

MAJOR GENERAL LEWIS' STORY.

(Continued from page 3, column 1.)

at the time the 5th Australian division passed through this division, the 117th infantry on the right was approximately on their objective facing southeast and in touch with the 46th division on their right; the 120th was in Naurey, elements having gone beyond there and reached their objective, but having been forced to return on account of being out of touch with units on their flanks; the regiment, in general, occupied the Le Catelet-Naurey line. The 119th infantry had its right in the Le Catelet-Naurey line, but had been forced to bend its line back to the tunnel on account of fire from the sector on the left.

When the 5th Australian division passed through the line held by this division, they were joined and assisted by various groups from the different regiments. These groups remained with the Australian division and were withdrawn during the night of September 29-30. After occupancy of the Green line by the 5th Australian division, the troops of this division were withdrawn slightly to the rear, where they remained in support until withdrawn on the night of October 1-2.

Action of Artillery.

For this operation there was assigned to the division twelve field artillery brigades, five heavy artillery brigades and three siege batteries.

The mission allotted to the artillery prior to the zero hour was as follows:

(a) Special gas bombardment—from 10 p. m. on "W" day to 6 a. m. on "X" day.

(b) Vigorous counter battery and harassing fire.

(c) Cutting lanes in hostile wire defenses.

(d) Bombardment of selected strong points and locality.

At 6 a. m. on "X" day the artillery began mission (b), (c) and (d) and continued until "Z" minus one hour on 2nd day.

The amount of artillery assigned for this operation enabled a very full and effective barrage to be laid down at zero hour. As this barrage consisted of 18-pounder, 4.2 and the heavy artillery barrages, it was most effective in keeping down the enemy's fire, thus facilitating the progress of the infantry. In addition to the barrage a smoke screen was laid down on the right flank by a special field artillery brigade detailed for that purpose.

The broad belts of heavy German wire were not cut to any considerable degree in the right sub-sector; in the left sub-sector the lanes were cut more effectively and the passage of the 119th infantry through the wire was greatly facilitated through the preliminary work of the artillery. Commendable enterprise was also displayed in the prompt use of enemy guns which had been captured by the infantry.

In general, the support rendered by the artillery was most effective and contributed in a large measure to the success of the operation. Supporting batteries were moved forward with great daring and skill. Close and effective liaison between artillery and infantry was maintained at all times.

Tanks.

Thirty-four tanks from the Fourth British tank brigade were assigned to the division for this operation. They were allotted to regiments as follows: Twelve to the 117th infantry, 12 to the 119th, and 10 to the 120th. All were of the mark "V" type. These tanks were further sub-divided among battalions in order that a sufficient number might be available for the battalions detailed for mopping up the tunnel and the Hindenburg line.

In order that close liaison might be maintained between infantry and tanks, each battalion detailed one enlisted man per tank whose sole duty it was to ride in the tank and watch for signals from the infantry. One officer was detailed from each battalion also to assist in conducting the tanks to the starting points.

The tanks detailed to the 117th and 120th infantry arrived at their jumping off line approximately on time; those detailed to the front line battalions, 119th infantry, however, did not arrive in time but came up about the time the infantry was crossing the tunnel.

The heavy fog and smoke made it extremely difficult for the tanks to maintain their direction. As one tank commander expressed it: "It was impossible to see one end of the tank from the other." Under such circumstances liaison between infantry and the tanks was practically impossible. Groups of infantry would come across an isolated tank in the fog and with its assistance would clean out some troublesome machine gun nest. Such incidents were common and showed excellent initiative on the part of both infantry and tanks. The tanks were of very great assistance to the infantry in crossing the wire; in fact, there is no question but that the in-

fantry, in many cases, would have been greatly delayed in getting through with increased casualties, had it not been for the tanks. Many machine gun nests were also destroyed by the tanks; while their devotion to their duty was clearly evidenced by their numerous casualties.

Liaison.

(a) Agents. The prescribed agents were employed but as a general rule were of no great value. Unless the liaison agent has a copy of the operation order of his unit and understands it fully; and unless he has some independent means of transportation either for himself or messengers, his field of usefulness will be quite limited. At each headquarters also a separate phone in a separate room, if possible, should be provided for liaison agents so as not to tax the operations phone. Liaison agents should not be allowed to congregate in the room devoted to operations.

(b) Means. The telephone when working was the most satisfactory means of communication. During the operation telephones were established as far down as regiments, and in some instances to battalions. Great difficulty was experienced in keeping lines open as the wires were frequently broken by tanks as well as by shell fire.

Wireless worked very well but was very slow to some degree, at least to the time necessary for encoding and decoding. Wireless messages must be short and concise.

Only a very small number of motorcycles and bicycles were available thus necessitating a wasteful use of runners.

No mounted messengers were available although they could have been used to good advantage down as far as regiments at least.

Runners, as usual, were used extensively. Relay posts were established between brigades and regiments, and between regiments and battalions. Within the battalions, even this means of communication failed at times due to runners getting lost in the fog.

Visual signalling was not practicable on account of the heavy fog.

Ammunition. Each soldier carried 220 rounds of rifle ammunition and two Mills No. 23 grenades. In addition, each regiment carried distributed among its personnel 600 No. 27 smoke bombs and 2,560 red ground flares. This amount proved ample for the operation. Smoke bombs were found to be very useful in clearing out dugouts. Ammunition for the division machine gun units was supplied direct from the division dump to machine gun units. For the 96 guns employed in barrage work, 1,248,000 rounds of ammunition was supplied, all of which was fired with the exception of 156,000 rounds.

Rations. Each soldier carried on his person one special assault ration in addition to the iron ration. Through the medium of the well organized and co-ordinated system of supply, hot food in hot food containers was served to troops on the firing line on the evening of the battle. These rations contained fresh meat, which is a most difficult component to handle on the battlefield. The work of the supply department in this regard is all the more meritorious when it is considered that it was necessary to transport these supplies entirely by horse transport through rain, mud and fog over a single road which was also used by ammunition columns, ambulances, troops and all forms of transportation to and from the battle line; and subject as well to constant shelling.

Examination of Wounded.

Medical. It is believed the evacuation of the wounded during this operation was as nearly perfect as possible under the existing circumstances. Coincident with the advance of the troops, aid stations and ambulance posts were rushed forward. At approximately one hour after zero the first cases began to appear at the advanced dressing station, having been brought by ambulances from the aid posts. A half an hour later cases began to appear at the walking wounded station. Evacuation was quick and continuous to the aid station and from the aid station to the dressing station, notwithstanding the congestion of roads throughout the period. By utilizing the services of prisoners to bring back wounded on stretchers and by the addition of 200 infantry stretcher bearers the battlefield had been cleared of the wounded by nightfall. When it is considered that there were evacuated during this day 2,575 cases, the accomplishment of the medical service can best be appreciated.

While at the advanced and main dressing station, 5,000 meals, consisting of hot soup, chocolate, coffee and bread, were served to patients and troops.

The fact that evacuation was accomplished with little accumulation of patients and the field was cleared by evening was due to the untiring efforts of both the commissioned and enlisted personnel of the medical de-

(Continued on page 7, column 1.)

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