MORANDUM FOR: The Director, 2nd Year Class, Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

SUBJECT: Operations of the French Cavalry at USKUB, Macedonia, 29-30 September, 1918.

I. PAPERS ACCOMPANYING

1. A bibliography for this study.

2. Four maps.

II. THE STUDY PRESENTED.-- The use of Cavalry in a pursuit, to block the retreat of a hostile army.

III. HISTORICAL FACTS RELATING TO THE STUDY.

1. General situation on the Macedonian Front at the beginning of September 1918 (see map No. 1).

The French Army of the Orient occupied the regions of LAKE OKHRIDA, LAKE PRESPA, MONASTIR, and the bend of the CERNA RIVER. On its left, west of LAKE OKHRIDA, were the Italian Forces and on its right (east) were the First and Second Serbian Armies, and then the British contingent extending still farther to the east, as far as LAKE DOIRAN. (1)
On the side of the Central Powers, the Eleventh German Army (125 battalions, of which 123 were Bulgarian, 1 was Austrian and 1 German) held the front from west of LAKE OKHRIDA to the west of the VARDAR RIVER. This front was prolonged to the east by two Bulgarian Armies. General Von SCHOLTZ, commanding the armies of the Central Powers on the MACEDONIAN front, had his headquarters at USKUB.(2).

2. General Plan of Allied High Command.
The intention of the Allied High Command was to rupture the front by a powerful attack against its center in the region of DOBROPOLJE. To the east and west, secondary attacks were to be made. After piercing the center at DOBROPOLJE the advance was to be made in the direction of GRADSKO, a point essential for the communications and supplies of the enemy; upon the rupture of the front the success would be exploited, and the cutting of the lines of retreat of the Eleventh German Army and the First Bulgarian Army would be sought.

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(1) (1-433. 2- 127. 3-90)
(2) (1-433,434. 2-127. 3-90)

As soon as the break through at DOBROPOLJE was made, another zone of action, that of MONASTIR, would also permit the development of the success. By taking the heights north of MONASTIR, liberty of action toward PRILEP would be assured and a passage for the Cavalry would be opened.(3).

3. Situation of the French Cavalry before the Offensive.
The French Cavalry of the French Army of the Orient, commanded by General JOUINOT-GAMBETTA, consisted of:

The 1st. Chasseurs d'Afrique (4 squadrons and 2 sections of machine guns);
The 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique (3 squadrons and 2 sections of machine guns);
The composite regiment of Moroccan Spahis (5 squadrons and and a machine gun company);
Two auto machine gun sections;
One section of two 37 mm. guns per regiment;
One ammunition section, on pack animals.
One radio section was furnished to General JOUINOT-GAMBETA but he was given no aviation and no field artillery and especially no mountain artillery.
Only one of the auto-machine gun sections was armored, the other being improvised with trucks(4).
During the first days of September, organization of the French cavalry group was completed and movements began on the 12rh.
The two regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique moved toward FLORINA to join the Moroccan Spahis, concealing their movement, as far as possible, from hostile aviation. All the cavalry was concentrated to the north east of FLORINA, near the MONASTIR road.(5).

4. The Cavalry Approach March.
At 5:00 A.M., 15 September, the battle of DOBROPOLJE began. On the 21st the cavalry was directed to approach the lines. On the afternoon of the 22nd, the Cavalry reached the area east of MONASTIR immediately behind the old front.(6).

5. Passage of the Old Front. Contact.
At 5:00 P.M. on the 22nd, French Infantry was north of MOGILA; the Italians had reached KANTALARCI; the enemy was in retreat; and by nightfall General JOUINOT-GAMBETTA gave his orders for the advance on PRILEP. The march began at daybreak, 23 September. Reconnaissance detachments gained contact with the enemy and engaged him; to the north west of MOGILA the enemy, attacked by a dismounted squadron of Spahis, resisted; to the east of MOGILA, on the contrary, the enemy withdrew;

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(3) (1-434,435. 2-128,129. 3-91. 4-214)
(4) (1-435,436. 2-129.4-215. 5-1)
(5) (1-436.2-130)
(6) (1-436,437. 2-130,131. 4-225.5-142)

(2) Source of info should have been noted.

(2) Obtained from source No 2, HISTORY S.D.

at TOPALKANI, a squadron of the 1st Chasseurs d'Afrique put the enemy to flight and captured some prisoners.(7)

6. A Change of Orders to the Cavalry.
About this time the Commander-in-Chief joined the French Cavalry and indicated his intentions and orders as follows: It was originally intended for the French Army of the Orient to break through on its left but the Eleventh German Army was still holding its position to the north and west of MONASTIR while to the east, the front of the Bulgarian Army was broken. Account was taken of this situation, different from that originally expected, and the maneuver was changed. The objective, now, for the cavalry was to be USKUB, which commanded the defile of KALKANDELEN, the only line of retreat for the Eleventh German Army. The cavalry was to move over the plain to PRILEP without loss of time and then to march on USKUB from there. The German-Bulgarian front gave way, but the battle continued with the Eleventh German Army in front of MONASTIR and toward the lakes. It was thought that the quick capture of USKUB would give decisive results(8). The French Cavalry was to disorganize hostile retreating columns, to destroy all enemy material which it could not capture, to cut telephone lines and routes towards USKUB, and above all to capture that city. The Cavalry, when it had exhausted its rations and forage, was to live on local resources; it was to move rapidly and its supply was not to delay its advance. The General commanding the French Army of the Orient was to send forward rations and forage daily by light trucks to the points designated by the Cavalry commander by wireless the preceding evening.(9).

7. The Cavalry then marched, by way of the TOPOLKANI-PRILEP road, on PRILEP, the terrain to the east of the road being covered by one regiment. The advanced elements of the Cavalry reached PRILEP at 12:30 P.M., 23rd September and by evening all the Cavalry was in the city or in its vicinity, with platoons with auto-machine guns sent out to reconnoiter towards BROD and VELES. (10).

8. The USKUB Maneuver.
Orders from the commanding general of the French Army of the Orient received on the afternoon of 23rd September gave the Cavalry the mission of pursuit towards USKUB across the mountainous region north of the PRILEP-BROD road. It was to capture USKUB, cut the KALKANDELEN route and then reconnoiter

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(7) (1-437,438. 2-131)
(8) (1-438,439. 2-131,132. 4-236. 5-4)
(9) (2-132. 5-4)
(10) (1-439. 2-132,133.4-239: 5-4)

In the direction taken by the Eleventh German Army in its retreat.
At 6:20 A.M., 24th September, the three Cavalry Regiments were assembled at PRILEP. No wheel transportation-only pack-was to be taken. The column, with the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique as advance guard, was to march on USKUB via VARGS and DOLGACE. Upon the advance guard moving out at 6:00 A.M., it encountered artillery and heavy machine gun fire. The Moroccan Spahis, with armored cars, already preceding them, reconnoitered the route PRILEP-STEPANCI-ORAHOVDOL in order to turn the hostile resistance by the east. With the enemy holding the BROD-PRILEP road and the DOLGACE-PRILEP road very strongly and with very little resistance encountered on the PRILEP-STEPANCI-ORAHOVDOL road, General JOUINOT-BAMBETTA at 2:00 P.M, decided to move on USKUB via the PRILEP-VELES road and then to follow the east or west bank of the VARDAR RIVER, depending on the resistance that would be met along the river.(11).
About this time it was learned that a mixed detachment, under orders of General Tranie, had been created and assigned the mission of marching rapidly on VELES, then on USKUB, to support the French Cavalry.
At 5:00 P.M., 24th September, the main body of the Cavalry, preceded by the Moroccan Spahis as advance guard, began its march on STEPANCI. At 2:00 A.M., 25th September, the Cavalry main body, having marched 30 kilometers, was south of STEPANCI, where it gained contact with the Serbian Army on its right. at 8:00 A.M. on the 25th, the march was resumed and at 10:00 A.M. the advance guard reached the BABUNA RIVER, the main body being at IZVOR. The main body moved, in the late afternoon, to HASKJEJIKOJ.
The First Serbian Army was to take the VELES bridges at dawn, 26th September, and the Cavalry was to take advantage of the opening of the passage. During the morning of the 26th, the combat continued south of VELES, the Moroccan Spahis operating in liaison with the Serbian Army. RASTANI, GRAND ORIZARI, and PETIT ORIZARI were held by the Bulgarians. The fighting was stubborn and seemed likely to be prolonged. If the Cavalry awaited the outcome of the battle about VELES, it would risk the accomplishment of its mission, which was to quickly reach USKUB and block the retreat of the Eleventh German Army. It was known that this army had given ground north and west of MONASTIR.(12).
Since the VARDAR route was closed, another had to be found. Information in the hands of the staff, indicated that the DRENOVO-PALIGRAD-DRACEVO route was possible for wheeled transportation, however Serbian officers and inhabitants

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(11) (1-440,441. 2-133 to 135. 5-5)
(12) (1-441 to 443. 2- 135 to 137. 4-240)

of the country, and stated that there were only foot trails in the GOLESNICA-PLANINA, no roads, few villages, no supplies. General JOUINOT-GAMBETTA decided to march at once on USKUB via DRENOVO and across the GOLESNICA PLANINA. Two days rations were distributed to the troops; the auto-machine guns were ordered to remain at IZVOR, where an intelligence section was established. (13). Orders were issued for the 1st Chasseurs to constitute the advance guard, to be followed by the 4th Chasseurs; the Moroccan Spahis to break off their engagement before VELES, take their place at the rear of the main body, cover the rear, seeking liaison with the Tranie detachment, which was thought to be near. (14).

At noon, 26th September, the main body of the Cavalry reached GOLOZNICA. From the outset the march was a difficult one, the road soon became a rocky trail scarcely traceable and cut up by divergent trails which the point of the advance guard had trouble in distinguishing, and finally becoming only a mountain pass where the men marched dismounted among the rocks and along the precipices. After a halt at GOLOZNICA march was resumed at 4:30 P.M. Another halt of a few hours was made upon reaching DRENOVO at 8:00 P.M. and awaiting the moonlight, in order to continue. The ascent of the mountain slopes, the passing over the crest of the descent was made during the night over a most difficult trail. The advance guard reached ALDINCE at the foot of the PALIGRAD range at daybreak, 27th September, where a halt was made to await the arrival of the Moroccan Spahis and to rest the Chasseurs d'Afrique. Food and other supplies were obtained here. It was known that the enemy had evacuated VELES. It was also known that the Eleventh German Army was directing its retreat on USKUB. (15).

The Chasseurs d'Afrique resumed their march at 10:00 P.M., 27th September, over very rugged terrain, and at 8:00 A.M. 28th September, arrived at CERNAVODA where they were joined two hours later by the Moroccan Spahis, who had made a great effort to join the command. (16).

The Spahis had withdrawn from combat about VELES about 5:00 P.M., 26th September and had marched all night through the mountains without halting, passing through BANJICA and reaching DRENOVO at 4:00 A.M., 27th September, where a short rest was taken. The march was then resumed and shortly after passing through JABOLCISTA, the column was engaged with the enemy in a defile, driving him out after losing several killed and wounded. The regiment went into bivouac at ALDINCE which it reached about 8:00 P.M. At 4:00 A.M.

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(13) (1-443. 2-138. 5-5)
(14) (2-138)
(15) (1-444. 2- 139. 5-5)
(16) (1-445. 2- 139,140)

28th September, the Spahis resumed the march and at about 10:00 A.M. reached CERNAVODA where they joined the Chasseurs. (17).
At 4:00 P.M., the Cavalry moved out again, the Spahis having had a short rest, and at 10:30 P.M., 28th September the main body reached PABARUSA with the advance guard at DRACEVO. The Cavalry was now out of the mountains and passed the night in a field, horses bridled and no fires allowed. A feeble glow in the distance located USKUB, 16 kilometers away. (18).

9. The Capture of USKUB.
The plan of General JOUINOT-GAMBETTA for taking USKUB was briefly as follows:
The Moroccan Spahis, including machine gun company, and platoon of 37 mm. guns, operating on the west bank of the VARDAR RIVER, to secure the heights of VODNA which commanded the city of USKUB, and the KALKANDELEN-USKUB road; the brigade of Chasseurs d'Afrique to support the Spahis by a diversion on USKUB or, profiting by the capture of the heights by the Spahis, to rush into USKUB creating disorder and carrying out demolitions. (19).
A squadron of the 1st Chasseurs was to reconnoiter the passages of the VARDAR RIVER, between DOJCA and KAPLAN, across the VARDAR, reconnoiter the entrance to USKUB, along the KUMANOVA-USKUB road, and to gain liaison with the left of the First Serbian Army and with the TRANIE detachment, which had left PRILEP for USKUB via VELES, 25th September.
A platoon of the 4th Chasseurs was to reconnoiter the passages of the VARDAR RIVER through DOJCA to URUMLI and the eastern entrance into USKUB along the VELES-USKUB road. The Cavalry command post was to be located at DRACEVO. (20).
At 9:00 P.M., on the 28th, three reconnaissance patrols of a platoon each of the Spahis moved northward and before midnight the signal fires which they were to use upon reaching their respective objectives, could be seen for two of them. At 4:00 A.M. on the 29th, the Chasseur reconnaissance patrols moved out. (21).
The Moroccan Spahis were to advance on MOUNT VODNA and cut the KALKANDELEN-USKUB road; the 1st Chasseurs were to cross the VARDAR RIVER and attack USKUB from the southeast; the 4th Chasseurs were to move on USKUB via DRACEVO and the road along the railroad, leaving one squadron as general reserve at DRACEVO.

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(17) (2-140)
(18) (1-445. 2-140)
(19) (1-444,445. 2- 140, 141)
(20) (2- 141)
(21) (2- 141)

The movement began about 5:00 A.M. on the 29th in a heavy fog. Resistance was met south of MOUNT VODNA by the Spahis but the regiment advanced dismounted, after sending a force to the west in an outflanking maneuver.(22). About 6:00 A.M. the Spahis patrols came under fire and soon the regiment was engaged with part of it dismounted and the remainder, including machine guns, in support. With three squadrons in the dismounted firing line, the advance continued. The other two squadrons, with machine guns took up positions which commanded the KALKANDELEN-USKUB road and the valley of the TRESKA RIVER. About 9:30 A.M. as the squadrons were nearing the railroad station at USKUB, patrols were sent into the city. At about 9:45 A.M., as large movements of hostile troops and convoys were discovered north of the city, three mounted squadrons with two sections of machine guns were directed in pursuit. Before noon the regiment had captured 350 prisoners, over 100 vehicles of hostile convoy and 1000 head of cattle. A squadron attacked, and captured, west of the city, a large group of storehouses, protected by machine gun fire.(23) The 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique advanced to LISICA where it was fired on from an armored train, hidden in the trees. The regiment dismounted and advanced on USKUB, driving the enemy back. The armored train withdrew to USKUB. At this point, the squadron, which had been held in general reserve, reverted to the control of the regimental commander. Contact was established with the Spahis on the left, who were advancing also. A platoon arrived near USKUB at about 9:00 A.M. and by 11:00 A.M. the entire regiment of the 4th Chasseurs was in USKUB.(24)

The 1st Chasseurs advanced to the VARDAR RIVER and as soon as the leading squadron had crossed at the URUMLI ford, it came upon a Bulgarian camp with a large supply train and its convoy, which it attacked. The enemy consisted of an infantry battalion. The regiment attacked dismounted and by an outflanking maneuver, finally drove the enemy to the north, capturing a number of prisoners and the convoy. The attack on USKUB was pushed with great determination but the lack of artillery was a great handicap. The enemy held up the advance long enough so that he had time to blow up his ammunition dumps and to withdraw several train loads of material, under cover of the armored train, which at last, destroyed several bridges, rendering the railroad useless for some time.(25).

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(22) (1-445,446. 2-141)
(23) (2-142. 5-5)
(24) (1-446. 2-142,143. 4-241.5-5)
(25) (1-446. 2-144)

By 11:00 A.M., 29th, USKUB was entirely in the hands of the French Cavalry. The defense of the city was promptly organized with two considerations in view: first, the possibility of the offensive by the enemy; and second and mainly, to block the retreat of the Eleventh German Army. The surrounding heights were occupied and defensive sectors organized. Liaison, by means of airplanes, was soon established between the Headquarters of the French Army of the Orient and the Cavalry, which since its entrance into the mountainous region GOLESNICA PLANINA had been isolated from all other friendly forces. It was learned that the Bulgarians, who had been barring the road, from VELES to USKUB, were retreating, and that the TRANIE detachment was now at LAKE KAPLAN.

The Moroccan Spahis soon reported continuous clouds of dust from a large hostile force on the KALKANDELEN-USKUB road. It was the Eleventh German Army retiring from the lake region only to find its one possible route of retreat blocked by the French Cavalry. However the Cavalry had no artillery with it and the early arrival of the TRANIE detachment was very urgent.(26)

It was reported that between KICEVO and GOSTIVAR many hostile convoys were moving to the north; that between GOSTIVAR and KALKANDELEN the route was "black with men, animals, and vehicles"; and that from KALKANDELEN and half way to USKUB were important convoys(27).

At 10:00 A.M., 30th September, news of the armistice with Bulgaria was received by airplane at USKUB. However, for some reason, the hostile troops coming from KALKANDELEN ignored it and in the afternoon their leading elements opened fire on the Cavalry outposts and attempted to encircle the town, engaging the Moroccan Spahis along the VODNA and the Chasseurs d'Afrique near USKUB. Combat continued throughout the night of the 30th, placing the Cavalry in rather a difficult situation. On 1st October at 8:00 A.M. the TRANIE detachment was reported; at 11:00 A.M. it entered USKUB; and at 4:00 P.M. it relieved the Cavalry on outpost duty.

On 29th September, negotiations for an armistice had begun at SALONIKA. The successful offensive, the rapid advance of the Cavalry and the tottering government at SOFIA, allowed the Allies to become masters of the situation. All the Bulgarian elements, west of the USKUB meridian, were to become prisoners of war. The Allies ontained free passage of troops across Bulgaria.

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(26) (1-447, 2-144,145. 4-241)
(27) (2-145)

The 4th Chasseurs were attached to the TRANIE detachment to operate west of USKUB. The French Cavalry, thus reduced to nine squadrons, passed to the Serbian First Army and successfully carried out its mission as Army Cavalry.(28)

IV. OPINIONS BEARING ON THE STUDY.

1. LIEUTENANT COLONEL PRIOUX, FRENCH ARMY, ECOLE SUPERIEURE DE GUERRE.

" Within the strategical domain, the Cavalry had rendered valuable services by taking USKUB at the moment when the enemy still could not believe of our presence, thus cutting the retreat of the Eleventh German Army before the arrival of the Infantry divisions.
From a tactical point of view, the Cavalry group of the French Army of the Orient, represented a truly modern arm which used both its mobility across the most difficult and varied terrain, and its fire power, and went around the enemy resistances, after having located them and fixed them in place by combat. The engaged elements had thus been able to withdraw from the enemy at the desired moment and rejoin the Cavalry main body, the latter always on the lookout for a gap which would permit it to penetrate deeply into the hostile formations and paralyze enemy actions.
It seems that in the mountains, Cavalry will obtain more important results by avoiding the great highways, where it is too easily held up by weak rear guards. It is often well to move it out into the mountainous regions where there are no good roads, upon the condition that it is especially equipped and given mountain artillery and pack trains. In these inhospitable regions, the density of the enemy is of the enemy is naturally quite feeble. When it debouches into the valleys, the Cavalry benefits from the effect of surprise.
This fact was verified on the 29th of September when our squadrons appeared suddenly in front of USKUB, coming from the GOLESNICA-PLANINA." (29)

2. OF THE AUTHOR.

a. Discussion.
Time and space factors in the problem of cutting off the retreat of the Eleventh German Army at USKUB made mobility of the pursuing force of prime importance. Hostile resistance of the main routes of the pursuing force would have caused sufficient delay to have defeated the purpose of the pursuers.

(28) (1-447,448. 3-146. 4-248)
(29) (1-453,454)

On the various occasions, the Cavalry commander, taking advantage of his superior mobility, maneuvered to avoid resistance that would have delayed his force, and by rapid movement having opportunely arrived at his position of vantage across the line of retreat of the Eleventh German Army, the Cavalry commander made use of the fire power of his force to hold the enemy until the arrival of stronger Allied forces.

b. Conclusion.
Only Cavalry could leave the roads, find and pass through unoccupied gaps in the hostile line, or brush aside small resistances, quickly disengage and continue rapidly over most difficult terrain to its distant goal, USKUB, in time to use its fire power to intercept the retreat of the Eleventh German Army.

(1) Staff Study Infantry Advanced

Sloan Capt. Inf. Col., Cav.

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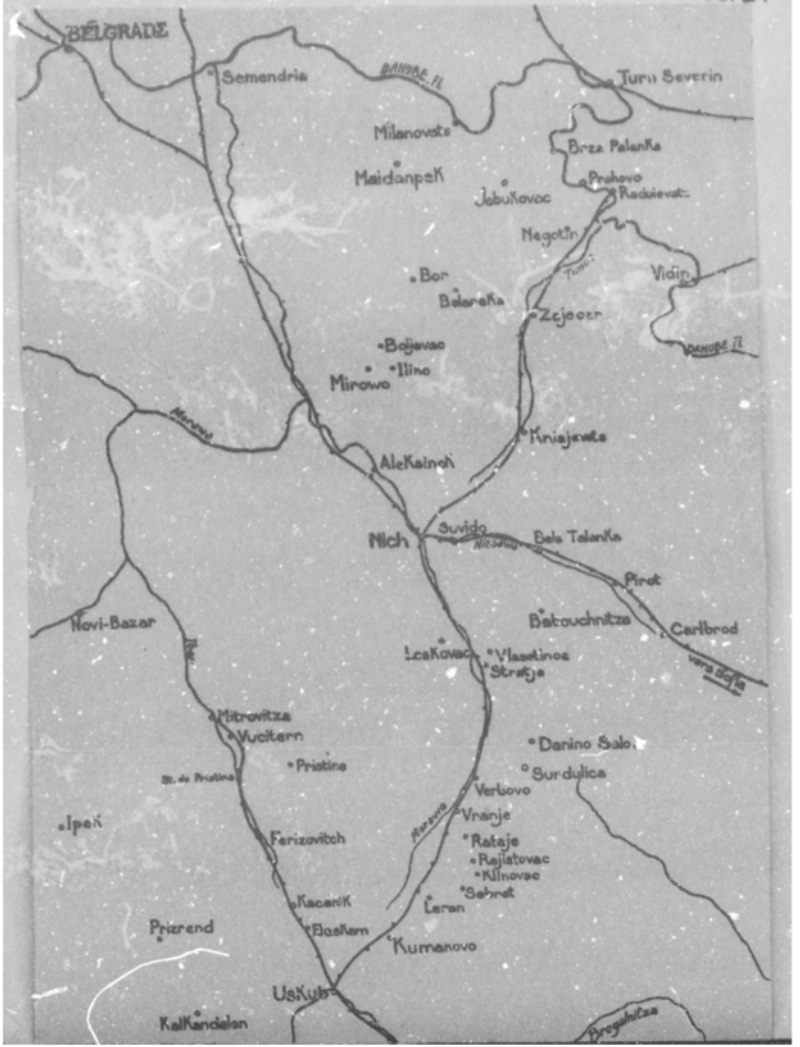
Sources 1 and 2 were obtained from the Cavalry School, Fort Riley, Kansas.

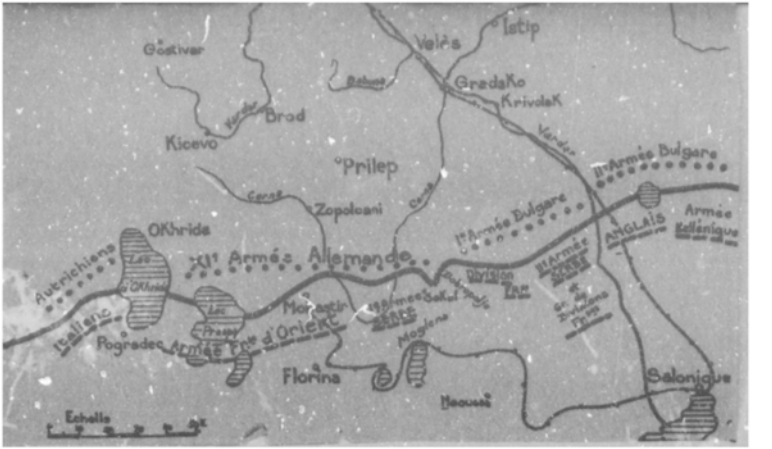
Sources 3 and 4 and 5 were obtained from the library C.& G.S.School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The following sources are in the library, C.& G.S. School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and no doubt contain material which would be available to anyone who translates French or German.

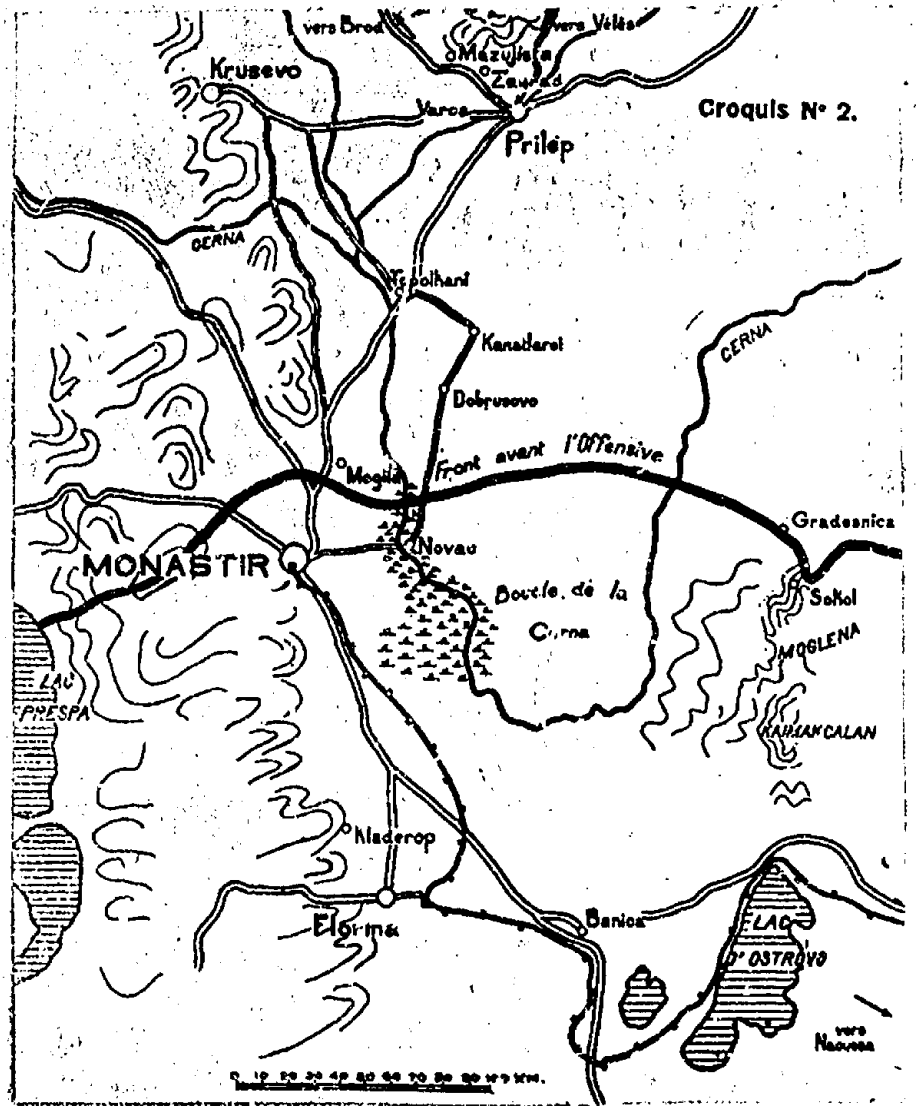
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MAP No. 1.

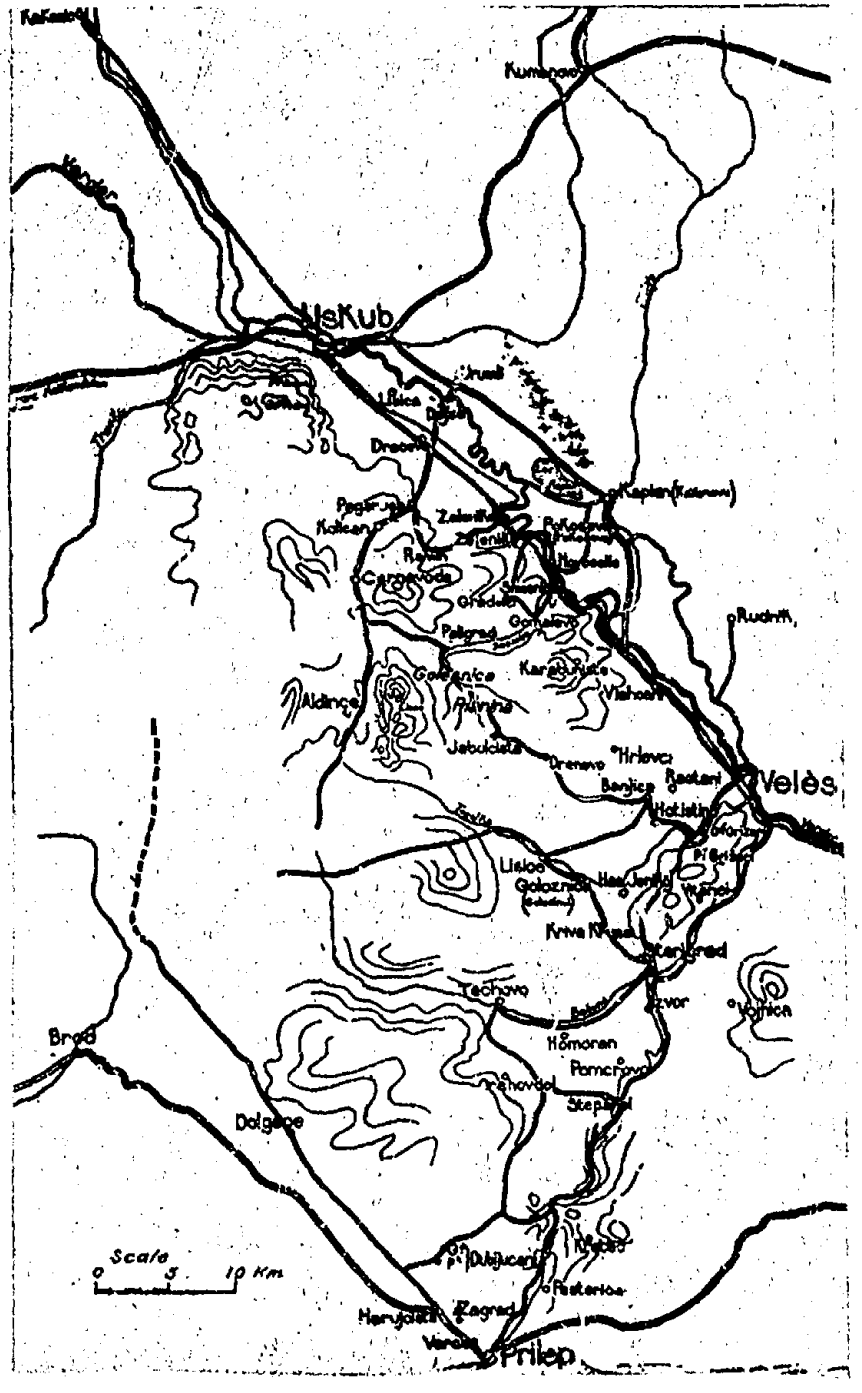

BELGRADE
Semendria
DANUBE R.
Turn Severin
Milanovats
Maidanpek
Jabukovac
Brza Palanka
Prahovo
Radujevatz
Negotin
Timok
Vidin
Bor
Balaneka
Zajecar
DANUBE R.
Boljevac
Ilino
Mirowo
Morava
Kniajevatz
Aleksinak
Nich
Suvido
Nisava
Bela Talanka
Pirot
Novi-Bazar
Ibar
Batouchnitza
Carlbrod
Vrana Sofia
Lesskovac
Vlasotinoc
Stratja
Mitrovitza
Vucitern
Pristina
St. de Pristina
Danino Salo
Surdulica
Verbovo
Ipek
Vranje
Morava
Ferizovitch
Ratajc
Rajistevac
Klinovac
Sebrat
Kacanik
Leran
Prizrend
Elashan
Kumanovo
Uskub
Kalkandelan
Bregalnitza


Gostivar
Velès
Istip
Babuna
Gradsko
Krivolak
Vardar
Brod
Kicevo
Prilep
Cerna
Zopoleani
Cerna
Vardar
IIe Armée Bulgare
Armée Grecque
ANGLAIS
Armée Hellénique
OKhrida
Autrichiens
XIIe Armée Allemande
Lac d'Okhrida
Ier Armée Bulgare
IIe Armée Bulgare
Italiens
Lac Prespa
Monastir
Pogradec
Armée Frse d'Orient
Sakul
Moglena
Florina
Vrbeni
Negouse
Salonique
Echelle

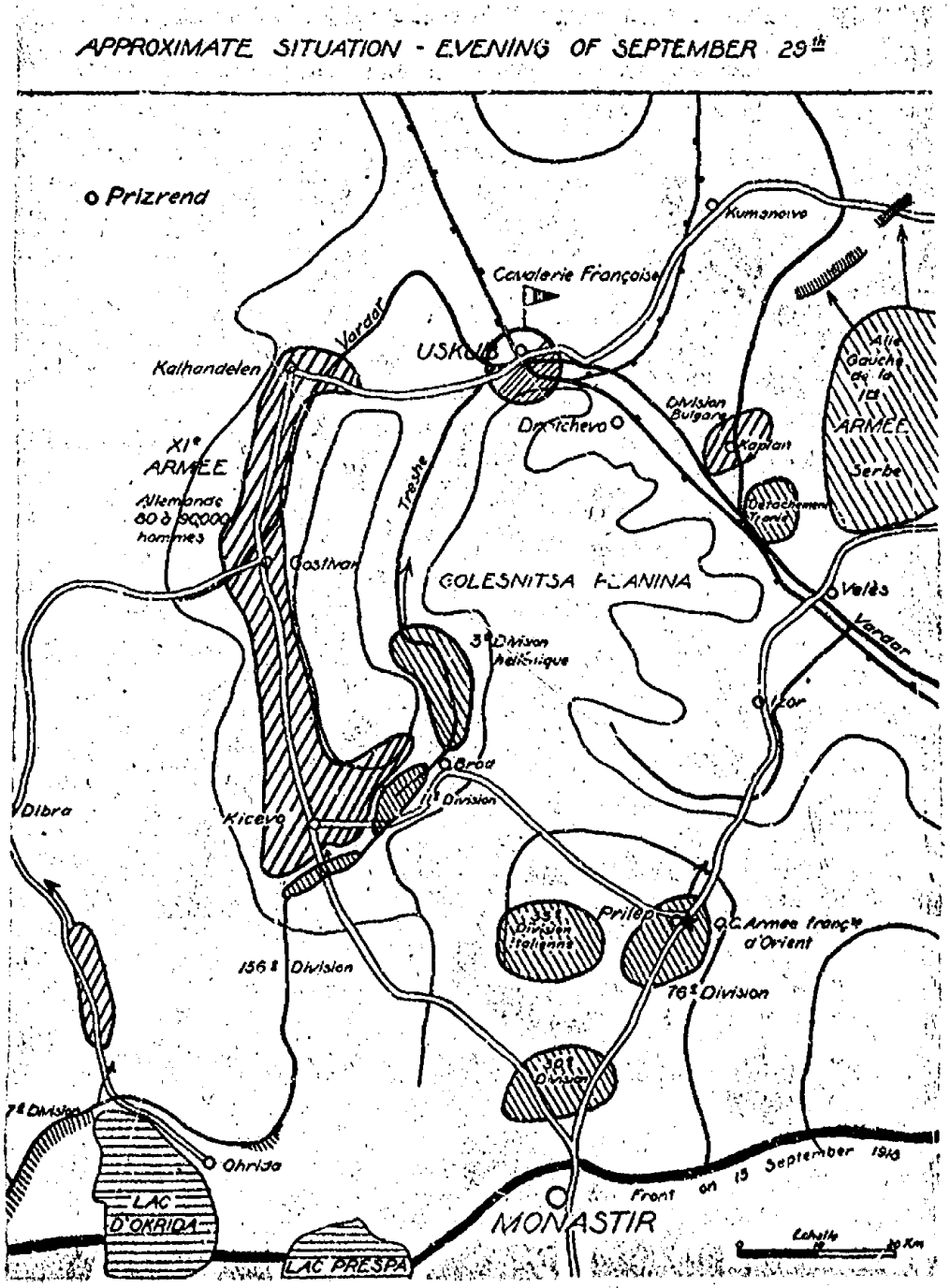
MAP No. 2.


Croquis N° 2.
vers Brod
vers Vélès
Mazuljsta
Zapad
Krusevo
Varos
Prilep
CERNA
Trnolhani
Kanadarci
Dobrusevo
Mogila
front avant l'offensive
Novac
MONASTIR
Boucle de la Cerna
Gradesnica
Sokol
MOGLENA
KAMJANCALAN
LAC PRESPA
Kladerop
Banica
Eleminé
LAC D'OSTROVO
vers Negotes

MAP No. 3.


Kumanovo
Skopje
Vardar
Lipkovo
Kačanik
Drenovac
Kaplan(Katlanovo)
Zelenikovo
Petrovec
Čaršovo
Gradsko
Rudnik
Gorobinci
Karadžica
Višnjevo
Aldinci
Jabolčište
Hrčevo
Drenovo
Velès
Banjica
Rastani
Hotolisko
Lisiče
Gložane
Kriva Reka
Kamenjane
Čečkovo
Izvor
Jurumleri
Brod
Dolgoec
Homonan
Pomeševo
Šahovci
Stepanci
Dabjuca
Pastenica
Zagračani
Varoš
Prilep
Scale
0 5 10 Km

MAP No. 4.


APPROXIMATE SITUATION - EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 29th
Prizrend
Kumanovo
Cavalerie Française
Vardar
USKUB
Kalkandelen
Division Bulgare
Dorichevo
Kaplan
Aile Gauche de la 1re ARMEE Serbe
XIe ARMEE
Allemands 60 à 90,000 hommes
Tresha
Detachement Trenti
Gostivar
GOLESNITSA PLANINA
Veles
Vardar
3e Division Hellénique
Tetovo
Babuna
11e Division
Dibra
Kicevo
Prilep
G.C. Armee française d'Orient
156e Division
Division Italienne
76e Division
Ohrida
LAC D'OKRIDA
LAC PRESPA
MONASTIR
Front on 15 September 1916
Echelle 10 20 Km