

YANKEE NEGROES IN HORIZON BLUE LED WAY TO RHINE

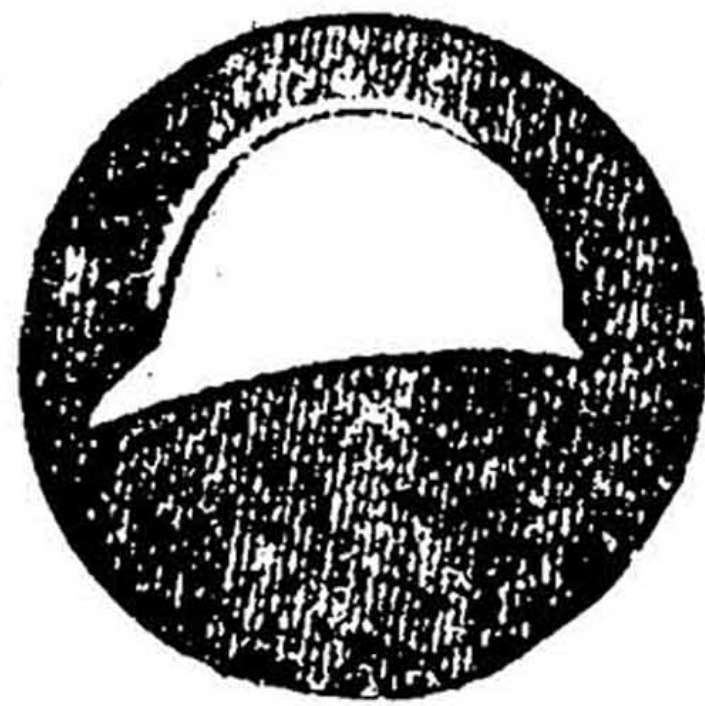
Two Regiments in 93rd Division Wear Croix de Guerre on Colors

IN VICTORIOUS OFFENSIVES

Shoulder Insignia Exemplifies Alliance of Our Colored Troops With French Army

Blue denim to horizon blue—American pick to French rifle, with lots of use for it from Reims to the Rhine—that is only a part of the story of the 93rd Division, the negro soldiers from New York and points west who fought under the tricolor and in French equipment from the time they heard the first big one till the Kaiser took the count.

Despite their strange surroundings, their stranger equipment, their few days in which



93rd Division
Insignia

to learn the trench tricks of French veterans, and the occasional blind spots in liaison when it was too late for "no compree," the 369th, 370th, 371st and 372nd colored regiments came through with two regimental Croix de Guerre and a great deal of honest

pride in the shoulder insignia that shows on its black background a blue French helmet as a memento of their very foreign service.

When this division joined the French it was blended even more perfectly into its background, as far as the eye could see, than any white regiment could be. Nearly all the German intelligence officers swallowed them whole as African Colonials. Even one group that stuck to the Yankee brand of tin hat was credited in Boche reports as French blacks "equipped with English helmets."

The 93rd was a friend in need for our ally and in most cases they became friends indeed, with every effort made to put them on equality and the French cuisine strained to the utmost to produce a kick-proof chow.

In the Afrique Sector

The 369th, whose reports are the most completely written, was put at the disposal of the 16th Division of the Eighth French Army Corps on March 18, 1918. Three weeks training within sound of the guns under French instructors and with French equipment was a startling change for men who had had only guard duty in the States and stevedore work in France. On April 8 they were put into a sector, doubled with French battalions, two battalions in the front line from the west bank of the Aisne to Ville-sur-Tourbe. They were treated with great cordiality by the French and the sub-sector, named "Afrique," became veritably their own when it was put under their commanding officer on April 29.

Despite the difference in language there were no misunderstandings, and a remarkably efficient support from the French kitchens did a great deal to "increase the efficiency," according to the official reports.

It was the fate of the 369th to take an active part in the famous July defensive near Reims, where the masterly stroke of French strategy lured the Germans into a futile pounding of empty trenches over whose ruins they wasted the force of the drive that was to take them to Châlons. While the Germans tore the network of forward trenches with tons of high explosive, a screen of men and guns was kept in the front lines and a part of this screen was made of men of the 369th. For a time the terrible bombardment cut off all liaison and runners linked the distance that telephone wires could not weather. Without rest or food, the men were finally withdrawn and marched six kilometers, where they acted as relief for the Moroccans of the 161st Division, sharing in a successful counter-attack.

"Superior Numbers" of One

From this time on they were in continual action in the fighting about the Butte de Mesnil and the Main-de-Massiges, from July 23 to August 19. Here a violent German barrage cut off a lieutenant and four men who were made prisoner and were being taken back to the German lines when a sergeant appeared and, with nothing but his bayonet and a goodly supply of furor Africanus, killed the guard and released his comrades. In German reports captured later the affair was described as a "blut-lustig" attack by superior numbers.

In the Meuse-Argonne drive the 369th was with the 161st French (Moroccan) Division, and on September 26 helped the Moroccans in the capture of Dormans. The next day, with liaison with units on their flanks partially destroyed, they advanced through the dark and the uncut barbed wire, accomplishing what the French declared was the "well-nigh impossible." On the 29th they had a large share in the capture of Sechault.

The regiment was given the Croix de Guerre, its colors were decorated and on November 18 it reached the Rhine, in the "marche triomphale," the first Allied troops, their commander claims, to reach the river. In all their fighting they can boast that they never lost a prisoner or a foot of trench.

The record of the 370th Regiment is fragmentary. They were put immediately with the French and were attached variously to the 72nd, 10th, 34th and 36th French Divisions, from April to August 31, 1918.

Often Passed Objective

There were difficulties that arose because of difference in language and the regiment only functioned as a whole for three weeks, but on its departure the French complimented the men on the manner in which they fought, remarking that they often went beyond their objective.

In the Oise-Aisne offensive, from September 17 to October 12, they saw action and again from October 24 until the armistice.

On September 22 the regiment held a sector near L'Ecluse, and three days' fighting up to the 30th saw all their objectives gained. On October 12 the men engaged in the fighting in the Bois de Monters were complimented. On the 5th they captured an enemy battery at Val St. Peine.

The 371st was in the Verdun sector from June 13 until September 14, in the Meuse-Argonne drive from September 27 until October 6, and in Alsace from October 16 until the armistice.

At Verdun they were used as support for the French 68th Division. In the Argonne they acted as a part of the reserve of the 9th French Corps and captured Côte 168 with the 372nd on September 28. The next day they took several points, including a railroad station, pushed on, and in a bloody engagement where they suffered heavily, captured Triers farm on the 30th.

Casualties Exceed Thousand

Their entire casualties amounted to 1,003 men and, when they left the French command, published orders declared that they possessed "the finest qualities of audacity and bravery which are the attributes of shock troops."

The 372nd spent a period of training in the Argonne from June 6 until July 14. In the Meuse-Argonne offensive, this regiment was a part of the French 157th attached to the 10th Army Corps. They were in a brisk and bitter encounter north of Fontaine-en-Dormois, where they reached all their objectives and captured a number of supplies. They contend with the 369th for the capture of Sechault.

They were especially complimented upon their patrol work, and the French gave them the Croix de Guerre and decorated their colors. They spent the time from October 13 to November 11 in the Vosges.