

General Headquarters of Armies of the East
Staff
3rd Bureau
3732
4 September 1914, 1600
Annexe No. 2330

General Instruction No. 5

I

The arrival of reinforcements from the 1st and 2nd armies, combined with the need to bring more flexibility to the command of the armies, has led to the following modifications in the order of battle:

The 3rd Army will comprise: the 5th, 6th, 15th and 21st corps
 the 65th, 67th and 75th infantry divisions
 the 7th cavalry division.

The 15th corps, which is marching, has received the order to stand by Gondrecourt, Houdelaincourt, Dammarie-sur-Saulx.¹

It will be attached to the 3rd army after 6 September.

The 21st corps will have its combat units transported by rail in the region of Joinville, Vassy on the 5th-6th September and the morning of 7 September.²

After disembarking, the 21st corps should go overland to the region of Montierender, Longeville.³

The 4th army will comprise the 2nd, 12th, 17th corps and the Colonial corps.⁴

¹Transferred from the 2nd army. Gondrecourt-le-Château, Houdelaincourt, Dammarie-sur-Saulx, about twenty miles to the southeast of Bar-le-Duc.

²Transferred from the 1st army. Joinville, Wassy, about twenty-three miles to the south of Bar-le-Duc.

³Montier-en-Der, Longeville-sur-la-Laines, about twenty-two miles to the south-southwest of bar-le-Duc.

⁴The 4th army lost a substantial number of its original units to the newly-formed 9th army.

The detachment of the army of General Foch⁵ will form, on 5 September, an autonomous army (9th army) comprising:⁶

- the 9th and 11th corps
- the 42nd division and the Moroccan division
- the 52nd and 60th reserve division
- the 9th cavalry division

The parts of the 9th corps which were not able to rejoin their army corps disembarking in the region of Troyes on the evening of 4-5 September evening; they will receive at their disembarkation the orders of the general commanding the 9th army.

The 5th Army retains its actual composition; a corps of cavalry comprising the 4th, 8th and 10th cavalry divisions is attached to it.⁷

II

In view of increasing the density of forces that can operate on favorable ground, the 4th army will be likely called on to operate all by itself in the regions to the west of the line Vitry-le-François, Brienne.⁸

The lines of separation between this army and its neighboring ones are the following: between the 9th and the 4th army: Chalons, Sommesous, Arcis (to the 9th army)⁹

between the 4th and the 3rd army: Nettancourt, Vroil, Heiltz-le-Maurupt, Buisson-sur-Saulx, Thieblemont-Faremont, Neuville-sous-Arzillieres, Brandonvillers, Margerie-Hancourt (to the 4th army).¹⁰

⁵Marshal Ferdinand Jean Marie Foch (1851-1929) commanded the 20th corps at the start of the war and then was promoted to commander of the 9th army during the battles of the Marne. In 1918 he became commander-in-chief of the allied armies in France.

⁶The 42nd division came from the 3rd army; the 9th and 11th corps and the remaining divisions came from the 4th army.

⁷The 4th cavalry division came from the 4th army; the 8th cavalry division came from the 1st army; the 10th cavalry division came from the 2nd army.

⁸Vitry-le-François is about twenty-six miles west-southwest of Bar-le-Duc, and Brienne-le-Château is about twenty-two miles south of Vitry-le-François.

⁹Châlons-en-Champagne is about the twenty-four miles southeast of Reims. The current A26 highway runs south from Reims through these communes.

¹⁰Nettancourt is about twelve miles to the northwest of Bar-le-Duc. These communes form a diagonal line of about thirty miles running to the southwest from

All the artillery and supply elements of the 4th army that are located to the east of this route will only gradually rejoin their army after an understanding with the 3rd army.

III

The area of withdrawal to be reached eventually, indicated by general order No. 4 and by note 3463 of 2 September, will be modified as concerns the 4th army.

This army was operating farthest from the line Mesnil-la-Comtesse, Jasseines, Pars-les-Chavanges.¹¹

The 3rd army, whose mission is to operate on the right of the principle group of our armies, will fold back slowly, while remaining, if possible, on the flank of the enemy and in a formation that permits it at any instant to re-pass easily to the offensive in a northeast direction.

J. Joffre¹²

for official copy
Major-general Belin¹³

Nettancourt.

¹¹Mesnil-la-Comtess is south of L'Aube River and about fifty miles southwest of Bar-le-Duc. These three communes create a horizontal east-west line.

¹²Marshall Joseph Jacques Césaire Joffre (1852-1931), formerly chief of staff of the French army, was named commander-in-chief of the French armies in France at the start of the war, a position he held until December 1916.

¹³General Émile Eugène Belin (1853-1937) was the deputy chief-of-staff of the French General Staff at the start of the war.