little to deter persistent German pilots. Bombs fell 'almost every evening when the weather was clear,' a doughboy recorded in his diary.³⁵ The British, used to the constant bombardments, headed for the dugouts, while the green Americans watched the air raids and 'appeared to enjoy the performance as much as a child enjoys the circus.'³⁶ They were, of course, destined to learn this lesson, and would not have to be reminded twice to go for cover.

Since February, Colonel Simonds had worked countless and often frustrating hours with his British counterparts to prepare for the 280,000 doughboys arriving in the spring. He had ironed out most of the kinks so that when the 100 divisions set foot on French soil in May and June, they could train in the British sector without delay. Simonds sorted through British training publications, such as *The Training and Employment of Platoons*, *The Training and Employment of Divisions*, *Bayonet Training*, and *Scouting and Patrolling*, that Pershing had ordered Colonel Bacon to send to II Corps for its officers.³⁷ He also dealt with more complicated matters, such as soldier's mail, the issue of rations, and the discipline of troops while attached to the British.

The censorship of mail had concerned the British Army since the Boer War, and in 1914, all mail sent from France was passed through a censor, who blacked out any mention of location or numbers of troops. On the outside of the envelope, only the soldier's name and unit could appear.. Any words the censor thought potentially helpful to the enemy were deleted. Simonds and the British intelligence agreed before the first Americans arrived that they would follow the British procedure and use the green envelopes and Field Service cards the British soldiers had been using since war commenced.

The mail problem involved complexities, and lectures were arranged to explain the regulations and encourage doughboys to use the 'Field Postcard,' which had fixed phrases, such as 'I am quite well,' 'I am wounded,' 'I have received your letter,' and 'I have received no letter from you.' The soldier would cross out the inapplicable phrases and send the card home. Most preferred to write letters, which kept censors busy, as they crossed out certain phrases, or, in some instances, confiscated the correspondence altogether.³⁸

Despite the great effort placed on the mail issue by Simonds and the British to ensure a smooth operation, the Americans still managed to complicate matters. First, the AEF Postal Service at Chaumont failed to establish an Army Post Office (A.P.O.) in the British area. Therefore, mail sent to officers and men in II American Corps either went astray, or was routed to a BEF post office at Hesdin. From there, it was sent by motorcycle sidecar to the II Corps statistical office for distribution. The long process

caused much delay in delivery to the recipient. Not until early September 1918 did the Americans in the British sector have their own post office, A.P.O. 790.³⁹

There was also the problem of men blatantly violating the censorship regulations. Each month, the British would issue a report on censorship of mail sent by American troops, since outgoing mail passed through the BEF. One of the more serious cases involved Pvt. Curtis Conion of the 412th Telegraph Battalion. In an innocent letter to his mother in Texas, which mostly dealt with her health issues, a small map that showed the location of his unit was inserted between the envelope and the folded pages. The letter was stamped approved by his unit censor, but opened by the British War Office censors and confiscated. The violation was reported to II Corps headquarters and Private Conion was tried by a court-martial. As a result, he was to forfeit two-thirds of his pay per month, and to perform hard labour for one month.⁴⁰

An even more important issue to contend with was feeding the troops. To simplify matters, Simonds agreed that the British would handle rations. A British officer was detailed as a senior supply officer, and, along with two assistants and a detachment of 75 men, he distributed rations at a railhead. From there, the rations were delivered daily by horse or motor transport, known as pack or ration trains. They were then handed over to American division senior supply officers and distributed to the regiments.⁴¹

Despite the best efforts of the American regimental quartermasters, there were early difficulties in distribution, as noted sarcastically by lieutenant, later Maj. Gen., J.M.L.

Grover, who was assigned to train the 107th American Infantry. 'They had a little organisation for meals and lined up in single file to receive their portions.' Gower noticed. 'The result was that as the last man got his dinner, the first man was back for the next meal. There wasn't a single night that I was with the Americans when at least one company failed to get anything, although they'd been working with us then for some weeks.'⁴²

Once the rations found their way to the hungry troops, it is clear from comments made by them that the food was disagreeable. Although Americans had been introduced to British rations aboard transports, they had difficulty with the foreign food and complained bitterly. Accustomed to large portions, the doughboys were issued a small meat ration, tea instead of coffee, and cheese. Receiving the brunt of complaints, Simonds appointed a board to investigate the alleged problems.

The board concluded that British rations were slightly less than those issued by the U.S. Army. The meat ration was deemed sufficient, and it suggested that American soldiers would get accustomed to eating cheese. To appeal to the American palate, the board recommended more vegetables, and coffee rather than tea. According to O'Ryan, the British soldiers found the last recommendation very peculiar since every afternoon at 5:00, he claimed, 'they had a tea break, no matter what the battlefield situation or where they were located.'⁴³

Simonds also had to decide how disciplinary actions that reached the level of a court martial should be handled. After consulting with the AEF judge advocate general, he decided that II Corps would deal with any infractions committed while training with the British. Only court-martials convened by American officers could convict, and sentences were to be carried out only by American authorities.⁴⁴ This made sense to the British, since the Dominion forces under BEF command handled their own disciplinary actions.⁴⁵

Training Begins

To help Simonds prepare for instruction in the British sector, the G-5 (training) Division of AEF headquarters wrote a 25-page guide, *Program of Training for American Divisions with the British*, and distributed it to the divisions in II Corps. Each period of training was outlined, along with the hours necessary to train each unit. Calculations were based on a minimum six-hour day, with Sundays and holidays excluded.⁴⁶

The training programme provided 10 weeks for infantry and machine-gun troops in three periods. The first period was to be undertaken out of line for a minimum of four weeks, encompassing drill, musketry and physical exercise. This included tutoring in infantry weapons, such as Lewis guns, light trench mortars, bombs and grenades. During this period, signallers, engineers and medical personnel received their specialised training. During the second period, the Americans were to be attached to British troops in the line for three weeks. Officers and non-coms entered for a 48-hour period; men combined with British companies and platoons for shorter periods. During the third period, each

regiment trained in a rear area for three to four weeks for advanced instruction. This included complicated procedures like the manoeuvring of battalions and companies.⁴⁷

The principal advantage of training with the British was the extensive experience both their officers and NCOs provided. But, as one might have expected, there were problems. One was that the Americans expressly refused to allow training to be dominated by British doctrine. Continuing to oversee the instruction on the British side was Lieutenant General Bonham-Carter, and his diary and correspondence show that he met with Simonds or visited training areas on a daily basis. Among his private remarks are: 'Spent all day visiting Americans; officers good – NCOs bad; men first rate; and the men in the ranks did not appear to render their officers the respect given by ours to officers on account of holding a commission, nor the trustful obedience and devotion our men give to any officer who proves his worth. They always seemed to be keeping their end up.'⁴⁸

Training with the British

The main problem that persistently hampered the training process was how much of a role the British were to play in instructing the Americans. Simonds sensed 'the tendency of the British was to actually take over the training of the platoons and regiments' from the inexperienced American officers, who 'wanted to be friendly and cordial' with their allies. He sent a tersely worded memorandum to division commanders: 'A clear understanding has been reached with the British Training Section that American authorities retain absolute control of, and responsibility for, the training. British

instructors will lend assistance to American officers, mainly by going through the work beforehand with them and during the actual instruction of the troops. In no case during this training will British officers take command of American troops.'⁴⁹ Such feelings were known to Haig, who responded by telling Bonham-Carter: 'Our officers are not to command and order the Americans about, but must only help American officers by their advice and experience to become both leaders in the field, as well as instructors.'⁵⁰

The British soldiers whom Bonham-Carter assigned to instruct the Americans were, in some cases, fresh from combat. Three years before, they had been much like the Americans as recruits heeding the call of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. Now they were survivors of the Somme and Passchendaele. The weight of their experience was quite apparent to a private in the 105th American Machine-Gun Battalion, who viewed his British instructors as 'a tired, inarticulate crowd.'⁵¹ But such experience would be an advantage when the two allies went into battle together. Lt. Col. Sir Phillip A. Christison, a former battalion commander in the 15th (Scottish) Division, was ordered to help train the Americans. His assignment was to command the 7th Cameron Highlanders (Training Battalion), one of the many skeleton units formed for the purpose of assisting the doughboys. After his month-long assignment with the 119th American Infantry, he bemoaned: 'I never saw my old and loved battalion again.'⁵²

Remarkably, spirits remained high within the British ranks, despite heavy losses during the 1916 and 1917 campaigns, as well as the recent German Spring offensives. The British, at this stage in the war, were ideal tutors. As Paddy Griffith wrote: 'By 1917.

BEF infantry units had come of age... as some of the battalions had maintained a reputation for good discipline, cohesion, and an aggressive desire to dominate no man's land at every opportunity.'⁵³ Although perhaps not appreciating it at the time, the Americans would receive the benefit of the British hard fighting at the Somme, Passchendaele, and, later, St. Quentin. While French units also trained AEF divisions in their sector and had much to contribute, the British offered them even more. At French headquarters, Maj. Paul Clark observed that for 'their first period of instruction, the Americans are just as well off, if not much better off, with the British as with the French. There is a community of language, and there is no doubt that the discipline of the British is superior to the discipline of the French.'⁵⁴

In 1918, the composition of the American Army in many ways resembled that of the British Army when it first entered the war. In August 1914, when the war commenced, the British Army consisted of small cadre of pre-war Regulars, supplemented by a larger Territorial Force that nearly doubled the original BEF. The latter was organised much like the American National Guard regiments. By January 1918, the British Army was filled largely with conscripts.⁵⁵

It is true that losses in their battles over four years had changed British units. But such changes in British Army divisions from 1914-1918 had little effect on their ability to keep fighting. 'In 1918, as in earlier years,' according to a study of morale in the BEF, 'some units were more effective than others, and a host of reasons determined military effectiveness. Leadership, morale, training and tactical ability were among the most

important.’ Recently drafted men survived by blending with veterans, and ‘the survival of distinctive traditions and ethos in some units supports this contention. Conscription did not in itself affect combat performance to any great degree.’⁵⁶

One area that neither Simonds nor the British could prepare for was how the American and British officers and men would actually get along as allies. This would not be an easy relationship since criticism of the Americans ran deep with some in the British officer corps, who, obviously, were still annoyed by Pershing’s rejection of amalgamation. One fervent critic was Maj. Walter Guinness (later the first Lord Moyne). As a staff officer of the 66th British Division, Guinness became well acquainted with the 27th Division and its commanding officer, who he described as ‘a typical Irish soldier of fortune.’ Guinness’ diary is replete with negative comments about the American officers and their ability to command: ‘The senior American officers were very poor indeed. Many of them had been Regular Army officers, physically and mentally unfit for responsible commands under the strenuous conditions of modern war.’⁵⁷

Guinness’ harshest criticism, however, was aimed at the training programme Pershing organised for the doughboys. He considered the AEF commander ‘to be the stupidest man in France, showing quite remarkable narrow-mindedness and obstinacy. He [Pershing] worked out a so-called “schedule” of training, which itemised, almost hour by hour, what the American troops were to do. In many respects, the schedule was perfectly absurd. For instance, it made no provision whatsoever for route marching, and although in our weekly confidential reports on the American troops, which we had to furnish our

G.H.Q., we continually emphasised this omission. there was nothing we could do to get it remedied.’⁵⁸

Furthermore, Guinness found it ludicrous that ‘all troops, wherever they were billeted, had to do exactly the same programme for each week of their course. We were obliged to organise the area to afford special facilities near the coast for long-range musketry and in the southern part for manoeuvres of, say, a whole brigade at a time. The third area was only suited for elementary training, owing to the difficulty of getting large tracts of land for manoeuvres and the impossibility of making safe rifle ranges. Nothing, however, would induce American G.H.Q. to remodel its “schedule” so as to conform to the necessities of the training ground.’⁵⁹

While there is much truth in Guinness’ comments, he was probably incorrect in one area. ‘Many of the American divisions no doubt would have liked to take advantage of our organisation and advice, but they were often too afraid to do so,’ he claimed. ‘because they had a vicious system under which the Inspector’s Staff used to arrive unexpectedly, look at troops at work, and send in a report to American G.H.Q.’⁶⁰ In this regard, Guinness greatly exaggerates the system of inspection in the AEF. Instead, inspectors made every attempt ‘not to interfere with programmes of instruction,’ according to one historian.⁶¹

Less cynical than Guinness was Lt. L.G. Pinnell of the 57th British Machine-Gun Battalion. He felt it was his task to assist Americans in adopting ‘British principles of

tactics and organisation. With all due respect to our French allies,' Pinnell thought. 'we are admittedly more advanced than they.' He surmised that 'the system of organisation adopted by the Americans is halfway between ours and the French.' His commanding officer responded firmly, but sympathetically: 'It is out of the question to attempt to influence the course of training or system that they will adopt. I am afraid things must take their course.'⁶²

How well the American and British troops interacted with each other varied. An advantage was that both spoke the same language. It was exciting for the majority of soldiers from both armies to hear their native language spoken for the first time with a far different accent. To the British soldier, the popular stereotype of an American was that of the cowboy. It was perpetuated by popular works of western fiction published since the 1870s that circulated around the world, and enhanced by the success of Buffalo Bill Cody's *Wild West Show*, which toured Britain on three occasions. Cody's last tour was in 1916, and 'by then, the show had become the best-known representation of America,' according to one chronicler of this period.⁶³

The letters, diaries and published histories from both the doughboys in the 27th and 30th Divisions and the British Tommies reveal, in rich detail, their personal feelings about each other. This is especially true about the relationship between the southern soldiers in the 30th Division and their British instructors. Lt. Col. Graham Seton Hutchison of the 33rd British Division was typical of those troops who believed the cowboy stereotype. He was quite disappointed that not a single doughboy in the 30th American Division

resembled 'a gentleman in a wide-brimmed hat, aiming sly shots at peaceful drinkers, rifling his pockets, and disappearing into the vastness of the mountains of Arizona,' as portrayed in the movies. Instead, the 'North Carolinians from the hills of southern America' struck him as more like his own division's Highlanders.⁶⁴

Still another surprised British soldier wrote that the men in his battalion 'had decided that these quiet, thinking men of North Carolina were not at all like the popular type of "Yankees." Some of them were proud to claim English decent! We wanted to justify our conception of the slack-jawed, keen-eyed man of quaint jargons and turns of speech that Mark Twain and others had introduced to us.'⁶⁵ British troops repeatedly reflected on the impressive stature of their American allies. The 33rd Battalion Machine-Gun Corps historian commented that they 'struck one at first glance as a concourse of very grave men with extremely tight uniforms.'⁶⁶ A philosophical Tommy opined that:

it is impossible to lay down any characteristics of the American soldier, owing to the large and varied area from which he may be drawn, and the mixture of races to be found in the large cities... At the same time, the general impression gained is that the American is quicker witted than the average British soldier, and men from the country districts are undoubtedly of very fine physique.⁶⁸

A member of the 26th Royal Fusiliers observed Americans camped next to his unit as 'men with cowboy hats, who wore their packs the way Indian women carried babies.'⁶⁹

Major General Grover echoed the conclusion of Haig that the rawness of the American National Guard troops was much like the British Territorial units in 1914. 'They came from all walks of society,' he commented, 'and did stupid things, like shooting their

ammunition when there was nothing to shoot at, and throwing grenades when there was nothing to throw them at.’⁷⁰

The Americans were, in many cases, just as bewildered about their British allies, and, at first, had no particular affection for them. With such a large population of Irish-Americans in New York, it was not surprising to hear some men in the 27th Division openly express their dislike for the British and make it known they would much rather train in the French sector. There were also a fair number of German-Americans in the division, and like their families and friends at home, they may have secretly wished for a German victory.⁷¹ But O’Ryan, whose bloodline was also Irish-American, kept his opinions silent and, as a good officer, insisted that his soldiers cooperate with their British hosts. Although the 30th Division’s ranks were heavy with men of Scots-Irish descent, and it is likely that anti-British sentiment existed there as well, no written account of such feelings was found. Recognising the potential for dissent, the British officers and men were cordial to the American troops, and over time, they warmed to each other.⁷²

Lieutenant Gow of the 107th Infantry perhaps best summed up the American attitude in a letter home in early June. Only a few months before, he complained about the British officers who had helped train him at Wadsworth, but Gow now had a complete change of opinion after entering the line with the Tommies. ‘I like the Britishers,’ he wrote to his family. ‘The Englishman has a reserve that’s very hard to break through, but when it is down, he is very much a human being.’⁷³ Gow did not point out that most officers were

likely to be of a very different social class than other ranks. and difference social behaviour.⁷⁴

Gow's division commander positively summarised the early days of the Anglo-American relationship. 'We trained about one month with the British.' O'Ryan wrote, 'and having British officers assigned to each regiment helped us learn all the little things that we wanted to pick up on. We were given problems in field exercises and trained on a larger scale in war than we had ever been trained before, as the British had large training grounds about 20 miles south of Calais, and every sort and kind of school.'⁷⁵

The Amalgamation Issue Returns

While the training of the Americans was underway, the amalgamation issue again complicated matters. Although Pershing had made his position on amalgamation very clear, there was a new effort to get him to acquiesce. Lt. Gen. J.C. Smuts, South Africa's representative in the War Cabinet, went so far as to suggest to Lloyd George that Pershing should be replaced since he was 'without real war experience, and is already overwhelmed by the initial difficulties of a job too big for him.' As a compromise, he suggested that 'Pershing remain in charge of all organisations in the rear, but let the fighting command over the American Army be entrusted to another commander.'⁷⁶

Smuts, who had hoped to obtain a field command, was probably referring to himself.

Lloyd George took Smuts' suggestions to heart during a meeting with Pershing on 2 June. He read a proposal requesting that Pershing 'agree to leave entirely in the hands of the BEF the decision as to the schedules of training of American divisions assigned to the

British, and also the power to put these divisions into action.’⁷⁷ Pershing held his temper, but very firmly objected to this proposition and stated that he ‘could not, should not and would not surrender my prerogatives in this manner.’⁷⁸ Lloyd George again backed off, and instead stressed the importance of establishing good relations between the two English-speaking allies. He also met privately with Newton Baker during one of the Secretary of War’s trips to France and communicated a ‘desire for opportunity of American and British soldiers to fraternise.’ Lloyd George became oratorical: ‘The future peace of the world depends upon the American and British peoples understanding one another, and the best hope of such an understanding grows out of the intermingling of the soldiers of the two armies.’⁷⁹

Despite the Prime Minister’s pleadings, amalgamation had once more failed, so the British now sought to make the Americans amenable to their training methods. Sir Douglas Haig did his part to make the Americans feel welcome in early June when he inspected a brigade of the 30th Division. During a private conversation with Col. Robert Bacon, he remarked that ‘they were some of the most splendid men I have ever seen... and very well drilled.’ Because they were National Guard troops, which ‘corresponded to our old militia,’ Haig said, ‘they pick up the work very quickly and, I think, should be able to go into the line much sooner than was anticipated, which is a good thing.’⁸⁰

Division Training

The doughboys had to acclimate themselves to the training area. The system of areas and sub-areas used by the BEF in the zone of the advance was complicated, according to

Sergeant Jacobson of the 107th Infantry. 'Each British unit was assigned to a certain longitudinal sector running westward from the battle front,' he observed. 'and these sectors were divided laterally into three areas – the battle area, the forward area, and the training area.' Billeting was very rudimentary, especially for enlisted men. While the officers had the luxury of sleeping in comfortable rooms at private homes, accommodations such as the barn one New Yorker slept in 'next door to cows, pigs and horses' were not unusual for the enlisted men.⁸¹ It was found that enlisted men rarely, if ever, knew the names of the villages wherein their own billets were situated. Many officers were just as ignorant. As a result, the officers were directed to familiarise their men in the local geography and distribute maps, if necessary.⁸²

Gradually, the Americans became accustomed to serving with the British. As the days passed, the regiments began to receive all sorts of British equipment--limbers, water carts, officer's mess carts, rolling kitchens, harnesses, animals and ordnance.⁸³ The American rifles, cartridge belts and bayonets were collected and replaced with British Lee Enfields, British belts and British bayonets. The Americans were issued British gas masks and steel helmets.

The doughboys reluctantly turned in their reliable '03' rifles in exchange for the unfamiliar British Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE) Rifle, No. 1, Mark III. Ordnance experts have called it one of the finest military bolt-action rifles ever produced. The SMLE weighed slightly less than the U.S. Model 1903 and was chambered for the standard British .303 cartridge. This meant the smaller American ammunition was not

compatible.⁸⁴ Afterward, British NCOs instructed the Americans about their new rifles. Using imitation bullets, instructors showed them how to load and fire the weapon... and 'scores of other things a fellow should know about it.'⁸⁵

The training schedule was the same each day, and it started early. This was primarily because the nearby artillery firing commenced around 4 A.M. and made sleep impossible. After breakfast, a detachment of British non-coms would arrive in the American areas to instruct U.S. non-coms in the use of gas masks, rifles and bayonets. The Americans then instructed their own men on what they had just learned. One of the British lecturers boasted he had been 'over the top 19 times without the loss of a single one of his men.'⁸⁶ Sergeant Jacobson described this instruction by the British as 'up-to-the-minute, vigorous, and very interesting.'⁸⁷ More advanced training was given in trench warfare, bayonet running and marksmanship at a short-range rifle pit. The doughboys drilled in grenade throwing and trench movement under a gas cloud. In all this, according to a soldier from Tennessee, British instruction 'was valuable beyond estimation.'⁸⁸ Yet, all of this should have been familiar to the Americans since it was already taught at the camps in South Carolina.

Leisure time, as one New Yorker recounted, consisted of a once- or twice-a-week cooling off in a close by lake, or a visit to a nearby town like St. Omer. The latter was a short hike from camp and gave the doughboys an opportunity to see the destruction of war firsthand since some of the village's dwellings and pavement had been damaged.⁸⁹ While

the Americans played tourist, the British were entertained at night by horse shows and dinner parties for officers.⁹⁰

Removal of American Divisions

On 3 June 1918, Foch informed Haig he was planning to remove five American divisions from his sector. He was concerned that the German offensive, with about 4,000 guns, at the Chemin des Dames, on the Aisne, had battered the Sixth French Army along the ridge, and there were few French divisions to hold off the enemy. Haig, as to be expected, adamantly opposed this move. He considered it 'a waste of valuable troops to send half-trained men to relieve French divisions. In three weeks time, these Americans will be fit for battle,' he said, and he doubted 'whether the French divisions they relieve will ever really fight in this war.'⁹¹

Lloyd George sided with Haig, fearing that German reserves were still a threat to the British in Flanders, and the shift of divisions would be harmful. But it was Foch's call since he was General-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France. For Pershing, this meant the divisions would be closer to the main body of the AEF, and he could use them once the crisis subsided. Therefore, on 15 June, five divisions (35th, 77th, 82nd, 4th and 28th) in the British area were transferred to quiet sectors on the French front.⁹²

As a gesture of goodwill between the British and French, Haig sent Bonham-Carter and a quartermaster to help coordinate the transfer. It was a long trip by Rolls Royce for the British officers and their drivers, made longer because of 'two or three tyre punctures and

no spare wheels.’ After arriving in the French sector, Bonham-Carter ‘had little to do at the conference except deal with administrative matters and answer questions about training.’⁹³

Changes in Command

Also during the first week in June, Pershing finally selected a commander for II Corps. Although he had created a corps headquarters staff, he waited to appoint a corps commander until he evaluated the performance of his general officers at the division level.⁹⁴ His choice for II Corps was Major General Read, ‘a handsome, tall cavalryman, who looked to one acquaintance as if he might have been a model for one of Frederick Remington’s drawings of a frontier cavalry officer,’ said a historian describing the former recruiting officer and 30th Division commander.⁹⁵

Pershing had been impressed with Read for some time and had recommended him for promotion to brigadier general in 1917.⁹⁶ Read’s appointment was well received by the divisions attached to II Corps. The officers of the 30th Division, in particular, were elated to see one of their own selected, and O’Ryan was also pleased since he and Read had been classmates at the Army War College. The British too, especially Haig, were comfortable with Read. ‘He seemed to me too old for the duties of a G.O.C. Division,’ the BEF commander thought, ‘but he knows the fundamentals of war, and should do well as a corps commander.’ Haig was a bit generous in this statement. Read may have known the fundamentals of war, but had no battlefield experience to put such knowledge into practise. After graduating from West Point in 1883, he taught military science, than

took command of the 5th Cavalry Regiment at a remote western post. Later, he served in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, but never engaged the enemy. Instead, Read was a Fifth Army Corps staff officer.⁹⁷

Haig's approval of Read was probably self-serving. He must have felt a sense of security when Pershing selected a corps commander, since he could then assume there was no immediate plan to remove the other divisions from the British. When Haig and Pershing met on 30 June, they discussed the appointment of Read and agreed that 'four divisions are too large a force for an inexperienced corps commander. Two divisions are ample.'⁹⁸ This was a peculiar comment since II Corps had five divisions, and Pershing had not yet decided that he was going to remove three more of them.

Historians have ignored Read's work as corps commander, probably because he failed to leave personal papers and is rarely mentioned in the correspondence of others, either American or British. Those who do mention Read describe him as amiable. Fourth British Army commander, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, for example, considered him a 'nice calm gentlemanly man who not get rattled.'⁹⁹ This is especially true in the operations when he relinquished control of his divisions to Haig's more experienced commanders. After the war, Read wrote a brief, unpublished narrative of his experiences in France. The only known copies are among the personal papers of Colonel Simonds. The manuscript is superficial and shies away from intimate or controversial moments during the war, although there is one instance that offers some insight into Read's personality. He humorously tells of breaking up a gambling party during his first week at

II Corps headquarters; he warned the culprits that he would not tolerate such behaviour unless he was invited to join.

It is difficult to gauge the command style of Read as a general officer. An examination of the orders issued from II Corps headquarters reveals that most were written by Simonds, and it appears that Read allowed division commanders wide latitude in day-to-day functions. Although during his short tenure as division commander, he never issued orders or bulletins in the manner of O’Ryan, he can be judged as a commanding officer who wanted to be liked by everyone and tried to avoid controversy. This trait, however, would almost cost him his post as corps commander during the Hamel operation.

With Read now corps commander, a vacancy existed in the 30th Division. Brig. Gen. Lawrence D. Tyson of the 59th Brigade thought he might finally take permanent command. He had been with the division since August 1917, and felt that he had proven himself. A more logical replacement for Read would have been Brigadier General Faison, who had also been with the division for a long time, and temporarily had been its commander. But Pershing had other ideas. He brought in Maj. Gen. Edward M. Lewis from the 2nd Division as the 30th’s seventh commanding officer. Lewis had been promoted from brigadier general after an impressive showing as the 3rd Brigade commander at Belleau Wood, where he earned glowing praise from Pershing’s close friend, Maj. Gen. Harbord.¹⁰⁰ Lewis perfectly fitted the description of a Pershing commander. Not only was he a West Point classmate of the commander-in-chief, but a graduate of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth and the Army

War College. Praised as ‘a model commander,’¹⁰¹ Lewis remained with the 30th Division until it returned home in 1919.

Tyson’s reaction to Lewis’ appointment was predictable. ‘Faison and I have borne the brunt of the day,’ he moaned to a friend in Tennessee. ‘We trained the division and brought it over here, and made it all ready for somebody else’s benefit.’¹⁰² But neither he nor Faison had a chance at being named division commander. Tyson’s rating, compiled after the Armistice, illustrated how lucky he was to have been given command of a brigade. He was a good disciplinarian, but ‘not deemed aggressive enough.’ Another officer judged Tyson’s ability more harshly: ‘I do not recommend him for promotion. If active operations were to continue, I would be disposed to recommend him for duty at a depot, rather than for the command of a fighting brigade.’¹⁰³

Faison’s rating, on the other hand, showed him to have possessed ‘the essential qualifications of leadership and an excellent, well-trained mind.’ But Pershing was the one making the decision, and he had not thought highly of Faison. During a visit to the 30th Division training area on 1 July, Pershing was angered that Faison ‘had not arranged any programme for visiting his troops; consequently, we did some aimless wandering through his sector.’ Furthermore, he noted, Faison ‘seemed to have no energy or grasp of the situation.’¹⁰⁴ Pershing would never publicly or privately state why he had not selected Faison as a division commander, despite a friendship between the two that lasted until Faison’s death in 1938.¹⁰⁵

With the appointment of Read as corps commander and Lewis as his division replacement, there was also a change of officers on the British side. On 23 June 1918, Lt. Gen. Sir Ivor Maxse was appointed Inspector General of Training of the BEF. By virtue of this new position, Maxse directly oversaw the training of the American divisions in the British sector. At 56, he was a career officer who trained and commanded the 18th Division until January 1917 and shaped it into one of the BEF's best units. Maxse then was promoted to command XVIII Corps. Haig had long considered creating of a BEF Inspector General of Training, and in a letter to the Secretary of the War Cabinet, Sir Maurice Hankey, he wrote: 'I consider it a matter of the highest urgency to take steps to improve the efficiency of training throughout the armies in France.'¹⁰⁶ Maxse's biographer believes the conflict with Horne made the choice for this new post an obvious one.¹⁰⁷

The new position of British Inspector of Training eclipsed that of Bonham-Carter. Although disappointed that he was no longer a field commander, Maxse worked hard in his current assignment and made inroads in coordinating a unified training doctrine, which had been lacking within the British Army in France. But this took time, and there is no evidence that his work had any direct influence on the training of American soldiers. Bonham-Carter, on the other hand, did have some effect on the doughboys. In reflecting upon his work with II Corps, he wrote to his sister: 'My work with the Americans is now practically finished, and the most backward of the divisions now with us is very nearly fit to stand on its own feet and walk with help. Their freshness is very

invigorating; one only realises after being with them how tired we all are.¹⁰⁸ He had done his bit.

Training with the Dominions

During training, the doughboys also became acquainted with Canadian troops, their North American neighbours, and, as was true of the British, so they learned from the Canadian divisions. It was not hard to run into them. By the time of the Armistice, more than 458,000 Canadians were overseas in France as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Canada had mobilised for war in August 1914. Training commenced at Valcartier, outside Quebec City, and the Canadians based some of their doctrine on what had been learned during the Boer War in 1899-1902. In early October, the first contingent left Valcartier for England, where more extensive training was held at Bustard Camp, part of a large complex on Salisbury Plain. As battalions came over, they were formed into brigades, eventually becoming the 1st Canadian Division.

Initially, one-third of staff officers were British. By autumn 1918, the Canadians had formed into their own corps of four divisions under Lt. Gen. Sir Arthur Currie. Although they never trained or served together with the Americans, the two forces had many similarities. As it had for the II American Corps, the British Army provided supplies and artillery to the Canadian Corps. Also, the Canadians were not responsible to the British government, but to the government of the Dominion of Canada. Through political pressure, its divisions were not split up, but served together as a Canadian corps.¹⁰⁹

The Canadians provided a Ministry of Overseas Military Forces in London and kept a liaison officer at BEF headquarters to deal with matters affecting them, which was similar to the American mission to the British at Grosvenor Square. Also like American commanders, Currie had the power to reject any requests from Haig and BEF commanders if he judged them not in the best interest of his corps. The Canadian Corps was 'a junior but sovereign ally,' as one historian defined the relationship.¹¹⁰

On 22 June, an official proposal was made to have the Canadians play a more active role in training the Americans. Maj. Lloyd C. Griscom, the American representative at the British Embassy in London, met with the Premier of Canada, Sir Robert Borden, about this matter. Borden 'considered the rapid training of our troops,' Griscom wrote to Pershing in Chaumont, 'the most important single factor of the war today, and he believed that Canadian officers could train our troops as fast, and possibly faster, than anybody else.' Borden also believed that the 'Canadians had developed some things in the art of war that were peculiar, and which would be of value to the American Army.'¹¹¹ As recent historiography suggests, Borden's biased assessment of his army is correct. One historian called it the 'shock army', and its attack across the Canal du Nord in late September 1918, substantiates this opinion.¹¹² But Borden's proposal was for naught. Sir Henry Wilson thought that the offer had come too late and would disturb the training schedules already in place for the American divisions.¹¹³

Also charged with helping instruct the Americans were the Australians, who ultimately influenced them greatly. By most accounts, the Americans and Australians had a natural

affinity with each other. Upon seeing the Americans, an Australian officer remembered that 'we amused ourselves watching a lot of very brand-new-looking Yanks arriving with their extraordinary-looking equipment. Some of the officers carried leather suitcases and umbrellas and looked more like commercial travellers than soldiers.'¹¹⁴ Another was entertained when he saw some Americans 'coming up the road with bayonets fixed and rifles ready kilometres away from the front line. They wore their gas masks when there was not a whiff of gas about.'¹¹⁵ The Americans were also fascinated by the 'diggers,' as the Australians were known. A 27th Division staff officer recalled that the Australian soldiers he encountered were 'dressed in olive-drab uniforms, wrapped puttees and broad-brimmed hats fastened up the side,' and they reminded him of 'Roosevelt's Rough Riders at San Juan Hill.'¹¹⁶ The diggers served as mentors to the doughboys and eagerly offered advice. A frequent warning to the Americans was to avoid capture by the Germans at all costs, since it was rumoured that the enemy tortured Allied POWs.¹¹⁷

The myth about Australian troops was largely perpetrated by the newspaper correspondent, C.E.W. Bean, who was later the official historian of the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF). In 1915, he developed the legend of the Australians as tough, undisciplined soldiers.¹¹⁸ To Bean, the Australian soldier was a 'bushman in disguise.' After observing them in Gallipoli, he noted that the 'wild pastoral life of Australia, even if it makes rather wild men, makes superb soldiers.'¹¹⁹ There was some truth to Bean's rhetoric, according to the American troops who fought side by side with the Australian's in the summer and autumn offensives. 'As individual fighters, they were superb,' a couple of II American Corps officers wrote about the Australians after the war. 'Their

initiative, vigour and bodily strength enabled them to surprise, wear out, or overpower the foe in almost every encounter.’¹²⁰ Lt. Gen. Sir John Monash commanded the five divisions of the Australian Army Corps, part of the Fourth British Army. Not a typical officer, he was an engineer in civil life... and Jewish. The historian John Terraine credits Monash with studying ‘the military profession in peacetime with a thoroughness that few Regulars could match.’¹²¹ The Americans would form their own opinions about Monash in the coming weeks.

The Reality of Training

As the first phase of instruction from the British in full swing, a certain attraction developed between them and the Americans, although problems did arise. The American divisions in the British sector on the Western Front underwent their initial training and gained some exposure to life on the front lines. It was a strange alchemy that brought the doughboys across the Atlantic, into all the strangeness of the Old World, and set them up in the British sector, where they heard the strange accents and received, among other items, British equipment. The booming guns in the distance were an incessant reminder, night and day, that they were close to the front. There were also the frequent air raids, not to mention front-line training when the German foe was at hand across the few hundred yards of no man’s land.

In all of this, they encountered the more familiar Canadians, who offered their experiences and enjoyed, as neighbours can do, their similarities. Then there were the Australians, whose backgrounds of frontier life on the Outback or residence in cities as

new as American cities fostered friendship. These ties would be tested in a few short weeks at Hamel, and on a larger scale months later during a major operation against the Hindenburg Line.

¹ Soldier's Diary, 'The Doughboys and Camp Greene,' 18-19 May 1918, <http://www.cmstory.org/ww1/diary>. (hereafter Soldier's Diary).

² Ibid.

³ Dennis, April 1918.

⁴ Robert B. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts* (New York: MacMillan, 1988), 512.

⁵ War Department, *Order of Battle of the United States in the World War (1917-19), Zone of the Interior, Volume 3, Part 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), 516-518, and 748.

⁶ American Expeditionary Forces, General Order #30, 15 February 1918, Entry 452, RG 120, NARA.

⁷ Fred D. Baldwin, *The American Enlisted Man in World War I* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1964), 146-150.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Herbert Roper, 'Paul Green's War Songs.' *North Carolina Literary Review* (Volume II, Number 1, 1994), 38.

¹⁰ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 147.

¹¹ Worth, 14-18.

¹² Adjutant General's Office. 'Vessel File,' *Tuscania*, A.G.O. General Correspondence, 1917-1925, RG 407, NARA.

¹³ Edward Graham Melvin, *One Man's War: World War I From the Memories of a Tennessee Farm Boy* (n.p, n.d). Copy among the collections of the United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Gerald F. Jacobson, *History of the 107th Infantry, U.S.A.* (New York: DeVinne Press, 1920), 18.

¹⁶ Berry, 209.

¹⁷ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 147.

¹⁸ Ibid, 148-149.

¹⁹ Soldier's Diary, 8-9 June 1918.

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- ²⁰ Sgt.-Maj. Albert Bruenig Diary, 9 May 1918, 30th Division Veterans Questionnaires. United States Army Military History Institute (hereafter Bruenig Diary).
- ²¹ AEF Base Section 4, 'Reports, Studies, Monographs, and other Records Relating to the Activities of Base Section No. 4,' 131, Entry 2532, RG 120, NARA.
- ²² No Author, *Souvenir Booklet of Brest: Giving brief History of Brest and Brittany* (Paris: Imprimerie A. Davy, 1919), 3-5.
- ²³ Jacobson, 22-23.
- ²⁴ John Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1976), 153-154.
- ²⁵ In 1918 there were 6,000 men in the British Army who reportedly had VD. Chris McCarthy, 'Not All Beer and Skittles: Everyday Life and Leisure on the Western Front.' In Jensen and Wiest, *Myriad Faces of Modern Armed Conflict*, 162.
- ²⁶ Donald Smythe, 'Venereal Disease: The AEF's Experience,' *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives* (Summer 1977), 64-74.
- ²⁷ AEF General Orders #6, 2 July 1917, #34, September 9, 1917, and #77, 18 December 1917, Entry 452, RG 120, NARA
- ²⁸ Peter Simkins, 'Soldiers and Civilian: Billeting in Britain and France,' in Ian F. Beckett and Keith Simpson, editors, *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1985), 186.
- ²⁹ AEF Surgeon General Weekly Reports of Sick and Wounded, 5-29 June 1918, Entry UD, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁰ 30th Division, 'General Order 13,' 29 May 1918, 30th Division General Orders, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ³¹ Berry, 209.
- ³² O'Ryan, 152.
- ³³ 27th Division Historical Files, 27th Division Bulletin #39, 9 June 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁴ 30th Division Historical Files, 336.4 (British Officers), 8 June 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA. Sergeant Major Tector and Major Sharp, who spent most of their time at Wadsworth, were not among this group.
- ³⁵ Breunig Diary, 29 May 1918.
- ³⁶ Rutherford Ireland, *History of the Twenty-Third N.G.S.N.Y.* (unpublished, 1937), 272. Copy among the holdings of the New York State Military Museum.
- ³⁷ The Commander-in-Chief to Chief of the British Mission, 17 March 1918. 'British Publications,' #15091, Entry 9, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁸ George S. Simonds to G.H.Q., I. B.E.F., 'Postal Censorship Arrangements,' 1 April 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

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- ³⁹ W.G. Busby, 'History of A.P.O. No. 790.' File 182-26.5, Entry 1023, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴⁰ Headquarters, II Corps, American E.F. to Commanding Officer, 412th Telegraph Battalion, American E.F. 'Disciplinary Action,' 8 November 1918, File 182-26.5, Entry 1023, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴¹ Lt. Col. H.S. Sternberger, 27th Division quartermaster, 'History of the Quartermaster Corps Attached to 27th Division, U.S.A.' and Col. H.B. Springs, Inf, U.S.A., 'Operations of Quartermaster Department. 30th Division, with British Expeditionary Forces, 24 May 1918 to 20 November 1918.' Entry 1915. RG 92, NARA.
- ⁴² Lt. J.M.L. Grover, 'Experiences of a Platoon Commander from 1914-1918.' #28, Reel 04, page 28, Imperial War Museum Department of Sound Records, London (hereafter all references to the Imperial War Museum will be IWM).
- ⁴³ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 180.
- ⁴⁴ Commander-in-Chief correspondence, 'Training of American Divisions,' Appendix II, Entry 8, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴⁵ For a discussion of disciplinary action in one Australian battalion, see Dale Blair, *Dinkum Diggers: An Australian Battalion at War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 67.
- ⁴⁶ 'Programme of Training for American Divisions Training with British,' G-3 Library Files, #13-1320, Entry 264, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Gen. Sir Charles Bonham-Carter Diaries, 29 April 1918, and Correspondence book, 16-17, Papers of Charles Bonham-Carter, Churchill College, Cambridge University. (hereafter Churchill College).
- ⁴⁹ Commander-in-Chief Training Correspondence. Chief of Staff, II Corps to Commanding Generals of Divisions, 'Training,' 9 June 1918, #15721-7, Entry 9, RG 120, NARA.
- ⁵⁰ George S. Simonds, *Notes*.
- ⁵¹ William F. Clarke, *Over There with O'Ryan's Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company 1966), 35.
- ⁵² Letters of Gen. Sir Philip Christison, 10 June 1918, IWM 82/15/1, IWM.
- ⁵³ Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, 79.
- ⁵⁴ Maj. Paul H. Clark to the Commander-in-Chief, 14 June 1918, 'Military Situation,' Papers of Gen. John J. Pershing, RG 200, NARA.
- ⁵⁵ G. D. Sheffield, 'The Performance of British Troops in 1918,' in *1918: Defining Victory* (Canberra: Army History Unit, Department of Defence, 1999), 75.
- ⁵⁶ G. D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 183 and 'The Morale of the British Army,' in Jensen and Weist, editors, 105-139. See previous chapter for full citation.
- ⁵⁷ Brian Bond and Simon Robbins, editors, *Staff Officer: The Diaries of Walter Guinness (First Lord Moyne), 1914-1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987), 215-219.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Whitehome, 168-172, and Maj. Gen. A.W. Brewster, 'Report of Inspections.' Entry 22. Folder #400, RG 120, NARA.

⁶² Capt. L.G. Pinnell, IWM 83/17/1, 18 June 1918, IWM.

⁶³ Louis S. Warren, 'Buffalo Bill Meets Dracula: William F. Cody, Bram Stoker, and the Frontiers of Racial Decay,' *The Journal of American History* (Volume 107, Number 4, October 2002), 1124-1125.

⁶⁴ Lt. Col. Graham Seton Hutchinson, *The Thirty-Third Division in France and Flanders, 1915-1919* (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1921), 117-118.

⁶⁵ Members of the Battalion, *History and Memoirs of the 33rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps and of the 19th, 98th, 100th, and 248th M.G. Companies* (London: Waterlow Brothers & Layton, Limited, 1919), 74.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 73.

⁶⁸ 'Notes on American divisions compiled by 39th Division, BEF' 39th Division, PRO 95/2597, (TNA: PRO).

⁶⁹ Eric Hiscock, *The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a,-Ling-a-Ling* (London: Corgi Books, 1976), 95.

⁷⁰ Jacobson, 29-30.

⁷¹ Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 62-66.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Lt. Kenneth Gow, *Letters of A Soldier* (New York: Herbert B. Covert, 1920), 299.

⁷⁴ G.D. Sheffield to author, 'Comments on Chapter 3,' February 2004.

⁷⁵ Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan to G-3, 'Confidential Report,' Entry 267, RG 120, NARA.

⁷⁶ W.K. Hancock, *Smuts: The Sanguine Years, 1870-1919* (Cambridge: At The University Press, 1962), 483.

⁷⁷ Pershing Diary, 8 June 1918.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Vol. II, 315.

⁸⁰ Diary of Lord Derby, 12 June 1918. Comment on Col. Robert H. Bacon, Seventeenth Earl of Derby MSS, 920DER, Liverpool Record Office. Provided to author by historian Jim Beach.

⁸¹ Diary of George A. Morrice, 9 June 1918, USAMHI.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Jacobson, 27-28.

⁸⁴ Bruce Canfield, *U.S. Infantry Weapons of the First World War* (Lincoln, R.I.: Mowbray Publishers, 2000), 98.

⁸⁵ Soldier's Diary, 12 June 1918.

⁸⁶ Stewart, 21.

⁸⁷ Jacobson, 22.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 23.

⁸⁹ 24.

⁹⁰ O'Ryan, 180.

⁹¹ Robert Blake, editor, *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 313.

⁹² The 35th Division collapsed the first day of the offensive, while the 77th became famous for its 'Lost Battalion,' and the 82nd included America's hero of the war, Alvin York.

⁹³ Bonham-Carter correspondence, BHCT 9/2, 22-23, Churchill College.

⁹⁴ Allan R. Millett, *The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 378.

⁹⁵ Coffman, 285.

⁹⁶ George W. Read, *1159 ACP 1884*, RG 94, NARA.

⁹⁷ United States Military Academy, *Sixty-Sixth Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York: June 11, 1935.* (Newburgh: The Moore Printing Company, 1935), 124.

⁹⁸ Haig correspondence, Volume 30, 30 June 1918, Papers of Field Marshal Lord Haig, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁹⁹ Thank you to Peter Simkins for pointing out this quote.

¹⁰⁰ The authoritative study on Belleau Wood is by Robert B. Asprey, *At Belleau Wood* (New York: G.P. and Putnam Sons, 1965). The 3rd Brigade was part of the 2nd Division. Harbord had left Pershing's staff and took command of the 4th Marine Brigade (5th and 6th Regiments), then was promoted to 2nd Division commander.

¹⁰¹ Edward M. Lewis, Correspondence File, '3790 ACP 1886,' RG 94, NARA.

¹⁰² Tyson to Matthew Steele, 22 January 1919, Lawrence D. Tyson Papers. East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, TN.

¹⁰³ Maj. Gen. E.M. Lewis rating of Lawrence D. Tyson and Faison, and Lt. Gen. Hunter Liggett's rating of Tyson are found in 'AEF Officer's Ratings,' Entry 31, AGO General Correspondence, 1917-1925, 210.01, RG 407, NARA.

¹⁰⁴ Pershing Diary, 1 July 1918.

¹⁰⁵ The issue of Faison not being permanently chosen as division commander would haunt Pershing well after the war. In 1922, Tyson wrote to Pershing in an attempt 'to do justice to General Faison.' The War Department, according to Tyson, was trying to force Faison to retire. If this were the case, Faison would have to retire at his pre-war rank of colonel. The rank of brigadier general was only temporary, for the duration of the war. Tyson maintained his previously held argument that Faison had actually trained the division the longest and that others (Read and Lewis) had benefited from his hard work. Pershing, no longer wishing to get involved in War Department matters regarding promotion, politely declined Tyson's request to intervene.

¹⁰⁶ Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to the Secretary, War Office, 16 June 1918, C.B./2255. Copy of letter among the Papers of Sir Ivor Maxse, IWM.

¹⁰⁷ John Baynes, *Far From A Donkey: The Life of General Sir Ivor Maxse* (London: Brassey's, 1995), 210-213.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Bonham-Carter to Joan Bonham-Carter, 8 July 1918, Bonham-Carter Papers, Churchill College.

¹¹⁰ Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 10-20. . Schreiber, 18-19, and Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 161.

¹¹¹ Maj. Lloyd C. Griscom, to the C in C, G.H.Q., AEF. 'Canadians to help train American Troops.' 22 June 1918. Pershing Papers, LOC (hereafter Griscom to C in C).

¹¹² The title of Shane Schreiber's book, *The Shock Army of the British Empire*. See introduction for full citation.

¹¹³ Griscom to C in C.

¹¹⁴ Australian War Graves Commission Website, www.ANZAC.org.au.

¹¹⁵ Suzanne Welborn, *Bush Heroes: A People, A Place, A Legend* (Freemantle: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 2002), 149.

¹¹⁶ Franklin Wilmer Ward, *Between the Parades* (New York: Frederick M. Waterbury, 1932), 45.

¹¹⁷ Malcolm Brown, *Imperial Museum Book of 1918: The Year of Victory* (Pan Books: London, 1999), 162.

¹¹⁸ Andrews, 60-62.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 62.

¹²⁰ Ewen C. MacVeagh and Lee D. Brown, *The Yankee in the British Zone* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1920), 193.

¹²¹ Terraine, *To Win A War: 1918*, 67.

Chapter 4: We Have Found Each Other at Last

Two weeks had passed since the 27th and 30th Divisions commenced their training on 28 May 1918. The Americans had developed comradeship with the British and Dominion troops, while learning from these experienced instructors. Then, actions by the AEF commander-in-chief caused a strain in relations. But, the American troops eventually entered the line, showed impressive tenacity in battle, and everything settled down.

Period A Training Continues

With the Americans showing some progress in the early stages of training, the British were anxious to bring them into the line sooner, rather than later. Pershing and Haig had agreed, from the beginning, that the Americans could serve as reserves only if an emergency necessitated such action. But, Haig's army commanders, such as Second British Army Commander Gen. Sir Herbert Plumer and the Fourth British Army's Gen. Sir Henry Rawlinson, were attempting to accelerate Period A. They reasoned that more progress would be made if the American 'troops were brought in closer contact with frontline conditions at an earlier stage of their training' and wanted them in the sector near Ypres that was in danger of being overrun by the Germans.¹

Simonds responded negatively to this request because the forward areas did not have adequate training facilities for bayonet practice, target practice, and other exercises that were essential to the completion of Period A. It made more sense to continue the current instruction in the rear until Period B commenced, and then consider allowing the

divisions to enter the line. However, he would consider the idea if the British would 'furnish this office with such information as you may deem necessary as regards your plans and lines of defence' so that 'proper steps could be taken to utilise these divisions by preparing tentative plans, making reconnaissance, and in other ways preparing to assist in the defence of this sector.'²

Plumer made another appeal on 11 June. He told Simonds that intelligence indicated German divisions were massing for an attack to the east of Cassel, a vital part of the British defences. He sought to use the 30th Division in a sector of the Winnezele Line. Plumer promised they would be reserves, but would move them to the front if the situation dictated. Simonds again said no. He did not consider the German movement a real emergency that required immediate attention. His decision was correct since the attack never materialised.³

Haig appealed directly to Pershing. The BEF commander-in-chief had been to II Corps headquarters and met Simonds. He left believing that both Simonds and Pershing had agreed that American divisions were ready to enter the line. He wrote requesting both the 27th and 33rd for occupation of the lines to the northeast and east of Amiens, since they were the closest American divisions to this section of the front. Haig recognised that facilities would not be 'quite so good as those in the areas they now occupy, and the training might be, to some extent, though not seriously, delayed.'⁴ Perhaps tiring of the constant appeals, Pershing approved with the understanding 'that the training of these divisions will be continued insofar as conditions permit and necessities require.'⁵

By moving closer to the front, the 27th Division had lost almost a week of training, which had to be made up before passing to Period B. In addition, it had suffered a slight setback when Col. Willard C. Fisk, in command of the 107th Infantry, became seriously ill with stomach trouble. Now 60 years old, he had been with the 7th New York for 40 years and was considered one of the National Guard's most competent and experienced leaders. Under his leadership, the 107th was the pride of the division, achieving high marks in efficiency ratings. O'Ryan ordered Fisk home and another National Guardsman, Col. Charles I. DeBevoise, replaced him. Formerly in command of the 1st New York Cavalry, he was fresh from the Army School of the Line at Langres, where he graduated first in his class, and remained as an instructor until O'Ryan brought him back to the division. He proved capable in combat and kept up the morale of his regiment during its darkest hours in the attack on the Hindenburg Line. After the Armistice, DeBovise was promoted to command the 53rd Brigade.⁶

At 30th Division headquarters, the southern soldiers were also having a setback, according to Brigadier General Faison. Taking advantage of his remaining days as acting division commander, he wrote to Read of concern that the 30th was not progressing in Period A. The infantry brigades were 'badly handicapped by the lack of suitable and well-trained officers,' he warned. Members of his staff shared this distress, and they recommended that any officer not doing his job should be relieved. Faison blamed the War Department regulations that allowed incompetent officers to remain in command, and feared that 'under present conditions, this division is not capable of manoeuvres, and the prospects are not bright for this state of affairs to come about.' Read did not respond

to Faison and the 30th continued training with its regimental commanders still in place.⁷ When Lewis took over as division commander, Faison made him aware of the situation, but this made little difference. Lewis refused to act on the grounds that he was new and felt the need to give his officers a chance to improve.⁸

The Hamel Operation

With Read now firmly in place as the corps commander, he found himself in the middle of the struggle between his own commander-in-chief and the British Army. The latest friction occurred over use of four companies from the 131st and 132nd Infantry Regiments, 33rd American Division during a proposed assault on the village of Hamel. The American portion of the operation was planned by the Australian Corps and approved by Read without Pershing's knowledge. This was Read's first real test as a corps commander and he handled it poorly.

The operation against Hamel was deemed essential. The German Spring offensives had caused a huge bulge in the British lines, including the village of Hamel., and the plan was to re-take this ground. Located near Amiens, a ridge shadowed the village and provided the enemy with observation of the Australian Corps, and easy prey for enfilading fire. The battle plan, designed meticulously by Monash, was to shorten and straighten the Australian line by capturing the ridge above Hamel (see map after page 157). His object was to take the village of Hamel, the woods nearby, the village of Vaire, and the spur beyond. Intelligence reported two German divisions with an estimated 3,000 troops

defending this area. If the attack was successful, Hamel would be the staging area for a larger operation a few weeks later.

The 33rd Division, composed of Illinois National Guard troops, had shown promise since its arrival in the latter part of May. It was attached to Rawlinson's Fourth Army for training, and instructed mostly by the Australian Corps and III British Corps. For the attack, Rawlinson suggested 10 American companies from the division so that Monash's troops, in the line for several weeks, could have a much-needed rest. Rawlinson claimed to have chosen the date of 4 July for the operation because of its significance to the Americans. However, this isn't entirely correct. The original date was 2 July, but Monash asked for two more days for his troops to prepare. Rawlinson agreed and postponed the operation to 4 July. Because the new date coincided with the American Independence Day, the British used this to their advantage as an enticement to bring the doughboys aboard.⁹

To have the Americans appealed to Monash since he had met many of them after their arrival in France. It was commonplace for American officers to billet with the Allies before reaching permanent stations, and Monash was one of the hosts. When he was in command of the 3rd Australian Division, several AEF officers had stayed with him in late 1917. Like many foreigners, he formed his impression of the doughboys by reading American fiction. Monash read voraciously, and one of his favourites was the author O. Henry.

Monash discovered the Americans were dedicated soldiers like himself. 'With but very few exceptions,' he wrote to his brother, 'I have formed a very high opinion of the excellent qualities, both mental and technical, of these officers. My impression is that some of the divisional commanders are rather old, and not as receptive of new ideas as may be desirable, but their attitude toward these problems is in every way satisfactory, and they show themselves open-minded and receptive to an admirable degree.'¹⁰ He would soon learn that not all Americans were as open.

Read received the request from Monash to use 2,000 men of the 65th Brigade and agreed, with the caveat that 'not more than the equivalent of one battalion be employed.' He was concerned that so many men in the line for the first time would cause confusion and high casualties. Monash assured him his intent was to assign a platoon to each American company as guides. Read then gave permission for the use of two battalions.¹¹

The II American Corps commander considered the Hamel operation 'valuable training for which due credit may be taken, if accomplished, as part of the weekly training schedule.' Read informed Maj. Gen. George Bell, the 33rd Division commander, of his decision and ordered him to select eight companies from the 131st Infantry and two from the 132nd. They would report to the 4th and 11th Australian Brigades. Why Read was so agreeable, when his chief of staff had done just the opposite and recently rejected all requests to use the Americans, is unknown. He may have felt that Pershing's approval to allow the 33rd to move closer to the line was an indication that they could take part in the

attack. It is unknown if Simonds attempted to sway Read's decision. But what is known is that Read's judgement was not well received at AEF headquarters.

The Battle Plan

Surprise was a component of most successful operations and Hamel was no different.

The men and equipment had to move forward quickly under cover of darkness. Morale among German troops around Hamel reportedly was low. Monash instructed his artillery to fire at German dumps, trenches and headquarters prior to the attack. If wind conditions allowed, it would add 4.5-inch howitzers with chemical shells to the mix.¹²

This harassment, he hoped, would cause so many German casualties that the infantry would only have to mop up the trenches.

Tanks were an important element of the attack plan. Although in use since 1916, the early models were clumsy and ineffective. But in the summer of 1918, the Mark V Tank was introduced, and it promised to be faster, agile, and better armed. Its predecessor, the Mark IV, moved at a rate of just over three miles per hour, while the Mark V could cover more than four miles an hour. Mostly, it was more reliable and was less prone to breaking down.¹³ Still, the Australians were mistrustful of the tanks after an unsuccessful experience with them at Bullecourt in April 1917. There, the unreliable machines were late in arriving to support the 4th Division, then unable to reach the German wire once engaged in battle.¹⁴

If everything went as planned, Monash expected the operation to last no more than 90 minutes. The level of preparation that he and his staff undertook for Hamel cannot be overstated. Such detail, time and energy in planning an operation were by now a Monash trademark. In the attack on Messines the previous year, Monash boasted that 'everything is being done with the perfection of civil engineering so far as regards planning and execution.'¹⁵ With the plans for Hamel well underway, Haig called him 'a most thorough and capable commander, who thinks out every detail of any operation and leaves nothing to chance.'¹⁶

The meeting notes for Hamel confirm this assessment. They contain several pages that cover every aspect of the operation, including possible failures. Monash had a staff officer calculate visibility at night for 3-4 July. Based on this information, he knew that 'movement can be observed at 9 P.M., but cannot a half-hour later.' Because he wanted the attack to be a surprise, Monash worried that moonlight would cast a shadow and allow the Germans to see troops and tanks moving toward the front.¹⁷ As another precaution, Monash ordered harassing fire by artillery and a squadron of low-flying planes to bomb the German lines to drown the noise of the tanks as they advanced. Planes would also be used to drop ammunition by parachute to the forward troops.

Pershing Intervenes

Meanwhile, controversy over the use of the Americans was brewing at AEF G.H.Q. They were committed without Pershing's knowledge, until Read made it known on 30

June when the two met at British Army GHQ. Pershing reacted negatively and told him to withdraw the men; they were not allowed to fight. The next day, he conferred with Haig and told him the same thing. Hamel was a 'radical departure from the program of instruction of this division,' Pershing lamented, 'and an exercise for which these men are not yet prepared.'¹⁸

Haig had to abide by Pershing's order and told Rawlinson to have Monash withdraw the Americans. The latter balked, and countered that without them, he would have to abandon the attack. Now in a quandary, Rawlinson attempted to contact Haig to determine how to proceed, but the BEF commander was on his way to meet with Pershing and could not be reached. During their afternoon discussion in Paris on 3 July, Haig assured Pershing 'he quite agreed with the decision to forbid American troops from participating.'¹⁹ Haig was, of course, not yet aware of the situation at the front and thought the withdrawal order had been obeyed.

The American units were in the line when the withdrawal order was issued. Only six of the ten companies learned of it, as Companies C and E of the 131st Infantry and A and G of the 132nd Infantry were too far forward and oblivious to what was going on behind them. Rawlinson finally reached Haig and the two conferred. They agreed the operation was 'to go on as planned,' despite Pershing's objections.²⁰

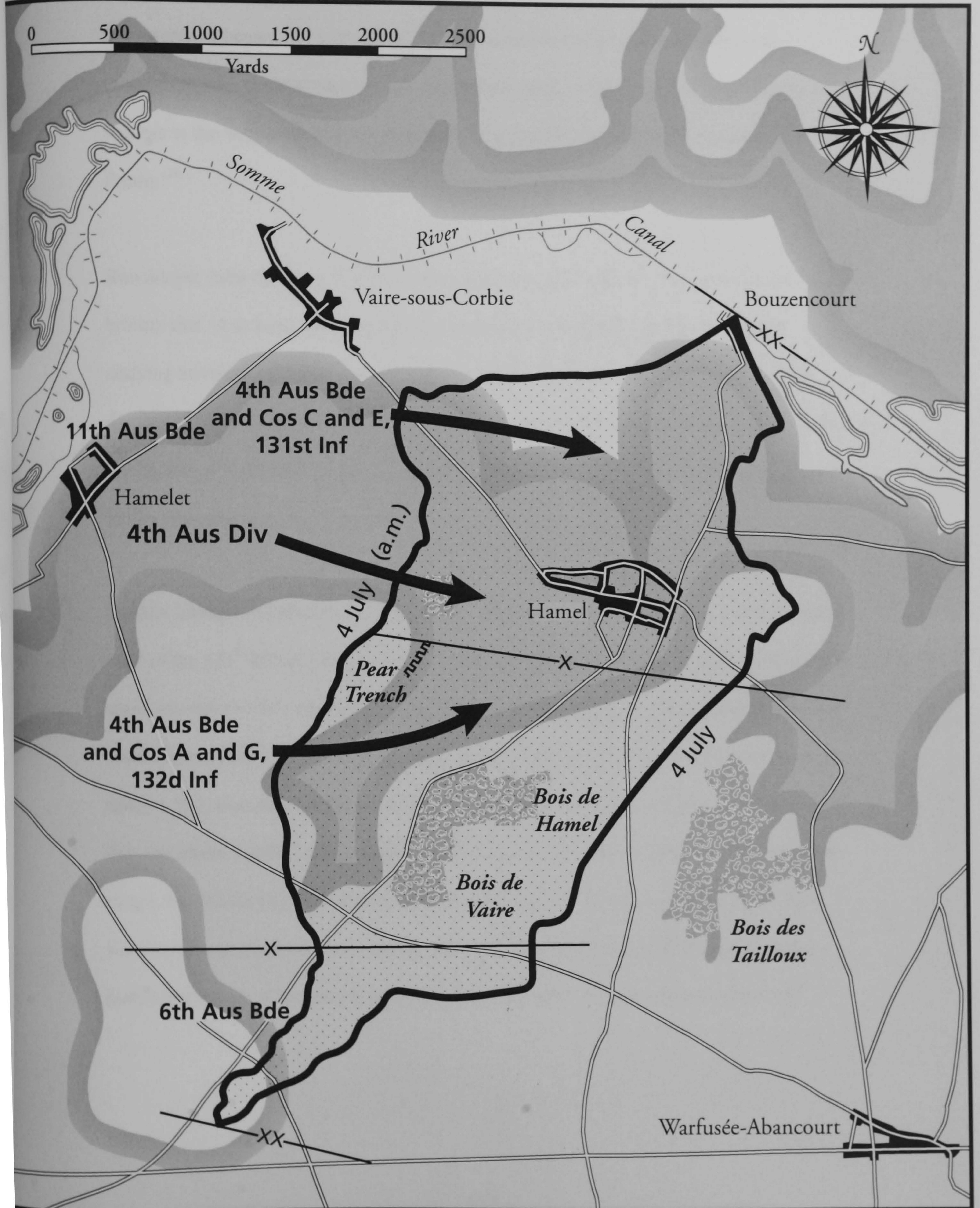
The Operation

At 1:30 A.M. on 4 July, the tanks moved up to the starting line, 1,000 yards in the rear of the infantry. The attack commenced as scheduled, at 3:10 A.M., with the barrage catching the Germans by surprise. Facing little resistance, the Australians and Americans quickly achieved all objectives in 93 minutes. Of the 60 tanks that started, 58 were still operable by the end of the battle. The Germans were driven from Hamel, the surrounding villages, and the ridges. (Map after page 161).

The consensus of contemporary judgement is that the American troops fought well, but at times became impetuous. They ran into trouble by getting too far ahead of the barrage. After entering Hamel and moving beyond the objective line, the Illinois soldiers had to be told that 'it was not up to them go on and take the next town.'²¹ As Monash assured Read, the Australians kept a close eye on the Americans by pairing runners and stretcher bearers with them as they advanced toward the enemy lines. On one occasion, a lieutenant from an American platoon was wounded after his company encountered resistance near Hamel's western edge. An Australian runner took command of the desperate situation and helped clear the Germans from the village.²²

Pershing received word of the battle on 5 July when a II Corps staff officer told him about 'participation of our troops in the action with the Australians.'²³ A note from Haig arrived, written the night before, confirming the news. 'The operation of which I spoke with you yesterday was carried out this morning with great success,' he told Pershing. 'Everything was done in accordance with your wishes to relieve all your troops before

Attack on Hamel, 4 July 1918



this operation began, but a few detachments that could not be removed acquitted themselves with great distinction and fought like tigers. I feel sure that this morning's success at the beginning of your great anniversary promises still greater successes in the future.'²⁴

Rawlinsion validated Haig's praise of the American performance. He wrote to his brother that 'American troops conducted themselves admirably, and have won the undying admiration and affection of the Australians, who were heard to remark: 'I'm damned glad they are on our side.'²⁵ Monash echoed this sentiment when he said: 'The contingent of them who joined us acquitted themselves most gallantly and were received by the Australians as blood brothers.'²⁶

Despite losing 176 killed and wounded, the Americans proved fearless in battle. Captain Gale of the 131st Infantry Regiment best articulated this point when he wrote: 'More real good was done to this company by this small operation with Australians than could have been accomplished in months of training behind the lines.'²⁷ The Australian losses were about 1,400, and although the exact figures for the Germans are unknown, it is estimated they lost about 2,000.²⁸ Preparations were made for a quick withdrawal of the American troops, but it took two days before they left the lines. While waiting at the front, there were numerous enemy counterattacks, and on 5 July, further casualties were incurred from a gas attack. Company E was the hardest hit, with 34 men seriously affected.²⁹

Aftermath

Read and Simonds were ordered to Paris by Pershing and reprimanded. They listened as he lectured about his difficulties with the British, and even though this operation proved successful, ‘you will have to watch *those people*.’ Pershing said.³⁰ He wrote in his diary that ‘the incident, though relatively unimportant in itself, showed clearly the disposition of the British to assume control of our units, the very thing that I had made such strong efforts and had imposed so many conditions to prevent.’³¹

While Pershing obviously overreacted by not allowing his corps commander more discretion in the use of his troops, Read deserved blame. Inexperienced in his role as a corps commander, he should have sought approval before agreeing to the battle plan. Had the operation resulted in heavy casualties, Read probably would have been sacked. Three days after the battle, Simonds wrote to Col. Fox Conner (G.H.Q.’s G-5) to tell him his side of the story. A ‘careful inquiry from all possible sources as to the outcome of the operation was made,’ the chief of staff said, and the ‘accounts are unanimous that the few men we had in this thing did excellent work, as we hear everywhere else of our men.’ Simonds then qualified this statement with: ‘We always have to make due allowances for their enthusiasm over getting us into these scrapes.’³²

News of the victory spread throughout the front. The British liaison officer at French Army headquarters was overheard telling his American counterpart: ‘We have found each other at last.’³³ Although neither the 27th nor 30th Divisions were involved at Hamel, they had interest in its outcome. In a sense, the 33rd Division was representing II

Corps. If it made a poor showing, it would reflect on the corps. At 27th Division headquarters, O’Ryan waited anxiously for word from the front and was relieved when a ‘British officer hastily came into division headquarters. and his joyous manner indicated what the general result had been.’³⁴

The British official historian declared Hamel a ‘minor operation,’ and this was true, considering the number of troops involved and preparations made. Many elements of Hamel had been introduced the year before as the British and Dominion forces had begun to perfect the limited-objective, set-piece attack at Vimy Ridge, Messines Ridge, Polygon Wood, and the first day of Cambrai. Still, the success of Hamel would have an influence on how future operations were to be conducted on the Western Front. Operations were now becoming more complicated, and in the case of the Fourth Army, Rawlinson had a greater reliance on others for planning.³⁵ The tactics used at Hamel were introduced in the later phases of training for the II American Corps.

Period B Training Delayed

When the training schedule was drawn up in March, it was agreed that the first period was the most crucial, and four weeks would be the minimum time allotted for its completion. Both sides recognised the possibility of delays in the arrival of troops and equipment. Halfway through this first period, a ‘state of training’ was conducted of some of the American divisions by the BEF to ascertain their progress. The report showed that although training was progressing satisfactorily, there had been significant delays in issuing British rifles and Lewis guns, and one division (the 27th) had little training beyond

drills and physical exercises.³⁶ The AEF G-5 took the comments to mean that a two-week extension of Period A was necessary. As a result, Period B would now commence during the third week of July.

Discipline within II Corps had remained good since the start of the first phase of training, with some exceptions. There were a few minor instances in which officers and men on leave in Calais had failed to produce proper passes, and this resulted in the military police having to return the guilty parties back to their units. The corps inspector general made his judgements on frequent visits to the regimental billets and saw firsthand that saluting was 'not yet uniform in all units of the same division,' and 'soldierly bearing' was 'generally good, even though many recruits in all divisions bring down the average.' But none of these infractions was excessive, and his report for July was positive.³⁷

Entering the Line

British intelligence reported the Germans were preparing for an attack in the Second Army sector, thus making it necessary to move the American divisions from the training areas to a position in close support to the front.³⁸ Therefore, the 27th and 30th Divisions were assigned to the Second British Army and moved to its sector, southwest of Ypres, on 9 July. They were placed under the command of XIX Corps, and ordered to organise and defend a portion of the East Poperinghe Line. The 30th Division moved near Poperhinghe and Watou, where it came under the tactical control of the II British Corps, while the 27th assumed the second, or reserve, position in the British defences near Mount Kemmel. This included Dickebusch Lake and the Scherpenberg areas.³⁹

Two days later, the 30th moved to the same reserve sector as the 27th, and the divisions were practically right next to each other. Both were on the north face of the Lys salient, which covered a front of 4,000 yards. The salient was formed in the Allied line south of Ypres that spring, when the Germans attacked along the Lys River during Operation Georgette and took Kemmel Hill from the French. A British officer wrote that the 'loss of Kemmel by the French is good; we held it anyhow; it should make them less uncivil.'⁴⁰ (Map after page 166).

The British referred to the Ypres sector as simply 'The Salient,' and Ypres as 'Wipers,' 'Eepriss,' or 'Ee-pray.' Ypres had played an important role in the war since 1914, when the Germans first entered the medieval town on 13 October and the next day met with opposition from the BEF. The first battle of Ypres commenced, and for the remainder of the war, the salient continued to be one of the most active parts of the Western Front.

The Menin Gate memorial near the town centre reminds one of the terrible costs suffered by the British in four years. It commemorates the almost 55,000 British and Dominion officers and men who died in the Ypres salient area and have no known grave up to 15 August 1917. Another 35,000 names are recorded, including the names of the missing from August 1917 to the end of the war, at Tyne Cot cemetery near Passchendaele.⁴¹

The salient extended from Zillebeke Lake, at one time the chief water supply for Ypres, to the southeast of Voormezele. It had been shaped by the fighting of First Ypres and the subsequent battles had created deep craters. The ground was very low, and shell holes became little pools. Surrounding the salient was the high ground – Observatory



Vlamertinghe
to
Poperinghe



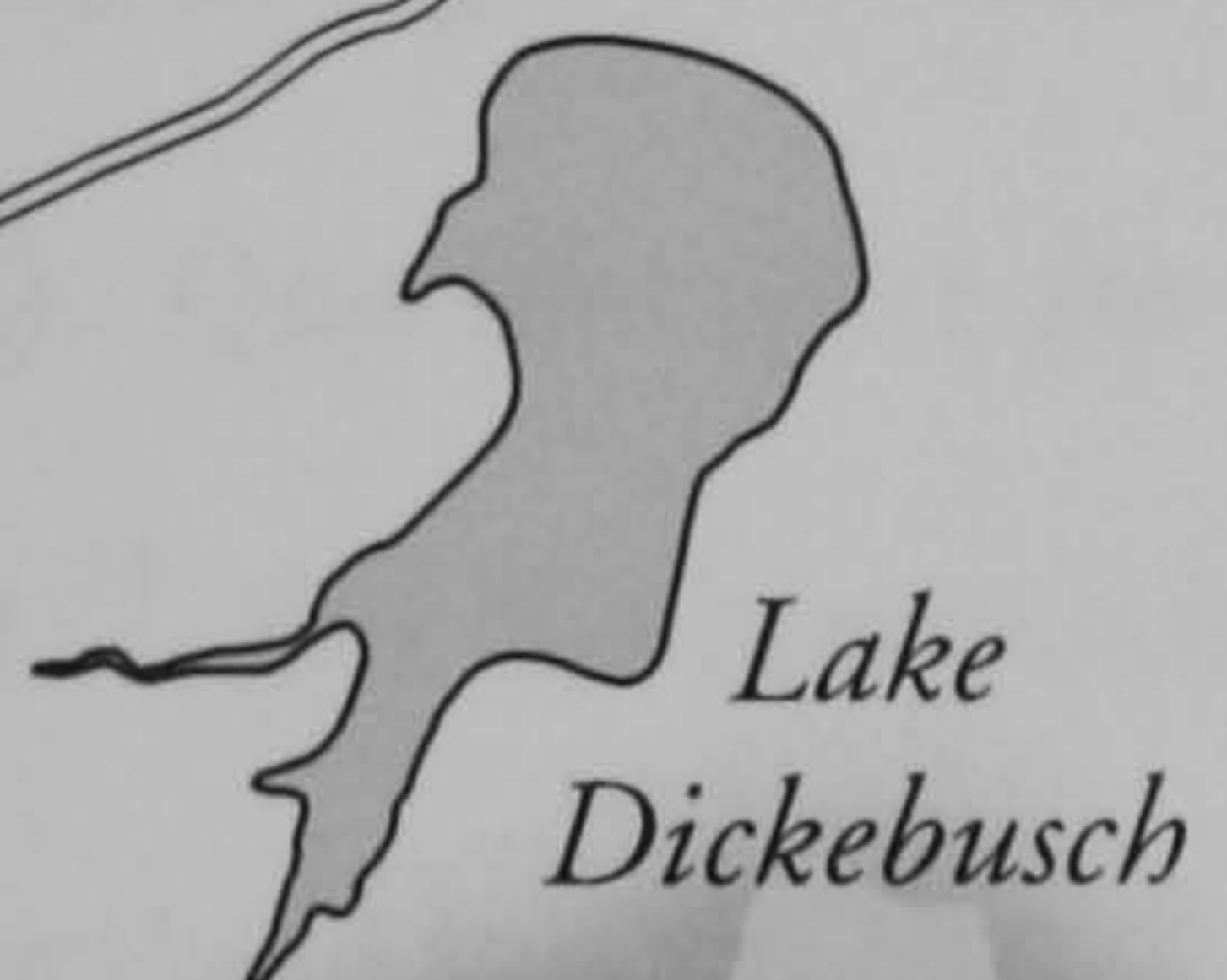
YPRES

Potje

Hooge

Lake
Zillebeke

Dickebusch



Lake
Dickebusch

Ypres-Comines Canal

St. Eloi

Hollebeke

Vierstraat

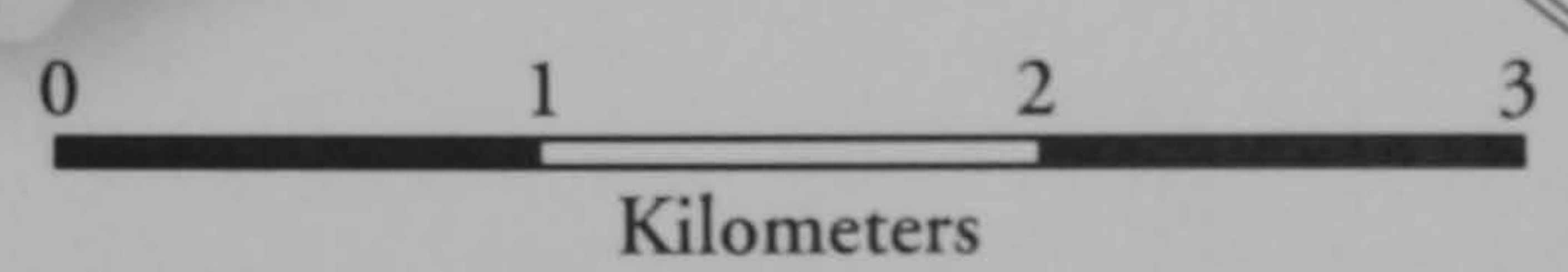
Oosttaverne

Kemmel

Wytschaete

Mt.
Kemmel

Messines



Ridge, Passchendaele Ridge, Messines-Wytschaete Ridge and Mount Kemmel – all in German possession. It allowed the enemy a clear field of fire in all directions. An American observed that often the men in the forward systems believed they were being shelled by their own artillery, when, as a matter of fact, the shells were from the enemy guns on the right and in the rear.’⁴²

The battalions of the 119th and 120th Infantry began occupying portions of the front in the Canal sector, 10 miles southwest of Ypres on 16 July,. One regiment had its camp at ‘Dirty Bucket,’ about four miles from Ypres. Men were housed in huts built by the British in a grove of oak trees big enough to house an entire company (256 Officers and Men). Quarters were far from luxurious, for lack of cots or bunks meant sleeping on the floor.⁴³ For the commanding officers of the 27th and 30th, it was much different. The 27th maintained headquarters at Oudezeele, while the 30th Division set up its command in Watou, where O’Ryan and Lewis slept on beds in their comfortable billets.⁴⁴

Both divisions were now only four miles from the front and well within range of enemy fire, as Pvt. Robert P. Friedman learned. A member of the 105th Engineers, he died as a result of wounds from shellfire on 13 July, the first combat casualty suffered by the 27th Division.⁴⁵ Friedman was one of many Jewish soldiers, several high-ranking officers among them, in the 27th; his loss was mourned by all in the division.⁴⁶ The 30th Division had its first combat-related death a month earlier when 1st Lt. Wily O. Bissett of the 119th Infantry was similarly killed on 17 June 1918.

In Belgium, the Americans witnessed the hardships of the civilian population. Shelling had destroyed villages around Ypres, but did not prevent the Flemish from cultivating their fields. As the II Corps engineers commenced working on the East Poperinghe Defence Line, they were instructed to avoid further damaging the crops. Yet, there was no way to entirely comply with this order since the laying of wire entanglements near the front meant clearing some of the crops, which was done under protest from the farmers.⁴⁷ The fighting in this region had caused untold casualties among the civilians, and one unit, the Headquarters Company of the 106th Infantry, 'adopted' a 13-year-old orphan and fed him for the entire time it was overseas. In early 1919, as the regiment prepared to return to the United States, the men brought him to Brest as a passenger, but the military police wouldn't allow the young boy to travel on the troop transports.⁴⁸

Training Continues

One of the objectives during this phase of training was to teach American officers how to command in the line, so company commanders rotated to the front for a few days. The men of the 27th and 30th Divisions may not have recognised this at the time, but the fact they spoke a common language with their British and Dominion instructors was an important factor in the level of training they received.⁴⁹ American division training with the French did not have such an advantage, and thus, it can be argued, suffered as a result.

The British officers instructed them in doctrine defined in publications such as *Instruction for the Training of the British Armies in France* (S.S. 152). Of the manual's

many features, one was 'to give commanders every possible facility and assistance in carrying out their duties of training their subordinates, while insisting on their responsibility for the efficiency of their commands.'⁵⁰ An early student in the lines was Capt. Henry Maslin, a company commander in the 105th Infantry. For four days, he was assigned to A Company, 7th Battalion, London Regiment, 58th British Division, and entered a portion of the line opposite Albert.

While in the line, 'at all times, day and night.' Maslin accompanied the commander when inspecting and visiting his company, and went with him out of the trenches and 'over the top' at night. He observed how the British had a 'battle surplus' of two officers, who did not enter the trenches during a tour of duty. That way, if there was a heavy loss of officers, 'there will be some officer who can assume command with knowledge of the company's administration.' Maslin was also impressed that 'hot tea was served to men for breakfast, as well as one-half dry tea ration for the remainder of the day.' Water was scarce, and 'men had to either go unwashed or go without tea.'⁵¹ He proudly reported afterward that 'all officers with whom I came in contact were very willing to give me all information.'⁵²

Another company commander, Capt. George P. Nichols, 107th Infantry, reported to the 41st British Division a month after Maslin. Assigned to the 124th Battalion in a sector opposite Mt. Kemmel, he spent three days in the line and afterward reported three specific observations: the intelligence service and the 'keenness of the men in each platoon assigned to the work;' the highly trained platoon and company runners; and the

‘high morale attained by the continued efforts of platoon commanders to instil “platoon spirit.”’⁵³

At the 30th Division, battalion officers went into the line with the 49th British Division, which had been in the Ypres sector since 1915, where the area still remained dangerous three years later. German shells resulted in four officers and twenty-two men killed in action while training at the front.⁵⁴ The Americans were tutored in map reading, and the occupation and defence of the line. Terrain exercises were also scheduled, but the British cancelled them on account of the frequent shelling.⁵⁵ Despite the danger, the experience was a positive one for the Americans. ‘The relations that prevailed between the units of the 59th American Brigade and the units of the 49th British Division,’ Maj. Gen. Tyson later remarked, ‘were always of the most cordial nature. The men of my brigade cooperated in every way possible and were on the best terms with the British, and they cooperated in every way with us, and there was never anything, so far as I am informed, but the best of feelings, in every respect.’⁵⁶

Visit by Pershing

During the second week of July, Pershing visited the 27th Division. While travelling to its training area, he spotted one of the New York regiments on a road west of O’Ryan’s headquarters and stopped for an impromptu inspection of the startled soldiers. He later remarked to their division commander that the ‘men look fit, but carry too much equipment. Get rid of some of it.’ Pershing ordered.⁵⁷ It is not clear as to his meaning of too much equipment. The men in II Corps had no more or less equipment than any other

soldier in the AEF. The only difference was the outer clothing, as well as shoes, breeches and tunics, which were mostly from the British. This was done out of necessity since the American supply depots were slow to refill, and Read gave the authority to fit the men from British stores.⁵⁸

Before leaving the 27th Division area, Pershing complimented O`Ryan on the `splendid spirit` of his men, but also pointed out a number of deficiencies. In particular, he noted that `one major saluted him with a riding whip, and another was seen going through the streets not wearing a belt.` Pershing also observed that when reviewing the men in one battalion, their packs `had too much in them and were carelessly made.`⁵⁹ Such sloppiness within the division had been noted at Wadsworth, and now it appeared that the National Guardsmen had brought their bad habits overseas, despite O`Ryan`s best efforts to correct their deficiencies.

Colonel Bacon also came to the 27th Division training area at the same time as Pershing, but stayed much longer. He accepted an invitation to have lunch with some of O`Ryan`s staff and spent much of the occasion filling in the news-starved officers of events in the other AEF sectors, like the French front, where some of them longed to be. Bacon told them of the recent operation of the 1st American Division when it relieved the French at Montdidier, and on 28 May captured Cantigny, despite heavy losses from German counterattacks. It was the first operation by an American division since arriving in France. From there, Bacon`s enthralled audience learned of the 2nd American Division at Belleau Wood a week later. There, two regiments of Marines were matched with some

of the German Army's best storm troops and suffered great losses as a result. But after three days, the Germans were driven from the Wood, and the Americans captured the village of Bouresches. As Col. Franklin W. Ward, in command of the 106th Infantry, recounted, Colonel Bacon's stories were the 'first graphic news that has been received by the "lost" division from their comrades on the American front.'⁶⁰ Ward's comment revealed that being part of a lost division was a constant reminder, to him and the other officers and men of II Corps, of how isolated they felt from the main body of the AEF.

Period B Training Begins

On 25 July, the divisions began Period B training. One battalion of each infantry regiment was sent to the front lines for a period of eight days. Up to this point, the Americans had only heard stories of combat from the war-weary British, but now they would see for themselves. 'Battle, whatever its frequency – or lack of it – is the end towards which most military training is directed,' one historian noted, 'and is an event which comes to loom large in the soldier's mind.'⁶¹ The first time in the line was confusing for the Americans, and there was heavy reliance upon the British. When the commanding officer of the 105th Infantry inquired as to why a working party from the 1st Battalion had not completed work on the Dickebush reserve line, he was told its British guide failed to appear and direct the lost Americans to the area in which they were assigned.⁶²

A regimental historian recalled a few years later that 'the first trip to the front line trenches will ever remain graven upon the memories of the men of the 107th Infantry.'

The unit made the journey under cover of darkness and 'along shell-torn roads that were fringed in many places by hidden batteries of British guns.'⁶³ Once at the front, the British soldiers would tease the green American troops and offer lots of 'practical' advice. One frequent suggestion was: 'Don't stir up Jerry, Yank: you shoot at im', he'll shoot back twice.'⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, some Americans arrived at the front over-confident, and somewhat arrogant. An example of the latter involved four officers from the 120th Infantry, who were detached for instruction with the 9th (Glasgow Highlanders) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry. One evening, the Scottish officers from the Highlanders were sent on a raiding party, and one of the American officers insisted upon accompanying them. He was advised to stay behind for lack of experience. Yet, despite the best efforts by the Scots to keep him away, 2nd Lieutenant Bellamy somehow coaxed a uniform from one of his instructors and tagged along with the raiding party dressed as a Highlander. When they entered the enemy trenches, the party lost one man to capture, and five others were wounded. Perhaps to the disappointment of the Scottish officers, Bellamy was neither captured, nor wounded.⁶⁵

A bitter British corporal, after leading another AEF regiment to the front lines for the first time, was still angry more than a month later, after being subjected to 'the big talk of what they were going to do, but had not done yet... All I hope is that when they do start, Jerry will smash them to atoms, for they are nothing more than human garbage, and this is the best I can say about them.'⁶⁶ But most British officers had positive experiences

with the Americans. A sniper with the 2nd Worcestershire Regiment recalled when he and other officers visited with some excited Americans who had just been brought into the line. 'They took us along to one of the huts, and talked away about being shelled by them goddamned Bosches.' The British officers reciprocated with words of encouragement while they 'drank their excellent coffee.' The Americans also treated them to an evening meal of chicken, potatoes and peas... 'the likes of which we had not tasted for many a long day.'⁶⁷

At the highest level, relations were now peaceful between Pershing and Haig. In a piece of correspondence sent from the British commander, Haig ended an otherwise businesslike letter with a warm sentiment: 'I take this opportunity of expressing my deep appreciation of the cordial way in which all ranks of the American Forces have worked in conjunction with the British Army since their arrival in the British zone, and I trust that the friendly relations already established may continue for all time.'⁶⁸

Also in mid-July, Pershing learned that the King was going to award him the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (G.C.B.), and a congratulatory letter came from Sir William Robertson. The two had been at loggerheads during discussions over amalgamation earlier in the year, and had not corresponded since Robertson was sacked as CIGS in March. He was now assigned to the General Headquarters at Horse Guards in London, and the tone of his letter suggested a lingering bitterness toward Lloyd George. Robertson warned Pershing to be 'careful in looking after the best interests of the

American Army.’ As though the two were sharing a dark secret. Pershing responded:
‘You may be sure I understand what you mean.’⁶⁹

On 26 July, Pershing returned to the British sector for another inspection, this time to see the 119th Infantry before it moved to the front. In typical fashion, he arrived six hours late and ‘made no apology,’ a British officer observed. He ‘walked along the front ranks with a forbidding scowl on his face and did not talk to a single man. All the officers seemed dead scared of him.’⁷⁰ Pershing’s comments on the regiment are not recorded, so it can be assumed that he was mostly pleased with its appearance.

To boost morale, it was announced that King George V would visit the soldiers the front. One hundred soldiers from each American division, as well as the same number from the British divisions, were instructed to assemble before the King on 6 August. The troops were formed without arms, according to the historian of the 120th Infantry, because ‘the British were afraid some of them would take a “pot shot” at their ruler.’⁷¹ On the day of arrival, a British chaplain delivered a sermon, then afterward a band placed in a field across the road played while the divisions marched by. The King sat on a raised platform to greet the troops, and after the parade, he visited the 30th Division headquarters with the King and Queen of Belgium. According to an eyewitness, the Queen pulled the lanyard of a gun in the back area, thus ‘hurtling potential death among the Germans, her own kin.’⁷²

The British Take the Offensive

On 8 August 1918, the Australian and Canadian Corps, part of the Fourth British Army, attacked German positions east of Amiens. The assault was planned as a limited operation like Hamel, but on a much larger scale. With the III British Corps acting as flank guard to the north and the IX French Corps in the south, the Allies advanced eight miles that day. The Germans were caught by surprise, prompting General Ludendorff to call this the 'black day of the German Army in this war.'⁷³ A key to the successful attack was the combined use of aircraft, artillery, tanks, and, most important, ground troops. The advance had slowed by 12 August, but it was the beginning of what became known as the Hundred Days Campaign, and the beginning of the end for the Germans in north-west France.⁷⁴ The Americans had a minor role on the second day of the campaign when the 131st Infantry of the 33rd was unexpectedly called upon by the III British Corps to assist in the capture of the Chipilly Spur and Gressaire Wood, southeast of Amiens.⁷⁵

Pershing received his G.C.B on 12 August at a ceremony primarily to honour units of the 33rd Division for their participation at Hamel. King George V also used the occasion as an opportunity to impress upon Pershing his desire to have the American troops serve with the British Army. The King told him that although 'he was not a politician and did not see from that point of view, he thought it was very advantageous to have some Americans troops serving with the British.' He offered Pershing use of the Dunkirk as an incentive to bring more troops to the British sector, and confessed 'how much it would mean after the war to say that the two English-speaking races fought side by side in this struggle.' Pershing had heard this before and had a stock answer: 'It is not intended to

have the Americans serve either with the French or with the British.' he said. 'but we are now forming armies of our own for which we have sufficient troops.'⁷⁶

Attending the ceremony was Rawlinson, whom Pershing had met before, and if he thought little of him the first time, he thought even less of him now. 'He does not inspire confidence,' Pershing recorded in his diary.⁷⁷ The feeling between them was mutual. Rawlinson had described Pershing as a 'tiresome, ignorant and very obstinate man, as we shall find out later on when he begins to try conclusions with the Boche on his own.'⁷⁸

II Corps is Reduced

Pershing dropped a bombshell on Haig when the two met on 12 August after the ceremony, saying he was going to withdraw the divisions from the British. According to Pershing's diary, it was an uncomfortable moment for both himself and Haig, and he described the conversation as 'not pleasant for a while, though we both kept quiet within the bounds of politeness.' Pershing broke the ice by presenting the usual argument that his intentions were to form an independent American Army, and it was never meant for his divisions to remain permanently with the British. Haig disagreed and countered Pershing's argument, saying that it was his understanding that the 10 divisions were sent to him to fight, but now they were all being withdrawn without having participated in any battle.

In the end, Pershing compromised and allotted the British two divisions, the 27th and 30th. The reason why these two divisions were chosen, and whether Haig had much influence

over the decision, remains unclear. One explanation might be that Read recently had rated them deficient. Pershing may have felt they needed more specialised training and were not ready for the operation in the St. Mihiel salient, which was in the planning stages. O’Ryan claimed that the 27th was selected because Haig was impressed when he reviewed a detachment during the first week in June.⁷⁹ Whatever the reason, it was now with the British permanently, but Pershing made sure that Haig understood it would continue to function under its own commanders.⁸⁰

In making the claim that the American divisions should be allowed to fight under his command, Haig grossly exaggerated. Pershing had made it known at the outset that the divisions were to train only temporarily with the British, and would be allowed to fight only in emergencies. Hamel should have been an indication of his intent. But, Pershing reminded him that ‘we are all fighting the Germans, and the best way, at present, for my troops to fight the Germans is in my army.’ The meeting ended, Pershing claimed, with Haig confessing ‘to seeing my point of view and agreed to the withdrawal of the divisions.’⁸¹ However, Haig’s diary reveals a different conclusion. ‘A VERY HOT DAY’ is how he began his diary entry for 12 August. Haig was obviously referring to that day’s dreadful summer heat, as well as perhaps making a reference to his most recent discussion with Pershing. ‘I have done everything to equip and help these units of the American Army,’ he wrote out of frustration. ‘So far, I have had no help from these troops (except the three battalions that were used in battle in Chipilly, in error). If he now withdraws the five American divisions, he must expect some criticism on his action, not only from the British troops in the field, but also from the British Government.’⁸² Haig

then wrote: 'All I wanted to know was definitely whether I could prepare to use the American troops for an attack... now I know I cannot do so.' Furthermore, he called Pershing 'very obstinate, and stupid' because 'he did not seem to realize the urgency of the situation,' and he 'hankers after a great, self-contained American Army.'⁸³

Such a reaction was far too dramatic. Pershing was within his right to remove the divisions. Yet, even Pershing was unsure about this decision and doubted his actions. On previous occasions, he turned to the French for advice, and this time was no exception. In January, he had sought guidance from Petain regarding amalgamation, and now he went to French Premier Georges Clemenceau for counsel. Pershing told him about his recent exchange with Haig, and the constant pressure from him and Lloyd George to keep his divisions with the British. Clemenceau revealed how he originally agreed with the British that the idea of forming an independent American Army was a mistake. But after giving this subject more consideration, he was now less inclined to side with the British. He was of the opinion that 'everyone who was against the Americans on this proposition was wrong.' The AEF 'should operate separately as an American Army, and you [Pershing] should not give it another thought.'⁸⁴ The conversation with Clemenceau had a positive effect, and the change was noticeable in Pershing's next letter to Haig:

My dear Sir Douglas: I have already directed the commanding general, II Corps to place, at your request, the 27th and 30th Divisions in the line. I have, however, informed General Read that these divisions must remain under their own division commanders. We have so often discussed the question of bringing American forces together in large units that I am sure it is unnecessary for me to insist upon the reasons why my division commanders should exercise tactical as well as administrative control over their own troops. As I wrote you some time ago, I

would be very glad if you could find it practicable to utilise the II Corps staff in an actual tactical command at an early date. I may add that I think the realisation of this would be desirable from every point of view.⁸⁵

In closing, Pershing thanked Haig for approving the removal of the divisions, but now hinted that the decision resulted from pressure by Foch:

The task that Marshal Foch has confided to me makes it essential that the 33rd, 78th and 80th Divisions join my forces in this region at the earliest possible moment. I spoke to you of this when we last met, and I am now writing Marshal Foch and pointing out that the assistance of these divisions is essential to the success of the forthcoming operations. I wish also to thank you for your cordial cooperation and the prompt manner in which you have met our desires in the matter of transferring divisions, especially as at this time, I realize how much this may have disarranged plans that you had already made.⁸⁶

Haig's response was more to the point. 'I always know when I am dealing with you what your opinion is on the question at issue!' he wrote Pershing. This is not 'always the case with the French. I am very glad to assist you with the entry into the line of the 27th and 30th Divisions, and I feel certain that the withdrawal of the remaining divisions will appeal to you as being in the general interest.' Furthermore, he told Pershing, 'I trust that events might justify your decision to withdraw the American troops from the British battlefield at the present moment. 'But, I have no doubt that the arrival in this battle of a few strong, vigorous American divisions, when the enemy's units are thoroughly worn out, would lead to the most decisive news.'⁸⁷

As the three American divisions made preparations to leave the British sector, on 15 August, Haig visited the 33rd Division headquarters, where General Bell was waiting with a guard of honour to greet him. This was their first meeting, and Haig thought Bell

looked like ‘a typical “Yankee,” with a little “goatee” beard and moustache.’ His ‘chief difficulty as a commander, Haig guessed, ‘is his big stomach; he is so fat that he cannot move far or fast without getting out of breath!!’ But, he considered him a ‘capital fellow.’ Bell told him that he appreciated the British looking after his division, and how distressed he was that ‘General Pershing won’t let him take part in our offensive battle.’⁸⁸

With 50,000 American soldiers now attached to his forces for the foreseeable future, Haig wrote Foch on 27 August: ‘In order to exploit the present favourable situation, I am strongly of the opinion that it is desirable that American divisions should take an active share in the battle without delay.’ Foch responded favourably. ‘It was not only permissible,’ he wrote Haig, ‘but desirable that we should use both American divisions at present with us in the battle after 31 August.’⁸⁹

Pershing’s close friend and advisor, Brig. Gen. James G. Harbord,⁹⁰ was a keen observer in the ‘game’ of politics that the Americans and British were playing. His post-war narrative covers in detail the often-stressful relationship between Pershing and Haig.⁹¹ Harbord visited Pershing at Chaumont on 23 August and ‘found the general full of his plans and problems.’ Pershing hoped that ‘Marshal Foch would direct that certain of our divisions serving with the British would be returned to their own First Army.’ Harbord observed, since ‘Marshal Haig had always played the game with General Pershing in an understanding way. Foch, as Allied commander-in-chief, could easily have ordered them back and saved General Pershing a rather uncomfortable visit to British Headquarters. But he left the child on Pershing’s lap.’ Still, Harbord correctly surmised that the ‘two

men (Pershing and Haig) understood each other, and their friendship had never faltered from the day they met.⁹²

As the last of the five American divisions from II Corps departed his sector on 25 August, Haig was still seething. His diary records: 'What will history say regarding this action of the Americans leaving the British zone of operations when *the decisive battle* of the war is at its height, and the decision is still in doubt?' Would events 'justify his [Pershing's] decision to withdraw such a large force of American divisions (over 150,000 men) from me at the height of battle?' Haig asked rhetorically. 'For the present, I am convinced that if they had taken part in this battle, they would, owing to the present tired and demoralised state of the Germans on this front, have enabled the Allies to obtain immediate and decisive results.'⁹³ Haig was, of course, exaggerating again. The American divisions attached to the BEF would prove to be more than enough strength for the coming offensive.

Defining Moment

It appeared Pershing and Haig had survived their latest struggle, and both came out on top. Pershing gained Allied backing for his own army, while Haig had use of II American Corps for the foreseeable future. Composed of only the 27th and 30th Divisions, it was the smallest corps in the AEF. After 12 August, Pershing stopped visiting corps headquarters for inspections since he was now too busy organising the AEF First Army and making preparations for its first independent operation. With his corps now left with the British, Read would have to step up and make decisions as a

commander without Pershing looking over his shoulder. Although he still had to keep Chaumont informed of how the two divisions were being utilised, he had much more latitude to act on his own.

Whether or not Read realised this, there was dissent within his corps. The chief of staff was not happy about the withdrawal of the divisions. Simonds wrote a confidential letter to Fox Conner, with a few carefully considered suggestions that indicated his preference to have had the entire II Corps moved to the main body of the AEF. 'I believe that if you had hit them for the five [divisions] instead of the three, they would have turned them loose,' Simonds advised. 'I think the sooner we can get these divisions with our own army, the better it will be, and I suggest that since both divisions will finish their tour on the front lines about the same time, the termination of that tour will be the psychological time to get them away.'⁹⁴ These comments are peculiar since Simonds had made no prior indication of his displeasure with the II Corps arrangements. There was no written response from Conner, and Simonds apparently let the matter drop.

During the second week of August, Read conducted his first inspection of the two divisions in II Corps to determine their 'state of training, general preparedness for active service, and general efficiency.' Along with various General Staff officers, Read spent two days with each division, and the results were disappointing. Although the report of this inspection was written two days after Pershing had offered Haig the 27th and 30th, Read may have told him of his findings in advance. For the 27th Division, Read reported that it was 'deficient in map reading, sketching, scouting and patrolling, and rifle and

hand grenade practice.’ He also concluded that the division’s officers were not sufficiently zealous in their care of men. On a positive note, Read thought the non-commissioned officers were exceptionally good.

Comments on the 30th Division were also mostly unfavourable. Unlike the 27th, its officers were zealous. But ‘sketchy methods have been used in the 119th and 120th Infantries.’ Both regiments exhibited inadequate instruction in map reading, sketching, and scouting and patrolling.’ At the end of his report, he ranked the five divisions in his corps in order of efficiency. The 27th and 30th were the two worst.⁹⁵

Inspection by the XIX British Corps contradicted Read’s report, as least as far as the 27th Division was concerned. The inspector determined that ‘the keenness, intelligence and spirit of all ranks have left nothing to be desired’ for the New Yorkers. Although the inspector did report some minor deficiencies, such as the improper wearing of caps, insufficient knowledge of trench cooking, and a general lack of sanitary education, he thought all of this was attributed to ‘inexperience and faulty administrative arrangements.’⁹⁶

The Line

With the 27th and 30th now close to the front and soon likely to be participating in major combat, Read was concerned that his corps did not have its own artillery. It was never intended for the II Corps divisions to have their own artillery, and from the moment artillery units arrived in France, they were assigned to the French Army for instruction.

There was never any indication that his divisions would be reunited with their artillery while training with the British. Still, Read wrote to the AEF operations branch:

With regard to divisional troops, the division, at present, has with it the British artillery, and it is presumed that these arrangements can be continued as long as the divisions remain on this front. Our experience here has shown that the combination of British methods with our own, which is necessary to a certain degree where British equipment is used in our organisation, and where the smaller units serve together in a mixed larger unit, leads to unavoidable complications and results in a hampering of the proper development of our units along our lines.⁹⁷

His concern was justified since the artillery regiments that trained for nine months with the 27th and 30th at Wadsworth and Sevier would never enter the British sector. Instead, the infantry and machine-gun units were forced to operate with the British artillery, whom they had not trained with. The two divisions never entirely adjusted, and this became a real problem during the Hindenburg Line operation.

Another concern for the Americans, and all soldiers who fought during the First World War, was the terror of gas warfare while at the front. In one horrific experience, 22 men of the 30th Division died as a result of a friendly gas attack that backfired. A similar mishap occurred three years before at Loos, when the gas companies of the 2nd British Division released chlorine during an unfavourable wind, resulting in numerous casualties within this division and other units nearby.⁹⁸ This time, 400 men and officers of the 105th Engineer Regiment, under supervision of the British, had transported 2,520 cylinders of gas, phosgene and chlorine in nine trains of seven 3-ton trucks each. The trains were pulled by a light railway to the Trois Rois Spur on a tramway system organised by the commander of the Royal Engineers Special (gas) Brigade, Maj. Gen. C.H. Foulkes.⁹⁹ The cars were pushed by hand to positions just below the outpost line. When all troops

were withdrawn from the outpost line, the gas was released simultaneously from all cylinders, with the wind blowing about four miles an hour directly toward the enemy lines.

Shortly after the cylinders were released, a steady wind changed direction and blew the gas clouds back over the Allied lines toward the trains. Recognising the confusion, the Germans fired machine guns that caught soldiers from the 119th and 120th Infantries, who were on patrol at the front, by surprise. Casualties mounted when one of the gas cylinders containing phosgene fell nearby and poisoned the men before they could adjust their respirators. When inhaled, phosgene was so lethal that only one or two breaths could result in mortal respiratory wounds.¹⁰⁰ Other soldiers walked unknowingly into the gas cloud and were also immediately affected.

According to prisoner interrogations a week later, the Germans lost a few animals but no men from the botched attack.¹⁰¹ There were two investigations of this incident. The 30th Division gas officer conducted the first, and among his conclusions were that officers ‘pay closer attention’ and that ‘no one be permitted to remove his respirator before receiving an “all is clear” command.’ The chemical advisor to the Second British Army carried out the other investigation, and his suggestions were more practical. He surmised that the ‘leakage of gas around the edges of the mask is important and greatly emphasises the need of the nose-clip and mouthpiece with the present type of mask.’¹⁰² One bright spot was the conduct of Sgt. Guy R. Hinson, who first led the men of his platoon away from the gas cloud to safety, then returned to the cloud on four other occasions to rescue

men overcome by the gas. His excellent leadership was rewarded with the Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁰³

There is little that could have been done to prevent this incident since both officers and men had received extensive training in gas warfare. A report written more than a month before by the AEF chief of the Chemical Warfare Service informed Read that in addition to the regular training of the corps gas personnel, many of its officers and N.C.O.s took a special four-day course taught by the British. Also, two hours per week was devoted to gas lectures.¹⁰⁴

Learning Curve

One may conclude that by the end of August, II American Corps, with its two divisions, was developing into an effective combat unit. Despite distractions from the AEF commander-in-chief and poor showing during inspections, it was on a learning curve that in many ways resembled what the BEF had been through in its infancy. The Americans were learning quickly, thanks in part to the British and Dominion troops, and their patience with the inexperienced doughboys. Yet, there was still much to be taught, and this would become evident as the two divisions were given more difficult tasks. The experience of being at the front had already hardened the doughboys. An even greater opportunity to test their ability was coming up as the second phase of training came to an end.

¹ Chief of Operations, G.H.Q., BEF to Chief of Staff, II Corps, 9 June 1918, 'Training of American Troops with British,' File 182-56.5, Entry 874, RG 120, NARA.

² Ibid.

³ Murphy and Thomas, 63-64.

⁴ The Commanding General-in-Chief, British Armies in France to the Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces, 14 June 1918. Folder 658-B, Entry 267. RG 120. NARA.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ O’Ryan. *The Story of the 27th Division*, 141.

⁷ Commanding General, 30th Division to Commanding General, II Corps, AEF, 9 July 1918, ‘Status of Training of 30th Division,’ File 353, Folder 36, Entry 267, RG 120. NARA.

⁸ John K. Herr, *My Personal Experiences and Observations in Connection with the Great War*. This is an unpublished manuscript found among the John K. Herr Papers, United States Military Academy Archives, West Point, New York.

⁹ Monash to Rawlinson, 23 June 1918, 3DRL/2316/60, AWM.

¹⁰ Monash to Leo Monash, 7 January 1918, MS 1884, AWM.

¹¹ C.E.W. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France: During the Allied Offensive, 1918* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, LTD, 1942), 262.

¹² Albert Palazzo, *Seeking Victory on the Western Front: The British Army & Chemical Warfare in World War I* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 167-168.

¹³ Prior and Wilson, 295.

¹⁴ Pedersen, *Monash*, 227.

¹⁵ Ibid, 166.

¹⁶ Haig Diary, 1 July 1918, NLS and Pedersen, 230.

¹⁷ Monash Papers, 28 June 1919, 3DRL/2316/60, AWM.

¹⁸ John J. Pershing. ‘Diary Entry for July 2, 1918.’ Pershing Papers, LOC (hereafter cited as Pershing Diary).

¹⁹ Ibid, 3 July 1918.

²⁰ Bean, 331.

²¹ H.J. Taylor, 17th Australian Battalion, unpublished manuscript. MS 863, 154-155. AWM.

²² Dale Blair, ‘Diggers’ and Doughboys’: Australian and American troop interaction on the Western Front, 1918.’ *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 3.

²³ Pershing Diary, 5 July 1918.

²⁴ Haig to Pershing, 4 July 1918. Pershing Diary and Haig Papers, NLS.

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- ²⁵ Henry Rawlinson to Clive Rawlinson, 7 July 1918. Sir Henry Rawlinson Papers. National Army Museum (hereafter NAM)
- ²⁶ Haig to Pershing, 5 July 1918. Haig Papers, NLS.
- ²⁷ Henry Rawlinson to Clive Rawlinson, 7 July 1918, NAM.
- ²⁸ Bean, 326, and Peter Pedersen, *Hamel* (London: Leo Cooper, 2003), 109.
- ²⁹ Bruce Jacobs, July 4, 1918: 'A National Guard "Model Company" From Chicago Goes to War Over General Pershing's Protest-Fireworks Follow!' *The National Guardsman* (July 1978). 39.
- ³⁰ Simonds Lecture.
- ³¹ Pershing, *My Experiences*, Volume II, 138.
- ³² Col. George S. Simonds, Chief of Staff, II Corps to Col. Fox Connor, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5. 7 July 1918, Entry 268, RG 120, NARA.
- ³³ Papers of Paul Henry Clark, 4 July 1918, 1-2, Entry 18, John J. Pershing Papers, RG 200, NARA.
- ³⁴ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 177.
- ³⁵ Prior and Wilson, 300.
- ³⁶ Lt. Col. D.K. Leonard, General Headquarters, BEF, 12 June 1918. 'State of Training.' British File, 33rd Division, Folder 1, Entry 318, RG 165, NARA.
- ³⁷ The Inspector General, II Corps, AEF, to Inspector General. G.H.Q., AEF, 'Monthly Report on Discipline,' 7 July 1918, File 56.2, Entry 1023, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁸ Commanding General to Asst. Chief of Staff, G-5, GHQ, AEF. 'Training Higher Commanders with 30th Division during 'Phase B' with the British.' 17 August 1918. File #16869-B, Entry 9, RG 120, NARA.
- ³⁹ U.S. War Department, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War, American Expeditionary Forces, Divisions* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), 135 and 165.
- ⁴⁰ Capt. J.C. Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew, 1914-1919: A Chronicle of Service in France and Belgium*, edited by Keith Simpson (London: Abacus, 1999), 476.
- ⁴¹ Richard Holmes, editor. *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1013-1015.
- ⁴² Walker, 14.
- ⁴³ Joseph Douglas Lawrence. *Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918*, edited by Robert H. Ferrell (Boulder: Colorado Associated Press, 1985), 16-17.
- ⁴⁴ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 2nd Division*, 197-201, and Murphy, 71-72.
- ⁴⁵ Burial File for Robert P. Friedman, Entry 1941, RG 92, NARA. He was a member of Company A, 105th Engineers and died on 13 July 1918.
- ⁴⁶ Rabbi Lee J. Levinger, *A Jewish Chaplain in France* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921). 127-128.

⁴⁷ *These Men: For Conspicuous Bravery Above and Beyond the Call of Duty* (unknown author and date of publication. Copy found among the holdings of the USAMHI).

⁴⁸ *The New York Sun*, 7 March 1919.

⁴⁹ Although Americans, British and Australians spoke English, there were slang words and various phrases that were foreign to each. Examples and an analysis of how this affected communication will be addressed in Chapter 8.

⁵⁰ A synopsis of S.S. 152 was outlined by Lt. Gen. Charles Bonham-Carter and is found among the papers of Sir Ivor Maxse at the IWM. This is a remarkable work in which Bonham-Carter details in six pages the main components necessary for Training in France, Individual Training, Training of Commanding Officers, Training of Units and Formations, Training of Staffs, and a General Policy of Training. Historians have underrated Bonham-Carter. He is not even mentioned in Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*. But, as I mention in the previous chapter, he certainly had a positive effect on the Americans.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Capt. Henry Maslin, Company D, 105th Infantry to GHQ (Through 27th Division, AEF). 'Report of Tour of Duty in British Trenches,' 25 June 1918. File 16427-R, Entry 9, RG 120, NARA.

⁵³ Capt. George P. Nichols, 107th U.S. Inf. to C.O. 107th U.S. Inf., 'Report on Visit to Front Line Trenches.' 16 July 1918. File # 16427-P, Entry 6, RG 120, NARA.

⁵⁴ 30th Division 'Strength Returns.' July 1918. RG 407. NARA.

⁵⁵ Murphy and Thomas, 73.

⁵⁶ Commanding General, 59th Infantry Brigade to Assistant Chief of Staff, General Headquarters, A.E.F. 'Report on Relations under British 2nd Corps. 15 December 1918. Entry 267, RG 120. NA.

⁵⁷ Franklin Wilmer Ward. *Between the Parades* (New York: Frederick M. Waterbury. 1932), 51.

⁵⁸ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 169.

⁵⁹ Carl Boyd, A.D.C. to Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, 12 July 1918, Pershing Papers, Library of Congress.

⁶⁰ Ward, 51-53.

⁶¹ Richard Holmes. *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 136.

⁶² Lt. John Jerome Callahan, 105th Infantry to C.O. 1st BN, 105th Inf. 'Report on Working Detail.' 3 August 1918, 333.1 Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁶³ Jacobson, p. 44.

⁶⁴ Berry, 212.

⁶⁵ War Diary, 9th (Glasgow Highlanders) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry, 6 July 1918. Thanks to Alec Weir for bringing this to my attention.

⁶⁶ Robert Cude, 55th Infantry Brigade, 24-25 September 1918 'Robert Cude Diary.' IWM.

⁶⁷ F.A.J. Taylor, *The Bottom of the Barrel: 1918* (n.p. and n.d.), 90-91.

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- ⁶⁸ Haig to Pershing, 18 July 1918, Haig Papers, NLS.
- ⁶⁹ Sir William Robertson to Gen. John J. Pershing, 18 July 1918, Pershing Papers, LOC, Correspondence Files,.
- ⁷⁰ General Philip Diary, IWM.
- ⁷¹ Walker, 13.
- ⁷² Herr, 15.
- ⁷³ Erich Ludendorff, *My War Memories* (Hutchinson, 1919), 526-527.
- ⁷⁴ For a thorough treatment of Amiens and the Hundred Days' campaign, see J.P. Harris, with Niall Barr, *Amiens to the Armistice: The BEF in the Hundred Days' Campaign, 8 August-11 November 1918* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998), and Maj. Gen. Sir Archibald Montgomery, *The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days, August 8th to November 11th 1918* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 55-56.
- ⁷⁵ Harris and Barr, 112, and Montgomery, 55-56.
- ⁷⁶ Pershing Diary, 8 July 1918.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid, 12 August 1918.
- ⁷⁸ Sir Henry Rawlinson to Sir Sidney Clive, 7 July 1918. Rawlinson Papers, NAM..
- ⁷⁹ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 177.
- ⁸⁰ Pershing Diary, 12 August 1918.
- ⁸¹ Pershing Diary, 15 August 1918.
- ⁸² Haig Diary, 12 August 1918, Volume 32, NLS.
- ⁸³ Ibid, 25 August 1918.
- ⁸⁴ Pershing Diary, 27 August 1918.
- ⁸⁵ August 20, 1918, Letter from Pershing to Haig, Haig Papers, NLS.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ Pershing to Haig, 14 August 1918, Haig Papers, NLS.
- ⁸⁸ Haig to Pershing, 15 August 1918, Haig Papers, NLS.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Harbord had been promoted to Major General in July 1918 when he took over the Services of Supply (SOS).
- ⁹¹ When Pershing's *My Experiences in the World War* was published in 1931, its main criticism was the author's lack of appreciation for the work of other AEF staff officers and the War Department's chief of

staff Peyton March. In response, March wrote his own narrative of the war that downplayed Pershing and Harbord responded on Pershing's behalf with his own work.

⁹² James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936) and Pershing, Volume II, 217.

⁹³ Haig Diary, 27 August 1918, NLS.

⁹⁴ George S. Simonds to Fox Connor, G-3, G.H.Q., AEF, 23 August 1918, II Corps General File, Folder 302, Entry 267, RG 120, NARA.

⁹⁵ Commanding General, II Corps, to C-in-C (G-5) G.H.Q., AEF, 'Inspection of Divisions of the II Corps,' 14 August 1918, File #13599-A-93, Entry 9, RG 120, NARA.

⁹⁶ Brig. Gen. C.H. MacMillan, 'Resume of Points Brought to Notice During Attachment of 27th American Division,' 16 August 1918, File 333.1, 27th Division, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁹⁷ Read to G-3, 23 August 1918, WO 166/466, TNA:PRO.

⁹⁸ Palazzo, 60-61.

⁹⁹ Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, 116-117.

¹⁰⁰ Palazzo, 29.

¹⁰¹ Herr, 15.

¹⁰² 30th Division Gas Officer to the Commanding General, 30th Division, 'Report of Gas Attack, 24 August 1918,' 105th Engineers Historical Files, 230-12.3, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁰³ DSC Citation for Sgt. Guy R. Hinson, Murphy and Thomas, Appendix J, 251.

¹⁰⁴ Report of the Chief of Chemical Warfare Service, AEF to the Chief Gas Officer, II Corps, 30 June 1918, USAWW, Volume 3, 161. For a comprehensive study on the training of American troops in gas warfare, see Charles E. Heller, *Chemical Warfare in World War I: The American Experience, 1917-1918* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Command and General Staff College, 1984).

Chapter 5: Alone with the British

Now that Period B training was completed, II American Corps placed both of its divisions under tactical control of the Second British Army, and they were ordered into battle for the first time. Some officers and men of the 27th and 30th Divisions had already seen action in the form of raids and patrols during rotation to the front with British units. In mid-August, sizeable infantry units and their accompanying troops, such as machine-gun battalions and engineer regiments, went forward to occupy their own sectors, without supervision, save for the command by the local British corps commander. The Americans of II Corps were now, in the common phrase, on their own.

Forward into Battle

Over the course of several nights, 16-24 August, the 27th and 30th Divisions prepared for combat. The 30th Division ordered its 60th Brigade to take over the Canal sector from the 33rd British Division, which was located on the north face of the Lys salient, southwest of Ypres. The 119th Infantry was on the right side of the line, the 120th Infantry on its left. In reserve was the 59th Brigade (117th and 118th Infantries). A week later, the 53rd Brigade (105th and 106th Infantries) of the 27th Division relieved the 6th British Division in the Dickebusch sector. It took over the front and support positions with regiments side by side, with the 54th Brigade (107th and 108th Infantries) in reserve. The British divisions left their artillery units to support the Americans.¹

Troop movements, as well as transport of supplies, were by light railway and conducted during the night, because daytime movements towards the front attracted the fire of German artillery on top of Kemmel Hill. In advance of infantry and machine-gun units were the 102nd (27th Division) and 105th (30th Division) Engineers. They had the difficult and dangerous task of repairing pockmarked roads, nearly impassable after three years of shellfire. Once the troops reached the front, they were quartered in wooden huts built by British engineers. Two squads of eight men, with a corporal in charge, slept in a hut. An occupant described them as spacious.²

Each day involved surveillance from observation posts and aeroplanes. The first few days were reported as calm. A 'quiet, inoffensive attitude,' is how the 30th Division operation report summarised this period.³ But such quiet did not last. Suddenly, as the division's historians noted, 'the scene had now shifted to the battleground of the World War – a stern and terrible reality to the men of all ranks.'⁴ They were referring to night patrols sent out as far as 1,000 yards to probe enemy defences. Troops patrolling too close to the German outpost lines were greeted with blasts of machine-gun fire.

The Germans were initially unaware that Americans had entered their sector, but according to a POW interrogated at 27th Division headquarters, they realised it when the rifle fire became 'more brisk and haphazard.' When asked to elaborate, the soldier from the 93rd German Infantry Regiment stated that soldiers 'who have been in the war for some time only fire individually when they are sure they have a target, whereas new troops are apt to fire more or less constantly at night, whether or not they have a target.'

He said the considerable shooting during the past few nights and the flashes from the guns allowed the Germans to better pinpoint the American line of advance. Once they recognised that untested American troops were opposing them, it became a daily ritual to try their mettle with harassing artillery fire, lobbing shells into back areas to hit crossroads and villages.⁵

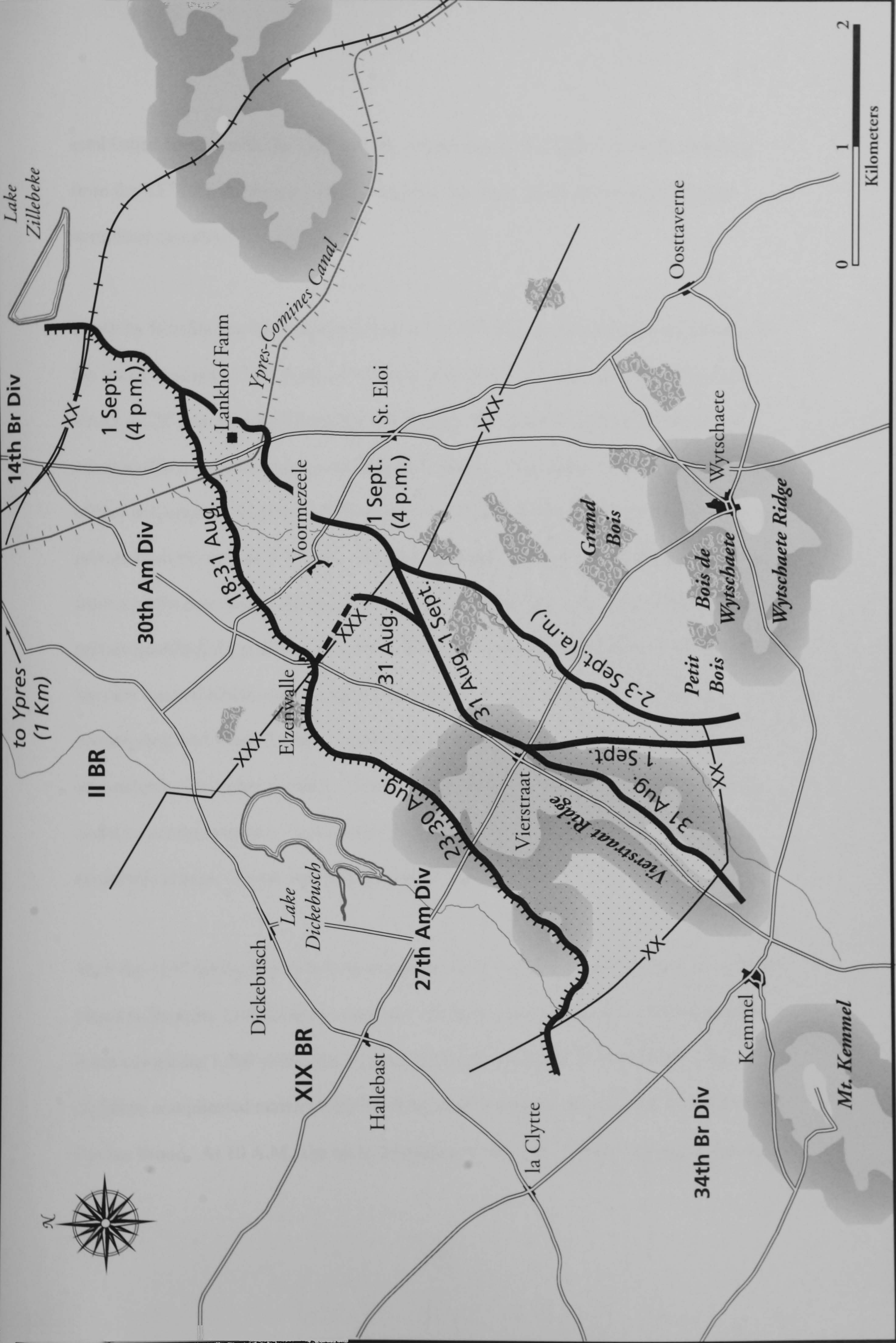
On 30 August, the enemy conducted a surprise move that further tested the doughboys. In the early morning, heavy clouds of smoke crept toward the American lines. An initial report said it was a gas attack, but further observation revealed the Germans were burning dumps of some kind to mask a withdrawal. A prisoner captured near Kemmel Hill confirmed the updated report when he told interrogators that troops were retiring to the Wytschete-Messines Ridge. He claimed a new line was established in front of Armentières, and that eight men per company in machine-gun posts remained behind on Kemmel. They were to give the impression of strength.⁶

XIX British Corps headquarters sent O’Ryan a telegram that night to order patrols from his brigade to reconnoitre the left of the line, opposite the 30th Division. The 53rd Brigade instructed elements of the 105th and 106th Infantries to enter German trenches to determine the depth of the withdrawal. They reported minor resistance from scattered machine-gun posts. The patrols were accompanied by members of the 184th British Tunnelling Company, which checked the vacant enemy dugouts for mines and booby traps. Later reports to brigade headquarters confirmed the prisoner’s statement was correct; the Germans had given up Kemmel Hill, although not completely.⁷ Additional

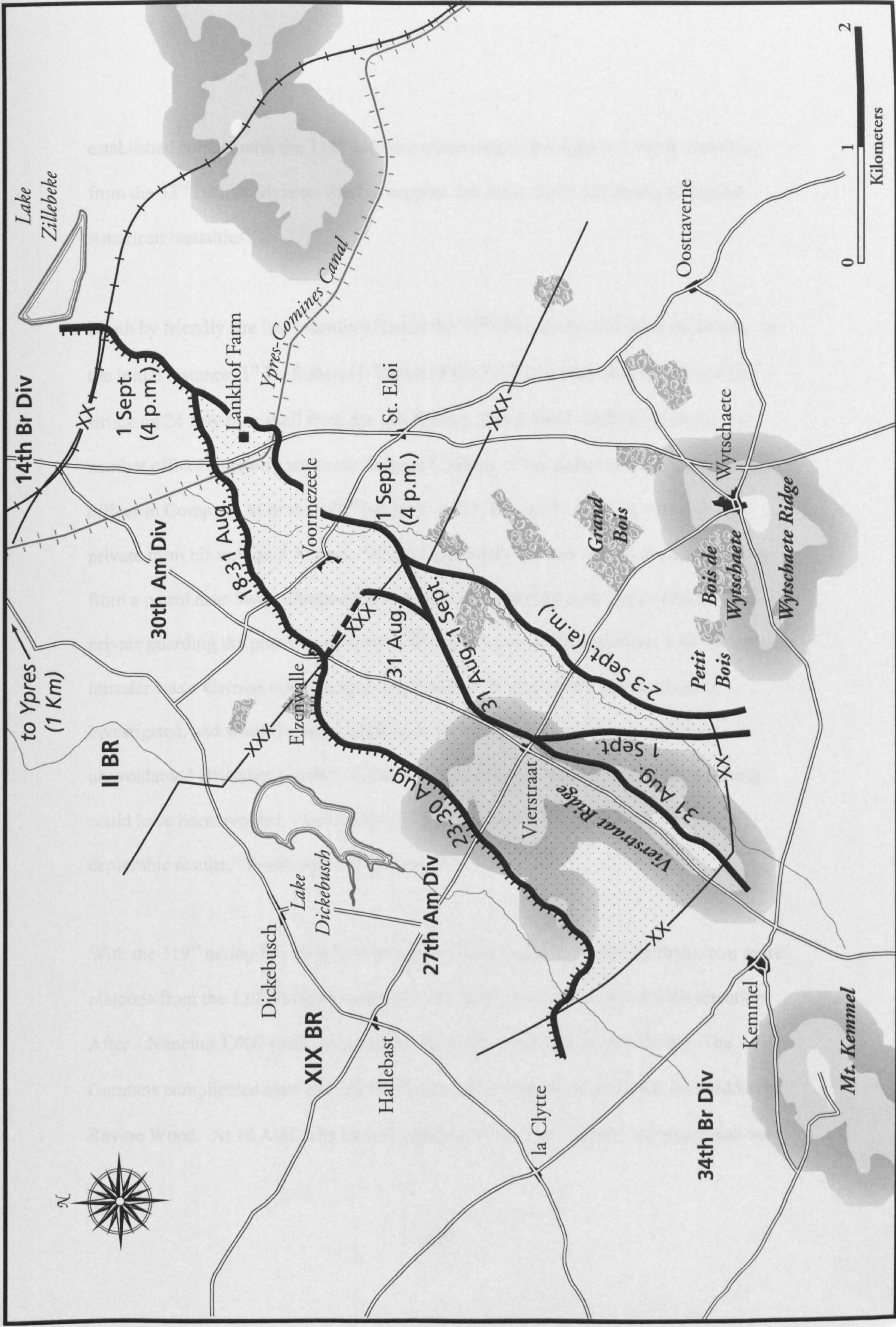
patrols were told to be ready to advance in support of those sent out.⁸ The Americans were gearing up for their first battle as entire regiments. (Map after page 196).

The following day, 31 August, II British Corps ordered up the 30th Division to send out patrols in its sector. A message was sent from Major General Lewis to the 60th Brigade to determine enemy strength and location. He made it clear that if strong resistance was met, they were to return to their entrenchments. Lewis was not ready to commit to a battle. Small parties from the 119th and 120th Infantries were sent out, and like those of the 53rd Brigade, they found the German defences mostly abandoned. Kemmel Hill was taken with ease by the Americans that night, even though the Germans were still close by in strength. Lewis told the brigade commander to hold the line at the Voormezele Switch and Lock 8 of the canal and await further orders. Messages to the front were often sent by runner, but some were communicated by wire. To ensure there was little delay in the latter method, the 105th Signal Battalion laid 15,000 feet of cable along this position to establish a forward communications post.⁹

At 7:30 A.M. the next morning, Lewis gave the order to advance; he was now ready for a battle. After a short barrage, a platoon of 40 men from Company I, 120th Infantry moved forward towards Lankhof Farm. There, the Germans had constructed a cluster of pillboxes in the ruins of an old farm building and positioned machine-gunners and snipers. The platoon would face a similar scenario a month later near Bellicourt. As the Americans advanced, the Germans withdrew to the canal and abandoned their defences at the farm, suffering only two casualties. The platoon then pushed beyond the farm and



Ypres-Lys Offensive, 18 August-1 September 1918



established contact with the 119th Infantry advancing on the right of Lock 8. Artillery from the 33rd British Division fired in support, but some shells fell short and caused American casualties.¹⁰

Death by friendly fire had recently affected the 30th Division on two other occasions. In the initial instance, 1st Lt. Robert H. Turner of the 115th Machine-Gun Battalion was struck on 24 July by a shell from the 186 Battery, Royal Field Artillery while he and another officer were on patrol near Belgian Chateau. During the second occurrence, an officer in Company M of the 120th Infantry, 2nd Lt. Lowell T. Wasson, was shot by a private from his unit on 7 August. Wasson apparently became confused after returning from a patrol near Swan Chateau and had entered a listening post unannounced. The private guarding the post was ordered to fire on Wasson by his superiors, who thought the intruder was a German conducting a trench raid.¹¹ Both friendly fire cases were investigated, and while Turner's death appeared to be an accident and 'entirely unavoidable,' Brigadier General Tyson concluded that in Wasson's case, the shooting could have been avoided. 'Orders will be issued to prevent a recurrence of such deplorable results,' Tyson wrote in his report.¹²

With the 119th taking fire from both its own artillery support and the Germans, two more platoons from the 120th Infantry were sent forward to help relieve the chaotic situation. After advancing 1,000 yards, they retired, having lost touch with both flanks. The Germans complicated matters with fire from trench mortars and machine guns hidden in Ravine Wood. At 10 A.M., the second battalion of the 119th Infantry advanced and held

on against heavy resistance.¹³ During this action, a patrol, including Cpl. Burt T. Forbes of Company I, was acting as a flank guard when a squad of eight Germans approached. As the enemy started setting up their machine guns, Forbes crawled by himself and charged the Germans. He single-handedly killed three and drove the other five away. For this act of bravery, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Croix de Guerre.¹⁴ Word of the action was sent to the rear by pigeon. It was the first time this means of communication had been used by the 30th, and it was successful. Remarkably, only one hour and five minutes elapsed between the time the message was sent, received and transmitted by the division staff.¹⁵

The 30th Division's contribution to the operation was now over, and the results were impressive. It gained one square mile of ground and inflicted one hundred German casualties, and captured sixteen prisoners, two machine guns, one grenade launcher, and a small amount of ammunition and stores. In the process, the 30th lost two officers and thirty-five men killed.¹⁶

In the 27th Division sector, XIX British Corps ordered O'Ryan's men to advance at 10 A.M. on 31 August and occupy a line along the Vierstraat Switch, 1,000 yards from their present location. Patrols from the 106th Infantry advanced along the line until held up for three hours by machine guns concealed in numerous nests near Siege Farm.¹⁷ The Americans retaliated with their own machine guns, as well as artillery fired by units of the 66th British Division. By 5:30 P.M., the enemy had been driven back, the objective gained.¹⁸

The fighting of August 1918 was over: another bloody month on the Western Front, and September started off the same way. On the morning of 1 September, the 105th Infantry went forward on its right to pivot on the 30th Division at Vierstraat Village. As it attempted to advance to the east crest of Vierstraat Ridge, the Germans again put up resistance and drove the Americans back to the village. Again, creativity by the Americans was used to send messages to the rear. In this case, the 102nd Signal Battalion sent messages with pigeons and dogs, and, amazingly, the latter were able to manoeuvre through the lines and across ground while subject to heavy fire.¹⁹

Despite such valiant efforts, communication was still difficult, as reflected in a frantic field message sent from the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry: 'Our new position very heavily shelled, making communications almost impossible... request that artillery open fire on hill opposite our new position.'²⁰ Information on why the regiment was stalled did not reach brigade headquarters until late in the day on 1 September. Messages were delayed because shellfire had cut the forward line. To help remedy the troubling situation, Cpl. Kenneth M. McCann of the 102nd Field Signal Battalion worked for 72 hours, while subjected to repeated gas bombardments and machine-gun fire, to replace the forward line near Kemmel Hill. For his extraordinary efforts, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²¹

More discouraging news reached the rear from an officer observing at the front that on the left of the 106th Infantry, two battalions had become badly mixed up and crowded into the line.²² Upon learning about the situation, the 53rd Infantry Brigade commander, Brig.

Gen. Albert H. Blanding, ordered the commander of the 106th, Col. William A. Taylor, to the front to investigate. Taylor reported two hours later that the officer in command at the front, Maj. Harry S. Hildreth, had 'apparently entirely lost control and seemed at a loss as to what to do.' Blanding ordered Taylor to immediately relieve Hildreth from command and take charge. Not until daylight the following morning was the situation in hand.²³ Hildreth was only temporarily reprimanded. He was lucky this was his only punishment since it was commonplace in the AEF, as well as the BEF, to permanently relieve commanders from their units for poor performance. Hildreth was allowed to regain his post as a battalion commander in the 106th a few days later.²⁴

On 1 September, Blanding ordered his brigade not to make a general attack, but to advance the front line as far as possible. With the help of artillery harassment, the two regiments moved forward, and by the afternoon of the next day, had captured the southern slope of Wytschaete Ridge. At noon on 2 September, Taylor phoned Blanding and requested permission to dig in on the line of the first objective and wait for relief. His request was denied. Instead, he was ordered to advance further, and after another day of hard fighting, the 106th permanently reoccupied the Chinese Trench, which ran between the Berghe and Byron Farms. The Germans by now had retired in some strength to Wytschaete Ridge.²⁵ The two-day operation ended with the 53rd Brigade losing two officers and seventy-seven men killed, mostly from artillery fire.²⁶

In the Rear

Two days before the Battle of Vierstraat Ridge commenced. (as the 27th Division's portion of the Ypres-Lys Operation was called). O'Ryan received a visit from the portrait painter John Singer Sargent. The British War Memorials Committee of the Ministry of Information commissioned him to paint a large-scale war scene for exhibition in a Hall of Remembrance.²⁷ The subject was to be a picture of the British and American troops cooperating. Sargent arrived in France on 2 July 1918 and was attached to the XIX Corps. During his visit with the 27th Division, he became a member of 'A Mess' in his quest to learn about the American troops.

Sargent found little inspiration to paint at 27th Division headquarters and persuaded an American staff officer to take him to Ypres. Roads packed with troops and trucks slowed the journey. Instead of despairing, Sargent thought of the congestion as a subject for showing the British and Americans together, as long as it 'could be prevented from looking like going to the Derby.'²⁸ But, for an unknown reason, he never painted the picture, or anything else depicting the Anglo-American alliance. Later, he returned to 27th Division headquarters and sketched O'Ryan.²⁹

On 3 September, the Americans received withdrawal orders, and moved back from the Canal and Dickebusch sectors during the next two days. The 41st British Division relieved the 27th, and the 35th British Division took the sector vacated by the 30th. Relief of the New Yorkers did not go smoothly. When the order reached the 53rd Brigade, it was so far forward that it took a considerable amount of time to reach the light railways

for transportation to the rear. Once the brigade reached the rear, it found that the 41st Division was in the midst of moving forward, and considerable congestion ensued. Then the men of the 27th Division, looking forward warm beds and clean uniforms, found that billeting and bathing facilities were difficult to find. O’Ryan later wrote that provisions had been made for his men, ‘but the lack of time and other circumstances prevented it being done to the fullest extent.’³⁰

After leaving the front, rumours spread within the divisions as to where they were headed next. Speculation in the 30th Division was that it would join the rest of the American Army. But a 14-hour train ride on 6 September took the division to the rear in St. Pol. It was a French town of 30,000 used as a rest and training area by the British – nowhere near the main body of the AEF. The 27th Division left Belgium the night before and arrived several hours later in France at Beauquesne, where billets were arranged throughout the village. For the first time in a month, the Americans were out of reach from the German artillery, and the men could relax without fear of shellfire.³¹

Lessons

While the recent operation was still fresh, the battalion and company commanders were charged with after-action reports. Only those written by the 30th Division line officers remain in both their original form and printed versions in the division history.³² In many cases, they are very detailed and provide a window into the seemingly chaotic American experience of being in the line for the first time. In one report, a lieutenant in the 119th Infantry complained that his platoon’s ammunition supply was defective, and for 24

hours, he had no reserve rounds.³³ Another officer told how the supply of water that reached the front lines during the nights of 2-3 September was not enough for one platoon, and 'this shortage, which seems to exist in all parts of the line. is the greatest hardship the men have to bear.'³⁴ These were annoying problems that had to be corrected. Other mistakes were not so insignificant and showed the weaknesses in the division's officer corps.

Problems arose in many situations. After reaching an objective, a platoon commander could not communicate with his left flank because he did not have a telephone, lamp, pigeons, or even a signalman. 'Liaison was poor,' he complained. 'I had no ground flares, no panels, and no other means of getting in touch with aeroplanes.'³⁵ Lt. F.J. Dietrele's concerns are echoed in many of the reports, as officers told of poor liaison and suggested that further training in this area was essential. Liaison should not have been such an issue since II Corps had made it a priority during the first phase of training by setting up liaison schools in each village.³⁶

The American mishaps were also noted by the opposing German troops. In a report dated 3 September, the commander of the 8th German Infantry Division, Major General Hamann, remarked: 'Withdrawal of our line confronted the American troops with a task to which they were by no means equal.'³⁷ When the 27th Division moved out of its quiet sector to pursue the Germans, Hamann wrote: 'The inexperienced troops do not yet know how to utilise the terrain in movement, work their way forward during an attack, or choose the correct formation in the event the enemy opens artillery fire.'³⁸ His comments

were similar to those of a soldier from the 93rd Regiment, who was captured and interrogated days before by the 27th Division.

Hamann, however, incorrectly believed the withdrawal of the 53rd Brigade from the line on 2 September was the result of exhaustion. In actuality, it was intended for the brigade to withdraw on that date, as reflected in the relief orders sent on 31 August by the 41st British Division, to take effect 2 September.³⁹ After the war, Hamann was more complimentary toward the New Yorkers. O’Ryan had written him to gather information for *The Story of the 27th*, and the German officer responded, saying ‘reports reaching me from all sources, particularly from our artillery observation posts, were that your infantry was unusually energetic in their attack.’⁴⁰

Such energy that Hamann witnessed was almost certainly the result of experiencing combat for the first time. Lieutenant Gow of the 107th Infantry recognised this and had even greater respect for the British after the fighting commenced. ‘I can understand now why the men who had been instructors could not describe an attack if they were asked about it,’ he wrote his family. ‘The thing is so tremendous that one’s mind simply cannot grasp it. It just can’t be done.’⁴¹

Enlisted men also had plenty to say about the Ypres-Lys Operation, but their comments are not recorded among the official reports. Rather, they are found amongst letters sent home, and in personal diaries and memoirs. Like Gow, most men reflected on being at the front. The sound of battle created a lasting memory for many soldiers, and one from

Tennessee described the constant firing of machine guns as though it were 'popcorn popping.'⁴² Another wrote how it seemed to him that the Germans knew the location of every trench, since they harassed the Americans during the day with artillery fire. At night, their planes bombed the front and rear, and the 'artificial camouflage provided what little deception was practised upon the enemy.'⁴³

The historian of Company K, 117th Infantry, wrote: 'The night of the big barrage on Kemmel Hill was a night of discomfort and nervousness' among the men in his unit. Nerves were frayed, and Private Stewart recalled how a sergeant in his company advanced cautiously with his rifle toward a noise in the rear that he insisted was caused by German soldiers conducting a raid. Moments later, he learned it was a trench rat retreating to its hole.⁴⁴ Once the men of Company K actually participated in combat, they 'were happier than we had been for many months, for the first battle experiences had been met with all the credit that was to have been expected, and we had not quailed at the smell of gunpowder.'⁴⁵

The bravery of the American soldiers was also applauded by the British. Before the 27th Division returned to New York, Gen. Sir Herbert Plumer told O`Ryan: 'The wonderful spirit that animated all ranks and the gallantry displayed in the minor engagements they took part in with us foreshadowed the successes they would achieve later.'⁴⁶

Training

Now in the rear again, the 27th and 30th returned to training. This meant drilling twice a day, and attacking imaginary enemy strongpoints, such as machine-gun nests.⁴⁷ The current period of training should have been Period C, but with approval from the British, Read had sent a memo to the AEF G-5 on 9 August, recommending no further structured training. At the time, this made sense, for two reasons. First, the corps was in the process of losing three divisions. Second, the two remaining divisions were about to enter the line. G-5 approved the recommendation and reminded Read that further training 'will strongly emphasize the attack – to which should be devoted the greater part of all exercises, from those for the platoon to the division.'⁴⁸

Besides training, there was time for recreation. In St. Pol, civilians treated the doughboys warmly, prompting one soldier in the 30th Division to describe the town as 'the most beautiful and comfortable area in which his regiment was ever billeted.'⁴⁹ The southern National Guardsmen reciprocated the hospitality by spending freely on beer and wine in the local cafés.⁵⁰ At Beauquesne, the Scottish comedian and singer Harry Lauder visited the New Yorkers. He lunched with O'Ryan and his staff, and later in the day, sat down at a small portable piano and entertained members of the division. Lauder ended his performance on a sombre note, telling the audience about the death of his son, an officer in the British Army killed on the Somme, and how much he hated the Germans and the way they conducted the war.⁵¹

Training with Tanks

During the middle of September, the Americans were introduced to the tactic of advancing the infantry with support from tanks. The 33rd American Division, now gone, had received rudimentary training in this technique before the Hamel operation. At Hamel, however, tanks played an auxiliary role. German defences were weak, with little wire, so it was unnecessary for tanks to lead the assault.⁵² For the 27th and 30th, tank training was new. The British conducted the training at their tank centre near St. Pol and distributed the most recent training manual, *Tanks and Their Employment in Cooperation with Other Arms* (SS 214). Published in August, it superseded two other manuals, incorporating lessons from the Somme, Cambrai, and even Hamel.⁵³ Although the future Maj. Gen. J.F.C. Fuller, who was then serving as chief of staff of the Tank Corps, thought the author of SS 214 an ‘ignoramus,’ recent analysis concludes it to be a balanced and objective work. The manual’s chief claim was that infantry constituted the only arm that could seize and hold a position, and tanks had to assist the infantry.⁵⁴ This was a fair assessment since the tank had not yet developed to the point where it could be used without infantry support.⁵⁵ One historian has calculated that infantry casualties were much lighter when men fought with the advantage of properly mounted tank attacks.⁵⁶

The effectiveness of tanks and infantry cooperating depended upon how well ground troops had trained, and other factors, such as terrain and weather. Cambrai is an example of the tank’s capabilities. Corporal Dillon of the Tank Corps remembered how ‘the tanks cleared the wire for the crossing of large numbers of people by driving into it two

abreast.’ The result was to ‘drag the enormous barbed-wire fences into balls of wire about 20 feet high, and when they cleared the ground, it was clean as a whistle.’⁵⁷

Although some British officers continued to question its usefulness, even after Hamel, the tank was now an integral part of BEF doctrine and would remain so for the rest of the war. Rawlinson’s Fourth Army used tanks successfully, particularly during the attack on Amiens, where 324 heavy tanks and 96 Whippets took part.⁵⁸ The downside was that this attack overstretched the Tank Corps, and at home, production could not keep up with demand.

Why the British were now anxious to train the Americans with tanks was hinted at by their staff officers. O’Ryan revealed in his history of the 27th Division how it was ‘intimated that in the near future, the division might be called upon to carry out a mission of great importance, which would require its use of what was popularly known as a “shock division.”’⁵⁹ The mission involving the Americans was going to be against the Hindenburg Line; the operation, in the early stages of planning, would include a significant number of tanks. An American tank battalion, the 301st, had been training in Stanford, England under British direction since early July with Mark Vs, and it would support the 27th Division.⁶⁰ The 30th Division would be supported by a British tank unit (4th Tank Brigade). ‘Although not appreciated at the time,’ as the historian of the 119th Infantry wrote, the training with tanks ‘proved of inestimable value in the subsequent operations of the regiment.’⁶¹

The British Front

While the men of II American Corps had their first exposure to combat near Ypres, the BEF attacked on three parts of the front. Lt. Gen. Sir Julian Byng's Third Army was fighting to the north, between Arras and the old Somme battlefield. There it drove the enemy 4,000 yards on a front of nine miles between Moyenneville and Beaucourt. On the 22 August, the Fourth Army, with only III Corps and the Australian Corps, captured Albert. Eager to keep momentum going, Haig ordered the Third and Fourth Armies to attack on a 33-mile front the next day.⁶² On the night of 25 August, both made steady progress between Lihons and Mercatel. Led by the Australians, the Fourth Army was on the north-south section of the Somme by 29 August, and on the same day, the New Zealand Division, attached to Byng's army, took Bapaume. During this phase of what became the Hundred Days campaign, army commanders had little say in the planning of battles. Rather, division and brigade commanders improvised as necessary.⁶³ By this time in the war, the corps commanders exercised little supervision over divisions during attacks and only intervened if a coordinated operation was necessary.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Haig ordered Gen. Sir Henry Horne's First Army to attack on 26 August against the Drocourt-Quéant line south of the Scarpe, with the intent to secure a front and flank on the Brouillon Wood. He hoped Horne would catch the enemy retreating from the Canal du Nord.⁶⁵ As in the past, Horne gave the task to Sir Arthur Currie's Canadian Corps. Like Amiens, the attack, at first, was a surprise, and significant gains were made by the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions. But also like Amiens, German resistance stiffened, and the assault stalled two days later. The Canadian divisions did not reach

their objective, even though they took 3,300 prisoners, and a significant amount of artillery pieces and machine guns.⁶⁶

A marked achievement of this offensive was the capture of Mont St. Quentin on 1 September by the 2nd Australian Division, which led to the fall of Péronne the next day. On 2 September, the Canadian Corps breached the Drocourt-Quéant position southeast of Arras. The Germans were left with only one option – retire to the Hindenburg Line – and this took until 11 September to complete. As Rawlinson’s biographers point out, it was the superior British artillery, along with skilful use of fire by the infantry that suppressed German artillery and machine guns.⁶⁷

The BEF continued to press the enemy, with Byng launching an attack against Havrincourt to secure two spurs running parallel to his front. His objective was to breach the outer German defences. Three divisions of the Third Army moved forward on 12 September, and by that evening, one division, the 62nd, had reached Havrincourt. The outcome, according to historians Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, had ‘no dramatic operational or strategic result.’⁶⁸ But it was a forward move.

The Next Operation

On 8 September, Haig asked his army commanders for recommendations on future operations. Although his query was vague, he wanted to know how their forces could contribute to a general Allied attack against the Hindenburg Line. General Foch had conceived the idea of a large-scale operation in July, and the plan presented to the Allied

commanders on the 24th of that month sought to reduce the German salient created by the spring and summer offensives. He hoped to relieve the threats to the important Paris-Nancy and Paris-Amiens railway communications.

The Hindenburg Line, called the Siegfried Line or *Siegfriedstellung* by the Germans, was conceived in the winter of 1916-17, shortly after Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and First Quartermaster-General Eric Ludendorff took command of the OHL.⁶⁹ It was built by the forced labour of prisoners of war and conscripted French citizens, and consisted of three trench systems protected by strongly built, heavy barbed-wire entanglements. To strengthen their trench systems, the Germans constructed concrete machine-gun emplacements, concrete observation posts with concrete shelters, and many dugouts that, in some cases, were wired for electric lights.⁷⁰ The high command of the German Army believed it impregnable, and that it would keep the enemy from Germany's borders.⁷¹

Byng responded to Haig the following day by suggesting an immediate attack against the German defences before they had a chance to rebuild their forces. Awaiting reports from Horne and Rawlinson, Haig travelled on 11 September to London for a meeting at the War Office 'to explain how greatly the situation in the field had changed to the advantage of the Allies.' During an interview with Lord Milner, he stressed that in the last month, his army had taken 77,000 prisoners and 800 guns. He argued that the German Army was near collapse, and suffering from morale and disciplinary problems in many of its divisions.⁷² What Haig sought from Milner were men to exploit this favourable

condition. He requested home defence and reserve troops from England, as well as aeroplanes and more ammunition for his army in France.

The Secretary of State for War agreed, and promised to try and help.⁷³ But Milner apparently was less enthusiastic about Haig's request than he admitted. Two weeks after his conversation with the BEF commander, Sir Henry Wilson told Milner that he thought Haig 'ridiculously optimistic, and I am afraid that he may embark on another Passchendaele.'⁷⁴

When Haig returned from London, he heard from his First and Fourth Army commanders. Horne wanted to cooperate with the Third Army by driving toward Cambrai and crossing the Canal du Nord. Rawlinson's plan was more ambitious. He wanted to seize the outer defences of the Hindenburg Line.⁷⁵ He was anxious to attack this position as soon as possible because his intelligence staff reported that only three of the nine German divisions opposing the Fourth Army were highly rated, and the other six rated average.⁷⁶ The three top-rated divisions had served in defensive positions for most of 1918: the other divisions were just as Haig had reported to Milner – under-strength with low morale. Fourth Army intelligence estimated that six more divisions were within a 72-hour march of reinforcing the lines.⁷⁷ Rawlinson's chief of staff calculated an attack that 'if carried out at an early date would deny the enemy any opportunity of reorganising his troops, improving his defences, or becoming familiar with the scheme of his defences.'⁷⁸ The ground on which Rawlinson wanted to attack included the old British trench lines, now used by the Germans as a forward defence.⁷⁹

Rawlinson's proposal had an important advantage. At his disposal was a defence plan captured from a German headquarters on 8 August. It revealed the extensive features of the Hindenburg Line, detailing lines between the Oise River and Bellicourt. It provided every battery position, barrage line and observation post, as well as infantry and artillery headquarters.⁸⁰

The Americans

The two American divisions serving with the British lay at the very centre of the Fourth Army's plan for an attack on the Hindenburg Line. With a clear understanding of how the line was composed, Rawlinson said that the purpose of the operation was to complete the demoralisation of the enemy by destruction of his defences, including wire and dugouts. The objective was to break through the Hindenburg Line in the Nauroy-Gouy sector, and cross the St. Quentin Canal. To meet this objective, Rawlinson needed fresh troops, and the 27th and 30th Divisions fitted perfectly into this plan.

Rawlinson ordered Lieutenant General Monash to submit a proposal for a joint operation with his corps and the American divisions under tactical command of the Fourth Army. The Australian commander was pleased to have the Americans: 'My experience of the quality of the American troops, both at the battle of Hamel and on the Chipilly Spur, had been eminently satisfactory. It was true that this new American Corps had no previous battle service, but measures were possible to supply them with any technical guidance that they might lack.'⁸¹ He ignored the fact that a brigade from both the 27th and 30th Divisions had recently spent three weeks in Belgium and engaged the enemy during a

three-day operation. But that operation was far from the scale and complexity of what he was planning for this attack. The Australian official historian, C.E.W. Bean, was correct when he noted that ‘the task thus allotted to the Americans by Monash was at least as great as any that he had ever set for Australian divisions, if not greater.’⁸²

Monash was also happy to provide relief for the tired Australian divisions that had been in the line since 8 August. The constant fighting had driven two of his battalions to mutiny. On 14 September, the 59th Battalion, with only a short rest, was ordered back into the line after a week of continuous fighting. The men refused to move to the front, and it took the coaxing of officers to get them to obey.⁸³ A week later, a similar incident occurred when 119 men from the 1st Battalion refused to carry out an order and go forward. The men were tried and all but one found guilty, but instead of being charged with mutiny, they were charged with desertion. Two months later, the war ended, preventing enforcement of the sentences. Normally mutiny meant the death penalty, but it was not introduced in the AIF.⁸⁴

The Battle Plan

It was not until 19 September when a telephone message sent from Lt. Col. W.G.S. Dobbie of the Operations Section, General Staff, British G.H.Q. to the II American Corps headquarters alerted Read that something was in the planning stages, and that the 27th and 30th Divisions were being transferred to the Fourth Army. Later in the day, Colonel Bacon paid a visit to Read and confirmed what he already suspected – his troops would play a major role in the upcoming operation. Read then visited Fourth Army

headquarters the following day and learned the current details of the operation. Ready or not, his troops were going to enter their first major battle.⁸⁵

As in previous operations, Monash's plan for the Hindenburg Line operation considered almost every conceivable scenario. He reasoned that because the line consisted of prepared defences, a canal crossing would be risky. Instead, Monash proposed piercing the line only at the tunnel sector, where tanks could be used. To soften the defences, he wanted a heavy preliminary bombardment, lasting two days.

The crux of the operation was for the Fourth Army, supported on its right by the First French Army, to attack the Hindenburg defences on the southern end of the line between St. Quentin and Vendhuile. This portion of the attack was to occur on two fronts – the IX British Corps on the south, and the Australians and Americans on the north. III British Corps was assigned to the left, but would not take part in the assault. It was to secure the left flank of the Australians and Americans, and mop up the ground west of the canal once the first objective had been achieved. Air support would play a part before and during the operation. It was to be provided by the 5th RAF Brigade, which included 17 squadrons, or 337 aeroplanes, to supply crucial reconnaissance and observation.⁸⁶

The American jump-off line faced the outer defences of the Hindenburg system west of the Bellicourt tunnel entrance. Terrain sloped toward the east, rising at Bony. There was very little natural cover, as any trees and hedges had been destroyed during the course of the war. The main defensive structure was the St. Quentin-Cambrai Tunnel, built by

Napoleon between 1802 and 1810. It was this extraordinary tunnel that the Germans utilised as an elaborate, near impregnable, position. Its length is about 6,000 yards, and its depth below the surface is between 15 and 20 yards. The top of the tunnel is 10 yards wide, and 18 yards wide at the water level. The Germans used the blocks in the centre and at each end as machine-gun emplacements. Inside the tunnel, the Germans placed numerous barges for quartering troops. In addition to the north and south entrances to the tunnel, there were numerous underground passages that connected with all parts of the main Hindenburg Line. Water flowed in a north to south direction.⁸⁷

Three American regiments from both divisions were to be used. Each objective was identified by colour on the operation maps. The outpost line was blue, the main trench system at the tunnel was green, and the Beurevoir Line was red. On the right of the line, the 30th Division, with the 60th Brigade (119th and 120th Infantries), was to move ahead 4,500 yards on a frontage of 3,000 yards towards Bellicourt. Two battalions from each regiment would advance 750 yards, while the other two battalions were to follow in support for mopping up duties. The 59th Brigade, with the 118th Infantry in the lead, would form the south defensive flank. It was to proceed 2,000 yards east of the tunnel, and, at this point, the 5th Australian Division would pass through and beyond the Americans to secure the final objective, the Beurevoir Line.⁸⁸ The 117th Infantry Regiment was to follow the 120th Infantry across the tunnel, then deploy, facing south, at the conclusion of the barrage. Afterward, the 117th would continue southward to protect the flanks of the 5th Australian Division. One company of the 120th Infantry Regiment, supported by a section of machine guns, was given the task of seizing and holding the

southern exit of the tunnel at Riqueval. From this point, the 30th Division would pause and consolidate, then continue to the next objective, a strongpoint that stretched from Cabaret Farm to the north to Nauroy to the south.⁸⁹

On the left of the line, two battalions from the 107th and 108th Infantries of the 27th Division were to advance toward Le Catelet, with two other battalions following to support and mop up. One battalion of the 106th Infantry would follow in the rear of the attacking line of the 107th Infantry and assist in mopping up the tunnel and exits. Then the 105th Infantry was to follow in rear of the 106th, cross the tunnel, change direction to the left, then deploy and halt in rear of the 107th. After halting on the Green Line, the 107th and 108th would be leapfrogged by the 3rd Australian Division, following through the 27th Division sector. The Australians would then exploit the situation and attack east to the Red Line.

At the same time, the 105th Infantry, supported by three batteries of British field artillery and one company of tanks, was to advance north beyond the dotted Green Line to its objective, the Red Line. The regiment was to consolidate on this line and establish contact with the 3rd Australian Division on its right and the 18th British Division on its left at the canal. Monash calculated that the Green Line would be reached by 10 A.M., and the Green and Red lines by 2 P.M.⁹⁰

On 18 September, Monash submitted this plan to Rawlinson, who approved it with some modifications at a Fourth Army conference the following day. The first day's objective,

which Monash thought would be the Beurevoir Line, was to be attacked only if there was success in penetrating the main Hindenburg Line and its support line (Le Catelet). The most significant change Rawlinson made was the addition of the 46th British Division, which was now attached to IX Corps. He also increased the heavy tanks to 162, and added Whippets and armoured cars. Monash was in full agreement with the latter addition. He later said it was a 'modification I could readily concur.' But, he was opposed to including IX Corps in the operation plan because it would broaden the area of attack. Rawlinson overruled him.⁹¹

Lt. Gen. Sir Walter Braithwaite, the IX Corps commander, had offered the 46th Division to Rawlinson for the difficult task of crossing the canal at Bellenglise, south of Bellicourt. He and his staff devised an elaborate scheme to cross the canal, where the water was at some places 6 feet deep. The plan was to use 3,000 lifebelts, along with light rafts, ladders, collapsible boats and heaving lines. A few days before the attack, Braithwaite rehearsed his men on the banks of the Somme to acquaint them with the difficulties of the upcoming task.⁹²

The final plan of operation was forwarded to Haig, who signed off with the realisation that it had both political and military implications. Sir Henry Wilson had warned him about 'incurring heavy losses in attacks on the Hindenburg Line, as opposed to losses from driving the enemy back to that line.' He made sure Haig understood that 'the War Cabinet would become anxious if we received heavy punishment.'⁹³ Haig lamented in his diary: 'The Cabinet is ready to meddle and interfere in my plans in an underhanded

way, but does not dare openly say that it means to take the responsibility for any failure. though it is ready to take credit for every success. If my attack is successful, I will remain on as C. in C. If we fail, or our losses are excessive, I can hope for no mercy.'⁹⁴

The Fourth Army operation, set for 29 September, was part of a more general Allied attack. The AEF First Army was to attack on 26 September with the French between the Meuse River and Verdun, in the general direction of Sedan and Mézières. The following day, the First and Third British Armies would attack on the Cambrai front in the direction of Valenciennes and Maubeuge. On 28 September, the Second British Army, the Belgian Army, and the French in Flanders were to attack on the Ypres front towards Ghent.⁹⁵

Plans for the Preliminary Attack

For the attack on the Hindenburg Line to be a success, the Fourth Army would first have to occupy the outer German defences, including the Knoll, and Guillemont and Quennemont Farms. The two farms and the Knoll, a crop-laden crest named Sappenberg by the Germans, were heavily fortified with field guns, machine guns, anti-tank rifles and infantry.⁹⁶ If this objective was taken, it would become the jump-off point for the main attack by the Americans. As Rawlinson's chief of staff recognised, if the Germans held the three defensive points, 'it would be very difficult to move our artillery sufficiently far forward for it to be able to support our attacking troops with an efficient barrage behind the main Hindenburg Line.'⁹⁷

Artillery support, in the form of a creeping barrage, was by now an important element to the BEF doctrine. It was designed to protect advancing infantry while neutralising enemy defences. The origins of creeping barrage date back to late 1915, with the introduction of the lifting barrage, which evolved into the creeping barrage that was used during some of the attacks on 1 July 1916, the first day of the Somme.⁹⁸ With a few exceptions, it was incorporated into all battle plans in 1918. Under cover of a pre-assault bombardment that was intended to demoralise the German troops while suppressing their artillery and disrupting the defensive system, the plan thus called for limited advances to capture the high ground adjacent to the German line, so that a jump-off point could be established. Once this objective was accomplished, field guns and remaining infantry would move forward for the main assault.⁹⁹

The crucial role of the artillery in this operation cannot be overstated. The barrage for this attack was to fall on two lines. At the start of the jump-off, it would fall 200 yards in front of the infantry start line for four minutes, then lift at 100-yard increments. On the first line, field pieces would be used to fire H.E. (High Explosive) shells with instantaneous fuse, and shrapnel. On the second line, heavier artillery would concentrate on the mouth of the tunnel, the villages connecting the line, and other positions suspected of having high concentrations of enemy forces. This would include communication systems, machine-gun posts and command centres.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the artillery, the flanks of the attack were to be protected by a smoke screen provided by one field artillery brigade on each flank. This was to occur after the artillery barrage and the infantry attained its first objective.¹⁰¹

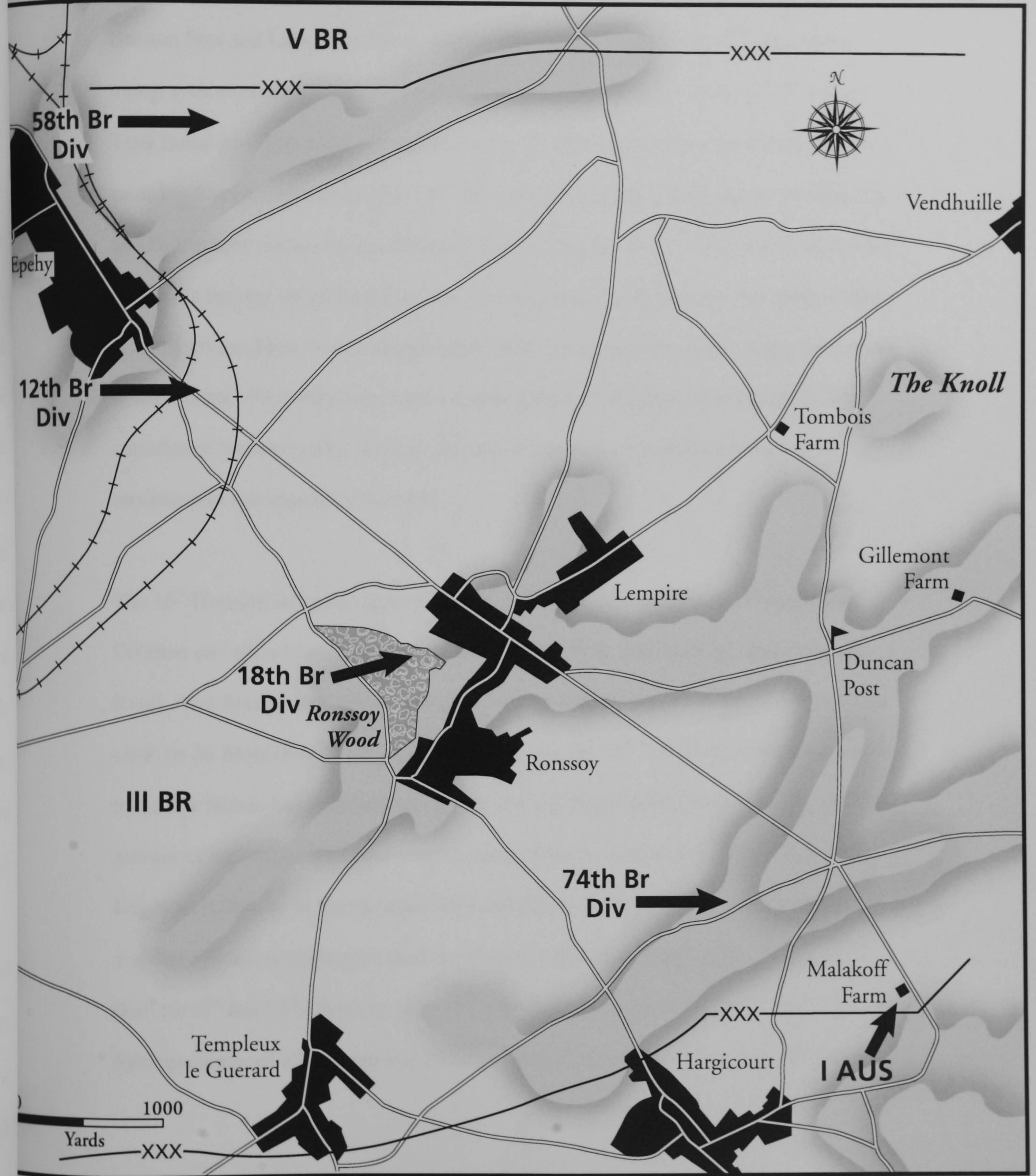
As Rawlinson's biographers acknowledge, the British artillerymen had the advantage of not only the size of the bombardment, but 'from their positions on the ridge, they enjoyed the best observation over any major German defensive yet attacked during the course of the war.'¹⁰² Yet, as the Fourth Army and its attached units would soon learn, the portion of the Hindenburg Line facing them was more formidable than realised, and even the heaviest and most concentrated artillery was not enough.

Advance Toward the Hindenburg Line, 18-24 September 1918

On 18 September, British artillery erupted against the German outpost line; a few hours later, the infantry advanced. This preliminary operation, led by III, IV and IX British Corps, encountered strong defences, including a link of villages and trenches well fortified with dugouts. In the III Corps sector, the attack was made against a fresh German division that had entered the line the previous evening, and by the end of the day, the attack had made few gains. Rawlinson was initially optimistic about the operation, as reflected in his diary entries for the 18th: 'IX Corps got on well, but had hard fighting. Very important success as we can now take the Hindenburg Line.' He remained optimistic the next day: 'All looks hopeful. III Corps made some progress, but IV Corps did not get on.'¹⁰³ (Map after page 221).

His optimism diminished when his army stalled, and on 21 September, Rawlinson ordered another attack by III Corps (12th, 18th, 58th and 74th British Divisions) to capture the outpost line with assistance from the 1st Australian Division on the right. The 74th Division objective was Quennemont Farm, Quennet Copse and Gillemont Farm, while

Operations of the III British Corps, 19-22 September 1918



the 18th Division was ordered to seize the Knoll. The 12th Division was to strike at Braeton Post and Little Priel Farm, and the 58th Division was tasked with taking the trench system north of there.¹⁰⁴ Providing support were 11 tanks from the 2nd British Tank Battalion. This attack started at 5:40 A.M., with the divisions advancing under a creeping barrage. Elements of the 74th Division in the north went as far as Quennemont and Guillemont Farms, but the Germans were waiting for them. The enemy laid down a protective barrage on its front lines, but, miraculously, the British and Australians went on until several belts of wire stopped them cold. Men bunched up and sought protection in shell-holes. Forward troops were isolated; support companies were caught in the crossfire of machine guns. Several attempts to advance were made, but they were unsuccessful and casualties mounted.

The 18th Division advanced from the south with one battalion from the 1st Australian Division and made it as far as Duncan and Doleful Posts, but could not make it to the Knoll. Ivor Maxse's old division hung on to its position until relief from the Americans came on 26 September.¹⁰⁵ At this point in the war, the 18th was a very different division to the one Maxse had commanded. It was now composed mostly of conscripts, and the average company strength was down to about 70 men. Although the 18th Division had fought well thus far in the Hundred Days campaign, it was worn out and depleted.¹⁰⁶ The division's historian correctly called the results of this latest attack 'a tragic business.'¹⁰⁷ Both the 12th and 58th Divisions were also prevented from reaching their objectives as the fighting continued all day and into 22 September. The next two days saw sporadic

counterattacks, but the III Corps front remained unchanged when it was taken over by the Americans on 24 September.¹⁰⁸

Rawlinson's diary for the 21st reflected despair: 'They (III Corps) were pushed back by the counterattack and did not hold on well. They are very tired.'¹⁰⁹ He had little confidence in the corps from the outset, and his frustration was directed mostly at the corps commander, Lt. Gen. Sir Richard Butler. He had been unhappy with Butler for some time, and a few days after the Amiens attack, Rawlinson placed him on sick leave because of recurring insomnia. He returned to duty on 12 September, but Rawlinson was still unsure about his abilities after a visit to III Corps headquarters four days later. His diary for 16 September indicates such apprehension: 'I am pretty sure the Australian and IX Corps will do their jobs, but am not so confident about the III Corps,' he wrote.¹¹⁰ Rawlinson also predicted that there might be trouble with Butler's portion of the outpost line attack because he had little control over his division commanders. He 'has not the practical experience to make decisions,' Rawlinson claimed, and he planned 'to talk seriously with Butler, for it will be his fault.'¹¹¹

This begs the question of why he was even brought back to command III Corps. If Rawlinson had truly lost confidence in Butler's abilities, he certainly could have found a competent division commander to replace him.¹¹² Despite the problems with III Corps, there were two bright spots in the preliminary operation. In the centre, the Australian Corps overran German positions on the ridge, which included three former British lines. By the end of the day, it overlooked the Hindenburg Line from the canal south of

Bellenglise to the tunnel north of Bellicourt. To the south, the 1st and 6th British Divisions of IX Corps encountered heavy machine-gun fire, preventing the infantry from coordinating its operations with the French. Yet they still secured a reasonably good jump-off position for the main attack.¹¹³

The Americans Move Forward

On 20 September, the 27th and 30th Divisions transferred to the Fourth Army to operate with the Australian Corps in the proposed operation.¹¹⁴ The two divisions moved to the area of Tincourt by British bus and truck (lorry), and it took about seven hours to reach their new station. Only days before, Tincourt had been in German possession. Upon arrival, the doughboys found ‘there were no shelters of any kind available, but everyone was so tired, they simply laid down under some trees, wrapped blankets about themselves, and went to sleep.’¹¹⁵

Tincourt was so close to the front, according to one of the 117th Infantry historians, that the men could see ‘the flash of guns are at no great distance,’ and ‘we all realised that our days in the rest area were over for the time being.’¹¹⁶ With the operation just days away, the past two weeks in the rest areas must have seemed a lifetime ago. Pvt. Harry T. Mitchell from the 107th Infantry recalled that ‘“resting” did not mean all the word implied;’ although ‘as hard as we worked, we thoroughly enjoyed our stay in Beauquesne.’ His unit had entrained at Tincourt on the 23rd, and afterward hiked to a valley near Haut Allains where camp was set up.¹¹⁷ There the 107th spent the next six days preparing for an operation over 300 officers and men would not survive.

A few days later, Mitchell and the rest of the 27th Division relieved the 18th and 74th British Divisions in the sector southwest of Guoy. while at the same time, the 30th Division relieved the 1st Australian Division in the Nauroy sector directly west of Bellicourt. Both divisions entered the line with far below the full AEF established strength of 28,000 per division. Neither had received replacements since arriving in France. The 27th reported strength at 16,136, and the 30th was a little better with 19,059.¹¹⁸ There were three main reasons why the II Corps divisions were below strength. First, they did not have their field artillery regiments and ammunition trains, which comprised about 7,000 officers and men. Second, casualties as a result of training and operations had thinned the ranks; and third, illness from the first wave of the influenza outbreak that hit the Western Front around 15 September left the divisions depleted.¹¹⁹

Still another factor affected the divisions. Many officers missed the operation because of the AEF G.H.Q.'s decision to commence an officers' school at Langres on 27 September. The 27th Division was ordered to send 29 officers, while the 30th Division was in worse shape, with more than 100 of its officers detailed to either the corps or gas schools.¹²⁰ Such thoughtlessness by Pershing's staff also affected the AEF First Army divisions about to attack in the Meuse-Argonne Operation. However, even though they were under-strength, the two American divisions were still more than twice the size of the British and Australian divisions, and four times the strength of the German divisions opposing them.¹²¹

For the Hindenburg Line operation, Read turned over tactical command to Monash, moved his headquarters close to him, and allowed the Australian commander full access to 27th and 30th Division staff. This was logical as neither Read, nor any of his staff, obviously had experience directing a large-scale operation. Monash could not have been happier with the agreement. 'I am bound to say that the arrangement caused me no anxiety or difficulty,' recalled the Australian commander. 'General Read and his staff most readily adapted themselves to the situation.'¹²² Although the orders and reports generated by Read's staff indicated that II Corps was 'affiliated' with the Australian Corps, in reality, the Americans were serving under the Australians.¹²³

Before relinquishing command to Monash, Read met his two division commanders. O'Ryan, who had suspected that his division was training for a major operation, was now convinced 'from the intensive character of the special training of the officers and men that the division was to take some important role of an offensive nature.'¹²⁴ His suspicions were realised on 23 September, when Read outlined the upcoming operation to O'Ryan and Lewis. Read told them the most difficult part of the operation was going to be on the northern end of the tunnel because the British were having trouble with the enemy outpost line in this sector. He asked O'Ryan and Lewis their views as to which division should be assigned to this sector, and both said they had no preference. For no apparent reason, Read made the decision to select the 27th Division, and O'Ryan claimed that it was because of 'its training and experience.'¹²⁵ This comment is odd since Lewis' division had the same amount of experience as the New Yorkers... as well as more men.

O’Ryan then told his troops they might have to undertake a preliminary operation to gain a more suitable jump-off point, since the III British Corps attacks were not going well.¹²⁶

Unlike Hamel, where General Pershing displayed petty interference, II Corps now received no instructions from AEF headquarters for the upcoming attack. Because the attack on the Hindenburg Line was part of a large Allied effort between the Meuse and Yser Rivers, Pershing was occupied with planning and organising his phase of the operation, and seemed to have overlooked the divisions serving with the British. Ten days before the First American Army attacked the St. Mihiel salient, on 12 September, seven American and two French divisions pushed the withdrawing Germans from the salient, at a high cost for both sides. American casualties numbered 7,000, and the Germans lost 2,300 killed and wounded, 15,000 prisoners and 460 guns.¹²⁷ From here, the AEF First Army had the difficult task of shifting divisions to the northwest to the Meuse-Argonne.

Pershing was certainly aware of the II Corps situation because Bacon had been sent to his headquarters on 22 September by Haig ‘to find out how the latter’s arrangements were getting on, and to acquaint him with what I am proposing to do with the two American divisions still with the British Army.’¹²⁸

Preparations for the Operation

There was concern within II American Corps about how well the officers would perform. As the after-action reports for the Ypres-Lys Operation showed, many officers ran into

difficulty during combat. Major General Lewis expressed his personal apprehension in a memorandum to his 59th Brigade commander. 'From numerous observations,' he told Tyson, 'I am convinced that the organisations of the command are not receiving the maximum and desirable amount of observation, and inspection by the commanders of the higher units. While, of course, I do not intend to dictate specifically how you and the members of your staff shall employ your time, I do desire to make the following remarks for your consideration.'¹²⁹

Lewis also indicated that he had 'seldom seen a regimental commander supervising instruction, and too often, the battalion commanders are content to stand around without actively engaging in the instruction, or correcting things that are obvious to a very cursory observation.' He then told Tyson to 'have frequent conferences with your field officers for the purpose of instructing them in these matters, and to learn what corrective steps are being taken by them.'¹³⁰ His comments seem to have helped Tyson's brigade, since it fought well during the forthcoming operation, and the next at the Selle River.

To assist the Americans with operational planning, Monash created an Australian Mission under the direction of Maj. Gen. Ewen George Sinclair-MacLagan. Eighty-three officers and 127 non-commissioned officers from the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions served as advisors to the 27th and 30th Divisions. Each was carefully selected to 'ensure that the best experience of the Australian Corps was made available to the Americans in France.' Sinclair-MacLagan, a career British officer, had served in Australia. At the outbreak of war, he received command of the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Australian Division.

and, in 1917, commanded the 4th Australian Division. which fought well at Third Ypres, Villers-Bretonneux and Hamel, which gave Sinclair-MacLagan great authority to advise the Americans.¹³¹

Brig. Gen. C.H. Brand was assigned as liaison officer to the 27th Division, and Brig. Gen. I.G. Mace served in a similar capacity with the 30th. They worked with their American counterparts as far down as the battalion level to familiarise them with technical terms and matters regarding supplies, equipment and tactics.¹³² Monash related in his memoirs that 'it was only because of the creation of this Australian Mission to the Americans, and Sinclair-MacLagan's tact, industry and judgement controlling it, that the combined action of the two corps in the great battle of the closing days of September proved as successful as it did.'¹³³

Monash organised meetings at his headquarters to further familiarise the Americans with the operation. The first was on 25 September. Read, his division commanders and their staffs, and the Australian Mission were in attendance. As usual, Monash was well prepared, having set out the key points in preceding days. Besides detailing the order of events for the attack, he outlined seven key points, from A to G: Teamwork, Strict Limitation to Prescribed Objectives, Orders, Attention to Details, Send Back Information (positive and negative), Keeping Men Fit, and Thinking Ahead.¹³⁴ He used maps, diagrams and a blackboard to stress teamwork: 'One job for each man,' he told his audience.¹³⁵ Regiments should attack with two battalions, using one battalion to mop up. Monash carefully stressed the latter point, mentioning his own experience of witnessing

attack troops pass over Germans hidden in dugouts, who then came up afterwards and fired into the backs of the advancing troops.¹³⁶

When the meeting ended, Monash returned to his headquarters exhausted. It had lasted three hours, and, according to him, he spent most of the time explaining intricacies of the attack and responding to a 'rain of questions.' But, he had 'no doubt that the American generals became fully informed as to the tasks and duties allotted to them, and fully understood them.'¹³⁷

O'Ryan's recollection of events differed significantly. 'There were no more than five or six questions asked in all by the American officers present. 'General Monash's conversation and explanations were so lengthy and detailed that there did not seem to be necessity to ask many questions.'¹³⁸ O'Ryan was concerned with the complexity of the preliminary and main attacks. For the first, he had been asked by Monash during the meeting to assign one of his regiments for a possible preliminary attack. O'Ryan selected the 106th Infantry. Now the 27th Division commander asked why the regiment would have to attack on a front of 4,000 yards without support from other regiments. Monash replied that he wanted to keep the rest of the division out of the preliminary operation so it would be fresh for the main attack. As a compromise, the 105th Infantry could be used in limited support.¹³⁹

Puzzling to O'Ryan was the main attack battle plan, which called for the 105th Infantry, after following the 108th Infantry, to manoeuvre and change direction to the left and

attack. From there, it would pass north through Vendhuile to relieve pressure on the British units attacking on that front. He wanted to know if this was practical. Monash's response was short: 'The plan will be carried out in this manner.'¹⁴⁰ Questions such as these might have been an indication that the plans for the operation were too complicated for the Americans. Regardless of how long the meeting lasted, or how many questions were raised, a set-piece battle of this calibre was new to the Americans, and they needed Monash's guidance every step of the way.

The preliminary attack was now necessary, and this caused concern to II American Corps. Simonds met Monash to express concern over III Corps's failure to capture the outpost line in the northern sector. Monash tried to appease Simonds and told him 'there will be a little operation tonight and we will take it over.' However, the following day, Simonds was told: 'Sorry, but III Corps did not get there last night, and I think the 27th Division will have to have a preliminary operation.'¹⁴¹

All this was an uneasy beginning to sending II American Corps into a major battle, and O'Ryan's 27th Division would find itself in the centre of it. Monash, one must conclude, had not measured the situation with his usual care. The corps commander of the splendid Australian divisions often attempted too much, as the near mutiny of men in two battalions had shown. He had too much to do, and a three-hour lecture to Americans was indeed a poor idea, particularly since O'Ryan's resulting concerns were, one can conclude, ignored. The preparation for what, as O'Ryan well knew, would be a complicated, probably too complicated, battle was foreboding in its lack of clarity at the

top, under Monash's direction. It remained to be seen what the Americans, in particular O'Ryan's division, would make of it.

¹ *27th Division Summary of Operations in the World War, 7-8 and 30th Division Summary of Operations in the World War, 7.*

² Soldier's Diary, 18 August 1918.

³ Headquarters, 30th Division, 5 October 1918, 'Report of Operations in Ypres Sector,' Folder #4, Entry 270, RG 120, NARA.

⁴ Murphy and Thomas, 70.

⁵ Headquarters, 105th Infantry, U.S.A., 'Memorandum From Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan,' 6 September 1918, 105th Infantry Regiment Historical Files, 227-22.3, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁶ Capt. D.T. Dunbar, Acting 53rd Brigade Adjutant, 'Orders No. 3.' 31 August 1918, File 227-32.13, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁷ Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, 'Operations Report, 27th Division, AEF, 29 May-22 September 1918,' Folder #5, Entry 270, RG 120, NARA. (Hereafter cited as O'Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report).

⁸ Dunbar.

⁹ Lt. Col. James G. Taylor, 'Extract from Personal Narrative No. 979,' Entry 1260, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁰ 2nd Lt. John R. Boston, 'The Position of the Front Line in the Ypres Sector,' 30th Division Officer Questionnaires. Entry 22, RG 117, NARA.

¹¹ Commander, 115th Machine Gun Battalion to Commanding Officer, 30th Division. 'Report of Death of 1st Lt. Robert E. Turner,' 26 July 1918, and Headquarters 60th Infantry Brigade to Commanding General, 30th Division, 15 August 1918, File 210.8, 30th Division Correspondence, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ W.H. Cavannah, 'Location of Front Lines of 30th Division South of Ypres, 17 August-3 September,' Entry 22, RG 117, NARA.

¹⁴ Burt T. Forbes, DSC citation, Appendix J, in Murphy and Thomas, 248 and 276.

¹⁵ Taylor, 2.

¹⁶ 30th Division, 'Operations Report,' Entry 270, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁷ 106th Infantry, American Expeditionary Forces, 'Field Order #15,' Headquarters, 31 August 1918, 106th Infantry Regiment Historical Files, 227-32.1, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁸ Commanding General, 53rd Infantry Brigade to Commanding General, 27th Division. 'Report of Operations,' 10 September 1918, 53rd Infantry Brigade Historical Files, 227-33.6, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁹ Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 27th Division to the Assistant Chief of Staff, 20 December 1918, 'Activities of the Signal Corps in Recent Operations,' Entry 1290, RG 120, NARA.

²⁰ Field Message, 31 August 1918, 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, 227-32.16, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

²¹ Kenneth M. McMann, DSC citation, in O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 910.

²² Commanding General, 53rd Infantry Brigade to Commanding General, 27th Division. ‘Report on Recent Operations,’ 10 September 1918, 27th Division Historical Files, 227-33.6, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Unfortunately, Blanding’s report is the only evidence we have on Hildreth’s removal as O’Ryan ignores the entire incident in *The Story of the 27th Division*. For a through discussion of the AEF relief system see Timothy K. Nenner, *John J. Pershing and Relief for Cause in the AEF*, ‘Army History.’ (Spring 2005).

²⁵ Sidney G. DeKay, ‘Comments on Fighting of 31 August to 2 September, 1918,’ 21 February 1927. 27th Division Files, Entry 22, RG 117, NARA.

²⁶ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.

²⁷ The Hall of Remembrance was originally intended to be part of proposed National War Museum. Although the Hall was never built, the Imperial War Museum in London serves the same purpose and some of Sargent’s paintings are among its collections.

²⁸ Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond, eds. *John Singer Sargent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998), 263-270.

²⁹ Ibid, and O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 239-240. The impact of the Western Front was captured in one of Sargent’s best-known paintings. It shows a field full of gassed and blindfolded men that stands as a lasting symbol of the horrors of war.

³⁰ O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 524.

³¹ C.B. Conway, and George A. Shutford, *History of the 119th Infantry, 60th Brigade, 30th Division, USA: Operations in Belgium and France* (n.p., n.d), 35.

³² Although O’Ryan mentions the reports in his own reports of the 27th Division operations from August-October, they were somehow lost before the division left France as he would have printed them in the *Story of the 27th Division*. For the published 30th Division version, see Murphy and Thomas.

³³ Commanding Officer, Co. E, 119th Inf. to Commanding Officer, 119th Inf., 8 September 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA, and Murphy and Thomas, 191.

³⁴ Memorandum of 1st Lt. A.H. Cox, 8 September 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA

³⁵ 1st Lt. F.J. Dieterle, attached to B Company., 3rd Platoon, ‘Report of Recent Operations,’ Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

³⁶ Headquarters, 30th Division, American Expeditionary Forces, France, ‘Program of Training-June 17-24, 1918,’ 15 June 1918, 30th Division Historical Files, 57.1, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

³⁷ Hamann, ‘Depreciation of American Tactics and German Defensive Organization, German File, 8th Inf. Div: 689-33.5, Folder 1, War Diary. Entry 322, Record Group 165, NARA. Also published in *United States Army in the World War* (Washington: GPO, 1947), Volume 4. 320.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ 41st British Division, 'Order #267.' 31 August 1918, File 904-32.9, Entry 318, RG 165, NARA.

⁴⁰ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 242.

⁴¹ Gow, 343.

⁴² Pvt. Marvin Islen, Company L, 117th Infantry Regiment to his family, n.d., Miscellaneous World War I manuscripts, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

⁴³ John H. Cates, *Company E, 117th Infantry, 30th Division in the World War I* (Johnson City: East Tennessee State University Press, 1964), 38.

⁴⁴ Pvt. Worth P. Stewart, *The History of Company "K," 117th Infantry in the Great War* (N.P. 1919), 29.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 31.

⁴⁶ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 240.

⁴⁷ John K. Herr, 16, and Harry T. Mitchell, *Company L, 10^{7th} Infantry: 54th Brigade, 27th Division, American Expeditionary Forces: 1917-1919* (New York, War Veterans Association, 1920), 26.

⁴⁸ Headquarters, II Corps, Commanding General to Asst. Chief of Staff, G-5, G.H.Q., AEF, 'Training Divisions,' 9 August 1918, and the Adjutant General to Commanding General, II Corps, 13 August 1918, File #16914-3, Entry 9, RG 120, NARA.

⁴⁹ Walker, 18.

⁵⁰ Soldier's Diary, 8-15 September 1918.

⁵¹ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 243.

⁵² J.P. Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks: British Military Thought and Armoured Forces, 1903-1939* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995), 173.

⁵³ SS 214 replaced 'Notes on the Use of Tanks and on the General Principles of their Employment as an Adjunct to the Infantry Attack' (SS 164), and 'Training for an Infantry and tank Attack Against Trenches.' (SS 204), see David J. Childs, *A Peripheral Weapon? The Production and Employment of British Tanks in the First World War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 129-130.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 181.

⁵⁵ Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, 165.

⁵⁶ T.H.E. Travers, *How the War was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front: 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 2000), 144.

⁵⁷ Cpl. Jack Dillon, 2nd Battalion, Tank Corps, 'The Battle of Cambrai,' Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War: A New History of WWI in the Words of the Men and Women who were There*, (London: Ebury Press, 2002), 249.

⁵⁸ J.P. Harris, 'The Rise of Armour,' in Paddy Griffith, editor, *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 131.

⁵⁹ O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 243.

⁶⁰ The 301st was originally designated the 41st Heavy Tank Battalion, but changed on 8 June to comply with the new unit designation system inaugurated by the War Department. See Dale Wilson, *Treat ‘Em Rough: The Birth of American Armor, 1917-20* (San Francisco: Presidio, 1999), 56-57.

⁶¹ *History of the 119th Infantry, 60th Brigade, 30th Division, U.S.A.: Operations in Belgium and France, 1917-1919* (Wilmington: Wilmington Chamber of Commerce), 35.

⁶² Simkins, 65-66, and Harris and Barr, 129-135.

⁶³ Prior and Wilson, 342.

⁶⁴ Andy Simpson, ‘British Corps Command on the Western Front, 1914-1918,’ in Gary Sheffield and Dan Todman, editors, *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army’s Experience, 1914-18* (Kent: Spellmount, 2004), 115.

⁶⁵ Edmonds, Volume 4, 355.

⁶⁶ Harris and Barr, 173-174, and Terraine, *To Win a War: 1918*, 131.

⁶⁷ Prior and Wilson, 345.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 174-175.

⁶⁹ Peter Oldham, *Battleground Europe: The Hindenburg Line* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), 16-28.

⁷⁰ Joseph Hyde Pratt, ‘The St. Quentin-Cambrai Canal Tunnel,’ *The Military Engineer* (Vol. XIX, No. 106).

⁷¹ Ian Passingham, *All the Kaiser’s Men: The Life and Death of the German Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2003), 138.

⁷² Blake, 326.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 326-327.

⁷⁴ Harris and Barr, 131.

⁷⁵ Harris and Barr, 170-171.

⁷⁶ Jim Beach, *The British Army Intelligence on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 2004).

⁷⁷ U.S. War Department, *Official Histories of Two Hundred and Fifty-One Divisions of the German Army which Participated in the War, 1914-1918* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1920), and Brig. Gen. James E. Edmonds and Lt. Col. R. Maxwell-Hyslop, editors, *Military Operations in France and Belgium, 1918, Volume I* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1947), 97.

⁷⁸ Maj. Gen. Sir Archibald Montgomery, *The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days, August 8th to November 11th, 1918* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), 121.

⁷⁹ Jackson Hughes, ‘The Battle for the Hindenburg Line,’ *War & Society* (Volume 17, Number 2, October 1999), 44.

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- ⁸⁰ Edmonds, 96, and report of H.Q. Fourth Army, 7 September 1918, 'Action to be Taken on the Captured German Defence Scheme.' Copy made from Papers of Sir Douglas Haig, NLS.
- ⁸¹ Sir John Monash, *Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: Hutchinson, 1920), 235-236.
- ⁸² Bean, 945.
- ⁸³ Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs* (Melbourne: Sphere Books, 1979), 418-422.
- ⁸⁴ For an extensive discussion of the mutiny and its repercussions, see Dale Blair, *Dinkum Diggers* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 159-164, Australian War Memorial Website, 'Encyclopedia/Mutinies in the 1st AIF.' http://www.gov.au/encyclopedia/first_aif/mutinies.htm.
- ⁸⁵ Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan to Brig. Gen. George S. Simonds, 14 February 1921. George S. Simonds Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. By this time, Simonds had been promoted to Brig. Gen. and was in command of the Panama Department.
- ⁸⁶ H.A. Jones, *The War in the Air: Being the Story of the part played in the Great War by the Royal Force, Vol. IV* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 513.
- ⁸⁷ *Operations of the 2nd American Corps*, 15.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 15, and Burdett, 11-12.
- ⁸⁹ 30th Division *Operations Report*, 3-4, and Herr, 21.
- ⁹⁰ Monash, 237-239.
- ⁹¹ Tim Travers, *The Allied Victories, 1918*, in Hew Strachan, editor, *World War I: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 287, and Harris and Barr, 211, and Monash, 241, and Pedersen, 282.
- ⁹² Prior and Wilson, 62, and Harris and Barr, 211-212.
- ⁹³ Terraine, 121.
- ⁹⁴ Blake, 326.
- ⁹⁵ Maj. Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice, editor, *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent* (London: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1928), 237.
- ⁹⁶ Oldham, 160.
- ⁹⁷ Montgomery, 137.
- ⁹⁸ Jonathan Bailey, 'British Artillery in the Great War,' in Paddy Griffith, editor, *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 29-32.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 946 Monash, 236-7 and Montgomery, 153-154.
- ¹⁰⁰ Capt. Nathaniel E. Callen, Infantry. 'The 30th Division in Attack on the Hindenburg Line Near Bellicourt, 23-29 September 1918.' *Company Staff Officers Course, 1924-1925* (Fort Benning: Infantry School Library), 21.

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- ¹⁰¹ Australian Corps, 'Outline of Plan of Attack on Hindenburg Line.' 22 September 1918. 30th Division Historical Files, 230-32.7, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ¹⁰² Prior and Wilson, 364-366.
- ¹⁰³ Rawlinson Diaries, 18-21 September 1918, National Army Museum, 5201-33, 28.
- ¹⁰⁴ Montgomery, 140.
- ¹⁰⁵ Maj. C.H. Dudley Ward, *The 74th (Yeomanry) Division in Syria and France* (London: John Murray, 1922), 228-234, and III Corps Operation Report for 18-21 September 1918. Papers of Maj. Gen. Butler, IWM.
- ¹⁰⁶ Peter Simkins, 'The War Experience of a Typical Kitchener Division: The 18th Division, 1914-1918,' in Cecil and Liddle, 309.
- ¹⁰⁷ Capt. G.H.F. Nichols, *The 18th Division in the Great War* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 410.
- ¹⁰⁸ Montgomery, 141-142.
- ¹⁰⁹ Rawlinson Diary 16-21 September 1918.
- ¹¹⁰ Prior and Wilson, 354, and Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 221-222.
- ¹¹¹ Rawlinson Diary, 16 September 1918.
- ¹¹² Peter Simkins to author, '18th Division,' 15 November 2002.
- ¹¹³ Rawlinson Diary, 16 September 1918, and Prior and Wilson, 354-355.
- ¹¹⁴ II Corps Field Orders, #14.
- ¹¹⁵ History of the 118th, 19.
- ¹¹⁶ Stewart, 136.
- ¹¹⁷ Harry T. Mitchell, 27.
- ¹¹⁸ Chief Surgeon, American Expeditionary Forces, Statistical Reports, Week Ending September 26, 1918. UD Entry, RG 120, NARA.
- ¹¹⁹ For an exhaustive study of the influenza outbreak and its effect on the U.S. Army in World War I, see Carol R. Byerly, *The Politics of Disease and War: Infectious Disease in the United States Army During World War I* (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Colorado, 2001).
- ¹²⁰ Special Order 263, 21 September 1918, 27th Division Historical Files, Decimal 210.63, and Adjutant General, AEF to Commanding General, 30th Division, 'Investigation; duties and assignment of officers,' 12 September, 1918, File 220.7. Both in Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.
- ¹²¹ During the latter half of 1918, a British division had no more than 7,000 officers and men, and the German Army had divisions between 3,000-4,000 strong. Prior and Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*, 316.

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- ¹²² Monash, 243.
- ¹²³ *Operations of Second Corps*.
- ¹²⁴ O’Ryan, 246.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 254.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid*.
- ¹²⁷ Simkins, 69-70, and Coffman, 283.
- ¹²⁸ Haig Dairy, Volume 33, 22 September 1918, NLS.
- ¹²⁹ General Lewis to Tyson, 14 September 1918, Lawrence S. Tyson Papers, East Tennessee Historical Society.
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid*.
- ¹³¹ Peter Dennis, Jeffrey Grey, et al.. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Australian Military History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 548-549.
- ¹³² Bean, 947; see also Pederson, 286-287, and H. Essame, *The Battle for Europe 1918* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 183-184.
- ¹³³ Monash, 245.
- ¹³⁴ ‘Beauvevior Offensive Plan,’ Monash Papers, 3DRL/2316., AWM.
- ¹³⁵ Pederson, 285.
- ¹³⁶ Herr, 20.
- ¹³⁷ Monash, 247-248.
- ¹³⁸ O’Ryan, 256.
- ¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 256-257.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 257.
- ¹⁴¹ Simonds, *Notes*.

Chapter 6: 'The Air was a Torturing Sound of Hell'

The two American divisions, the 27th and 30th, had had their baptism of fire, and now, in the last days of September 1918, were to enter into the most important experience of their association with British forces on the Western Front. They were to spearhead an attack that, if successful, might bring an end to the war. Here in the British sector, led by an Australian general, in the midst of Australian units, the divisions were equal in strength to four British or Dominion divisions, and would lead the way against a strong German position. But despite its strength in numbers, the II American Corps was deficient in tactical experience and would pay a heavy price as a result.

The Americans Enter the Line

The 27th Division took over the line on the night of 24-25 September from the 18th and 74th British Divisions in the Gouy sector, and the previous night, the 30th Division relieved the 1st Australian Division in the Nauroy sector. Hostile shelling had slowed relief in the 30th Division sector, and it was not completed until 2 A.M. on the 25th. On the way to the front, the Americans passed through the heart of the Somme Valley – what Brigadier General Tyson called that 'terrible battlefield that is the abomination of desolation.'¹ They were then crowded into the trenches constructed to accommodate Australian and British units. An average Australian or British battalion now numbered around 500 officers and men. The American equivalent, a regiment, was more than twice that strength.²

In a trench held by Company F of the 118th Infantry, the Germans welcomed the new occupants with a raid, but the Americans managed to foil it, with small losses to both sides.³ One of the Germans captured that morning confessed how air reconnaissance had observed the relief the night before, but his unit was not aware that Americans had taken over.⁴ During the next two days, the Germans continued to harass the American line with additional raids and aircraft patrols, which were followed by intense H.E. shelling with 77s.⁵ The Germans now knew that the 27th and 30th were in the line, but whether or not they expected a major attack is a matter of conjecture.⁶ British and Australian planes patrolled the German lines and took reconnaissance photographs, which did not reveal new defensive earthworks.⁷ However, some German POWs interrogated by American intelligence officers indicated they expected an attack, while others said their forces were caught by surprise.

Germans captured by the 120th Infantry professed to know an attack was imminent 'because they had shot down a British airplane carrying the plan of attack.' As a result, the German regiment 'received a fresh draft' on 28 September.⁸ However, a German soldier captured by the 107th Infantry on 29 September admitted 'the attack was a complete surprise.' He also claimed to 'not know who was on the line when the attack began.'⁹ Further proof that the Germans were likely surprised by the attack comes from Sgt. E.G. Graham of the 118th Infantry. During burial detail on 1 October, Graham found a dead German under an Army straw tick, and all he was wearing was his underwear and socks.¹⁰ He had evidently not had time to dress.

Plans for a Preliminary Operation

Because the British were unable to entirely secure the outpost line, the two American divisions were now charged with carrying out this task on 26-27 September. On the north end of the line, the 27th Division was assigned the more difficult job, using the 106th Infantry to advance 1,000 yards on a long front of 4,000 to secure a jump-off line for the main attack. In the 30th Division sector, the 118th Infantry had an easier undertaking. Because the portion of the outpost line opposite the division had already been taken by the British, except in a few places, the regiment was to make a much shorter advance on a 1,200-yard front to straighten the line in preparation for the main attack. The flanks of the attackers were to be protected by a smoke screen fired from one field artillery brigade on each side. Maps used for the preliminary operation identified the start line in brown and the objective lines in green. Tanks from the 4th British Tank Battalion were to support the 106th Infantry, while the 1st British Tank Battalion was to advance with the 118th Infantry. Both regiments would advance from a taped line and receive assistance from a creeping barrage. The 106th was formed on the left of the jump-off line, and on its right was the 118th.¹¹

Since the element of surprise no longer existed, preceding the preliminary operation would be an intense bombardment of 750,000 shells fired at the German defences by British and Australian artillery units. The unique aspect was detonation of BB, the British designation for mustard gas, for eight hours. This was the first use of this particular type of gas by the British, although the Germans had introduced first used gas at Second Ypres on 22 April 1915, and the British had speedily followed suit. The

British had more than 26,000 18-pounders and 6,200 6-inch mustard howitzer rounds in their arsenal. Rawlinson ordered the BB to start at 10 A.M. on 26 September and to continue until 6 P.M., with the German artillery and centres of communication as targets.¹²

To manage the expected high casualties, medical units readied themselves for the operation. Like the infantry and machine-gun units they were to support, the two sanitary trains (102nd and 105th), each comprising two field ambulance companies and two field hospitals, had no large-scale operational experience. During the Ypres-Lys operation, the 27th and 30th Divisions relied heavily on British ambulances and field hospitals for assistance. For the Hindenburg Line, British and Australian medical units would again cooperate with the Americans. This included providing dressing stations, ambulance-collecting posts, and rest stations for the slightly wounded doughboys.¹³

Besides medical personnel, and of course artillery, the two American divisions also had to rely on the British and Australians for auxiliary labour and administration units.¹⁴ But one crucial area, traffic control and road clearance, would be undertaken by the II Corps Military Police Company. Formed on 10 September from detachments of 70 non-commissioned officers and men transferred from the 27th and 30th Divisions, it was primarily tasked with rounding up stragglers. Also, when the villages, such as Bellicourt and Bony, were captured, the military police were responsible for assisting refugees and other inhabitants.¹⁵ Each division still had a military police unit to maintain order in its sector. The 102nd Military Police of the 27th Division appeared to have the most

experienced commander, Maj. Harry T. Shanton. Before joining the Army, he had at one time been the transportation manager of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.¹⁶

Lt. Gen. Sir John Monash, the Australian Corps commander, held a conference on 26 September with the American division and brigade commanders, the Australian division commanders and staffs, with officers from supporting units in attendance. As the artillery bombardment could be heard in the background, Monash went over the operation plan and answered last-minute questions from the eager Americans. The conference lasted over two and a half hours, and, according to Monash, 'No one present will soon forget the tense interest and confident expectancy that characterised that meeting.'¹⁷ Sir Douglas Haig arrived before the conference ended, and Monash persuaded him to greet the senior officers and say a few words of encouragement.¹⁸ There was not much he could say to them that they didn't already know. So Haig also confidently predicted a positive outcome and told the assembled officers that 'the biggest battle of the war started this morning, and the enemy will be attacked by 100 divisions in the next three days.'¹⁹

For an unknown reason, General Read did not attend. Although he had relinquished tactical command to Monash, he was still very active in organising his corps for its first major operation. Between 21 and 24 September, he issued three detailed field orders.²⁰ Each summarised the movements and reproduced battle plans as prepared by Monash's staff. The third, #16, was the most detailed. It provided the general plan for the preliminary operations and main attack, and instructed unit commanders on how to deal

with liaison, how to assemble, and what to expect of road conditions.²¹ Once the fighting commenced, the field orders would be of limited use since conditions would change rapidly. For now, Read was doing his best to prepare the corps, but it would be up to the division and brigade commanders to conduct the battle at the front.

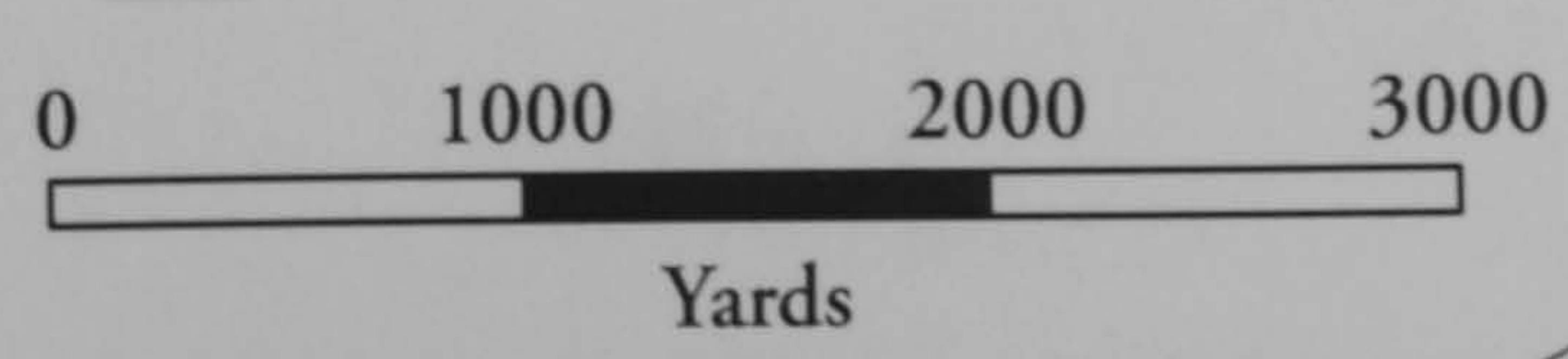
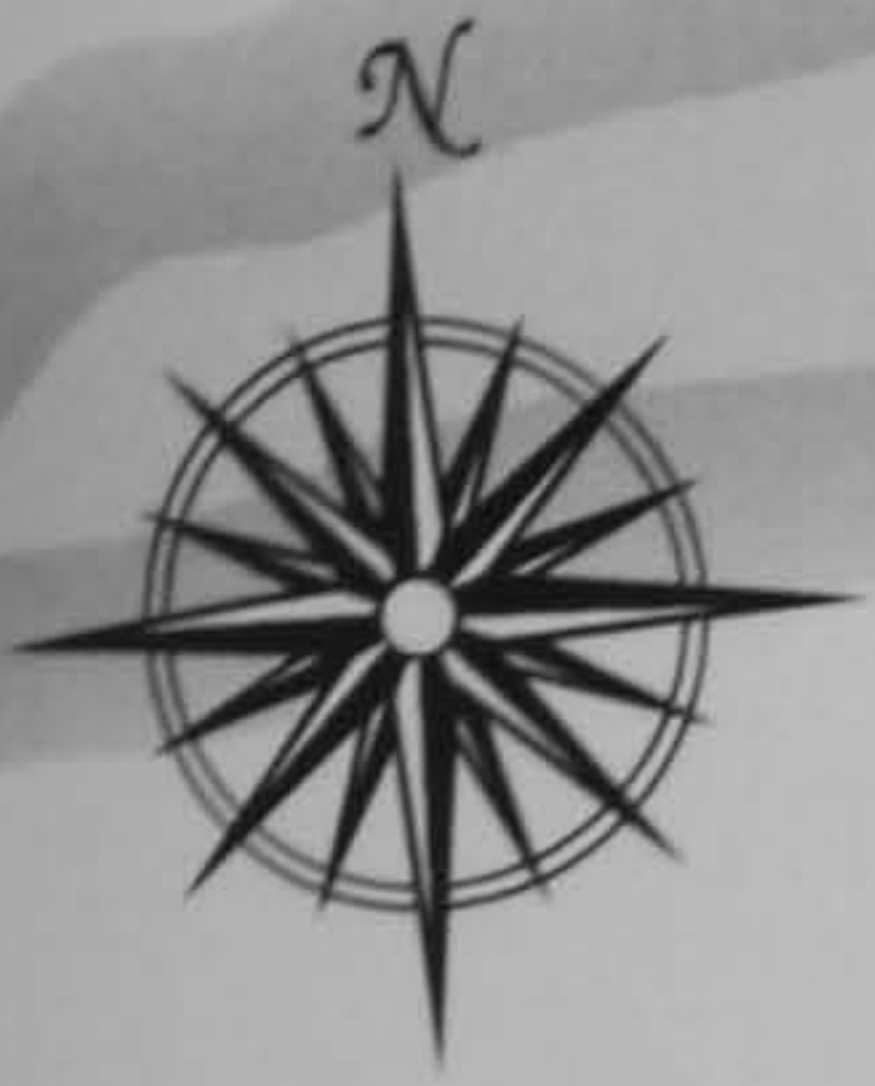
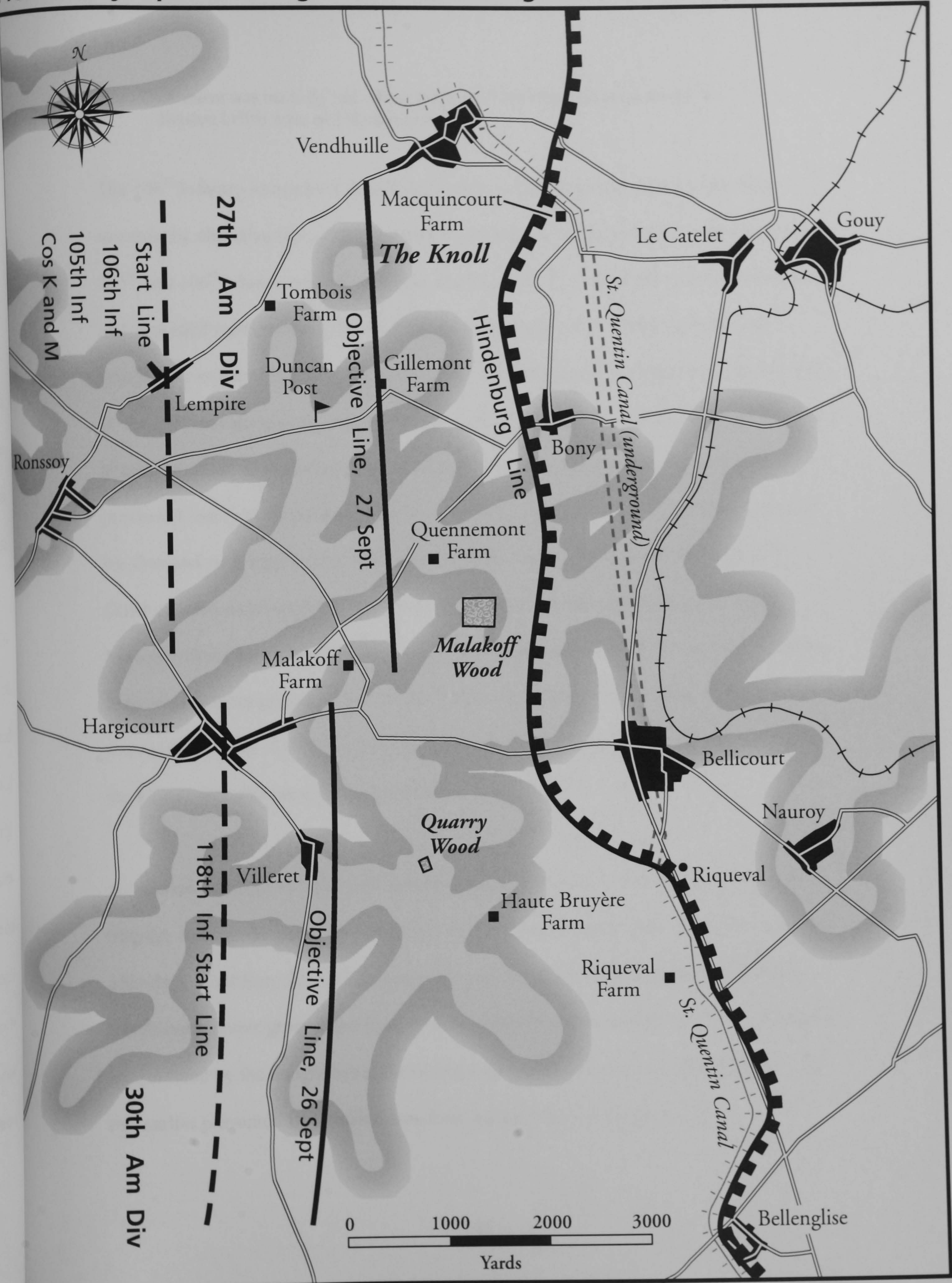
The Preliminary Operation Commences

The 118th Infantry commenced the preliminary operation at 9:30 P.M. on 26 September. It started out well, and by 10:55, the regiment's 1st and 3rd Battalions had established a new line 500 yards in advance of the jump-off, halting north of La Haute Bruyère.²² The straightening of the line would continue the next day in conjunction with the preliminary attack of the 27th Division. (Map after page 244)

At 3:30 A.M. on 27 September, the 106th Infantry headed towards the starting line while shells fell all around. Because the troops would have to move rapidly against heavy German machine-gun fire, each man was ordered to leave his overcoat, blanket and field kit at company headquarters, and instead carried a raincoat and rations, along with fighting equipment and five grenades.²³ Twelve tanks supported the 106th Infantry, while two companies (K and M) of the 105th Infantry were on its left flank. The officers and men were well aware of the complexity of the attack. In previous days, Major General O'Ryan had lectured the company commanders about their task, and his words of wisdom were passed on to the lower ranks. In particular, he emphasized that they were not to be taken prisoner, but 'fight to the finish.'²⁴ In the event that a soldier was captured, he was to give only the following information:

I left my billet in a rear area two or three days ago, at which time I heard that the rest of the division was going south. How far south I do not know, but believe

Preliminary Operation Against Hindenburg Line, 26-27 September 1918



the move was made by rail. Since that time, I have seen no other unit of the division in this area, only British troops.²⁵

The 106th Infantry jumped off at 5:30 A.M. and, at first, moved forward unimpeded towards the objective line, with protection by a creeping barrage, and coverage from the 105th and 106th Machine-Gun Battalions, and the tanks.²⁶ A short time later, signal flares and wounded men returning from the front indicated that some of the regiment had reached the outpost line. But the good news was premature.²⁷ As planned, Company M of the 105th advanced to the outpost line to mop up. There, it found the situation far from at hand. Instead of mopping up, the unit became engaged in a heavy fight. In the process, it lost two of its lieutenants. One of them, Lieutenant Rudin, was 'in the van of his men and pointing the way with an uplifted arm' when hit by machine-gun fire.²⁸ Other officers were wounded, and as the morning progressed, all order broke down. Messages from the front were sent to 53rd Brigade headquarters, but they were conflicting as to what was happening. This, in turn, meant that the brigade had little information to convey to O'Ryan. One of the early telephone messages sent to him vaguely summed up the chaos: 'Situation around the Knoll very obscure.'²⁹

As elements of the 105th and 106th Infantry tried to advance, the enemy filtered down through ravines and communication trenches into deep dugouts that were still intact, even after days of artillery fire. When the Americans passed over the dugouts, the German troops came above ground and fired at them, inflicting heavy casualties.³⁰ The resistance encountered by the doughboys at the German outpost line was at least as intense as what had earlier prevented III British Corps from taking this same position.

Further confirmation that all was not going well came at 1:25 P.M. from the 106th Infantry, saying that its right battalion had been attacked, and 'the situation is not clear.'³¹ At the same time, an Australian air patrol reported that fighting was still going on around the Knoll, but couldn't give an accurate assessment due to poor visibility. However, an American officer who reported to O'Ryan's headquarters five hours later contradicted the information. He had come from the front shortly before and was sure the Knoll and the two farms 'were in our hands, with only pockets of the enemy remaining to be mopped up.'³² It would become evident a short time later that this officer was wrong.

While elements of the 27th Division were in the midst of a difficult fight, also on the morning of the 27th, the 118th Infantry renewed the attempt to adjust its line. Early reports from the 3rd Battalion indicated that it had gained all objectives by 10:15 A.M., and the 1st Battalion was in the process of extending the divisional line to include Malakoff Wood, but had to withdraw, after the German machine-gun fire became too heavy, at a cost of many casualties. The fire came from Quennemont Farm on the left, where the 106th Infantry was in trouble, thus preventing the troops of the 30th Division from advancing further.³³ As the 118th was fighting to consolidate its line, a message came at 6 P.M. the 106th Infantry headquarters, stating what was already obvious: 'The whole front is practically the same as the jumping-off point this AM.'³⁴ The message had actually been sent much earlier, but transmission had been a problem throughout the day. The commander of the 1st Battalion, 106th Infantry reported: 'All our communications are down, and we can't use anything but runners.' He blamed the problem on shelling that severed the wires.³⁵

As night fell on 27 September, the 105th and 106th withdrew to a line that was only a short distance in front of where they had jumped off that morning. But most disturbing was that an unknown number of troops from both regiments were still holding their forward positions around the Knoll and the farms, and this would have a major impact on the main operation. Despite the heavy losses, the gains were minimal. Casualties from the two days of fighting were 17 officers and 300 men killed, with more than twice those numbers wounded and missing.³⁶ Most were from the 106th Regiment. Nearly all company officers were killed or wounded.

The way in which the Germans cut down the New York soldiers during this operation reminded one historian of 'Pickett's charge' at Gettysburg, when advancing Confederates were struck down by Union artillery fire.³⁷ A Second German Army report provides an unflattering portrayal of the American attack. Its 84th Schleswig-Holstein Infantry Regiment had encountered some Americans near Lempire, who were initially 'in assembled formation, but then took to flight, streaming to the rear in the fire of our artillery.'³⁸ Furthermore, the Germans boasted how their troops 'victoriously repulsed all enemy attacks, and executed against its right and centre. The main line of resistance is everywhere in our possession unchanged.'³⁹

The commander of the 53rd Brigade gave his account of what went wrong with the preliminary operation in the 27th Division sector. He placed the blame for much of the day's failure on the 'very great shortage of officers.' Even more detrimental to the attack, Brigadier General Blanding pointed out, was that the officers available had little

time to study and disseminate their orders, maps, and aerial photographs of the ground on which they were to advance. He also recognised that the much-anticipated use of tanks was a disappointment. His brigade had minimal training with the machines in early September, and this became evident during the fighting. They had no effect on German machine guns and artillery.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the Germans were expecting the 118th Infantry to continue its advance on 28 September. With reconnaissance from their planes, they placed artillery fire and increased machine-gun fire on positions that contained concentrations of Americans.⁴¹ But the 118th did not advance that day. Instead, it waited for relief from the units of the 60th Brigade. For the regiment, the fighting was over, and it would be placed in reserve for the next day's main operation. During its period in the line, the 118th suffered 10 killed and more than 100 wounded.⁴²

Preparations for the Main Operation

That night and into the early morning of 28 September, the 54th Brigade (107th and 108th Infantry) relieved the 105th and 106th Infantry. Patrols from the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry were sent forward to gain contact with missing troops. During the afternoon of the 28th, the patrols found one officer and seven men of the 106th Infantry, along with several strong points held by the Germans. The British artillery was sent the coordinates, and its guns shelled the area, but did minimal damage because the Germans still managed to hold on to most of the outpost line.

It remained unclear how many soldiers from the 27th Division were still at the outpost line and what part, if any, of the ground was in American possession. Australian aircraft flew patrols over the front and ‘verified some American troops on the desired line, but could get no flares to answer signals.’ German machine guns fired at the airmen, offering further proof that the ground was not under Allied control.⁴³ Major General Read was especially uneasy about the situation, and therefore a conference at 54th Brigade headquarters was convened that day, with representatives of the 27th Division and Australian Corps in attendance to discuss this difficult situation.

The main topic was the idea of adjusting the artillery fire to a line closer to the Americans in order that troops might advance under its protection from the start. But after consulting with Brig. Gen. K.K. Knapp, in command of the artillery supporting II Corps, the conference participants learned that, due to a lack of time, it would be impractical to change the barrage table by bringing it further back, which would put Americans near the Knoll and the farms at risk.⁴⁴ Knapp was well liked and trusted by the II Corps officers, and they felt he ‘made every effort to give our men all possible advantage of artillery protection.’⁴⁵ The idea of postponing the operation was also suggested to Monash, and, according to one of his biographers, he thought it was the better solution. However, Rawlinson overruled him. The Fourth Army commander felt that a delay would mean changing the arrangements on other fronts where troops were set to attack the next day.⁴⁶

The decision was important. It now meant that the lead regiments of the 27th Division would form up as close as possible to the barrage line for the attack an hour earlier, then

try to fight their way forward by the original start time, without artillery support.⁴⁷ This was a difficult decision for all parties involved, made even more difficult by the fact that it was British artillery supporting American ground troops. If the 27th Division had its own artillery, then the decision might have been much simpler. O’Ryan later justified the resolution:

The 53rd Brigade, which was gallantly holding its gains, was entitled to every consideration, even though some sacrifice was involved. To voluntarily assume the risk of destroying those because of a decision to increase the security of the 54th Brigade, no matter how logical it might be in the tactical sense, would be repulsive to the mass of the officers and men of the division, and destructive of morale.⁴⁸

To reassure Read about the operation, Haig paid him a visit at his headquarters and found the II Corps commander ‘very anxious.’ Haig referred to him as ‘a good honest fellow,’ and told Read not to worry about the next day’s events because ‘the reality was much simpler than his imagination pictured it to his mind.’ It is doubtful that Haig really believed this, but his words must have been some comfort.⁴⁹

Rawlinson was also optimistic that the next day’s attack would be successful. His diary entry for the 28th reads: ‘I feel pretty happy about the prospects as a whole, for even if the Americans are inexperienced, they are keen as mustard and splendid men.’⁵⁰ Monash did not share such optimism. He had little faith in the 27th and 30th Divisions, according to C.E.W. Bean. As the official correspondent with the AIF, Bean was on a first-name basis with the Australian Corps commander, and visited his headquarters the night of the 28th. ‘He [Monash] was very insistent on the fact that he doubted whether the Americans would succeed in carrying out their objectives.’ Monash’s attitude that evening left Bean

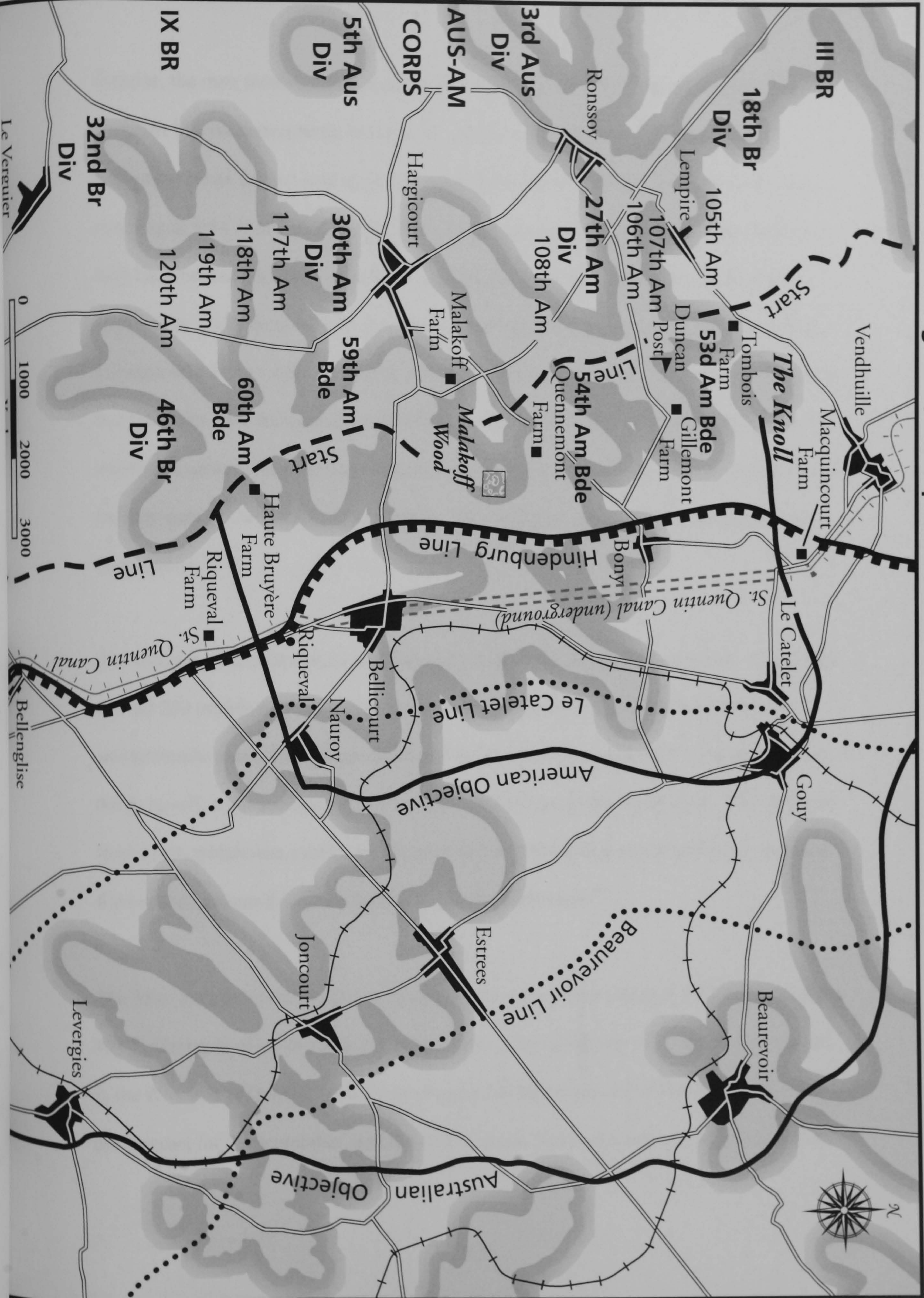
with the feeling that ‘John was hedging against a possible defeat, in which case he would be able to throw the blame onto the Americans.’⁵¹

Main Operation, 29 September 1918

With the attack set to start on schedule, the units in the line from the preliminary attack were ordered into reserve and replaced by the fresh regiments. This meant that in the 27th Division sector, the 54th Brigade, with the 108th Infantry Regiment on the right and the 107th Infantry Regiment on the left, took over the line from the 105th and 106th Infantry Regiments of the 53rd Brigade. In the 30th Division sector, the 60th Brigade, with the 120th Infantry Regiment on the right and the 119th Infantry Regiment on the left, relieved the 117th and 118th Infantry Regiments of the 59th Brigade. That night, the engineer units laid the jump-off lines. Two men and an officer from each company crawled out of the trenches and moved forward with rolls of white tape, which was laid on the ground, parallel to the trenches. The engineers also made road and water reconnaissance, and searched for enemy traps and mines while under the constant threat of machine-gun and shrapnel fire. At the same time, the tanks turned on their engines and rumbled forward under the cover of aircraft flying over the line to drown out the noise.⁵² (Map after page 251).

It was going to be a Sunday morning that the doughboys of II American Corps would not soon forget. To ease their jittery nerves, a soldier in the 27th Division remembered how ‘the British had given us a big half tumbler of rum before the charge, and Thank God for that.’⁵³ Paul Maze, a French artist serving as an interpreter on Rawlinson’s staff, wandered through the 27th Division line during its preparation for the assault, and to his

Attack on the Hindenburg Line, 29 September 1918



surprise, the men seemed relaxed and ‘settled down to their job with great spirit.’⁵⁴

Sergeant Melvin remembered being in the trenches in front of Bellicourt on 28 September when he was told by an officer that his unit would go over the top the next morning at 5:54 A.M. They would know it was time to start when a big shell was fired way back behind the line. ‘We had to lie there all night and worry about that.’ Melvin later wrote. ‘It is impossible to describe the feelings a man has with that in front of him. I always said I knew how a man felt who was condemned to die, for we all thought it was our last night. We thought of our families and the ones we loved.’⁵⁵ After the jump-off, another doughboy recalled that ‘the trip over the top was terrifying, yet exhilarating, but I believe most of the boys were in a trance. I know I was. I had gone to confession and communion.’⁵⁶

The soldiers of both divisions were certainly well equipped for the operation. Every man carried 220 rounds of ammunition and two Mills grenades. Each regiment had 600 smoke bombs and 2,500 red ground flares for distribution as needed.⁵⁷ The night before the jump-off, a hot food ration was served to the troops on the firing lines. This included fresh meat, which was a rarity for the men and something that could not be enjoyed as a field ration because it was too hard to eat on the battlefield.⁵⁸

The New Yorkers were the first to jump off and started their attack at 4:50 A.M., with the 107th Infantry heading towards Gillemont Farm. On its left, the 108th Infantry advanced in the direction of Quennemont Farm. Fog and a light wind with limited visibility was the forecast for 29 September, and the BEF meteorologist who made this prediction was

correct. The attack started on schedule that morning, with visibility almost nonexistent.⁵⁹ But the poor conditions actually gave the attackers an advantage. While the fog and smoke clouds ‘hindered the maintenance of order and cohesion,’ as the 30th Division historians recognise, ‘they were of tremendous assistance in blinding the enemy’s machine guns and field artillery.’⁶⁰ First reports received at division headquarters indicated that the attack was ‘going well.’ At 8:10, the 108th was reported to have crossed the Hindenburg Line and was on its way to the tunnel. An hour later, the situation had changed drastically. Regimental messages stated that its 3rd Battalion had suffered heavy casualties from machine-gun fire at Gillemont Farm, but still continued to advance. At 10:05, reports came from the 107th Infantry that casualties, especially officers, were heavy, with one battalion falling back.

Almost two years after the Hindenburg Line operation, the U.S. Army chief of staff requested that O’Ryan provide a detailed observation of his division’s battlefield performance. His report provides insight into the 107th Infantry’s tactics during this phase of the battle. The Germans had counterattacked against the 107th Infantry in an attempt to demoralise the regiment by inflicting heavy casualties. The Germans massed troops that attacked over the open ground, while protected by artillery and Minenwerfer fire. They took advantage of cover that was afforded by the rolling character of the terrain and the artificial features of the ground. However, the 107th was able to counter the attacks ‘with disciplined resolution and expertness in the use of the rifle.’ But, due to heavy losses, the Americans were forced to take cover in trenches and shell holes.

The Germans then changed tactics and employed expert bombers who bombed their way down the approach trenches. These bombers were supplied by specially trained men who passed bombs along to them. Each group was supported at a distance of several hundred yards by a group of rifle grenadiers, similarly supplied with rifle grenades, and light Minenwerfer groups. The advance of these parties was also supported by field artillery. The effectiveness of the supporting fire was made possible because each bombing group carried red rag on a stick that was kept in sight at a prescribed distance behind the bombers. To counter such tactics, O’Ryan thought, a unit’s men should enter a battle without any fixed idea that it was to be a ‘set piece’ action or open warfare, or with their minds committed to any classification of combat, but rather with the knowledge that their training had supplied them with a military team capable of successfully meeting any phase of combat.⁶¹

Meanwhile, throughout the 27th Division sector, the tanks that were supposed to support the infantry were once again of little use. Because of the fog and smoke from the artillery, they could not see the infantry, and many lost their way almost immediately after leaving the tape.⁶² Seven tanks did come within 100 yards of Gillemont Farm, but were destroyed by anti-tank guns once they became visible through the mist.⁶³

Despite setbacks, it appeared that O’Ryan’s troops had reached their objectives, but were taking heavy losses while mopping up. Patrols sent forward were subject to sniper and machine-gun fire. ‘It was a slaughter; we ran into a trap,’ remembered Cpl. Norman

Stone. 'It was the saddest thing I ever encountered. The machine-gun fire was thicker than flies in summer.'⁶⁴

As the Australians came up to what was left of the 108th Infantry, to leapfrog the Americans, they found battalions leaderless. On the right flank, the 2nd Battalion was mopping up Quennemont Farm. The 3rd Battalion had parts of two companies in the Hindenburg Line south of Bony, but its left flank was held up at Gillemont Farm. Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion of the 107th Infantry, along with a combined battalion of the 106th Infantry, was holding a position on the western edge of Gillemont Farm in Willow Trench. Mixed organisations of the 106th and 107th Infantries intermingled and held trenches around the Knoll and the rear of this position.

A few hours after the jump-off, much of the two brigades of the 27th Division were depleted on account of heavy casualties.⁶⁵ Many Americans lay dead or wounded throughout the battlefield. To one New York soldier, 'they'd just become figures going down, like pins in a bowling alley.'⁶⁶ The Germans were also taking significant casualties, and the Second German Army issued orders to withdraw from the front to the rear of the canal.⁶⁷ The 107th Infantry was in the thick of the fight, and, although it could not break through the line, the regiment was able to hold on until joined by the 3rd Australian Division, following closely behind. The Australians had jumped off four hours later to give the Americans time to capture Le Catelet line, where it would leapfrog over them and continue the advance. But upon approaching the start line, the Australians immediately encountered heavy fire, as well as many dead Americans, in front of them.⁶⁸

The large numbers of Germans who survived the artillery bombardment had no intention of surrendering and were overwhelming the Americans, and now the Australians.

Reports from the 3rd Australian Division indicated that ‘many Americans were leaderless near Gillemont Trench and Willow Trench.’⁶⁹ Still, the Allies counterattacked and captured Quennemont Farm. In the midst of the battle, the Australians provided great assistance to the inexperienced Americans. Lt. Col. Harry Murray, commanding the 4th Australian Machine-Gun Battalion, accompanied officers of the three machine-gun battalions in the 27th Division sector. ‘Mad Harry’ carried out liaison duty and helped the inexperienced Americans when the Germans counterattacked. For his great service, O’Ryan recommended him for the Distinguished Service Medal, which he received two weeks after the Armistice.⁷⁰

At 27th Division headquarters, O’Ryan had difficulty keeping abreast of the fighting. As was the case in the preliminary operation, he received a flow of messages that contradicted each other. Those sent early from the brigade headquarters indicated success in reaching the objective, but only a few minutes later, word came that the lead regiments were under machine-gun fire and bogged down. Aircraft observed the situation, but poor visibility obscured reporting. At 10 A.M., O’Ryan received a firsthand account from a wounded officer of the 107th Infantry Regiment that the ‘casualties, especially the officers, were heavy.’⁷¹ One officer recalled what it felt like to be shot. ‘There is a sharp pain when you are hit, and a shock that leaves you faint. This

lasts about 15 minutes, then the pain is gone. but a raging thirst sets in. I guess I smoked at least a dozen cigarettes in about 20 minutes.⁷²

At 11 A.M., the leading brigades of the 3rd Australian Division moved forward to eventually pass through the Americans. At noon, the Australians reached the line of the 108th Infantry, near Gillemont Farm. As the afternoon progressed, the Australians extended their lines further west to overlap the 107th Infantry. Neither this American regiment nor the Australians could advance any farther because of enfilading and cross-fire from Bony, Gillemont Farm, and the hill slopes east of the canal and north of Gouy.

On the extreme left, the 105th Infantry was, according to the plan of operations, required to cross the tunnel and turn to the north along the east bank of the canal to seize Le Catelet and Gouy. Here it was to be leapfrogged by the 3rd Australian Division, which was following behind the 107th. But when the latter failed to advance because of heavy fire at the Knoll, the 105th had to take up a defensive position, as ordered by the 53rd Brigade commander, and hold it against counterattacks. With the 18th British Division, it captured the Knoll and Macquincourt Trench. The 105th commander, Col. James M. Andrews, blamed the failure to proceed beyond the Knoll on 'the smoke barrage laid down by the Allied artillery, which proved very confusing to our troops; the direction of the march was hard to maintain, and due to some as yet unexplained phenomena, our marching compasses were so unstable as to be practically useless.'⁷³

The commander of the Australian division, Maj. Gen. Sir John Gellibrand, sent Monash a steady stream of messages throughout the day. At 2:20 in the afternoon, he sent back a report from an Australian liaison officer with the 105th Infantry, indicating that its headquarters was at Duncan Post, to the rear of Gillemont Farm. All of the regiment's battalions had been committed, 'but headquarters does not know where they are.'⁷⁴ Two hours later, Gellibrand presented Monash with a much clearer picture of the situation: 'As soon as troops advanced,' he wrote, 'the enemy opened fire at close range with machine guns and artillery. The centre battalion is now trying to reach Gillemont Farm, and the left battalion is pushing forward, but the enemy is in strength opposite them with good observation.'⁷⁵

Also on the extreme left at the Knoll, the 18th British Division connected with the Americans there, but was driven back to Tombois Road. The Germans attempted to counterattack at Vendhuile and up Macquincourt Valley, but were stymied by machine-gun and artillery fire. At 2 P.M., the few American officers available were ordered to organise and command detachments that had been pushed back to the left regimental sector. Three hours later, O'Ryan issued an order to the commanding generals of his two brigades 'to secure the left flank of our advances and prepare a defensive line of support for the Australian Division now attacking on the general line. Organise all stragglers and available men, and connect with the 18th British Division in the north and the 3rd Australian Division in the south.'⁷⁶

At this time, O’Ryan ordered his division commanders to organise all stragglers and available men of the 27th Division in Knoll Trench and Willow Trench, and form a defensive line in support of the Australians attacking near the Knoll, Bony and Gillemont Farm. The commander of the 54th Brigade was to take command of the left regimental sector, and the commander of the 53rd Brigade was ordered to do the same in the right regimental sector. With no other infantry to send forward, O’Ryan ordered three companies of the 102nd Engineers to occupy a reserve position north of Ronssoy. He notified the 53rd Brigade commander that it is ‘not the idea that you should put them in the line, but they are to be used as reserve and kept in a secure place, where they may be available for such use, in case of necessity.’⁷⁷

In the early morning of 1 October, the 27th Division withdrew and marched in the direction of Peronne for a much-needed rest. The operation was over for the New Yorkers. In two days of hard fighting, the division lost 26 of its officers and 648 men killed.⁷⁸ The 107th Infantry had the greatest number of losses, with 349 officers and men killed. It was the highest number of casualties for an American unit on a single day in the whole war.⁷⁹ Among them was Cpl. Alexander Kim of Company L, one of the few Chinese-Americans serving with the AEF. He was shot through the head in front of Gillemont Farm.⁸⁰ A survivor of the battle, Pvt. John Bowman of the 108th Infantry, which also took its share of casualties, summed up the operation when he said, ‘we’ve had our real touch of war, and it has been awful.’⁸¹

Burial parties were sent out to collect the dead, or mark their temporary graves. Also, Lieutenant Colonel Murray, in command of the 4th Australian Machine-Gun Battalion, made a reconnaissance of the battlefield east and northeast of Duncan Post on 30 September, and witnessed the carnage resulting from heavy machine-gun fire directed at the 27th Division as it left the trenches the previous day. Despite not having met all of their objectives, Murray was impressed by the fact that all of the dead New Yorkers he encountered were facing forward, an indication that none of the Americans retreated when the fire grew intense. This touched him enough to write O’Ryan: ‘I am convinced that the officers and men of the 27th Division did all that was humanly possible for brave men to do, and their gallantry in this action must stand out through all time in American history.’⁸² O’Ryan may have been in no mood to receive accolades from the Australian. It had been reported to him that ‘the bodies of our dead were looted, with money, valuables, and letters and diaries taken,’ he wrote in his official report. ‘In one case, the ring finger of a soldier was cut off. It was believed to have been done by the Australian troops, but couldn’t be proven.’⁸³ There was no investigation of this matter by the Americans or Australians, and it did not go any further than O’Ryan mentioning this in his report to Read.

Besides killed and wounded, one officer and 33 men were taken prisoner. Among the American POWs was Pvt. James F. Walker of the 106th Infantry, who was captured along with three other soldiers from his company as they hid from machine-gun fire in a shell hole. At first, their captors treated the prisoners like ‘civilised human beings,’ but once behind the lines, it was a different story. The Americans were ‘cuffed and shoved about,’

fed only a slice of sour black bread 'as thick as tissue paper.' and given a bowl of coffee made from burnt barley. While the fighting continued, the Germans kept the POW's in a cage, then took them across the border to Belgium, and finally to Germany. There, Walker was held with other Americans until after the Armistice.⁸⁴

German prisoners were a common sight behind the American lines, and the surrendered enemy men and officers were handled in an efficient manner. Those captured by the 27th Division were sent to a POW cage operated by the 102nd Military Police at Ronsoy. Mounted men from the unit were charged with taking the prisoners from the infantry and escorting them to the cage. Guards were posted at all times to ensure that prisoners were not interfered with, or robbed of their possessions.

As previously mentioned, the military police were also responsible for collecting stragglers, and 150 men were recorded as having been separated from their units. But traffic problems were the main issue faced by the MPs, and these reached a climax as the infantry and support units headed towards the jump-off line. 'Every available man worked night and day' to keep the lines moving, claimed a private in the 102nd. 'So great was the demand for help,' Pvt. Charles L. Campbell recalled, that 'mechanics, wagoner's, horses-shoers and cooks were used.' 'Splintered vehicles and dead horses that blocked the way' complicated their job. Such work was also dangerous. One soldier was killed, while directing traffic, by a bomb dropped by a German aeroplane.⁸⁵

Attack in the 30th Division Sector

To the south, in the 30th Division sector, the advance had more success. The attack started at 5:30 A.M. under a screen of mist and low clouds. Mixed with smoke from the barrage, the visibility immediately hampered the assault. The division's commanding officer, Maj. Gen. Edward M. Lewis, recalled vividly that 'four minutes after the starting signal, the air was a hell of torturing sound... the scream of bursting shrapnel, the whistle of bullets, the splintering explosions of grenades, the staccato bark of countless machine guns... that all helped to build up a direful symphony of battle.'⁸⁶

Men from the two lead regiments mingled while heading in the direction of the defending Germans, who could barely see what was coming towards them. On the right of the line, the 120th Infantry crossed the canal and continued eastward until 11 A.M., when it met severe resistance and could not advance further. Yet, it had captured Nauroy and occupied the Le Catelet-Nauroy Line. Elements of the regiment had gone beyond Nauroy, eastward, but could not make contact with the 119th Infantry on their left and had to pull back. A battalion of the 117th was then ordered to advance through Bellicourt to support the 119th on its left.

As a result, the 119th Infantry now encountered less resistance, and a field message received at 30th Division headquarters said that it broke through the Hindenburg Line at 7:30 A.M. The 119th's success may have been influenced by an informal order from its tough-talking colonel, who instructed his men 'to break that line, or not a one of us comes back.'⁸⁷ The 1st battalion of the regiment took the north portion of Bellicourt, and

companies advanced as far as Nauroy.⁸⁸ However, five hours later, Lewis received reports that the 119th had run into trouble northeast of Bellicourt. He responded by ordering the 117th regimental commander to 'rush' his reserve battalion to join the attack. At 12:55 P.M., Lewis stressed the severity of the situation to his 59th Brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Lawrence D. Tyson:

The trouble seems to be around Bellicourt. Have that battalion (reserve) go over there and go through it, and help in the attack that is developing. The 46th Division may want to ask assistance of the 117th to go down a little further than their boundary if necessary... the definite task of that battalion to is to mop up Bellicourt and go through it, and assist in the attack to northeast. The information we have is that machine guns are firing from Bellicourt and along the ridge to the southeast.⁸⁹

Lewis then notified the 119th Infantry commander of his order to send the reserve battalion of the 117th to his assistance, and that 'the best information we have from some of our units and the Australians is that parties of the enemy have been shifting in from the north on the 27th Division front.' A half hour later, it was reported to Lewis that 'Bellicourt is now mopped up.'⁹⁰ Lewis attempted to assist the 27th Division by ordering one battalion of the 118th and the regimental machine-gun company to protect the left flank of the 27th Division.⁹¹

To the east of the 30th Division, the 46th British Division attack across the canal near Bellinglise went well and would turn out to be the success story of the day. It was led by the 137th Brigade, men who, in some cases, crossed in light portable belts, life-belts, or on planks when bridges were unavailable. The 1/6th North Staffords captured Riqueval Bridge before the Germans had a chance to destroy it with demolition charges. A considerable artillery fire aided the attack, and again the fog caught the German sector by surprise. Casualties for the 46th were light, with the exception of the 138th Brigade.

which took heavy fire from the German positions to the west, where the Americans and Australians were having trouble.⁹²

During the early afternoon, the 8th Brigade of the 5th Australian Division passed through the 120th Infantry and, after mopping up in and around Bellicourt, continued attacking towards the east. The 120th was ordered into support positions, but some of its men lost contact with the regiment and remained fighting with the Australians. One of the Australian liaison officers, Brig. Gen. H.A. Goodard, said the Americans 'were like lost sheep, not knowing where to go or when to go.'⁹³ By late afternoon, mixed American and Australian units were unable to make any significant advances, so the two brigades from the 30th Division reinforced the flanks and dug in for the night. Following the 120th was the 117th Infantry (less one battalion that was held in reserve and sent to assist the 119th Infantry), which proceeded across the canal tunnel, changed direction, and attacked to the south and southwest to protect the 30th Division right flank. By noon, the right flank of the 117th had contact with the 46th British Division, and its left flank came in contact with the advance line of the 120th Infantry near Nauroy.⁹⁴

Command of the forward area passed to the 5th Australian Division at 1:05 A.M. on 30 September. The division, with Americans still intermingled, had attacked the previous day at 6 A.M. with the 3rd Australian Division, which had leapfrogged the 27th Division on the left. By noon of that day, the fighting had died down, and the 30th Division units retired from the line.⁹⁵ In the late morning of 30 September, Lewis issued a stern order to his brigade commanders: 'It is absolutely essential that the division be organised today

and fed tonight.' He warned that this 'can only be done through personal reconnaissance... waiting for tardy reports and map references is a waste of time. Checking on the ground is the only satisfactory way.'⁹⁶

Providing much-needed assistance to the 30th Division in consolidating its lines for a withdrawal was Maj. Gen. Sir I.G. MacKay, on the staff of the Australian mission during the planning of the operation. He had written a series of instructions for Lewis on the reorganising and controlling of units, and employing staffs. Then he went forward to the 59th and 60th Brigade headquarters to provide commanding officers with these instructions. Later, he assisted Lewis in the withdrawal of the 30th Division from the line on the night of 1-2 October.⁹⁷

After almost two days of heavy fighting, the 30th Division advanced 3,000 yards on a front of 3,750 yards, and took 47 German officers and 1,432 men as prisoners.⁹⁸ The accomplishment had been achieved at a high cost. More than 500 men had died after three days of fighting, and another 2,000 were wounded. Despite taking heavy casualties and losing order in some instances, the attack in this sector can be considered successful. Much of the success of the 30th American Division came from the work of the British artillery on the day before the attack and continued until the jump-off. With trench bombardment, counter-battery fire, and a barrage that cut the wire, the artillery caught the Germans in their dugouts and caused numerous casualties among their units. German prisoners captured by units of the 30th Division substantiated this fact by telling their interrogators that the barrage caused heavy casualties.'⁹⁹

News of the Operation

On the home front, families in the Carolinas, Tennessee and New York were unaware that their sons were entering into a dangerous operation. Strict censorship of letters prevented soldiers from discussing battles. But, news of the operation to break the Hindenburg Line and its outcome was swiftly reported by Philip Gibbs. He was a veteran British reporter, who was hired as a special correspondent for *The New York Times* to cover the British sector. His stories were syndicated and picked up by newspapers in New York, Knoxville, Raleigh and Columbia. He was especially fond of the American soldiers, and his coverage of their operations was more than fair.¹⁰⁰ Also closely following the recent fighting was Col. Robert Bacon, who was still the American liaison officer at British headquarters. He wrote in his diary on 2 October 1918 how he was 'so brimful of the events of the last three days of glorious contact with our 27th and 30th Divisions.' Yet, he also noted how difficult it was to speak of the recent fighting 'without great sobs in my heart and in my voice, for many are the homes that are already desolate. America is paying the great price.'¹⁰¹

Elsewhere on the British Front

On 27 September, while the Americans were struggling to gain a jump-off position for the main attack, the First and Third British Armies struck west of Cambrai. Leading the First Army attack was the Canadian Corps, facing the Canal du Nord. It crossed the canal on a front of 2,500 yards and, despite heavy casualties, captured Bourlon village and the adjacent wood. Then, with help from the 11th British Division, the village of Marquion was taken. On 28 September, the Third Army captured Marcoing and secured

the crossings of Escaut Canal between that village and the outskirts of Cambrai. To the north, the Belgian Army and the Second British Army attacked in the Ypres area the same day and captured Passchendaele Ridge. Plumer's troops took back Messines Ridge the next day, and progressed even further until the combination of German reserves and the familiar rains of Flanders bogged down the offensive.¹⁰²

Assessment of American Performance

Gen. Sir Henry Rawlinson was one of the chief critics of the II American Corps' battlefield performance. At Fourth Army headquarters, he had read the field messages on 29 September, and he reluctantly concluded that II Corps was in trouble. 'The Americans appear to be in a state of hopeless confusion and will not, I fear, be able to function as a corps, so I am contemplating replacing them... I fear their casualties have been heavy, but it is their own fault.'¹⁰³ Yet Rawlinson was failing to recognise that even though not all of the objectives had been met, the Germans facing the Fourth Army were soundly defeated. He also overlooked the evidence that his battle plan was faulty in that he was asking too much of the inexperienced American divisions in such a difficult operation.

Rawlinson was also quick to place blame on the Americans for not accomplishing their objectives on the first day. He recorded in his diary: 'My heaviest losses in this battle have been the American Corps. They were too keen to get on, as gallant new troops always are, and did not pay enough attention to mopping up, with the result that the Germans came out of the dugouts, after they had passed, and cut them off.'¹⁰⁴ A more recent analysis of the Hindenburg Line operation is sensitive to chaos on the battlefield

and suggests that the Americans had 'fallen prey to the German tactic of leaving gaps in the wire to entice inexperienced troops into the fields of concentration there.'¹⁰⁵

Also extremely critical of the Americans was the Australian Corps commander. In his post-war memoirs, Monash defined mopping up to mean 'killing or disarming of all enemy found in hiding, the picketing of the entrances and exits of all dugouts, and laying siege to them until their occupants surrendered.'¹⁰⁶ He surmised that 'American Infantry had either not been sufficiently tutored in this important matter, or the need of it had not penetrated their understanding.'¹⁰⁷ But he was overreacting. Examination of the message logs sent by the 107th Infantry shows the Americans were indeed mopping up, but the enemy was too great in number, and counterattacked with the skill and determination of an experienced army.

The consensus of Monash's biographers is that this operation was far from his best effort. One suggests that in preparing for this offensive, 'Monash was not at his best... his plan for capturing the Hindenburg Line was deeply flawed.'¹⁰⁸ It can be argued that only the sheer determination of the American and Australian troops prevented disaster. Monash should not have used the Americans to spearhead an operation of this nature, especially after the failure of III Corps to secure the jump-off line in the 27th Division sector. Instead, Rawlinson should have ordered Monash to use II Corps as a reserve, but he failed to do so, and the Americans were cast into an operation that had little chance for success. The mere fact that Monash had to convene several meetings, some of

considerable duration, as well as form a mission to assist the Americans, demonstrated the complexity of the battle plan.

Despite his disappointment with the outcome of the operation, Sir John Monash did offer words of praise that the Americans 'showed a fine spirit, a keen desire to learn, magnificent individual bravery, and splendid comradeship.'¹⁰⁹ Bean also supported the Americans in a lecture he gave in 1940. He stressed the strong relations between the two Allies and made it clear that 'if Australian or other divisions had been faced with the same task at the same stage of their training, they probably would have failed just as completely.'¹¹⁰

Some of Monash's officers offered their own assessments of the American performance. 'As individuals, the Americans were not to be blamed,' recalled one Australian who observed the doughboys. 'But their behaviour under fire showed clearly that in modern warfare, it was of little avail to launch an attack with men untrained in war, even though the bravery of the individual may not be questioned.'¹¹¹ Maj. Gen. C.H. Brand, one of the Australian advisors to the 27th Division, thought the task undertaken by the Americans 'would have sorely tried any veteran division.'¹¹²

More recently, the American battlefield performance has undergone a reassessment. Leading this revision are historians Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, who write in their biography of Rawlinson that the usual critical account of the Americans 'should be disregarded. The 27th Division and the heavy casualties suffered by it were the

consequences of an attempt to advance against strongly defended positions without artillery protection.’ Prior and Wilson argue persuasively that ‘there were any number of precedents in this war for failure under such circumstances, and on this occasion, the originators of the fiasco were not the hapless American troops or their commanders, but Rawlinson and Monash.’¹¹³

The Americans Evaluate Their Performance

As already noted, the heaviest criticism of the American performance was failure of the two divisions to mop up the German pockets that survived the initial attacks. Most of the criticism is directed at the 27th Division and, in particular, its 108th Infantry. The farmers and horsemen from upstate New York followed the other regiments on the morning of the 29th with orders to clear pockets of resistance, but were unable to accomplish the mission. O’Ryan wrote in the history of the 27th Division that ‘very careful consideration had been given to this regiment (108th) regarding the problem of adequate mopping up.’¹¹⁴

Furthermore:

The personnel of the regiment were highly trained, well disciplined and intelligent. They thoroughly understood the importance of mopping up. The difficulties and importance of the task had been impressed upon them by the experience of the 106th Infantry two days before. Nevertheless, so complex was the enemy’s defensive system, and so resourceful and determined were the enemy machine gunners that had been placed at isolated posts, that a number of these machine-gunners succeeded in evading detection and destruction during the earliest phases of the attack.¹¹⁵

O’Ryan also made the same argument 10 years later to the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), which queried him during the writing of the *27th Division Summary of Operations in the World War*. An early draft of the monograph claimed that on 27 September, ‘all assaulting units had failed to mop up and round themselves under

fire from the rear as well as the front.’ He took umbrage to such comments in a five-page letter, claiming that even though the 106th Infantry was fired on from the rear in the progress of their advance, ‘it was not due to any general failure to mop up.’ He then explained that the units of his division had been ‘warned of the importance of thorough mopping up.’ But, the enemy had prepared a defensive system with a ‘view to concealing combat detachments until after the attackers’ mopping-up parties believed their work to be completed.’¹¹⁶

His comments are supported by at least two sources. An Australian artillery officer assigned as liaison officer to the 105th Infantry recalled that ‘most of the enemy machine gunners appeared well sheltered behind the tall weeds east of the canal, which afforded them excellent cover. They could not be noticed unless moving about.’¹¹⁷ Providing further evidence was an inspection of the tunnel by three II Corps engineers in December 1918. The engineers found conclusive evidence that the preliminary barrage of 26 September was only moderately effective, particularly in the 27th Division sector. After examining the northern entrance to the St. Quentin Canal and surrounding dugouts, the engineers discovered only one machine-gun post destroyed along the Hindenburg Line from Bony to Bellicourt. All others were still intact.¹¹⁸ This conclusion is substantiated in the report of artillery for the Fourth Army: ‘Provided he was with secure shell cover, the enemy’s losses in killed from the bombardment were probably not great.’¹¹⁹

Another American investigation of the tunnel at Bellicourt revealed that the Germans had also used graveyards as dugouts, having blown open the graves and tossed the bodies

aside.¹²⁰ Even Rawlinson, who inspected German defences around Gillemont Farm on 5 October, remarked in his diary that it was a 'most interesting defence... and it is clear why it gave so much trouble.'¹²¹

As in the Ypres-Lys operation, communications were a problem. Signal wires were under shell fire and cut by the tanks, and the two field signal battalions suffered heavy casualties. Another predicament was the number of troops assigned to units. Because so much equipment was carried onto the battlefield, large parties were needed, and they became easy targets for German artillery.¹²² Pigeons, used elsewhere on the Western Front, were not delivered until the night of 19 September, too late for use in this operation.¹²³

As previously noted, the largest disappointment was the tanks, which failed in their mission to support the infantry. This was especially true in the 27th Division sector, where 23 tanks were assigned to sustain the attack on its front. British mines, left over from previous operations, destroyed two of the tanks, and 16 were lost to artillery fire. The tanks often outran the infantry they were supposed to support. A brigade commander in the 301st American Tank Battalion recognised this fact in the 'lessons and suggestions' portion of his report. 'There was a marked tendency on the part of some tank commanders to get too far ahead of the infantry and, consequently, lose touch,' according to 1st Lieutenant Reynell. He stressed that 'if infantry cannot get forward owing to opposition, the first duty of the tank is to overcome the opposition. To do this.

it will often be necessary for tanks to come back to their infantry and lead them forward again.’¹²⁴

Of the 23 tanks that began the operation in the 27th Division sector, only one was still operable at the end of the day and actually made it across the tunnel.¹²⁵ Mechanical defects plagued some of the tanks during the fighting, and they had to be abandoned in enemy territory. On at least one occasion, the machine guns were removed from the tank, and its crews went forward on foot with the weapons. The greatest casualties to tanks were caused by direct hits from artillery fire. Several tank commanders in the 27th Division sector reported evidence that German infantry machine gunners had devised a signalling system to point to the artillery where tanks were located.¹²⁶ On the other hand, tanks supporting the 30th Division did much better. Eight tanks of the 1st British Tank Battalion reached the Hindenburg Line and were able to crush wire and take out machine-gun nests east of Bellicourt and north of Nauroy. Their success was no doubt the result of battlefield experience. Unlike the men of the 301st Tank Battalion, the 1st British Tank Battalion had been engaged in previous heavy combat before the Hindenburg Line operation, especially in March and April at Villers-Bretonneux.¹²⁷

Even though the 27th Division receives the most attention in this operation, it was not alone in its mistakes. Despite having achieved its objective on 29 September, the 30th Division exhibited errors. One of its biggest critics was the division’s G-3 (Operations). Maj. W.F.L. Hartigan, who wrote a report three days after the battle that outlined the troops’ deficiencies. He was disturbed by the ‘loss of direction’ of men who became

confused in the mist and smoke barrage, left leaderless by NCOs who failed to carry compasses and 'assume charge of stragglers.' Company officers and NCOs, according to Hartigan, 'were not sufficiently informed of the general plan, and of their own objective and mission, in particular.' He concluded: 'As long as they are allowed to hold rank without performing the duties, we will have NCOs incapable of initiative or the exercise of command.'¹²⁸ The historian of the 18th British Division echoed Hartigan's analysis. 'The men of the 30th American Division were magnificent,' he thought, 'but their staffs were lacking in experience.'¹²⁹

In his report of 27-29 September, 1918, Read agreed with the Australians and British on the II Corps' performance. He pointed out that the American 'lack of experience was the chief failing of the regimental and higher command. While the staffs, as a rule, functioned efficiently and handled the tactical situations with skill, there was a tendency for them to lose the remarkably close touch with the combatant units that all British headquarters maintained.' The men 'learned along the lines from the experience with the British, and a remarkable improvement was noticeable toward the close of the operations.'¹³⁰

Epilogue

The fighting produced many instances of heroic acts. Chaplain A.I. Foster of the 117th Infantry, while aiding wounded comrades, 'found a large number of men who had been lost in the fog. He promptly took charge, as there was no other officer available, led his men through severe shell fire to the objective, captured it, and held it for two days.' It

was reported that ‘Foster captured 14 German prisoners single-handedly, and a small grey pony.’¹³¹ Despite his gallant efforts, Chaplain Foster’s name was absent from lists of Medal of Honour and Distinguished Service Cross recipients. Twelve men of the 30th Division did receive the Medal of Honour, the largest number from any American division serving in World War I. Six men of the 27th Division also received this award.¹³²

The attack on the Hindenburg Line was the greatest challenge so far for the 27th and 30th Divisions since they had begun training with the British in June. Although the operation did not go entirely as planned, and casualties were high, the II American Corps displayed much courage and a willingness to fight as equals among the British and Australian forces. The battle was too complex, as Monash himself discovered. Still, the officers and men of the two divisions were now battle-hardened veterans, and as disciplined as any of the AEF units in France. As the next operation would prove, they were also quick learners, and the mistakes made on 29 September were largely corrected.

¹ Brig. Gen. Lawrence D. Tyson to Maj. Matthew F. Steele, 22 January 1919, Lawrence D. Tyson Papers, East Tennessee Historical Society.

² *History of Company F, 118th Infantry (Hampton Guards), 30th Division: Belgium, Somme Offensive, Bellicourt, Montbrehain, Brancourt, and St. Martin’s Reviere* (Spartanburg: Band & White Printers, 1919), 19, and Nichols, 407. Also, thanks to Dale Blair for providing the strength of British and Australian units for this period of the war.

³ *30th Division Summary of Operations*, 14-15, Entry 326, RG 165, NARA. (Hereafter cited as 30th Division Summary of Operations).

⁴ 1st Lt. F.M. Mack, Intelligence Officer, 118th Inf., ‘Intelligence Summary No. 8.’ 24-25 September 1918. File 230-20.1, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁵ Field Message, Col. Wolfe, Commanding 118th Infantry Regiment to 59th Infantry Brigade, 27 September 1918, File 230-32.16, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁶ ‘Summary of Events and Information.’ Historical Section British File, Folder 8-10: War Diary, Entry 316, RG 165, NARA.

⁷ F.M. Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War, 1914-1918* (Angus and Robertson, 1923), 329.

⁸ 30th Division Field Messages, 230-32.16, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁹ O’Ryan, 27th Division Report of Operations.’

¹⁰ Letter of E.G. Graham, 118th Infantry Regiment. Thanks to Ed Slagle for brining this source to my attention.

¹¹ *Operations of the 2nd American Corps in the Somme Offensive: 8 August to 11 November 1918*, Monograph No. 10, (Washington: Historical Branch, War Plans Division, General Staff, 1920). (Hereafter cited as *Operations of the 2nd American Corps* and page number).

¹² Palazzo, 185.

¹³ *Operations of the 2nd American Corps*, 36-39 and Appendix I. The field hospitals with 27th Division were reinforced by the Australian 11th Field Ambulance and the 133rd British Field Ambulance, as well as ten Red Cross ambulances. British Field Ambulance 134, which established a temporary advance dressing station, assisted the 30th Division and British Field Ambulance No. 132 cared for gas victims and the walking wounded.

¹⁴ This included the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Australian Divisional Artillery, the 6th and 12th Army Brigades, Australian Field Artillery, and eight brigades and four batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery. See *Operations of the 2d American Corps*, 36-39.

¹⁵ Headquarters II Corps, American Expeditionary Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal, ‘History of the II Army Corps Military Police Company,’ File 182-35, Entry 1023, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁶ ‘Much Interest in Military Police,’ *The Spartanburg Herald*, 8 September 1917.

¹⁷ Monash, 250.

¹⁸ Pedersen, 287.

¹⁹ Terraine, *Ordeal of Victory*, 469-470, and O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 258. Haig’s reference to the attack on the 26 September was the start of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive to the east.

²⁰ II American Corps, Field Orders, File 22.16, Entry 821, RG 120, NARA.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ‘Field Order #16.’

²² 30th Division Summary of Operations, 14.

²³ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Four tanks supported each of the three battalions.

²⁷ Commanding General, 53rd Infantry Brigade to Commanding General, 27th Division, 'Report of Recent Operations,' 7 October 1918, File 227-33.6, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

²⁸ 'History of Company M, 105th Infantry,' 105th Infantry Regiment Historical Files, File 11.4, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

²⁹ O'Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Col. Wolfe, 'Operations from 12:00-12:00 26-27 September 1918,' File 230-33.1, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA, 'Summary of Operations of the 30th Division, Near Le Catelet,' 24-29 September 1918, Entry 326, RG 165, NARA, and Strength Returns, '118th Infantry,' September 1918, Entry 327, RG 407, NARA.

³⁴ Headquarters, 106th Inf. to 118th Inf., 27 September 1918. File 230-32.16, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

³⁵ Ibid, 25 September.

³⁶ O'Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report .

³⁷ Frederick Palmer, *Our Greatest Battle* (New York: Dodd, Meade, and Company, 1919), 240.

³⁸ Historical Section, German File: 'Group of Armies Boehn,' File 810-33.5: Folder II. 'Report of Operations,' Entry 320, RG 165, NARA.

³⁹ Second German Army Order, 'Enemy Attacks Repulsed,' 27 September 1918, File 811-33.5, Folder I, Entry 320, RG 165, NARA.

⁴⁰ Brigadier General Blanding to Commander, 27th Division, 'Operation Report,' Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA

⁴¹ *30th Division Summary*, 28 September 1918.

⁴² Name File of Dead and of Severely Wounded Casualties of Infantry Divisions in the A.E.F., 1918, Entry 588, RG 120, NARA, and World War I Organisation Records, Office File: Casualties of the AEF by Division, Entry 11, RG 407, NARA.

⁴³ Cutlack, 330.

⁴⁴ Knapp was the general officer commanding, Royal Artillery (GOCRA), of VII British Corps. The GORCA was in charge of artillery planning under the corps commander, and units (brigades) were assigned on an as-needed basis. Rawlinson directed him to assist II American Corps in coordinating the infantry with the artillery barrage. Thanks to Sanders Marble for his insight into this subject. Letter to author, 6 July 2004.

⁴⁵ Ewen C. MacVeagh and Lee D. Brown, *The Yankee in the British Zone* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), 365.

⁴⁶ Pedersen, 287.

⁴⁷ Montgomery, 157.

⁴⁸ O’Ryan, *Story of the 27th Division*, 300.

⁴⁹ Blake, 328.

⁵⁰ Rawlinson Diary, *RWLN 1/11*, Diary, 28 September 1918, Churchill College. Also, Maj. Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice, editor, *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent: from His Journals and Letters* (London: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1928), 238.

⁵¹ C.E.W. Bean Diary, 28 September 1918, 3DRL/606,AWM.

⁵² Murphy and Thomas, 100.

⁵³ Berry, 216. Pershing strictly forbid his troops from drinking rum, and specifically noted this in the training agreement of 12 February 1918. Also, Shrader, note 87, 130.

⁵⁴ Paul Maze, *A Frenchman in Khaki* (London: William Heinemann, LTD, 1934), 347.

⁵⁵ Edward Graham Melvin, Sr., *One Man’s War: World War I from the Memories of Tennessee Farm boy*. Unpublished manuscript among the holdings of the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁵⁶ Corp. James Toole. *From Auburn’s Own: In Their Own Words*, Compiled by Raymond E. Keefe, Jr. (Self-Published, 2002). Toole was killed 18 days later at St. Souplet.

⁵⁷ Murphy and Thomas, 98.

⁵⁸ Maj. Gen. Edward M. Lewis, Report of Operations for the 30th Division, Entry 270, RG 120, NARA. (Hereafter cited as Lewis, 30th Division Report of Operations.

⁵⁹ 30th Division Historical Files, File 321.91(Forecast), 29 September 1918. Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁶⁰ Murphy and Thomas, 102.

⁶¹ Commanding General, 27th Division to Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, ‘Report of Observations, Battlefields, 27th Division,’ 16 August 1920. O’Ryan was asked to submit this report by the Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Peyton March. MID #242-30, Entry 65, RG 165, NARA. (Hereafter cited as O’Ryan, Report of Observations)

⁶² Maj. R.I. Sasse, Tank Corps, ‘Report: 2nd Tank Brigade, 27 September-1 October, 1918,’ Folder 397. Entry 267, RG 120, NARA.

⁶³ Montgomery, 163.

⁶⁴ Toole, 23. Next to artillery shelling, no other killing mechanism is more associated with the First World War than the machine gun. It ‘became a decisive battlefield weapon,’ according to John Ellis in *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (London: Pimlico, 1976), ‘capable of mowing down troops by the hundreds.’ 167.

⁶⁵ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.

⁶⁶ Berry, 217.

⁶⁷ Historical Section, German File: Second Army: 811-33.5: Folder I: Order No. 1038, 29 September 1918. Entry 320, RG 165, NARA.

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- ⁶⁸ Peter S. Sadler, *The Paladin: A Life of Major-General Sir John Gellibrand* (Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172.
- ⁶⁹ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.
- ⁷⁰ George Franki and Clyde Slatyer, *Mad Harry: Australia’s Most Decorated Soldier* (East Roseville: Kangaroo Press, 2003), 142-144. For his heroism in the First World War, Murray was awarded six decorations, among them was the Victoria Cross.
- ⁷¹ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations eReport.
- ⁷² Toole, 21.
- ⁷³ James M. Andrews, ‘Operations,’ 27th Div., 25-29 Sept 1918, 27th Division, 105th Infantry Regiment, Entry 21, RG 117, NARA.
- ⁷⁴ Papers of Sir John Gellibrand, ‘3rd Division Messages, 29 September 1918, 2:20 P.M., 3DRL 1473/103. AWM.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, 4:30 P.M..
- ⁷⁶ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.
- ⁷⁷ Commanding General, 27th Division to Commanding Generals, 53rd and 54th Infantry Brigades. ‘Defensive Line of Support.’ 29 September 1918, 5 PM.
- ⁷⁸ O’Ryan, 27th Division Operations Report.
- ⁷⁹ Harris, *Duty, Honor, Privilege*, 294.
- ⁸⁰ Cpl. Alexander A. Kin, ‘Burial File.’ Entry 1942, RG 92, NA, and Commanding Officer, Company I, 107th Infantry, to Roger H. Williams. Correspondence files of the 107th Infantry Regiment, Entry 2133, RG 391, NARA.
- ⁸¹ John Bowman, ‘John Bowman Letters,’ 2 October 1918, USMHI, Carlisle Barracks.
- ⁸² Lt. Col. Murray, Commander, 4th Australian Machine Gun Battalion, to the Commanding General, 27th Division, 30 September 1918, Papers of George S. Simonds, LOC.
- ⁸³ O’Ryan, Confidential Report.
- ⁸⁴ ‘Walker From 106th Survives German Prison Camps, and Diet of Raw Turnips.’ Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook. New York State Military Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY.
- ⁸⁵ Pfc. Charles L. Campbell, 102nd Military Police. ‘History of the 102nd Military Police.’ *O’Ryan’s Roughnecks Website*, <http://www.oryansroughnecks.org/campbell.html>
- ⁸⁶ Lewis, 30th Division Operations Report.
- ⁸⁷ Melvin, 3.
- ⁸⁸ Operations Report of 30th Division.
- ⁸⁹ 30th Division, Field Messages. 230-32.16, Entry 1241. RG 120, NARA.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid, Lewis to 60th Brigade, 29 September 1918.

⁹² Harris and Barr, 223-224.

⁹³ Papers of Brig. Gen. H.A. Goodard, 9th Infantry Brigade, AIF, 29 September 1918, 3DRL 2379, AWM.

⁹⁴ Murphy and Thomas, 104.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ 30th Division to Commanding General, 60th Brigade to Commanding General, 59th Brigade. 'Reorganization of 30th Division, 30 September 1918, 230-32. 16 Field Messages, 30th Division Historical Files, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁹⁷ Diaries of Lt. Gen. Sir Iven MacKay, 30 September 1918, 3DRL/6850/6, AWM.

⁹⁸ 'Operations Report of 30th Division.

⁹⁹ Maj. Gen. Edward M. Lewis, 'Operations Report of 30 September 30, 1918,' 30th Division Historical Files, 33.2, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁰⁰ For biographical information on Gibbs, see Martin J. Farrar, *News from the Front: War Correspondents on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton, 1998).

¹⁰¹ James Scott Brown, *Robert Bacon: Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923), 402-403.

¹⁰² Simkins, 72.

¹⁰³ Rawlinson Diary, 29 September 1918.

¹⁰⁴ Maurice, 239.

¹⁰⁵ Blair, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Monash, 248-249.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Dennis... [Et al] *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 406.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ C.E.W. Bean, 'Relations of the A.I.F. with the Americans in France, 1918,' 22 August 1940, Papers of C.E.W. Bean, Manuscripts, 354.151, AWM. Thanks to Peter Pedersen for telling the author about this document.

¹¹¹ Richard Holmes. *The Western Front* (London: BBC Books, 1999), 210.

¹¹² Brig. Gen. Brand, 4th Australian Brigade, 4th Australian Division, to General O’Ryan, 27th American Division, ‘Few Notes on eight day’s tour of duty with 27th American Division,’ AWM 26, Operations Files, AWM.

¹¹³ Prior and Wilson, 374-375.

¹¹⁴ O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 313.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ John F. O’Ryan to Maj. X.H. Price, 6 January 1918, Entry 28, RG 117, NARA.

¹¹⁷ 1 Lt. W.O. Pasfield, ‘Notes on report of 1st Lt. W.O. Pasfield, 11th Australian Field Artillery Brigade, in regard to the operations of the 27th Division, 29 September 1918,’ copy among Papers of George S. Simonds, LOC.

¹¹⁸ II Corps Historical Files, 22.21, ‘Enemy Line of Defence,’ Entry 1023, RG 120, NARA.

¹¹⁹ Maj. Gen. C.E.D. Budworth, *Fourth Army Artillery in the Attack on the Hindenburg Line, September 29, 1918*, 23 October 1918. Copy located in the files of the British Army, Entry 32, RG 165, NARA.

¹²⁰ Schwensen, Kai, *The History of the 102nd M.P.* (Kai Schwensen, 1919), 56.

¹²¹ Rawlinson Diaries, /5201-33, 28, 5 October 1918, NAM.

¹²² *History of the AEF Signal Corps*, pp. 218-239, Entry 1521, RG 120, NARA.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ 1st Lt. Carelton Reynell, U.S. Tank Corps, H.O. 2nd Tank Brigade. ‘2nd Tank Brigade, American E.F., Report on Operations, 27 September to 1 October 1918,’ 5 October 1918, 13, Papers of George S. Patton, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

¹²⁵ Wilson, 204. The British mines had already been identified by the Germans, who fenced the area and marked it: ‘Achtung minenfeld’ (Beware Minefield), Bean, 960.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 204-205.

¹²⁷ David Fletcher, editor, *Tanks and Trenches: First Hand Accounts of Tank Warfare in the First World War* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 183.

¹²⁸ W.F.L. Hartigan, *Observations of the Battlefield of September 29th of Troops of 30th Division*, File 230-33.9, 30th Division, RG 120, NARA, and David Fletcher, 95-103.

¹²⁹ Nichols, 427.

¹³⁰ Report to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, G.H.Q. A.E.F., from the Commanding General, II Corps, 18 December 1918, Entry 270, RG 120, NARA.

¹³¹ AEF Chaplain’s Office Files, ‘30th Division,’ Entry 597, RG 120, NARA.

¹³² O’Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 893-894, and Murphy and Thomas, 240-241.

Chapter 7: Back to the Front

There was only a brief respite of five days before II Corps moved back to the front as part of the Fourth British Army. This gave brigade commanders little time to draw lessons from the recent Hindenburg Line attack, so it was questionable how the Americans would perform during the next attack. The 27th and 30th Divisions had taken heavy casualties in the fighting of 29-30 September and were below strength, with no possibility of receiving replacements, but still larger than depleted British divisions.¹ The Australian Corps, still attached to the Fourth Army, had been continuously in line since 8 August and was in dire need of a rest. The Americans were to replace it.

What the Americans and their Allies did not realise was that the new attack, early in October, was to mark the beginning of the end of the war. At that time, the main American force to the south was mired in the Meuse-Argonne, not getting far, despite two general attacks on 4 and 14 October. But, on the British front, the drive of former weeks continued, the line was moving, and German forces, under pressure everywhere, simply could not sustain the impact of repeated attacks.

The BEF Continues the Offensive

After breaching the Hindenburg Line on 29 September, the Fourth Army continued to push forward. The Beaurevoir Line had not been taken, and Rawlinson was adamant that his army must complete the destruction of the final prepared German defences just to his east. Once this was accomplished, he would push the Germans back across open country.

On 30 September, the next operation commenced in heavy rain. Although the weather was a hindrance to the aerial artillery spotting, the 1st and 32nd British Divisions of IX Corps managed some progress that day and the next. The divisions conducted mostly small-scale and uncoordinated attacks, and, on 1 October, penetrated the Beaurevoir Line between Wiancourt and Sequehart. However, a German counterattack regained the line that night. Also on the 30th, a coordinated attack to the north was more successful. Monash's tired corps pushed past the Bellicourt Tunnel entrance and took the Hindenburg support line at Le Catelet. This area had been loosely secured by mixed American and Australian troops on the night of 29 September, but was now firmly in Allied hands.²

To break the Beaurevoir Line, Rawlinson recognised that a full-scale assault was necessary. On 2 October, five divisions (1st, 32nd, 46th and 50th British, and the 2nd Australian), with support from eight brigades of artillery and 22 tanks, were ordered to assault the last German prepared defence the next day. At 6:30 A.M., the attacking divisions advanced 2,000 yards on a front of 10,000 and opened up part of the Beaurevoir Line until the Second and Eighteenth German Armies recaptured the villages of Beaurevoir and Montbrehain by the end of the day. It took three more days of fighting by the 25th and 50th British Divisions and the 2nd Australian Division to retake the villages.³ The Australian division was actually preparing to withdraw when Rawlinson ordered Monash to keep his troops at the front a day longer. The 4 October assault on Montbrehain was led by the 6th Australian Brigade. Inadequate tank support slowed the

attack when the machines joined the fight late. By then, the infantry was encountering German reinforcements, including fresh artillery.

Montbrehain was eventually taken at the cost of 300 Australian men and 40 officers.⁴ The loss was deemed unnecessary by the Australian official historian, who argued that Rawlinson should have included the attack as part of his larger objective.⁵ However, Monash and his division commanders considered the attack worth making and did not question Rawlinson's orders, so it is unfair to blame the consequences entirely on the Fourth Army commander.⁶

With the Beaurevoir Line in Allied possession, the Fourth Army had an excellent vantage point from which it could launch further attacks against the retreating German forces. In his victory dispatch of 6 October, Haig expressed pleasure at the success: 'The effect of the victory upon the subsequent course of the campaign was decisive. The threat to the enemy's communications was direct and instant, for nothing but the natural obstacles of a wooded and well-watered countryside lay between our armies and Maubeuge.'⁷

Americans Re-Enter the Line

Now that Montbrehain was no longer contested, Rawlinson ordered Monash's troops withdrawn from the line, and half of the II American Corps undertook relief of the Australian Corps during the night of 5-6 October. Only the 30th Division was ordered to the front, and both brigades of the 27th Division were in corps reserve. The Australian artillery remained to support the Americans. Rations were to be issued by the British

because the Americans would be too far from the supply lines. The doughboys were fed staples, such as bacon, oatmeal and potatoes, and unlike the initial experience with British food, there were no reported complaints from the hungry soldiers.⁸

The 59th Brigade was placed on a front of 4,000 yards, with its 118th Infantry on the right and the 117th Infantry on the left, 1,200 yards to the rear. The 60th Brigade was in reserve, between Bellicourt and Villeret.⁹ Prior to the 30th Division arriving at the front, Major General Read sent a request to AEF headquarters for all officers of the 27th and 30th Divisions currently at schools to return immediately to their units. 'Considerable casualties and the fewness of replacements furnished,' he wrote, 'have reduced the number of officers for duty, with combatant units below what is considered prudent to lead into battle.'¹⁰ This was a desperate, but necessary, appeal, since so many of his line officers had become casualties during the Hindenburg Line attack, and the platoons and companies were short of commanders. Pershing's staff did not send a formal response to Read, but the division strength reports for October indicate that the officers had returned to their units.

A Minor Operation

With the German Army now forced into open country, the Fourth Army continued the pursuit, and the Americans would spearhead most of the attacks. Because the 117th occupied a sector too far behind the 118th, it had to straighten its line before the next attack. A minor action was planned for 7 October to make this correction. It was similar in scope to the preliminary operation conducted by the brigade before the main

Hindenburg Line attack.¹¹ At 5:15 A.M., a rolling barrage commenced the attack, but the artillery covered only a portion of the front. As a result, the 25th and 50th British Divisions, protecting the American flanks, could not advance. This caused the 3rd Battalion of the 117th to run into stiff opposition. Company L took the brunt of casualties when machine-gun and shell fire poured in from the vicinity of Geneve, Bois de la Palette and Ponchaux. It lost a captain and 1st lieutenant. 'At the time the barrage lifted, the company commander recalled, 'we were within 50 yards of the enemy's lines, at which point we were held up for 10 minutes by heavy machine-gun fire.'¹²

Four hours after the jump-off, Major General Lewis halted the attack when the centre companies of the 3rd Battalion established liaison with the 118th and stopped near Mannions. Although the battalion had advanced only 500 yards and took heavy casualties, it captured 150 prisoners of the 20th German Division. Lewis blamed the losses on failure of the barrage and a lack of preparation time. His division had been in line less than a day, and it appeared that not all officers knew the battle plan. This problem would continue to haunt the 30th Division until it was withdrawn. Such issues were not exhibited by the British Army at this point in the war, since its commanders and staffs at divisional and brigade level were now vastly more experienced. But there was a more serious reason for the high casualties. During the fighting, Companies G and H of the 117th were falsely told that the 3rd Battalion of their regiment had been annihilated when the Germans counterattacked. They were rushed forward to repel what turned out to be a nonexistent attack, and suffered from intense shell fire moving in and out of the line.¹³

When word of this mishap reached corps headquarters, Read instructed Lewis to publish a Fourth Army telegram that warned British troops about listening to rumours: 'There are indications that the attention of officers and men is in danger of being diverted by insidious rumours from their single task of defeating the enemy.' it cautioned. Rawlinson had issued it to alert his troops against believing stories about alleged peace talks. It was a universal message and made clear that an 'army will concentrate its entire energy on bringing the operations in the field to a successful and decisive conclusion.'¹⁴ There were no further incidences of rumours affecting the next series of operations.

The Advance Continues

On the afternoon of 7 October, the Fourth Army issued an order for the 30th Division to commence another attack the next day. The 118th would spearhead the assault, with one battalion of the 117th in support. It first required an advance of 3,000 yards on a line running northwest from Brancoucourt. After securing this line, the barrage would halt for 30 minutes, and then the support battalion would pass through and exploit the second objective, requiring a push of 3,000 yards to the northeast toward the village of Premont. Instructions were issued for mopping-up parties to help secure the village. The Americans were supported on their right by the 6th British Division and on the left by the 25th and 66th British Divisions. This attack was more complex than straightening the line, and even more difficult because Read's staff did not distribute orders to 30th Division headquarters until late evening. Again, Lewis did not have time to instruct brigade commanders before the attack was due to start.

In the hours preceding the jump-off, the Fourth Army artillery pounded the Germans with 350,000 shells. On 8 October at 5:10 A.M., the infantry moved forward under a barrage, as well as support from a battalion of heavy tanks and two companies of Whippets. Machine-gun fire from the numerous emplacements around the west of Brancourt-le-Grand raked the lead elements, preventing progress. Elements of the 6th Division were held up and could not protect the American flanks. Fortunately, two hours later, resistance lightened when the Germans retreated, fighting a rear-guard action. On the right flank, Company C of the 120th Infantry was pulled from reserve, and was able to advance enough to fill a gap that developed between the 118th Infantry and the 6th Division. By 7:50 A.M., the 2nd Battalion of the 118th reached its first objective at Brancourt, and by 1:30 P.M., the regiment's 1st Battalion entered the village. There the elements of the 118th mopped up and then consolidated a line and dug in for the night. On this day, the action of three men of the 30th Division earned the Medal of Honour. In one instance, Sgt. Gary Evans Foster accompanied an officer to attack a machine-gun nest in a sunken road near Montbrehain. When the officer was wounded, Foster single-handedly killed several of the Germans with hand grenades and his pistol, and then brought 18 back as prisoners.¹⁵

That evening, Read again notified the 30th Division that it had no time for rest, but would resume attacking at 5:20 A.M. the next morning in the direction of St. Souplet. This time, to prevent any confusion about the attack, a conference was convened at 60th Brigade headquarters to ensure that all subordinate commanders received and understood the latest orders. Officers were told that the first objective was a line running north from

Bohain to west of Busigny. It required an advance of 4,000-5,000 yards by elements of the 59th Brigade. The second object was to be taken by the 60th Brigade, after passing through the 59th and advancing 2,000 yards farther to the northeast.

The eventual object was to secure the Selle River and the high ground from St. Benin to Molain. Such an attack, the American officers were told, would not be easy as it necessitated advancing a great distance through several villages, farms, and woods that probably contained enemy units. Despite Read's best efforts to see that his men were prepared for the next attack, the orders again arrived late at the 119th regimental headquarters, around 3:30 A.M. on 9 October. Then, the runner sent to deliver the orders from this command post to the battalion commanders and front line troops did not reach them until 4:30 A.M. The barrage had been ordered to commence a half hour later, but was changed to 5:30 A.M. As the 119th Infantry historian suggests, the difference of 30 minutes 'might have caused disastrous results.'¹⁶

A similar situation occurred within the 117th Infantry sector. The regiment was ordered to assault Busigny with the 2nd Battalion in the lead, the 1st Battalion in support, and the 3rd Battalion in reserve. But it received the instructions late, and when they finally arrived, it was recognised that they were incomplete and inaccurate. The regimental commander found that an error had been made in defining boundaries, most importantly the line of departure. It was believed to be three miles away, but the exact location was unknown. An attempt was made to reach 2nd Battalion headquarters to warn of the situation, but a message sent by wire failed. Therefore, when the attack start time

arrived, it was realised that the lead battalion was not in place. The 1st Battalion commander took the initiative and commenced with two battalions moving forward. As a result, the 117th was forced to form a defensive flank to the right, while its left moved forward to join the 119th Infantry. The regiment managed to reach the western bank of the Selle River, but could not cross on account of heavy fire on the right flank.¹⁷

Eventually the German fire of machine guns died down, and the 119th Infantry advanced 4,000 yards on the left of the sector and captured St. Benin, St. Souplet and Escaufort. On the right, the 120th Infantry met strong resistance and suffered heavy casualties from fire coming from the direction of Vaux Andigny, and also the high ground to the south and southeast. Most of it came from the right where the 25th British Division had been held up and were some distance to the rear. By the day's end, the Americans liberated three villages and more than 700 French civilians. Also, a large number of machine guns, field pieces and ammunition was taken.¹⁸

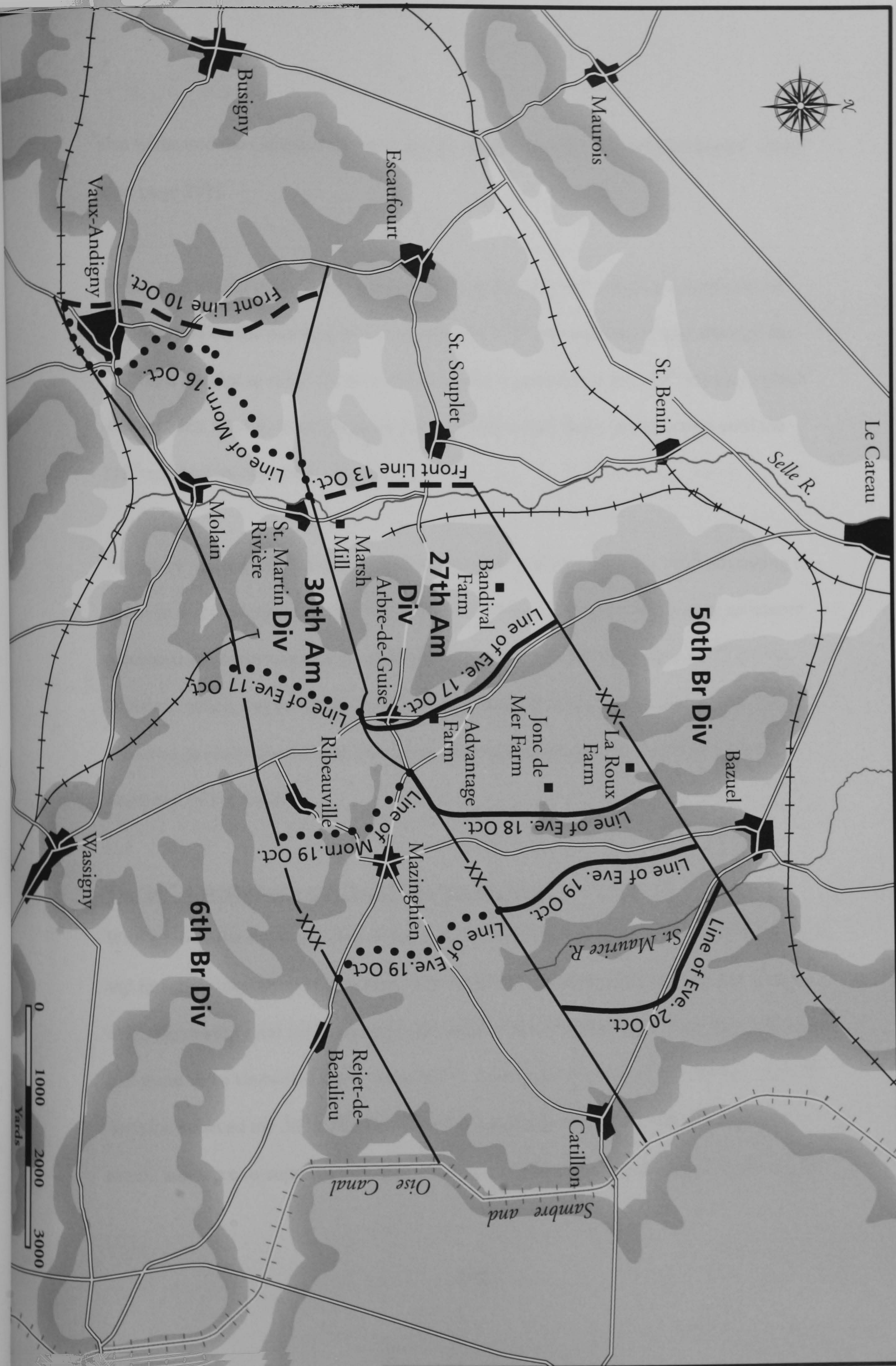
News of the 30th Division advances reached Col. Robert Bacon, still the American liaison at Montreuil, prompting him to write of 'the wonderful events of the last few days that are almost too much to comprehend.'¹⁹ His enthusiasm was well grounded, but there was much fight left in the German forces, and the Americans at the front would learn this over the next several days.

Following instructions from Rawlinson on the evening of 9 October, Read ordered the 30th Division to advance the next morning to the line of Le Cateau-St. Souplet-Andigny,

parallel to the Selle. The terrain surrounding the Selle formed an obstacle that the Germans used to great advantage. Although the river was between 15 and 18 feet wide, it was not more than 4 feet deep. The Germans had dammed it at St. Souplet and St. Benin, and at the southern exit at Le Cateau. Only to the south of St. Souplet was it narrow and could be crossed without much difficulty. Otherwise a bridge was needed.²⁰ East of the Selle, as the Fourth Army historian describes it, 'the slopes became more abrupt, small streams ran in the valleys, and there was large tracts of woodland.' Because the pasture between these tracts was divided into many small enclosures bounded by high, thick hedges, which, while constituting a serious obstacle to an infantry advance, at the same time afforded it excellent cover from view except at short ranges.²¹

This next attack commenced at 5:30 A.M. on 10 October, with the 60th Brigade objective being the river and the high ground beyond, from St Benin to Molain. The 119th Infantry took the lead and the brigade captured St. Souplet and St. Benin, the latter with the British, and established its line on the western bank of the Selle. The brigade was prevented from crossing the river by fire from the high ground to the east. On the right of the line, the 120th Infantry encountered heavy fire when taking Vaux-Andigny, and could not take its main objectives, the village of Molain and the Selle. Following was the 118th Infantry, which had been in reserve. It covered the exposed right flank of the 120th, and then closed a gap that developed between the American regiments and the 25th British Division. Despite making a determined stand, the Germans were clearly in retreat, as indicated by the congestion of their transports on the roads and railroads. The Americans

Selle River Campaign, 10-20 October 1918



also witnessed the Germans destroying their supply dumps – a good sign indeed. (Map after page 291).

To keep up the pressure, Rawlinson again requested that the Americans continue the advance, and on the morning of 11 October, the 118th was ordered to pass through the 120th and attempt to reach the river. It was to be supported by the 119th Infantry, which would attack from its position along the west side of the Selle, but not cross until the 118th reached its objective.

The attack started with three battalions of the 118th and one from the 120th advancing to the river and capturing La Haie Manneresse and Vaux-Andigny. But enemy resistance prevented the Americans on the right from advancing further because the 25th British Division, which was covering their flank, was held up in the Bois de Riquerval. It now appeared obvious that the Germans were no longer in retreat, but prepared to make a stand east of the Selle.

The 30th is Withdrawn and the 27th Enters the Line

With a lull in the fighting, Read ordered the 30th Division to retire for a much-needed rest and re-supplying. Despite the usual communication problems, the division had fought well. However, it did suffer a significant number of casualties, with more than 300 killed and about three times that many wounded.²² During the evening of 11 October, the 27th Division relieved the 30th. The New Yorkers were rested after the Hindenburg Line attack, and were re-supplied with the few articles of clothing that remained in the depots.

Clothing was in great need, and the II Corps quartermaster had not received any new shipments in weeks. As a result, some Americans were equipped with British tunics and trousers.²³

The two brigades of O’Ryan’s division left the reserve area in Tincourt and marched east, with the 54th halting at Brancourt and the 53rd at Bellicourt.²⁴ The 54th, plus the 2nd Battalion of the 105th, replaced the 60th Brigade on the night of 11-12 October. In reserve was the 53rd Brigade at Busigny. The move to the front lacked secrecy. On the 13th, the Germans shelled Busigny, striking the courtyard of the chateau where O’Ryan made his headquarters. Fragments struck Maj. Chester H. King, commander of the 104th Machine-Gun Battalion, and forced his evacuation. Other shells seriously wounded several dispatch riders at the division message centre. The German shells also found their way to the 106th Infantry regimental headquarters, almost killing several of its staff officers.²⁵

On 14 October, the 27th was ordered to reduce its front, to be replaced by the 6th British Division on the southern end of the line, and the 50th British Division would take over a portion of the line to the north. The 27th would still occupy a front of 4,200 yards. The reason for the reduction was to prepare for an upcoming attack. The day before, the British had captured a German map that showed the enemy intended to construct two temporary defences. They were noted as Hermann Stellung I and II. The first line was to run east of the Selle River from St. Souplet to Le Cateau, while the other was to be constructed east of the Sambre and Oise Canal. British air reconnaissance on 14 October photographed the country as far as Maubeuge, but neither of the Hermann lines was

revealed in the images. There were, however, newly dug trenches, between Vaux-Andigny and Le Cateau, that were protected by wire, as well as a number of rifle pits in pairs on the high ground between the Selle and the Sambre and Oise Canal.²⁶

Before the reduction in the 27th Division sector was to take place, O’Ryan ordered a detachment from the 54th Brigade to conduct a raid in German territory. His purpose was not only to identify German units opposing the Americans, but to ascertain if any obstacles had been put in place between his front and the Selle. This was not going to be an ordinary trench raid. O’Ryan wanted to give the Germans the impression of a large-scale attack. He arranged for the Australian artillery to place a barrage on a front of 1,500 yards that covered the German trenches opposing the 108th Infantry at St. Souplet. The barrage would first cover the flanks, then rest for three minutes. Next, the barrage would cover the middle sector of about 200 yards in width, then fire continuously on the German front line trenches. After working out the details with Brig. Gen. William Pierce, 54th Brigade commander, 21 men from the 108th went forward at 4 P.M. in broad daylight. The raiding party waded across the Selle at a point that was 3 feet deep and captured two non-commissioned officers and 21 enlisted men, while only sustaining two men slightly wounded. After interrogating the prisoners, it was determined they were from the 204th German Division and had been instructed to hold the line at all costs.²⁷

This raid and others like it, along with air reconnaissance, provided the Allies with valuable information on the German units, regarding their front and defensive positions. Although not nearly as elaborate as the Hindenburg Line, their line had many trenches

and strong points. The line stretched from the eastern bank of the Selle as far south as St. Souplet, then it crossed to the west bank of the river and continued south through the village of Molain. A high railway embankment paralleled the river a few yards east, from north of Le Cateau to a point east of St. Souplet. To the east of the river was a low ridge where the Germans positioned themselves, as well as another one 2,500 yards farther, which dominated Catillon and the valley of the Sambre and Oise Canal.

The Last Offensive

To dislodge the Germans, Rawlinson planned the largest attack since 29 September, to commence on 17 October. The day before, 16 October, the 30th Division re-entered the line between the 27th Division and the IX British Corps. He tasked the II American Corps with crossing the headwaters of the Selle between Molain and St. Souplet, where they would capture the hamlet of Arbre Guernon, and the villages of Mazinghien and Ribeaupville.

In the 27th Division sector, the plans called for its brigades to attack side by side on a 2,000 yard front, and then expand to 2,800 yards at the objective line. The 53rd Brigade was to attack on the right, with the 105th Infantry in the lead and the 106th in support, and the 54th Brigade was to attack on the left, with the 108th Infantry in the lead and the 107th in support. In the first phase, one battalion each of the 105th and 108th Infantries was to wade the Selle and advance up to 3,000 yards, overrunning the rail embankment and reaching the line of the Le Cateau-Arbre de Guise road. After pausing, the same lead battalions were to proceed to the second phase line 1,600 yards further, where they would dig in and consolidate. One battalion from each regiment would follow the lead battalion

to mop up bypassed German units and positions. One battalion from the 105th Infantry would attack the villages of Arbre de Guise/Arbre Guernon and Advantage Farm near the second phase line. In the 53rd Brigade sector, a third battalion of the 105th Infantry would push on to the third objective, 1,800 yards in advance. In the 54th Brigade, the 107th Infantry was to pass through the 108th and proceed to this line. Patrol elements were then to advance to the exploitation line another 1,800 yards, near the canal and the village of Catillon.²⁸ Artillery support for the 27th American Division would come from the 4th Australian Division.²⁹

The 30th Division would attack with its two brigades. Its 59th Brigade had the task of capturing the vilages of Molain and St. Martin Rivière, then advancing to the first objective, which was a line running northwest through the western outskirts of Ribeaupville. There, it would halt for three hours, while the 60th Brigade was to pass through on to the second objective, a north-south line through La Haie Tonnoile Farm. After this second objective had been reached, patrols were to push out to the line of the Sambre and Oise Canal near Catillon. The 5th Australian Division, with five brigades of light and one brigade of heavy artillery, was designated to support the 30th American Division.

To assist the infantry, 10 tanks were allotted to the 27th Division and 12 to the 30th from the 301st American Tank Battalion. Tanks were becoming scarce at this point in the war, and since 30 September, the 301st had attempted to rebuild what it possessed after losing half of its 40 tanks during the Hindenburg Line attack. The commander of the 301st, Maj.

Ralph I. Sasse, noted in his history of the unit that infantry troops his battalion was to support were sceptical in the use of tanks with infantry since so many of the machines had proved a failure during the attack on the St. Quentin Canal. Some of this scepticism may have been avoided if the tanks had been able to train with the infantry prior to the 29 September jump-off, but frantic efforts to move the infantry into line did not allow for such exercises. Only some elements of the 30th Division witnessed a tank exercise in mid-September. Instead, Sasse ordered his company and platoon commanders to work with the infantry to ensure that the manoeuvres orders were understood, and this was done to a small degree.³⁰

Everything possible was used to assist the infantry. Two aero squadrons from the Australian Flying Corps, the 35th and 3rd Squadrons, would play a major role in the attack.³¹ The squadrons would not only fly contact patrols to verify the progress of the infantry, but a patrol from each squadron would watch for any counterattacks. If one was spotted, 'this plane will drop white parachute lights immediately over the counterattack troops. All troops should be warned to keep a sharp lookout for this signal.'³² Aircraft were to drop phosphorus bombs throughout the attack until the advance element reached the second phase line in order to create an additional smoke screen and blind German observation posts on key high ground. Two other squadrons would also carry out a noise plan to conceal the movement of the tanks to the front on the morning of the attack – a tactic that had proved beneficial during the Hamel and Amiens operations. Also, one squadron of the 20th British Hussars was assigned to both the 27th and 30th Divisions for patrol and messenger service.

The attack was scheduled for 17 October, with the 30th Division on the right of the line and the 27th Division to the left. Rawlinson did not expect to advance beyond the first objective that day, but concerned that German resistance might collapse at any time, he emphasised that every effort should be made to exploit success. He ordered a preliminary bombardment to commence at 8 A.M. on 16 October. The attack the following morning started poorly on the right of the 27th Division sector. The 53rd Brigade led the attack, with the 1st Battalion of the 105th Infantry and the 106th in support. When the barrage opened at 5:20 A.M., German artillery responded with a counter-barrage that struck the assembled troops, and the 1st Battalion took heavy casualties, including a company commander, before it could advance. As had been the case with the Hindenburg Line attack, officers were among the early casualties, causing great confusion in the ranks. In the rear, the 2nd Battalion lost two company commanders as it advanced to assist the 1st Battalion.³³ The 3rd Battalion also could not offer much assistance since it had already suffered casualties and been disorganised from heavy shelling and gas concentration during the march to the assembly area. The 106th Infantry also had to cross a trench system on the west side of the Selle, opposite Marsh Mill, 1,000 yards south of St. Souplet. The system had been constructed early in the war by the Germans for training and contained a considerable amount of craters that became obstacles.³⁴

Also at 5:20 A.M., the 107th Infantry advanced from its jump-off west of St. Souplet in the direction of the Selle. In the van was its Machine-Gun Company, attached to the 1st

Battalion, with orders to maintain contact with the 150th British Brigade on its left and also protect the flank if necessary.³⁵ This was no easy task since the company, like the entire regiment, was badly depleted after taking heavy losses in the attack against the Hindenburg Line two weeks before. The company commander reported an effective fighting strength on 15 October of 3 officers and 51 men – less than one-third its original size.³⁶ One of the three officers was Lt. Kenneth Gow. Shortly after the barrage commenced, he had gone ahead of his unit to scout for suitable roads to transport the machine-gun carts. Gow only made it a short distance when fragments from a German H.E. shell pierced his face and neck. He died instantly.³⁷ In one of his last letters home, he had advised his parents not to mourn in the event of his death, but accept that they had 'given a son to a great cause.'³⁸

On the 27th Division's left, the 108th Infantry also encountered problems. The 1st Battalion led the attack, with the 3rd Battalion in support to mop up. The initial assault hit resistance from machine-gun elements in front of the railway embankment, but the 1st Battalion was able to overrun the line. Alas, it could not keep up with the creeping barrage. An attempt to reorganise the regiment at the railway after the battalions had become intermingled was difficult on account of the fog. The 108th pushed on and by 6:30 A.M. had overrun Baudival Farm.³⁹ Support from the tanks again proved disappointing as they had difficulty crossing the river, and those that did became disabled. Le Cateau Station was taken by the 66th British Division this day, along with 400 prisoners.⁴⁰ This same division had trained the 27th Division back in June and July.

About midnight, the 27th Division ordered its forward units to the ridge 1,500 yards to the east of their current positions. The division continued to patrol aggressively and support attempts by the 30th Division to move forward on the right until it was relieved on 20 October.⁴¹ During the two-day battle, the 27th Division attacked and defeated most of the 204th German Infantry Division, advancing 5,500 yards through the German defences. It suffered more than 50 casualties.

Among the units of the 27th Division taking severe casualties were its engineer detachments. O'Ryan claimed they suffered from what he later deemed 'The Psychological Effect of Certain Physical Features of Terrain.' The engineers accompanied the leading waves of infantry with ropes and portable foot bridge. When encountering a sunken road that ran parallel to St. Souplet, several hundred yards from the start line, these detachments with their impediments stopped, instead of going beyond to the start line in the open. Because of the fog and uneven terrain, they could not tell how much further to advance. Hence, when the barrage fell, the engineers, having further to go than the distance prescribed for them, and encumbered as they were with the bridge material, were delayed and caught by the enemy counter-barrage, with resulting casualties that otherwise would not have occurred. O'Ryan believed the men were psychologically paralyzed by the unusual terrain. Fifteen engineers were killed in action on 17 October, and more than three times that many were wounded.⁴²

In the 30th Division sector, the attack commenced at 5:20 A.M. on 17 October, with the 59th Brigade in front and the 60th in reserve. They held a front of 2,000 yards; each

regiment had a battalion in front, one in support, and a third in reserve. Machine-gun fire was provided by the 113th and 115th Battalions, which raked St. Martin-Rivière, Molain, and connecting roads. On their right were the 46th and 6th British Divisions. Facing them were three German divisions: the 15th Reserve, 24th Infantry, and the 3rd Naval. The attackers jumped off in a thick fog, which made the situation difficult for even the most experienced British commanders. This was particularly true in the sector assigned to the British 139th Brigade of the 46th Division. It attacked on a front with one battalion, the 8/Sherwood Foresters, in the lead. Although the battalion initially caught the Germans by surprise and took many prisoners, it suddenly lost direction in the mist and split apart. The left element of the battalion headed toward Andigny les Fermes, which created a gap at Regincourt on the high ground. When the mist cleared, German machine-gun fire opened up from this area, and to the northwest, inflicting heavy casualties.

Along the river, the German defences were minimal, but still posed a threat. There were trenches and wire near Le Cateau, and as the 59th Brigade attempted to cross the Selle, it was held back by enemy fire and the fog that caused the lead battalion to lose its way, reminiscent of the attack of 29 September. Another reason the brigade did not reach the objective was because it fell behind the barrage. Lead troops of the brigade finally reached a road running southwest from Arbre de Guise and dug in. That night, the 60th Brigade relieved the 59th, which passed into division reserve.

The Americans had not expected stiff resistance from the Germans, or a heavily reinforced front. Prisoners taken by the 30th Division troops indicated that this was a

rear-guard action, but the intensity of fighting by the Germans indicated a more organised defensive stand. By the afternoon, the attack had died down and the troops dug in.

The attack resumed early the next morning, with the 60th Brigade advancing only a few hundred yards before falling back to its original position along the road south of Arbre de Guise, where it remained throughout the day. After dusk, the lead regiment, the 119th Infantry, advanced and, this time, moved forward 2,000 yards to capture Ribeuville unopposed. The 119th Infantry had attempted to take the village earlier, and found it abandoned by the Germans.

One obstacle that delayed the American advance was the ridge overlooking Catillon. The village was one of the approaches to the Sambre and Oise Canal. The ridge had not been taken, mostly because of the failure of the 6th British Division to support the right flank of the Americans; this did not go unnoticed at 30th Division headquarters. Its chief of staff, Col. John K. Herr, recalled years later how he contacted the 6th Division to coordinate the jump-off on 16 October. He was told by his counterpart that the 6th would not jump off despite orders to do so. When Herr asked why, he was told, 'There is no use in concealing from you the truth; we just can't do it. We can make a bluff at starting off and open up with artillery fire, but we simply cannot make a real attack.'⁴³ Yet, the 16th and 18th British Brigades did get as far as its intermediate objective on 17 October.⁴⁴

Herr relayed this conversation to Lewis, who informed II Corps headquarters that the right flank of his division was now going to be exposed. But Read took a passive approach to the situation and refused to take the matter up with Rawlinson. The corps

commander referred to such matters as 'soldier's talk' in his final report. Instead, he told Simonds to suggest that the 30th Division form a defensive flank on its right to make up for the loss of the 6th British Division. Lewis recognised this solution as unacceptable since a flank would in no way protect against enfilade fire from the German artillery and machine guns. The matter ended there, and the attack ensued with the inevitable occurring. The 6th Division had been in line on the right flank of the 30th Division since 8 October, and on the 9th, it failed to advance abreast of the 118th Infantry, thus exposing the regiment to German fire from Bohain.⁴⁵

The following day, the 60th Brigade advanced at 5:15 A.M., with support from two battalions of the 59th. With little trouble, the 119th Infantry passed through Mazinghien and established a line on the eastern outskirts of the village. The 120th Infantry had a more difficult time, and it took several attempts before passing north of Mazinghien. All the while, casualties were mounting. One of them was Pvt. Judson W. Dennis, who was killed by machine-gun fire near Busigny on 17 October 1918. A letter to his family had arrived the same day with news that he survived the Hindenburg Line attack – one of the few times they had heard from him since he left for France that summer.⁴⁶

That night, Rawlinson issued orders to relieve the II Corps, and its front was taken over by the IV British Corps on the night of 20-21 October. The 1st British Division took over the 30th Division sector and the 6th British Division relieved the 27th. Although it was not known at the time, the war was over for II Corps. Its 27th Division moved to Corbie, and the 30th went to Querrieu for training. One unit, the 1st Battalion of the 105th Engineers,

remained in line at Montbrehain with the Fourth Army until 4 November. There it assisted in repairing the light railways from this village to Bohain.

Reflections on the Selle Operation

For the hard-fighting Americans in II Corps, the war effectively was over. But they had made their contribution. During the Selle Campaign it was a good deal more than average. And, considering how the two divisions of the corps were essentially new to combat, compared with their British and Australian counterparts, they had done extraordinarily well. The American infantry and machine-gun units had received good instruction from the British and Dominion forces, and were able to apply what they had learned in this final operation. This was done against a German opponent that was far from collapsing. As one historian of the operation writes, the Germans 'fought hard and skilfully used defence in-depth doctrine. Their position and intervention units were well organised, and the position divisions were relatively strong in manpower.'⁴⁷ This was true even when the Germans were surrendering at alarming rates.

Even the American tanks proved more successful in this operation by knocking out some of the German machine-gun nests. But many also lost their way in the mist and smoke. In one instance, a lieutenant had the added difficulty of trying to operate with a broken compass, and, as a result, he crossed the Selle three times, believing he was crossing different streams.⁴⁸

As historians Paul Harris and Niall Barr recognise, the Battle of the Selle is largely ignored when considering the final campaigns of the war. This is especially true, given the American participation in the battle and the Hundred Days campaign as a whole. Sir Douglas Haig had recognised its importance and sent Read a congratulatory message on 20 October. He told the American corps commander that ‘all ranks of the 27th and 30th American Divisions under your command displayed an energy, courage, and determination in attack that proved irresistible... you have earned the lasting esteem and admiration of your British comrades in arms, whose successes you have so nobly shared.’⁴⁹ He was mostly correct. The Americans had fought well, providing a valuable contribution to this phase of the Fourth Army attacks. The British had every reason to admire their doughboy comrades.

The achievements of II American Corps are overshadowed by the large-scale Meuse-Argonne offensive.⁵⁰ In his *My Experiences in the World War*, Pershing has less than a page on the Battle of the Selle, and most of that is Haig’s congratulatory message.⁵¹ It is doubtful that Pershing had followed much of II Corps’ progress in mid-October since he was busy reorganising the main body of the AEF.

Retirement

Out of line for the last time, the 27th and 30th resumed their training. With training came inspection by American and British officers, and subsequent reports. The first was actually an ongoing inspection by the II Corps acting inspector general, who compiled his notes while the divisions were still in combat at the Selle. Brig. Gen. George D. Moore

offered an analysis of the training from the first period in June to the Hindenburg Line attack. His criticism of the men in II Corps, especially in battle, stated the obvious. Liaison was poor, staff work faulty.⁵² Lack of discipline was also noted, and it was particularly taking its toll on the Americans, especially in the 27th Division. Since its formation at Camp Wadsworth in 1917, there had been incidents and infractions. After arriving in France, the division became more disciplined, albeit having been in line: later, it began to show signs of wear. The men committed mostly minor infractions, straggling and wearing uniforms incorrectly. While in the rear, the doughboys explored the battered cities and villages that were no longer under German occupation. The city of Amiens was of particular interest, and on 2 November 1918, members of the 30th Division attended a mass at its cathedral to remember the dead Americans, British and Australians.⁵³

Also during this period out of line, the two commanding generals in II Corps received a form letter of sorts from General Pershing about the state of the American Army in France, sent to each AEF division commander with his name typed in the salutation to give the document a personal touch. The observations were made while he was in command of the First Army. Pershing sent the letters, instead of publishing the message in orders, which 'are too often considered perfunctory.'⁵⁴

Copies sent to O'Ryan and Lewis were, at this juncture, of little value. The 11 points addressed in the document covered everything from liaison and plans of attack to staff efficiency, straggling, and the personality of officers. Pershing encouraged commanders

to make sure older officers and their staffs were alert, and 'well toward the front to direct correct tactical dispositions and see that there is no hesitation, and that important ground once taken is strongly held.' Most importantly, he said that each 'division commander should impress his own personality upon the division, and see his officers frequently.'⁵⁵

During the second week of November, the 27th and 30th Divisions were visited by Brig. Gen. W.J. Dugan, attached to Ivor Maxse's training branch, who carefully observed the Americans over the course of three days. Although his comments were of limited value to the divisional commanders because the Armistice was signed one day after he filed his report, they are insightful and worth noting. His main observation was that the 'system of training is indifferent,' and that the 'officers and men don't strike one as being very keen on training.'⁵⁶ He suggested that this was due to the fact training started too early, and too many hours were devoted to each subject. Dugan concluded that senior officers lacked imagination in preparing interesting training programs, and didn't think the staff work was running on smooth lines. 'The work of reconstruction is causing a good deal of floundering, chiefly due to want of experience and the absence of a sound working system throughout all units.'⁵⁷

The War Ends

Of greater significance was the news of the Armistice. It was mostly anti-climactic for the two American divisions, which were not immediately aware that an armistice was signed on the morning of 11 November. O'Ryan was alerted later that day by two Australian soldiers who passed by him on the street outside his headquarters and asked,

‘Why in the hell don’t you celebrate?’ The 27th Division commander observed at that moment, among the Americans, there was ‘not a ripple of excitement. Everything went on as usual.’⁵⁸ But that night, the soldiers did celebrate, and they were allowed to imbibe liquor, which O’Ryan normally forbad. A witness to the celebration said that soldiers were parading up and down the streets, yelling and hollering like a bunch of cowboys just after a range drive.’⁵⁹ In the 30th Division rest area, there were no reports of wild celebrations. Rather, the men talked of going home. Some of Read’s staff officers had a more festive attitude about the historic event and flocked to Amiens, where they were joined by their British, Canadian, Australian and French counterparts. The city was packed with jubilant soldiers, and according to two American officers, ‘Tables in the Amiens restaurants and cafes were as hard to procure that night as on Broadway on New Year’s Eve.’⁶⁰ With such revelry, the war was effectively over for the 27th and 30th Divisions.

¹ On 30 September the 27th Division reported its strength at 18,055, while the 30th Division fared better at 23,380. The effective AEF division strength was about 28,000 officers and men. See *27th Division Summary of Operations*, 38, and *30th Division Summary of Operations*, 38. (full citations in Introduction).

² J.P. Harris and Niall Barr, *Amiens to the Armistice: The BEF in the Hundred Days’ Campaign, 8 August-11 November 1918*. (London: Brassey’s, 1998), 232-235, and Maj. Gen. Sir Archibald Montgomery, *The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days, August 8 to November 11th 1918* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1931), 173-174.

³ Montgomery, 184-186.

⁴ Bean, *Medical History*. The exact casualty figures for Montbrehain are unavailable.

⁵ Pederson, 291.

⁶ *Ibid*, 291-292.

⁷ Montgomery, 189-190.

⁸ ‘Rations,’ File 430.2, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁹ *Operations of the 2d American Corps in the Somme*, 22, and File 182-33.3, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA..

¹⁰ II Corps to General Headquarters, AEF, Telegram, 4 October 1918, File 182.10.2, Entry 1023, RG 120, NARA.

¹¹ Murphy and Thomas, 108.

¹² Report of Operations, Company L, 117th Infantry Regiment, 30th Division Historical Files, 230-33.2, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ G-1, II American Corps to Commanding General, 30th Division, AEF, 'Danger of Rumors,' 7 October 1918, File 182-10.2, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁵ American Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (Washington: GPO, 1938), 393.

¹⁶ C.B. Conway and George A. Shutford, *History of the 119th Infantry, 60th Brigade, 30th Division, U.S.A.: Operations in Belgium and France, 1917-1919* (Wilmington: Wilmington Chamber of Commerce), 50.

¹⁷ The problem of relaying the attack order of 9 October in the 59th Brigade sector became a discussion point after the war for officers at the U.S. Army Infantry School when it was published in *Infantry in Battle*. Officers examining this situation concluded that the commander of the 1st Battalion made the correct decision, but that both battalions were essentially lucky that they had the right amount of troops in the right place at the right time. *Infantry in Battle* (Washington: Chief of Infantry, 939), 131-133.

¹⁸ Ibid, 51.

¹⁹ James Scott Brown, *Robert Bacon: Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923), 405.

²⁰ Brig. Gen. Sir James Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1918, Volume V* (1947), 238.

²¹ Montgomery, 231.

²² 30th Division Summary of Operations, 35.

²³ William F. Clarke, *Over There with O'Ryan's Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 92.

²⁴ Field Order #56, File 182-33.3, 8 October 1918, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

²⁵ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 347.

²⁶ Montgomery, 204.

²⁷ Ibid, 347-348.

²⁸ 27th Division, AEF, 15 October 1918, Field Orders No. 63 (extract), *USAWW*, Vol. 7, 584-587; Operations Report, 27th Division AEF 1918, 50-52; 27th Division Summary of Operations in the World War, 30-31; Headquarters 106th Infantry, AEF, Field Orders No. 28, 16 October 1918, RG 120, Entry 1241; Headquarters, 107th Infantry, AEF, Field Orders No. 37, 16 October, 1918, RG 120, Entry 1241; Headquarters, 108th Infantry, AEF, Field Orders No.49, 16 October 1918, RG 120, Entry 1241, NARA. I also wish to thank Mark Whisler. 'Der Tommy Kommt,' *British Expeditionary Force Campaign Orchestration and Fourth Army Operational Executions at the Battle of the Selle River, October 1918: A Case Study in 1918 British Offensive Operations against the Imperial German Army.*' (M.A. thesis, United

States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2001), is the definitive study of the Selle River, and Whisler's advice on this chapter was invaluable.

²⁹ Battle Instructions, Series D, 30th Division, 15 October, 1918, 30th Divisions Historical Files, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

³⁰ Sasse, *History of the 301st Tank Battalion*, 198-201 Also, see Wilson, 205.

³¹ G-3, II American Corps, AEF, 16 October 1918, 'Operations Instructions Series B, No. 7 Aircraft,' *USAWW*, Vol. 7, 612.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The company lost 10 dead and 45 wounded in the shelling. Also, see O'Ryan in Sutcliffe, 365.

³⁴ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 370-371.

³⁵ Headquarters 107th Infantry, Field Orders No.37, 16 October 1918, File 227-32-1, 27th Division Historical Files, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

³⁶ 'Effective Fighting Strength of Machine-Gun Company, 107th Infantry,' File 227-10-5, 27th Division Historical Files, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA. When the unit arrived in France at the end of May 1918, it reported strength of 5 officers and 158 men.

³⁷ Jacobson, 427, and Burial File for Lt. Kenneth Gow, Entry 1941, RG 92, NARA.

³⁸ Gow, 21 September 1918.

³⁹ Capt. J. F. Oakleaf, *Notes on the Operations of the 108th Infantry Overseas*. Online edition. (Olean, New York: Olean Times Publishing Company, 1921). URL: http://raven.cc.ukans.edu/kansite/ww_one/memoir/Oakleaf/108th.htm, 18; Operations Report, 27th Division, AEF, 53-54; *27th Division Summary of Operations*, 32; O'Ryan, 8; Headquarters, 3rd Battalion, 108th Infantry AEF, 1 Nov 1918., Subject: Report on Operations from 11-20 October, 108th Infantry Operation Reports, Entry 1241, RG 120, NARA.

⁴⁰ Captain J.C. Dunn, '17 October 1917.' *The War the Infantry Knew: 1914-1919* (London: Abacus, 2001), 558.

⁴¹ O'Ryan in Sutcliffe, 372.

⁴² O'Ryan to the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, MID File #224, Entry 65, RG 165, NARA.

⁴³ John K. Herr, *My Personal Experiences and Observations in Connection with the Great War*, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

⁴⁴ Edmonds, Vol. V., 300-303.

⁴⁵ Murphy and Thomas, 112.

⁴⁶ Dennis, 30 October 1918, and Burial File for Judson W. Dennis, Entry 1941, RG 92, NARA.

⁴⁷ Whisler, 40.

⁴⁸ Maj. Roger B. Harrison, 'Famous Charges Told of the U.S. Tank Brigade,' *The Army* (Vol. 1, No.1, Washington, D.C.), 15.

⁴⁹ *Operations of the 2d American Corps in the Somme Offensive*, 38.

⁵⁰ Harris and Barr, 262.

⁵¹ Pershing, Vol. I, 352-353.

⁵² Acting Inspector General, II Corps to the Inspector General, G.H.Q. AEF, 'Notes on Training and Discipline,' 19 October 1918, II Corps Historical Files, File 326/24, Entry 586, RG 120, NARA.

⁵³ Breunig Diary, 2 November 1918.

⁵⁴ Gen. John J. Pershing to Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, Commanding 27th Division, AEF, 24 October 1918, Pershing Papers, LOC.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Brig. Gen. W.J. Dugan, C.M.G., D.S.O., 'Notes on Visit to II American Corps,' 10 November 1918, Maxse Papers, IWM.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division*, 397.

⁵⁹ Clarke, 117.

⁶⁰ MacVeagh and Brown, 343. Broadway refers to New York City's most famous avenue.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: The Brothers-in-Arms

One of the more interesting, and controversial, questions surrounding the employment of U.S. Army troops in France in 1917-18 during World War I was whether the Americans should have organised an independent army on the Western Front. In this regard, the experience of the 27th and 30th American Divisions, which trained and served with the British Army until the Armistice, provides a unique case study in which to examine this question. These two divisions illustrate what might have occurred if Gen. John J. Pershing had allowed his entire force of two million soldiers to amalgamate and serve under the command of British and French Army generals.

The Coalition

What are we to make of the coalition between the II American Corps and the British Army? It was at first fraught with acrimony, mostly as a result of the complicated negotiations between the two commanders-in-chief. As we look through the prism of II Corps official records, its published regimental histories, and soldiers' letters and diaries, a clearer picture develops.

There were several outright advantages of placing American divisions under British command, and the first, undoubtedly, involved supplying the divisions. Even though Pershing had established a comprehensive Service of Supply with base sections throughout France, his First Army divisions at the front suffered from a lack of fresh food and replacement clothing, as well as inadequate equipment. The American supply lines,

nearly all by rail from the Bordeaux area on France's southwest coast were long. Their carrying capacity was limited. That fact forced Pershing to make a choice between delivering food or ammunition during periods of heavy fighting. Ammunition, of course, had to take priority; the men sometimes had to go on iron rations. The 27th and 30th Divisions also occasionally had problems distributing food, but when this occurred, the British came to their aid. They were better fed by the British than were their American counterparts, at St. Mihiel and in the Meuse-Argonne. In contrast, the British supply lines running between Amiens to the south and Hazebouck in the north had no trouble.

Another advantage of being under British command was that despite being organised as a corps, II American Corps remained essentially a skeleton organisation, and, therefore, it was not necessary to take key officers from the two divisions and place them in corps staff positions. The British handled the higher command and much of the tactics that otherwise would have fallen to American staff officers, who were in short supply. But the main advantage was that American division commanders and their subordinates were dealing with experienced British staff officers, who were more than willing to share the lessons learned of the previous three years.

When training the Americans, the British stressed aggressive trench fighting with bayonets and grenades.¹ The British officers emphasized the role of chain of command in preventive measures. For example, officers were encouraged to check soldiers' feet for trench foot, as well as ensuring they had proper clothing and equipment to prevent cold-weather related injuries, which might keep soldiers out of line unnecessarily.² The 27th

and 30th American Divisions were each about the size of a British corps. Pershing purposely organised large divisions for two specific reasons. First, there was a shortage of trained officers that he could choose from to command his divisions, and, second, American military leaders were convinced that large divisions could continue in battle for longer periods, thus lessening the need for rotations.³ Both factors became significant for II American Corps since its two divisions suffered high casualty rates and received no replacements while in line.

The Issue of Amalgamation

Essentially, the two divisions were amalgamated into the BEF, a situation that Pershing attempted to discourage early on, but did nothing to prevent after he organised the First Army. In the instance of the 27th and 30th Divisions, Haig won the battle with Pershing over the use of American troops. He had complete access to 50,000 eager, but inexperienced, doughboys to amalgamate with his Fourth Army. Haig was patient with Pershing and better understood the importance of the Anglo-American relations than his American counterpart. This was reflected in a congratulatory letter to the 27th Division before it left France. He told the New Yorkers: 'In the greater knowledge and understanding borne of perils and hardships shared together, we have learnt, at last, to look beyond old jealousies and past quarrels to the essential qualities that unite the great English-speaking nations... I feel confident that the new era opened on the battlefields of the Old World will see the sympathy and friendship now established between our two nations constantly deepened and strengthened.'⁴

Pershing, on the other hand, refused to recognise the usefulness of the relationship. In his memoirs, he wrote: 'Except for the details of trench warfare. training under the French and British was of little value.'⁵ Perhaps the tense conferences with Haig and Robertson still weighed heavily on his mind. What he failed to understand was that by allowing the British to use the 27th and 30th at the front, he helped hasten the end of the war. Despite not reaching all of their objectives and suffering high casualties during the Hindenburg Line attack, the operation may have been scaled down if it were not for the use of fresh American troops.

Despite tense moments over the amalgamation issue, Pershing and Haig enjoyed a warm relationship. The American ambassador in charge of Pershing's headquarters personnel, Lloyd C. Griscom, described the two leaders as 'of the same type – self-contained, direct, honest, and incapable of intrigue. They had great respect for each other, but when they met for a conference, the very similarity of their reserved characteristics prevented them from indulging in an open, free and frank discussion.'⁶

Relations with the British

It is quite clear that Pershing had little interest in the 27th and 30th Divisions after they remained behind as the II American Corps. If he did have any concerns about the performance of the two divisions in the British sector, they were laid to rest by Lt. Gen. Claude William Jacob of II British Corps.⁷ The divisions under his command had helped train cadres of the 27th and 30th while they were at the Ypres front in late August. He told Pershing when they met on 22 November during a parade for the King and Queen of

Belgium: 'The Allies pushed the Germans just to the crest of the hill. and it took just a little added push by the Americans to put them over.'⁸ Jacob, however, did not mention that the Germans occupying Mt. Kemmel had mostly abandoned their position before the Americans took over the front. Still, the British general's encouraging words must have pleased Pershing since he made a special note of the conversation in his diary.

Pershing also wanted to know what his division and brigade commanders thought of their experiences with the British and Australians and ordered his operations officer (G-3) to send questionnaires to them on 10 December 1918. Officers were to address three major issues: the part played by American units compared with that of the foreign unit, the efficiency of American troops as compared with those with whom they served, and any difficulties due to a difference in language.⁹ All 10 divisions that had served at some point with the British, as well as those divisions serving with the French, were surveyed and given only 10 days to report back to the G-3. Each report was to be marked 'Strictly Confidential' and would have limited distribution.¹⁰ The actual memorandum ordering the report was marked 'Secret,' and it is doubtful that anyone outside of the AEF or War Department ever saw the reports. Unfortunately, Haig did not place a similar demand on his general officers, and, therefore, we have less input on the British relationship with the Americans. Only the diaries and letters already cited in this study hint at how some British officers and men regarded the doughboys. But we are fortunate to have the comments from the II American Corps general officers, which are revealing, but not altogether surprising.

Within the 27th Division, O’Ryan saw the relationship as a valuable experience. ‘We trained about one month with the British, and the British officers assigned to each regiment helped us wonderfully in all the little things that we wanted to pick up on.’ he wrote. ‘We were trained in field exercises and on a larger scale in war than we had ever been trained before, as the British had large training grounds about 20 miles south of Calais, as well as every sort and kind of school.’¹¹ O’Ryan did disclose one interesting fact: the men in his division had no particular affection for the British since many of the New Yorkers were of German-American and Irish-American blood. As a result, they would have preferred to serve with the French. The British officers and men recognised the hostility and made a special effort to be cordial to the Americans, and over time, a bond developed between the Allies.¹²

The comments from the 30th Division commander were also encouraging. Lewis recognised that ‘the fraternisation of Australians and Americans was more marked than that of the English and Australians, or the English and Americans.’ He further remarked that the ‘relations of officers in this division were uniformly pleasant, even cordial, including those between the British and Australians.’ His 60th Brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Samson L. Faison, had mixed reviews of the alliance.

The relations that prevailed between troops of this brigade and the British infantry were good, while the relations with both the Scotch infantry and English artillery were the best. Yet, Tommy considered himself a superior soldier to the American and took no pains to conceal it. In fact, he took every opportunity to impress upon the mind of the American soldier that such was the case. Our soldiers resented any such attitude and denied that it was based on fact.¹³

Another brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Lawrence D. Tyson, in charge of the 59th, thought the British were wonderful:

Their officers are splendid and tireless, and uniformly courteous and helpful, and they seemed to have the greatest admiration for the Americans, and we saw no spirit of jealousy or pettiness in our contact with them. They were thorough, very fine, and I am glad, indeed, that we had the opportunity of serving with them; it has been great for America. It would have been better, perhaps, if there had been more Americans to serve with them, which may have eradicated any feeling that may have been in the hearts of the two nations against each other.¹⁴

Beside the responses to the questionnaires, Maj. Gen. George W. Read's final report also sheds light on the relationship. 'From the time II Corps was assigned to the Fourth British Army until it was transferred to the Third British Army, after the signing of the Armistice,' Read happily wrote, 'relations between the corps and army were always excellent... The amalgamation was complete, and founded on a spirit of mutual esteem and profound good will...all officers at both headquarters seemed determined that good feelings and cooperation should surmount every natural difficulty, and the relations, at no time, were other than most satisfactory.'¹⁵ Read is the only American officer in the AEF who actually uses the word amalgamation, further proof that Pershing really understood the relationship with the British.

Read's chief of staff was less enthusiastic about serving with the British. This comes as no surprise since Col. George S. Simonds had wanted II Corps transferred from the British in August 1918. He had more to say about the coalition than did the other officers since he had been working with the British long before the first American divisions arrived in this sector. 'The problems with them [British] are far more numerous and

complex than to be expected,' Simonds surmised. 'Although they are of our language, race, and, to a considerable extent, our ideas and ideals, their methods of procedure are certainly different than ours. Furthermore, the general run of their enlisted men... is inferior in intelligence, initiative and adaptability to American soldiers.'¹⁶

Simonds also had plenty to say about the British officers he encountered. Overall, 'the type officer of this class is a man of character and always a gentleman,' he observed. His word, once given, can always be relied upon. He is a man of positive opinions and wants to do things his way. He is sometimes hard to convince, and sometimes presents the attitude of not wanting to hear the other side. However, he does listen to reason, and he does make concessions.'¹⁷

When it came to specific British commanders, Simonds was less impressed with Gen. Sir Herbert Plumer. He 'is a man of positive opinions, who wants to dominate things wherever he happens to be,' Simonds opined. 'He gave me the impression that his judgement might sometimes go wrong.' Gen. Sir Henry Rawlinson was more to his liking. He 'has a nervous energy, more apparent than in most British officers. He is a man of considerable tactical ability. He keeps his finger on the pulse of his troops, clear down into the ranks, and knows at all times the state of their supplies, their casualty lists, health conditions, morale, etc. He always showed the utmost consideration to his subordinates, consulted his corps commanders freely, gave considerable weight to their opinions, and gave them great latitude in their operations.' Rawlinson's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Sir Archibald Montgomery, impressed Simonds even more. 'He is a student of

his profession – keen, alert, and of pleasing personality: and, he was able to efficiently coordinate the work of the staff.’¹⁸

Early on, Simonds carried the brunt of II American Corps until Read was appointed its commander, and one of his first concerns was the British supply system. It was organised to accommodate fewer men than an American division, and it was questionable how this would impact the II American Corps. This ultimately became the responsibility of Col. Edward S. Walton, II Corps quartermaster. He concluded that the supply question was worked out through trial and error and praised the British in their efforts to accommodate the Americans. ‘Although we had our troubles, of course,’ Walton wrote, ‘none of them was caused by lack of cooperation.’¹⁹ Certainly II American Corps in no way had the previously mentioned logistical difficulties experienced by other AEF divisions.

Lessons Learned

In World War II, the amalgamation issue, essentially that of Allied cooperation, arose again. To better understand how this situation was handled in the past, the War Department ordered a study of the American and British relationship of 1917-1918. The purpose was to assist Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower’s build-up of a coalition of armies for the eventual invasion of France. The 1942 study was based primarily upon the questionnaires ordered by Pershing, and the conclusions were to be expected.

‘In general, the American soldier considered the English enlisted man as difficult to make friends with, but a good fellow, and worth risking one’s life for.’ the author of the study learned. ‘He was inclined to be condescending toward his American cousins, but they were fully prepared to take this out of him by whatever means necessary, after which perfect harmony prevailed.’²⁰ A common issue reported by the Americans in 1917-18 was some difficulty in understanding the British. ‘A foreign language doesn’t cause as much irritation as your own language spoken differently,’ remarked one AEF officer.²¹

Contribution of II American Corps

How do we gauge the operational effectiveness of II American Corps? After arriving in France on 31 May, 1918, the 27th Division lost 1,829 officers and men killed in battle, with another 6,505 wounded. The 30th Division did not fare much better after arrival on 24 May. It lost 1,641 officers and men killed, and sustained 6,774 wounded. Also, 229 of the 27th Division were taken prisoner, compared with 75 from the 30th Division.

However, the two divisions captured an extraordinary number of the enemy. The 27th Division recorded 2,357 Germans passing through its POW cages, while the 30th Division claimed 3,848 prisoners. Such statistics are impressive, for the New York troops spent a mere 57 days at the front, and the southern soldiers only 12 more.

The divisional statistics indicate a high casualty rate, common throughout the AEF. This was, of course, due partially to poor command from line officers, but inexperience within all ranks was the chief reason so many men did not return home. As the 27th and 30th Divisions remained at the front for longer periods, casualties decreased, despite a

determined enemy that fought with skill to the very end. Both divisions can credit their later success on the battlefield to the tutoring received from the British, even though Pershing did not want the Americans to receive formal training from their allies. 'A fixed principle,' General Read recalled, 'was that in this training, no British advisor or instructor could at any time take command of one of our units.'²² While the British officers never actually took command of the American regiments during training or operations, their influence was apparent in practically every facet of how the doughboys distributed food and clothing, cared for the sick and wounded, and operated during the Hindenburg Line and Selle River operations.

Recent scholarship on the BEF during the last 100 days of the war clearly demonstrates that it evolved from the failures of 1914-16 to perhaps the most effective fighting force on the Western Front in 1918. Historians such as Paddy Griffith, Gary Sheffield and Peter Simkins, among others, applaud the innovations in artillery with the creeping barrage, and the combined arms of infantry advancing with tanks.²³ The Fourth Army artillery during the Hundred Days offensives, according one of Haig's biographers, 'was now so accurate and lethal, and called upon to do much less, that the weight of the shell provided more than enough to complete the task.'²⁴ It was not perfect, though, as shown by the failed attack on the Knoll and the two farms in the northern sector of the Hindenburg Line by the 27th Division. But the doughboys recovered and, undoubtedly, the American Corps profited from the British learning curve, while the remainder of the AEF struggled during the Meuse-Argonne with ineffective artillery and logistical breakdowns.

The 27th and 30th Divisions were immune to the problems encountered by Pershing's First Army. His decision to commit 225,000 men to attack the St. Mihiel salient benefited from the fact that the German Army, with only 25,000 men, had already begun to withdraw from the area. Then, a mere two weeks later, he shifted these same divisions 50 miles toward the Meuse River, and ordered the tired officers and men to attack a position that the most experienced British and French units would have found difficult. This is not to say that II American Corps did not encounter similar difficulty. Despite the best efforts of the British, the first two operational experiences of the 27th and 30th Divisions exposed a number of serious weaknesses that were also inherent to the other AEF divisions. Liaison was poor, and orders were not effectively transmitted to the unit commanders. This was, of course, due to the inexperience of officers at all levels, but this was mostly corrected during the Selle River campaign.

The National Guard Issue

A question of somewhat lesser importance is the effectiveness of National Guard troops. Throughout the history of the United States, there has been an ongoing debate over the so-called citizen soldier, and whether the nation should rely more heavily on this component, or on the professional soldier. In 1917-18, there was little debate. It was clear that the National Guard would have to carry a large part of the burden, along with conscripts, since the Regular Army had too few men and officers to form an effective expeditionary force. National Guard divisions had a mixed record in World War I. In the United States, the National Guard had a poor reputation before the war, and few Regulars changed their opinions after the Armistice. It did not help that the commander of the 26th

'Yankee' Division was relieved in mid-October 1918, and that the 35th 'Kansas-Missouri' Division collapsed on the fifth day of the Meuse-Argonne.²⁵ Still, other National Guard divisions, like the 28th, 33rd and 42nd, fought in major operations and did quite well.²⁶ Certainly at the top of this list are the 27th and 30th Divisions. Their experiences reflect what a National Guard division could and could not achieve.

It cannot be overstated how unique these two divisions were among other National Guard units in the AEF. By the Armistice, the ranks of the 27th were still composed largely of New Yorkers, while the rolls of the 30th were filled primarily with men from North and South Carolina and Tennessee. The other National Guard divisions in France had lost much of their local composition through replacements. Despite prodding by Read, neither of the II American Corps divisions received any additional troops until after the fighting ceased—a further indication that Pershing placed little importance on this corps. He also left its officer corps intact, despite consistently relieving ineffective officers in other AEF corps. The 30th Division, following command by five different generals, was led by Lewis, a Regular, for most of its service in France. Its counterpart, the 27th Division, was under the fine leadership of O'Ryan. He had the distinction of being the only National Guard officer to command a division throughout the war.

In Comparison

A larger question is how did the 27th and 30th Divisions compare to other AEF divisions, as well as the Australian and British divisions with which they trained and served? As previously indicated the divisions of II Corps were largely left to their own devices and,

in many ways, operated under the British. As a result, they were better fed and equipped than the remainder of the AEF because of the alliance with the BEF. Also, when it came to training, the 27th and 30th Divisions had a clear advantage over other AEF divisions because of the British Army and its experienced instructors.

On par with the II Corps divisions were two Regular Army divisions (1st and 2nd) and another National Guard division, the 26th. They were the earliest combat organisations to arrive in France. While most of the AEF received the bulk of training in the United States, these three divisions mostly trained in France under the supervision of French instructors and ultimately.²⁷ Whether or not it was a direct influence of the French instructors, the 1st, 2nd and 26th served in all major operations and were considered the best of the First American Army. Regarding combat, the 27th and 30th Divisions suffered about the same percentage of casualties as the remainder of the AEF, and experienced difficulty in liaison during battle. Neither of the II Corps divisions received replacements, while the divisions of the First American Army were kept at full strength with drafted men. Discipline within the 27th and 30th was far superior to that of other American divisions. Both II Corps divisions had fewer court-martials and incidences of straggling than the rest of Pershing's doughboys.

In comparison to the Allied units to which they were attached, the 27th and 30th Divisions were, of course, National Guard troops, while the Australian and British armies of 1918 were composed mostly of citizen soldiers. But the Americans actually resembled the British Army of 1914-15. Because of their inexperience, they made numerous tactical

errors and suffered unnecessary casualties in the same way the BEF took tremendous losses during the first two years of the war. Certainly the reason II American Corps was well-disciplined directly correlates to its association with the British. American officers, such as O'Ryan, had visited the front in the British sector in 1917 to observe and were impressed with the high level of obedience displayed by the Tommies.

Australian troops, on the other hand, were less impressive to the Americans. Monash's troops had a reputation as undisciplined, and this was certainly true when comparing them to the British troops. The Americans often witnessed Australian soldiers failing to salute superior officers. Even more startling was the claim by some doughboys of seeing Australian soldiers rifling through the belongings of dead American troops. As at least one historian has argued, the problems of discipline were the result of overuse and a lack of replacements.²⁸ Similarity did exist on the battlefield. The Australians were good role models for the Americans in their tenacity to continue fighting despite being in line for long periods and not receiving replacements, as well as taking heavy casualties. In summary, it is difficult to make a direct comparison between the II American Corps and the larger body of the AEF, as well as the associated Australian and British units. Yet, it can be said that the 27th and 30th Divisions represented the U.S. Army well during its association with the BEF, and, indeed, it was the correct decision by Pershing to leave them with that army.

Epilogue

In writing about the 27th and 30th Divisions, the author discovered that the sources for the 27th Division are far more detailed than those for its sister division. Almost two years after arriving home from France, Major General O’Ryan published *The Story of the 27th Division*. The book was a monumental achievement, comprising two volumes and more than 1,000 pages. He sent the book to family members, friends, and fellow Army officers who inspired or assisted him during the writing.

Pershing was among the first to receive *The Story of the 27th Division*. O’Ryan respected his former commander-in-chief and wanted him to share in this accomplishment. The 27th Division commander also had an ulterior motive in sending Pershing the gift. He sheepishly asked the general of the armies to write a brief accolade that his publisher could use for publicity purposes. Pershing politely refused. In a letter written by an aide, he told the former division commander that he felt his history was one of the best personal accounts of the war. If he wrote a few words for O’Ryan’s book, however, then there would be an obligation to do so for other officers writing books.

Even though Pershing perhaps never read *The Story of the 27th Division*, he was correct in saying O’Ryan’s work was among the best. It is certainly the most complete account of the American units that served in the British sector, standing alone in a crowded field that includes narratives covering every regiment of the 27th and 30th Divisions. From 1919-1940, thirty unit histories associated with the two divisions were published, as well as a single-volume history of the 30th Division. *The Thirtieth Division in the World War*

lacked the depth and insight of O’Ryan’s work since it was written in the third person by two authors who had no direct affiliation with the division. With the exception of O’Ryan’s book, those written by veterans were mostly for one another, destined to become souvenirs of their shared experience. There is no evidence that any of the unit histories, including O’Ryan’s, were reviewed or excerpted in newspapers or periodicals. This is surprising in his case since he was considered a prominent New Yorker before the war, and served afterward for a short period as city police commissioner.

The homecoming celebrations for the 27th and 30th Divisions were quite similar. In New York City, the 27th Division was greeted with the pomp and celebrity one would expect. After demobilising its units at Camp Dix, New Jersey and Camp Upton, New York, the division paraded up Fifth Avenue and banqueted with some of the city’s best-known actors and actresses. In the south, the 30th arrived at Charleston harbour in February 1919 for embarkation, followed by demobilisation at Camp Jackson, South Carolina or Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. From there, the units went home for separate welcome home celebrations in cities and towns throughout Tennessee, and North and South Carolina. Southern hospitality was showered upon the men in Knoxville, Memphis, Chattanooga, Asheville and Columbia, where the citizens came out in droves to applaud their local heroes with food, entertainment and speeches. Local newspapers covered all of these events in detail and published special sections that touted the exploits of the two divisions on the Western Front.

In the years following the war, associations affiliated with both divisions held reunions. Which division actually first broke the Hindenburg Line, the 27th or 30th, was one of the issues debated when the veterans from New York gathered with those from the south, both wishing to claim this honour. A North Carolina newspaper reported: 'Twenty-five thousand folders containing a facsimile of the official operations map of the 30th Division in France were put on sale by the Buncombe County Colonial Dames. The proceeds of the sale will be turned over to the association to help defray the expenses of its campaign combating that of the 27th New York Division, claiming credit for breaking the Hindenburg Line.'²⁹ The 27th Division Association was the more active of the two organisations. During a four-week period in May and June 1930, it sponsored a 'Back to the Front' reunion voyage to France, where the veterans revisited the sacred battlefields in the British sector.³⁰

Official commemoration of both divisions was the responsibility of the Federal Government. The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) dedicated the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial, near the village of Bony, in 1937. Named after the area near the Somme River where the two divisions fought, more than 1,800 Americans are buried in the cemetery. The legacy of the 27th and 30th is also commemorated three miles from the cemetery with a marker on the battlefield, also dedicated in 1937. The Bellicourt Monument stands atop of the St. Quentin Canal Tunnel. It contains a map of the operation to break the Hindenburg Line, along with an orientation table showing the direction of the attack.³¹ A further testament to the courage of the 27th and 30th is the Kemmel Monument near Vierstraat, Belgium. It was erected by

the ABMC in 1929 and pays tribute to the first operation in which the two divisions participated. Thus, the contribution of the II American Corps during World War I is permanently enshrined on the former battlefields of the Western Front.

¹ Kenneth E. Hamburger, *Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997), 15.

² *Ibid*, 14.

³ *Ibid*, 26.

⁴ Douglas Haig, letter to the 27th Division, 12 February 1919, 'British Files,' Entry 315, RG 165, NARA.

⁵ Pershing, *My Experiences, Volume II*, 114.

⁶ Lloyd C. Griscom, *Liaison*, lecture presented to the Army War College in 1940, copy among War Plans Course No. 5, 1939-1940, Entry 299, RG 165, NARA.

⁷ Jacob took command of II British Corps in May 1916 and remained there throughout the war. His command style was noted for thorough planning and preparation, and a willingness to stand up to his superiors. See J.M. Bourne, *Who's Who in World War One* (London: Routledge, 2001), 143.

⁸ Pershing Diary, 22 November 1918.

⁹ Lt. Col. Calvin C. Goddard, 'Relations Between the American Expeditionary Forces and the British Expeditionary Forces, 1917-1920,' June 1942, Historical Section Files, Army War College, Entry 310, RG 165, NARA.

¹⁰ Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 to Commanding Generals (27th and 30th Divisions), 'Report,' 10 December 1918, Entry 267, RG 120, NARA. Fox Conner directed 'by order from Pershing, a detailed report of each operation with your division engaged in while serving as a unit of the British. It is to be marked Strictly Confidential.'

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan to G-3, AEF, 'Confidential Report,' Entry 267, RG 120, NARA.

¹³ Brig. Gen. Samson L. Faison to Maj. Gen. E.M. Lewis, 'Notes on Confidential Report,' Entry 267, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁴ Brig. Gen. Lawrence D. Tyson to Mathew Steele, Lawrence D. Tyson Papers, East Tennessee Historical Society.

¹⁵ 'Report to AEF, G-3 from Commander, II American Corps,' Entry 270, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁶ Simonds, *Notes*.

¹⁷ Maj. George S. Simonds to the Acting Chief of Staff, G-2, G.H.Q., AEF. 'Estimate of General Officers of the English Army,' 16 September 1919, File #1017, Entry 268, RG 120, NARA.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Shrader, 121, and Col. E.S. Walton, 'Looked After By John Bull,' *The Quartermaster Review*, 1, No. 2 (September-October 1921), 26.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² George W. Read, *My Personal Experience in the World War* (unpublished monograph located among the papers of George S. Simonds, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.). 3.

²³ For an excellent synthesis of the recent BEF scholarship, see Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), in particular, 96-99.

²⁴ Weist, *Haig*, 108.

²⁵ See Robert H. Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne: The Failure of the Missouri-Kansas Division* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

²⁶ See Mahon, *History of the Militia and National Guard*. (full citation in Introduction).

²⁷ For a larger study of this issue, see Mark E. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in the First World War* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2003).

²⁸ Christopher Pugsley, *The ANZAC Experience: New Zealand, Australia and Empire in the First World War* (New Zealand: Reed, 2004), 276-277.

²⁹ *The Ashville Times*, 28 September 1928.

³⁰ Thanks to Lisa Budreau for sharing the information about this pilgrimage, which is part of her study, 'The Politics of American Commemoration in the Aftermath of the First World War (dissertation in progress, Oxford University).

³¹ The American Battle Monuments Commission, *Somme American Cemetery and Memorial* (Arlington, VA: ABMC, n.d.).

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Appendix I: Staff: II American Corps (29 September 1918)

Command and Staff

Maj. Gen. George W. Read-Corps Commander
Col. George S. Simonds-Chief of Staff
Lt. Col. Richard K. Hale-Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1
Lt. Col. Kerr T. Riggs-Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2
Col. Fred E. Buchan-Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3
Lt. Col. John P. Terrell-Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4

27th American Division

Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, Division Commander
Col. Stanley H. Ford, Chief of Staff
Brig. Gen. Albert H. Blanding, 53rd Infantry Brigade Commander
Brig. Gen. Palmer E. Pierce, 54th Infantry Brigade Commander

30th American Division

Maj. Gen. Edward M. Lewis, Division Commander
Col. John K. Herr, Chief of Staff
Brig. Gen. Lawrence D. Tyson, 59th Infantry Brigade Commander
Brig. Gen. Samuel L. Faison, 60th Infantry Brigade Commander

Appendix II: Order of Battle: 27th and 30th American Divisions (10 August-1 September 1918)

27th American Division

53rd Infantry Brigade
105th Infantry Regiment
106th Infantry Regiment
105th Machine-Gun Battalion

54th Infantry Brigade
107th Infantry Regiment
108th Infantry Regiment
106th Machine-Gun Battalion

Divisional Troops
104th Machine-Gun Battalion
102nd Engineer Regiment
102nd Field Signal Battalion
Headquarters Troop

Trains
102nd Train and Military Police
102nd Supply Train
102nd Engineer Train
102nd Sanitary Train (Ambulance Companies and Field Hospitals, 105-108)

30th American Division

59th Infantry Brigade
117th Infantry Regiment
118th Infantry Regiment
114th Machine-Gun Battalion

60th Infantry Brigade
119th Infantry Regiment
120th Infantry Regiment
115th Machine-Gun Battalion

Divisional Troops
113th Machine-Gun Battalion
105th Engineer Regiment
105th Field Signal Battalion
Headquarters Troop

Trains
105th Train Headquarters and Military Police
105th Supply Train
105th Engineer Train
105th Sanitary Train (Ambulance Companies and Field Hospitals 117-120)

Appendix III: Order of Battle-29 September 1918

Australian Corps

2nd Australian Division

5th Australian Infantry Brigade

17th Battalion

18th Battalion

19th Battalion

20th Battalion

6th Australian Infantry Brigade

21st Battalion

22nd Battalion

23rd Battalion

24th Battalion

7th Australian Infantry Brigade

25th Battalion

26th Battalion

27th Battalion

28th Battalion

3rd Australian Division

9th Australian Infantry Brigade

33rd Battalion

34th Battalion

35th Battalion

10th Australian Infantry Brigade

37th Battalion

38th Battalion

39th Battalion

40th Battalion

11th Australian Infantry Brigade

41st Battalion

42nd Battalion

43rd Battalion

44th Battalion

5th Australian Division

8th Australian Infantry Brigade

29th Battalion

30th Battalion

31st Battalion

32nd Battalion

14th Australian Infantry Brigade
53rd Battalion
54th Battalion
55th Battalion
56th Battalion
15th Australian Infantry Brigade
57th Battalion
58th Battalion
59th Battalion
60th Battalion
5th Cavalry Brigade

II American Corps

27th American Division
53rd Infantry Brigade
105th Infantry Regiment
1st Battalion
2nd Battalion
3rd Battalion
106th Infantry Regiment
1st Battalion
2nd Battalion
3rd Battalion
105th Machine Gun Battalion

54th Infantry Brigade
107th Infantry Regiment
1st Battalion
2nd Battalion
3rd Battalion
108th Infantry Regiment
1st Battalion
2nd Battalion
3rd Battalion
106th Machine Gun Battalion
Divisional Troops
104th Machine Gun Battalion
102nd Engineers
102nd Field Artillery Battalion
301st Tank Battalion

30th American Division

59th Infantry Brigade

117th Infantry Regiment

1st Battalion

2nd Battalion

3rd Battalion

118th Infantry Regiment

1st Battalion

2nd Battalion

3rd Battalion

114th Machine Gun Battalion

60th Infantry Brigade

119th Infantry Regiment

1st Battalion

2nd Battalion

3rd Battalion

120th Infantry Regiment

1st Battalion

2nd Battalion

3rd Battalion

115th Machine Gun Battalion

Divisional Troops

113th Machine Gun Battalion

105th Engineers

105th Field Signal Battalion

4th British Tank Brigade

Australian and British Auxiliary Units Attached to II Corps

3rd Anti-Aircraft Search Light Section

1st British Siege Company of Railway Engineers

182nd British Tunneling Company

4th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

5th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

7th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

8th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

10th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

12th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

13th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

14th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

6th Army Brigade, Australian Field Artillery Brigade

3rd Squadron Australian Air Force

2nd anti-aircraft batteries
5th Balloon Wing; 2
20th Regiment Hussars

See 'Fourth Army Order of Battle at Zero' for a more exhaustive listing of all units designated for the attack on 29 September 1918. Reproduced in War Department, *U.S. Army in the World War, Military Operations*, Volume 7. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 95.

**Appendix IV: German Army (Second and Eighteenth Armies)
Order of Battle, 29 September 1918
North to South**

8th Division

153rd Infantry Regiment

54th Division

84th Infantry Regiment

27th Reserve Infantry Regiment

90th Reserve Infantry Regiment

121st Division

7th Reserve Infantry Regiment

60th Infantry Regiment

185th Infantry Division

65th Infantry Regiment

161st Infantry Regiment

28th Reserve Infantry Regiment

75th Reserve Division

250th Reserve Infantry Regiment

249th Reserve Infantry Regiment

251st Reserve Infantry Regiment

Corps Units

65th Reserve Field Artillery Regiment

42nd Foot Artillery Regiment

Appendix V: Comparative Strength of American and British Divisions, 1918

American Army¹

Division: 28,105 officers and men. It would contain two brigades of infantry and one brigade of artillery. It also contained engineer, machine gun, signal, medical and transportation units and a headquarters.

Brigade: 8,324 combatants.

Regiment: 3,770 combatants.

Battalion: 1,027 officers and men.

British Army²

Division: 12,000 to 15,000 infantry and staff. It would contain a pioneer (labour) unit and three brigades.

Brigade: 3,000 to 5,000 infantry and staff

Battalion: 1,000 to 1,600 infantry and staff

¹ American Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938), 529-530.

² T.H.E. Travers, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992), 183.