

9th / Marine

References: Ninth Infantry, Toulon-Troyon Sector.

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Marines

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Ninth Infantry---Toulon-Troyon.

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for billets. In the assignment of stations to the 2nd Division, the 9th Infantry was directed to the subsector Rouvrois, the extreme souther part of the Toulon-Troyon line, where it came down to the Meuse. It was at this time held by the 326th Regiment of Infantry of the 52nd Division of Infantry. (French) (1)

On 16-17 March, the II/9 sent officers forward to reconnoiter the center of resistance Coralie. (1)

The night of 18-19 March, the II/9, with the Regimental Machine Gun Company, a section of Pioneers, a section of Trench Mortars, and a section of One Pounders entered the center of resistance Coralie, marching from Boquement to Wolmbey, crossing the Meuse to La Croix, and proceeding from that point, with guides, to the front, where they relieved a battalion of the 326th Regiment of Infantry. (1). The relief was accomplished without incident,

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and was completed by 4:45 am, 19 March. The I/9 and III/9

remained in billets, engaged in tactical exercises under

French direction. (2)

In front of the center of resistance Coralie, No Man's Land was about 2000 yards wide. It was partially open, partially overgrown broken ground, full of old entrenchments and obstacles. In it were two advanced posts, believed to be occupied by the Germans at night, Spada and Moulin de Relaincourt. (3)

The first contact with the enemy came on 23 March. (4)

It was planned to ambush the German patrol which was believed to operate through No Man's Land nightly, and on 23 March the II/9 ordered three patrols, each of 2 officers and 16 men, to lie along the Lamourville-Spada road, which angled here across No Man's Land, and molest any Germans who might appear. Patrol # 1 was to go out from 8 to 11 pm. It left the point

being followed. It was halted, and Lieut. Taylor and
Tumulus in the center of resistance Coralie, moved east to
point circled back, but saw nothing. The distance from
the road, which its route intersected at a point about 400
it was again reported that one man or two men followed. About
metres north of the Relaincourt mill, and had a brief con-
tact with the Germans, firing some rifle grenades at half-
seen targets. (4) Patrol # 2 emerged from Tumulus and moved
by a different route, more to the right, to the same vicinity.
Out from 11 pm. to 2 am, it had no adventures, and returned. (4)

Patrol # 3, 1st Lieutenant Moses J. Taylor commanding,
left Tumulus at 2:00 am, and proceeded eastward towards the
designated point on the Lamourville-Spada road. It was a
clear night, and the moon, now going down the sky in the west,
shone directly behind the patrol, which was deployed in two
squad columns, with Lieut. Taylor and a sergeant ahead of
the center of the formation. A few hundred metres out, the
men in the rear passed the word forward that the patrol was

being followed. It was halted, and Lieut. Taylor and his sergeant circled back, but saw nobody. Some distance forward, it was again reported that one man or two men followed. Again the patrol halted, and a search was made without result. These halts consumed much time. Coming to the Lamourville-Spada road, about 400 metres north of Moulin Relaincourt, Lieut. Taylor placed his men in ambush along the west side of the road, and he himself, with his sergeant, proceeded east of the road to reconnoiter. About 40 or 50 yards beyond this point, the two came upon some Germans in an old trench or shell hole, one of whom shot Lieut. Taylor. The Sergeant returned the fire with his pistol, and retired across the road to the main body of the patrol. Germans, some 30 or 40 of them, opened fire with rifles east of the road, and a machine gun came into action from the Moulin Relaincourt. The Patrol, under command of its remaining officer, fell back

about 500 metres. Finding that it was not followed, it reformed and returned to point Tumulus in the battalion line, not having been able to recover the body of Lieut. Taylor. (4 & 5)

Lieutenant Taylor was the first officer of the 2nd Division to die in action. It was considered by the battalion commander that the remaining officer in the patrol, being confronted by a superior force, acted correctly in retiring. (5)

On 28-29 March the II/9 was relieved in CR Coralie by the I/9, Maj. H. G. Bartlett, USMC, with "D" Company of the 5th Machine Gun Battalion, and special troops of Headquarters Company. II/9 withdrew to billets in Camp Gibraltar and in Waimbey. (1 & 2).

About this time French troops began to be taken from the sector for employment in the great battles in the north, and the arrangements of the 2nd Division were extended. (16)

On 3-4 April, III/9, Lt. Col. Bearas, USMC, with "C" company

also the Regimental Machine Gun Company and Headquarters Company, and Regimental Headquarters. Battalion Headquarters was in Maizey. (6). It will be noted that all reserves were behind the Canal de l'Est, which was behind and parallel to the center of resistance Marie Louise, and was crossed by two bridges. In front of the center of resistance Marie Louise, the German trenches were from 200 to 800 metres distant. The country was open, the German having the higher ground. (15)

These regimental dispositions were later modified. (1)

On 5 April, 3 platoons of Company "D", then in Rouvrois as reserve for I/9 in the center of resistance Coralie, were moved to La Croix. (1)

On 7 April Regimental Headquarters moved from Rouvrois to La Croix. (1) The same date, 3 platoons of Company "M", reserve company of III/9 in the center of resistance Marie

Louise, were moved north to La Gauffiere, above La Croix, and placed under the orders of I/9. (1). Thus the reserve of III/9 was reduced to "K" Company, distributed between Rouvrois and Bannancourt. The movement of "M" Company from the vicinity of quarry St. Nicolas probably saved many casualties which would have occurred in the course of the bombardment of 13 April, for their original positions were crowded.

This sector Rouvrois was a very sensitive one, because of the conformation of the ground. The canal and the river were close behind it, depriving it of depth. (15) The low ridge on which the Marie Louise trenches were cited was everywhere overlooked by the enemy. The supporting guns were so far back, in the Forêt de Mancaulieu, across the Meuse, that only by firing at extreme elevation could they reach the enemy front line. (15). The French in this place were always nervous

about the possibility of being pinched off. (16)

During this day, the 13th, there was steady shelling.
The relief was without incident, but immediately following,
most of it on Malzey and the rear area. At about 10:45 pm,
the activity of the German guns increased. (6). The gunfire mounted
the German fire greatly increased, amounting to fire of
at first to no great volume, but it was steady and swept the whole
battalion area. (9). It flailed the entire battalion area,
On 10 April the artillery effect intensified, and
covering the petit postes and the front line, and estimated
350 shells were estimated along the line of petit postes in front
through the parallels in the rear and the communication
of the CR Marie Louise. The same number fell the next day, mostly
trenches. (6 - 8). A few minutes later a box barrage was
on the boyaux leading up to the line. On 12 April 930 shells, some of
laid around Yvonne and Odette positions, reaching back of
heavy calibre were thrown into the town of Malzey and on the front
all covered by which supports might approach. This continued
trenches of the center of resistance (8). On the next day the
until about 18:30 pm. (6-8-10)
Commanding Officer of the French Artillery in the sector sent a
warning, warned by the intensity of the shelling, and
warning that a storm battalion would attack, that night, or very
soon, the Americans in the Bois Bouchat. This was in the center
of resistance Bizerte, now held by the III/23, Major Elliot; and
at about 22:00, for a barrage by rocket signals. The notified
the Commanding Officer of the 23rd Infantry warned all his bat-
talion commanders to sleep on their arms. (9)

During this day, the 13th, there was steady shelling, most of it on Maizey and the rear areas. At about 10:45 pm. the German fire greatly increased, amounting to fire of destruction. (8) . It flailed the entire battalion area, covering the petit postes and the front line, and extending through the parallels in the rear and the communication trenches. (6 & 8). A few minutes later a box barrage was laid around Yvonne and Odette positions, reaching back along all boyuax by which supports might approach. This continued until about 12:30 am. (6-8-10)

Meantime, warned by the intensity of the shelling, and discovering that all wire communications had been broken by gunfire, the company commanders in Yvonne and Odette called, at about 11:30, for a barrage by rocket signals. The assigned artillery, at about 12:00, laid down normal interference fire in No Man's Land, and kept this up all night, definite points

of passage by the enemy not being known. The American guns had, earlier in the evening, shelled the enemy's front in the trench Adrianople from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. (6 & 8)

At 12:30 the German barrage lifted and settled on the communications to the rear, centering around the canal crossings. The garrisons of Yvonne and Odette emerged from the dugouts in which they had taken shelter from the shells to find their trenches full of Germans. (6) The enemy raiding party, close behind its barrage, had effected entry in about four places. Pioneer detachments breaching the wire which had already been damaged by gunfire. (11) They entered at a point about the junction of the Yvonne and Odette systems, and selected favorable points to left and right, along the Boyau D'Agen and the little stream Crause. (11) One party passed through towards the Boyau St. Nicolas and the Moulin Haut, by which supports would come, and went into a wave for-

mation. Two other parties also took up position, and the

infantry of companies "L and I" were attacked from front and

rear in the dark. (6-11) The Germans in the trenches called

out that they were French, come in to assist; and some of them

called "Gas", and many infantry men put on their masks. But

all of them resisted furiously. There followed about two hours

of close and savage fighting, with grenades and hand weapons.

Each man did what he could in the dark. The company cooks,

in their shelters a little way to the rear, left their kitchens

and hurried up to help. (11-12). The battalion commander, re-

ceiving a message that the enemy had penetrated his position,

sent from Maizey the Battalion Scout Officer and his scouts,

whose Out Post had been destroyed by shell fire, as reinforce-

ments to I and L. He also requested the despatch of the reserve

platoons from Bannonecourt and Rouvrois, and ordered reserve

machine guns to Moulin Haut to cover the approach along Bayau

them from working through it. By day light the affair was over.

St. Nicolas. (6)

Eleven prisoners, three of them wounded, were in American hands.

A scratch detail of cooks and orderlies from Battalion

The bodies of 55 Germans, one of them an officer, lay in the Headquarters were also sent forward. (6) But for the most trenches of Odette and Yvonne and on the ground before them.

part "I" and "L", with "C" company of the 5th Machine Gun Trails of blood indicated that wounded had been carried back.

Battalion, defended themselves alone. (11) Presently there Many packs and rifles and some pioneer material was left behind.

came a message from Marie Louise that the Germans were be- The Americans lost five enlisted men killed, and two died from

ing expelled (6). At about 2:30 they drew off through the of woods; three officers and thirty-six enlisted men were

wire (11). "I and L", thoroughly aroused, followed them wounded, and one officer and twenty-five enlisted men were cap-

into No Man's Land, where the American barrage was holding cured, which included 1 officer and 3 men from the medical de-

them among the shell holes. A number of the raiders were tachment: a total of 72 killed, wounded, and missing. Against

killed here, and a few captured, and at this time they

it was the known German loss of 59 killed and 11 captured, and

dropped two machine guns which they were carrying away,

the probability of numerous wounded. If the object of ^{The American} and which the Americans recovered. (11). Some of their

was to take prisoners, it was a successful but expensive. (6-11)

prisoners, also, at this time, overpowered their guards

Interrogation of the prisoners developed that the ^{own} and returned to their lines. But the barrage, lacking

made by the Cassatrapp and a selected detail of three

definite objectives, had not sufficient density to keep

them from working through it. By day light the affair was over. Eleven prisoners, three of them unwounded, were in American hands. The bodies of 59 Germans, one of them an officer, lay in the trenches of Odette and Yvonne and on the ground before them. Trails of blood indicated that wounded had been carried back. Many packs and rifles and some pioneer material was left behind. The Americans lost five enlisted men killed, and two died later of wounds; three officers and thirty-six enlisted men were wounded, and one officer and twenty-five enlisted men were captured, which included 1 officer and 6 men from the medical detachment; a total of 72 killed, wounded, and missing. Against it was the known German loss of 59 killed and 11 captured, and the probability of numerous wounded. If the object of the raid was to take prisoners, it was successful but expensive. (6-11)

Interrogation of the prisoners developed that the raid was made by the Stosstrupp and a selected detail of three

provisional companies and a pioneer detachment of the 272nd

Reserve Regiment, 82nd Reserve Division. They were led by

Captain Kleine, the Regimental Raid Commander (Jagdkommandeur)

They were rehearsed in the raid on a prepared terrain in the rear, and were brought up to the front the evening of 13 April.

The entire personnel engaged in the raiding party was between 350 and 425 men, including 10 officers (13)

Sidelight upon the conduct of the men of the Third Brigade, in this and other actions in Toulon-Troyon sector,

is contained in the following indorsement placed by the

Commanding General, 3rd Brigade, upon the report of Colonel

Upton to the Division Commander:

"This action is an excellent example of what determined

men can do to win success even when almost everything is

to the advantage of the enemy. Attention is invited to the

list of names of men given who rendered conspicuous service.

It will be noted that many are of foreign origin.

In this brigade, there are not less than 25% of this class. In the training area, organization commanders almost gave up hope of even making soldiers of them, not through any lack of willingness on the part of the men themselves but on account of their lack of knowledge of English. Since arriving in this area, this class of men have in every engagement with the enemy, fully demonstrated that they have a fierce fighting ability, and that they will stick to their work to the bitter end. The first man killed in this brigade was a man who had such a deficient knowledge of English that orders were issued transferring him from the organization. He was killed staying at his post even after his comrades had endeavored to get him to fall back to the support line. The French awarded him the Croix de Guerre. Few if any of

this class will be transferred from this organization on account of deficient knowledge of English. It may be well for organizations with a similar personnel to be advised of this important fact. It is evident that, with patience and painstaking effort in the training of this class, we can develop fighters who will measure up to our best American traditions".

The moral effect of this action, on the 9th Infantry and on the other regiments of the 2nd Division was of the first importance. All ranks felt that they had met the enemy on his own terms, and that, man for man, they were better men than he was. (16).

On the night of 12-13 April, II/9 relieved I/9 in the center of resistance Coralie. The relief being completed at 1:30 am. I/9 with "D" company of the 5th Machine Gun Battalion retired to Camp Gibraltar and to

Woimbey. (1)

On the night of 21-22 April, the center of resistance Marie Louise was relieved by I/9, III/9 withdrawing to billets. Some changes were made in dispositions, following the raid of 13 April. Company "B" took over Yvonne, Company "D" Odette, Company "A" was placed in support, Maizey-Rouvrais, and Company "C", battalion reserve, was stationed at Dompcevrin, directly behind Maizey. The relief was completed at 2:35 am, 22 April. (1)

On 1-2 May, III/9 relieved II/9 in the center of resistance Coralie, II/9 withdrawing to Camp Gibraltar. On 4 May, ordered to a new subsector in the north, it left Camp Gibraltar and camped in Monthairons, from which place it marched northward, taking over, on 5-6 May, the subsector Mont-sous-les-Cote. It remained here until the night of

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11-12 May. (1)

III/9 was relieved by French troops on 9 May, and marched to Genicourt, where individuals who distinguished themselves during the raid on center of resistance Marie-Louise were decorated with the Croix de Guerre. It then embussed and was taken to the Fains rest area, near Bar-le-Duc. (12)

I/9, relieved in the center of resistance Coralie, marched overland to the Fains area. About the same time II/9 was withdrawn, entrained at Ancemont, and joined the regiment in the new area. A training schedule was inaugurated and followed until 20 May. (1-12).

Changes in battalion command occurred during this period: Major A. C. ^{Arnold}/assumed command of the III/9, Major Charles E. Livingston the I/9, and Major H. E. Bouton, the II/9. (12).

