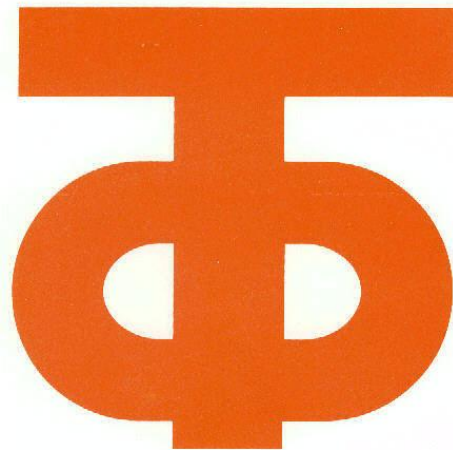


# **90th INFANTRY DIVISION**

## **WORLD WAR II**



### **AFTER ACTION REPORT**

**JUNE THROUGH DECEMBER 1944**

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HEADQUARTERS 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO 90, U.S. ARMY

INTRODUCTION:

As of 1 June 1944, the 90th Infantry Division was disposed in marshaling areas as follows: The main body of the Division was stationed in the XXIX District, Western Base Section, located generally north and east of the cities of Cardiff and Newport, Wales. The Division's residual elements were located at Bournemouth, England while Group A (composed of foot elements of the first and third Battalions 359th Infantry Regiment and forty vehicles) was located at Camp Syon Abbey in Devonshire, England, and attached to the 4th Infantry Division. The 358th Infantry Regiment was stationed at Camp Llangattock, Wales; the RCT 9 (-) and the 90th Reconnaissance Troop at Camp Court-Y-Gollen, Wales; the RCT 7, 344th FA Battalion, Company B, 315th Medical Battalion and Company B 315th, Engineer Battalion at Camp Chepstow, Wales; and Division Headquarters, Division Artillery Headquarters, 345th FA Battalion, Special Troops at Heath Camp, Cardiff, Wales; and 315th Engineer and 315th Medical Battalion (less 3 Companies) also at Heath Camp.

The Division had completed its preparation for overseas movement to the coast of France and was in the midst of loading vehicles aboard motor transport ships.

OPERATIONS:

1 June (D-5): The main elements of the Division were loaded on 9 Motor Transport ships at Cardiff and Newport, Wales. Group A initiated embarkation at Dartmouth, England. The 24th Cavalry Squadron was attached to the 90th Infantry Division through Corps order to take effect D+5.

2 June (D-4): The detachment accompanying the vehicles of Combat Team 9 (- Group A) embarked as per schedule during the day. The remainder of the Division completed last minute preparations for movement. Group A completed embarkation at Dartmouth.

3 June (D-3): The personnel accompanying the 9 motor transport ships went aboard their assigned craft. Combat Team 9 (-Group A) and Division advance detachment went aboard the personnel ship, the Susan B. Anthony, and moved into the Bristol Channel at 1800. Group A moved to or remained at Anchorage in Dartmouth-Salcombe Bay and the English Channel.

4 June 9 (D-2): The remainder of the Division, less residual elements, went aboard transports as follows: one-half Division Headquarters and Combat Team 8 (less 3rd Battalion) on the Excelsior at Newport. Combat Team 7 (less 3rd Battalion) on the Explorer at Cardiff. One half Division Headquarters, plus the 3rd Battalions of the 357 and 358, and Division troops on the Bienville at Cardiff. Group A still at anchorage, conducted briefing.

5 June (D-1): All units remained at anchorage until late in the evening when Group A, joined convoy and initiated the Channel crossing.

6 June (D-Day): The main body of the Division sailed from the Bristol Channel for the coast of France. Group A landed on Utah Beach at 1000-1600 and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of St. Marten Varreville (404983) as part of the 4th Infantry Division's Reserve.

7 June (D+1) Group A moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Reuville (380968). The Susan B. Anthony, which carried the Division's advance detachment and CT 9 (-Group A), struck a mine off Utah

Beach at midmorning and sank in approximately two hours. All men were saved, but the bulk of the equipment other than individual was lost. Elements of CT 9 (-Group A) assembled at Reuville by nightfall. The remainder of the Division sailed eastward along the coast of England.

8 June (D+2): The main body of the Division arrived off Utah Beach at midmorning and began debarkation from all three transports simultaneously at 1200. By midnight, all foot elements had closed into allocated positions in the Division's Assembly Area -- Turqueville-Reuville-Audonville-La Hubert-Ecoqueneauville -- with the Division CP set up at the village of Loutres. Only 5% of the Division's transport vehicles were available because MT ship unloading was far behind schedule. The Division Commander received warning orders that the 90th Infantry Division would attack across the Merderet River through the lines of the 82nd Airborne Division with a view to cutting off the Peninsula. The RCT 9 moved by battalion to the vicinity of Bandienville, still part of the 4th Infantry Division's Reserve.

9 June (D+3): Infantry and Engineer reconnaissance parties were dispatched by the Division to reconnoiter possible crossing sites along the Merderet River within the contemplated zone of action. Particular attention was paid to the bridges opposite the towns of Chef du Pont (330938) Les Dupres (330933), and Grainville (315997). Corps order gave the Division the mission of attacking to the west on 10 June to seize the high ground East of St Sauveur le Vicomte to deepen the corps bridgehead. CT 9 was still to remain attached to the 4th Infantry Division. During the day, the 82nd Airborne Division, supported by the 345th Field Artillery Battalion of the 90th Infantry Division drove a bridgehead across the Merderet River at 308910. It was determined that the crossing at Chef du Pont was lightly held. The situation in the vicinity of Grainville remained obscure. By 1800 the bulk of the Division's equipment had been put ashore, and shortly before dark, the 90th Division was set in motion towards jump off positions for the morning. A new CP was chosen at 2200. In the meantime, elements of CT 9 were employed by the 4th Infantry Division to mop up bypassed resistance, and to make a reconnaissance in force within its sector. The second Battalion was only 50% equipped as a result of a loss during the sinking.

10 June (D+4): Upon order of Corps, the Division attacked on 10 June 1944 with the object of seizing the high ground east of the Douve River. Plans called for two regiments to attack abreast, take an intermediate objective and then push on to the final goal. The 357th Infantry was assigned to the left [right] sector of the drive and the 358th Infantry to right [left] sector. The remainder of the 358th was placed in Division Reserve to be prepared to advance in either of the regimental zones. The Division Artillery was ordered to prepare to mass its fires in either of the regimental zones, while the normal support battalions were to render support to their respective Infantry Regiments. CT 9 remained attached to the 4th Infantry Division. Both Infantry Regiments crossed the LD at the prescribed time (the 358th at 0400 and a 357th at 0515). The 358th successfully crossed the Merderet River and after severe resistance reduced a château which was occupied by the Germans. The 357th advanced in its zone of action and encountered enemy resistance in the vicinity of the town of Amfreville. The 358th's elements made an attempt to capture Etienville [Pont l'Abbe], but a strong German counter-attack forced a platoon, which had entered the town to withdraw. Fighting slowed down at 2300. Verbal orders were given to continue the attack the following day.

11 June (D+5): Both Regiments supported by affective Artillery barrage continued to press the attack in their respective sectors during the day. The 358th, with two Battalions abreast, made an assault against the town of Pont l'Abbe (Etienville) from the East. One Battalion served as a holding force on the Northwest side of town. The Division Artillery supported this attack. The 359th (-1 Battalion) was released from assignment to the 4th Infantry Division and reverted to the control of the 90th Division on 10 June. It moved to an alert area and was committed to action in the vicinity of Picauville to the East

of Pont l'Abbe. Units of the Regiment received a severe shelling during the move to that sector. By nightfall, the entire Regiment had been committed. Elsewhere, the units adjusted their lines and made preparation for a continuation of the attack on the morrow.

12 June (D+6): The two regiments continued to push forward upon the opening of the new day. The 357th Infantry pressed its attack at 0800 with the mission of capturing the high ground in the vicinity of Amfreville. It then planned to reorganize and attack in the general direction of Gourbesville. The 358th Infantry continued its attack upon Pont l'Abbe with the plan of eventually pushing on to occupy the high ground beyond town. The 359th Infantry was ordered to continue its offensive in the vicinity of Picauville. The 1st Battalion, 359th Infantry was kept in readiness for Division Reserve. The 357th Infantry fought fiercely throughout the day, but due to the ferocity of the enemy, they were able to make very little gain. The 359th Infantry encountered severe resistance in its sector and was forced to press the enemy back in hedgerow-to-hedgerow combat. American planes bombed Pont l'Abbe at 1700. Their attack was very effective. It greatly aided the 358th Infantry in its approach to Pont l'Abbe. A coordinated attack preceded by the support of all available artillery was launched on the town at 1900. By 2030, patrols of the 1st and 2nd Battalions had entered the town. By 2130, the two Battalions had mopped it up completely and had begun the move to occupy the high ground to the north and northwest. At nightfall, and under the cover of darkness, unit commanders regrouped their forces in preparation for the continuation of the attack on 13 June. Major General Eugène M. Landrum assumed command of this Division on this day.

13 June (D+7): At 0500 the Division continued its attack, concentrating on the capture of the town of Gourbesville. The main attack was preceded by the attempts on the part of a task force consisting of an Engineer Company to capture the town. This failed to materialize due to the severity of the enemy resistance. The 357th Infantry then attempted to force their way forward only to meet strong resistance, which lasted throughout the rest of the day. In the 358th's sector, the Division's units were successful in capturing and occupying the high ground to the north and west of Pont l'Abbe. Effective patrolling was conducted by the 359th Infantry covering a three-mile sector.

14 June (D+8): Corps order called for elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and the newly arrived 9th Infantry Division to pass through the 90th Division and secure the line Douve River in our zone. The 358th Infantry was ordered to make a limited attack in order to mask the move. After elements of the 82nd Airborne Division had passed through satisfactorily, 358th Infantry assembled in the vicinity of Pont l'Abbe to await further orders. The 357th Infantry continued its attack on Gourbesville, while the 359th Infantry was ordered to resume the attack on Orglandes to the Northwest. Elements of the 3rd Battalion of the 357th Infantry fought their way into Gourbesville at 2020 and held their control of the town until the next morning.

15 June (D+9): Corps order assigned a new mission to the 90th Division. The Division was ordered to seize and hold a line running from the railroad station (288024) to Terre de Beavual (2901). Accordingly, the 357th Infantry was given the task of seizing and holding the line from Gourbesville to Beavual, while to the 359th went the task of holding that part of the line which ran from Ravan (225012) to Hau David (208012). The 358th Infantry was ordered to move into an assembly area approximately 1000 yards to the east of Gourbesville. Because of the severity of the fighting in the vicinity of the town, the 3rd Battalion of the 357th was forced to withdraw from Gourbesville. The Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Kilday reorganized his men and then laid the foundation of plans which resulted in the recapture of the town. At 2240 elements of the Battalion again entered the town, and by 2330, Gourbesville had passed completely into the possession of the 3rd Battalion of the 357th Infantry.

16 June (D+10): Elements of the Division in conformity with Corps order continued their efforts to secure their new defensive line. The 358th took over the mission of the 357th. The 357th reverted to Division Reserve in the vicinity of Gourbesville. The swamp to its immediate front caused of the 358th to experience great difficulty in its advance. Plans were made to bypass the swamp and the towns of Le Calais and Reuville in the process of advance. Resistance continued to be severe throughout the day. The 359th Infantry was attached temporarily to the 9th Infantry Division for part of the day, but reverted to Division control at 2100.

17 June (D+11): The Division continued its efforts to seize its assigned defensive line throughout the day, and by the latter part of the afternoon, units of the Division occupied the desired defensive position, thus affording the necessary protection for the VII Corps from Terre de Beavual to the railroad station at 288024.

18 June (D+12): The Division's units continued to occupy their defensive sectors. CT 7 was motorized and moved to take over the defensive positions formally occupied by the 47th infantry of the 9th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Portbail. This Division came under control of the VIII Corps.

19 June (D+13): During the day, the Division maintained its defensive sector while elements of the newly arrived 79th Infantry Division passed through its lines. CT 7 continued its mission to prevent enemy movement either from the North to the South or from the South to the North between the two cities of St Saveuer de Pierre Pont and Portbail. After the passage of the units of the 79th, the Division's two assault Regiments (358 and 359) assembled in place to await further orders. In the meantime, the Division's Artillery supported the units of the 79th Division until it passed out of range of effective Artillery coverage.

20 June (D+14): All units of the Division maintained their respective positions. The 357th Infantry occupied its defensive sector. The 2nd Battalion of the 359th Infantry occupied a defensive sector to the left of that of the 358th Infantry. The 359th (-) remained in Division Reserve. Division Artillery made preparations to move into a new assembly area. On two occasions during the day, German tanks appeared in the area of the 357th Infantry.

21 June (D+15): Operations memorandum covering the subjects of rehabilitation, housekeeping and Tank-Infantry training was drawn up and put into effect immediately. German mines were issued to all units for training purposes. The Division's Regiments continued to hold their positions. The 2nd Battalion of the 359th was relieved of its assignment and rejoined the rest of the 359th. Several times throughout the day, the 357th was attacked by enemy Infantry and tanks, but all enemy efforts were beaten back. Enemy Artillery was active in the 357th Infantry area.

22 June (D+16): All three Regiments continued to organize their defensive positions. The 2nd Battalion of the 357th launched an attack of a limited nature in order to strengthen its position. The attack was successful. A reinforced Battalion of the 359th proceeded to the vicinity of the 357th. This Battalion was attached to the 357th. Necessary readjustments were made by the 358th and the 359th so that they might tie in with the defensive positions of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions.

23 June (D+17): The 358th and 359th Infantries relieved the 507th Parachute Regiment in the area south of the Douve River. The 357th conducted mop-up operations in the town of Portbail. Along the entire front aggressive patrolling was conducted by the respective units in their defensive sectors.

24 June (D+18): Corps order directed active patrolling by the 359th from their sector down to the river line with the mission of eliminating all German resistance in that pocket. The mission was completed and no Germans were found. Throughout the night, German patrols made contact with the 90th front lines.

25 June (D+19): The activities of the 90th remained unchanged. The various Regiments continued defending their respective sectors. Civilian report of an impending attack against the 357th Infantry was found to be inaccurate. Nevertheless, the 358th was ordered to motorize one battalion and to hold it on call. The VIII Corps directed all Artillery in the Corps to fire one-sixth of a unit of fire to represent the simulated attack.

26 June (D+20): The mission of the Division remained unchanged. The units continued to improve their defensive positions. During the night of the 25th and the morning of the 26th, an enemy patrol struck in force in the area of the OPLR of the 357th and made slight penetration. Hand grenades were used extensively between our units and the enemy patrols. The enemy was destroyed or taken prisoner. The 357th's lines were restored. 40 prisoners including one Regimental Commander and two Lieutenants were taken. 357th suffered 13 casualties.

27 June (D+21): The Division's units continued to hold their defensive sectors, and to await further orders from Corps.

28 June (D+22): The mission for the Division remained unchanged. An air mission made on Vesley to knock out Artillery and Command Posts was very successful. Preparations for the relief of the 357th Infantry were made with representatives of the 79th Division.

29 June (D+23): Plans were made for the 79th Infantry Division to initiate relief of the 357th Infantry. It was planned to move one Battalion by motor immediately upon their release.

30 June (D+24): The 358th and 359th Infantries continued to defend their sectors. The 357th Infantry upon being relieved by the 79th Infantry Division reverted to Division Reserve.

REPORT OF OPERATIONS - NORTHWEST FRANCE  
PART IV - MONTH OF JUNE  
REPORT ON SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

1 - SUPPLY:

a. Numerous problems in supply were encountered throughout this period. A serious problem arose when we first arrived on Utah Beach as the 2nd Battalion of the 359th Infantry landed without the majority of its guns and equipment, as a result of the sinking of their troop ship. The heavy fighting also resulted in continuous losses of weapons and equipment and placed a heavy strain on all supply personnel. The manner in which all obstacles were overcome and the methods used in devising substitutes and improvising new weapons, reflect credit on the Division supply personnel.

b. Class I:

(1) From June 6 through June 9 '44 units drew direct from the dumps. Truckhead distribution was made to all units for the remainder of the month. Supplies were distributed on the following basis:

"C"	20.116	6.4%
"D"	16.056	5.1%
"K"	125.684	40.4%
"10-1"	148.256	47.6%
"Hospital Ration"	1.405	0.44%
"5-1"	0.205	0.06%
TOTAL	311.722	100.00%

(2) "10-1" rations were available commencing with the June 15 issue.

(3) Bread, fresh beef and laundry soap were not available for issue during the month of June.

(4) One seven (7) Day issue of PX ration was made to the Division for the month of June. However there was no shortage of these items as all units landed with an adequate supply.

(5) Water was abundant and an adequate supply was maintained at all times.

c. Class II:

(1) Clothing and equipment were available for issue in limited quantities during this period.

(2) Clothing and equipment lost by the 2nd Battalion, 359th Infantry through the sinking of their ship was secured from various sources including service troops on the beach, adjacent units and salvage from beach hospitals. The amount obtained from beach dumps was negligible as they were just beginning to operate at this time.

d. Class III:

(1) Gasoline, oil and lubricants were issued to all units from beach dumps, which were located close to units throughout the period. This simplified the supply problem during the early part of the month as many of the QM trucks had not arrived in France before June 21. For the above reason, no records of gas consumption for the Division are available.

e. Class IV:

(1) All units of the Division arrived on the Continent with a 30-day supply of Class IV items and no issue was necessary.

f. Personal Effects:

(1) Personal effects of officers and enlisted men were turned over to the personnel sections of each organization when they arrived on the continent on June 19.

g. Graves Registration:

(1) The Division QM opened the cemetery at Ste Mere Eglise on 10 June '44 with the assistance of the 3rd Platoon of the 603rd Graves Registration Company. The Division QM supervised the operations of the cemetery until June 26 when it was taken over by VII Corps.

h. Remarks:

(1) All units of the Division were hampered during most of this period by a lack of transportation. Captured German vehicles were pressed into service to move supplies and ammunition. Organic vehicles were de-waterproofed and put into service as rapidly as possible after they arrived on the beaches.

(2) Impregnated clothing was issued to all troops prior to embarkation and proved invaluable in providing protection against the cold and dampness during this period.

i. Ammunition:

(1) Ammunition expended for the period was 1147 tons. The following calculation based on ETOUSA U/F dated 10 December '43, is a breakdown of the above tonnage:



<u>Small Arms</u>	<u>Number of Rounds</u>	<u>Percentage U/F</u>
Carbine	154415	1.43
Caliber 30 5/clip	84740	2.69
Caliber 30 8/clip	348184	2.27
Caliber 30 MG	402250	9.57
Caliber 45	100400	3.84
Caliber 50	20159	0.33
Rocket AT 2.36"	2009	2.59
<u>Mortar:</u>		
60mm Mortar	7292	1.33
81mm Mortar	10257	2.52
<u>57mm:</u>		
57mm Gun	138	.06
<u>Artillery:</u>	<u>Number of Grounds</u>	<u>Percentage U/F</u>
105mm M3 How (all types)	2583	2.39
105mm M2 How (all types)	24172	5.37
155mm M1 How (all types)	5483	6.09

(2) Critical items of ammunition during this period were as follows 105mm How M2; 155 How M1; Grenade, rifle, M17. The supply of ammunition during the early stages was direct from beach dumps to using units. At times the ammo carried in by the DUKW (ducks) was unloaded into unit ammunition trucks. As soon as the ASP was established in the beach maintenance area the ammunition supply operated normally.

## II - ORDNANCE MAINTENANCE:

a. Third echelon maintenance of motor vehicles was extremely light which was due primarily to the very limited use of roads as the area occupied by our troops was relatively close to the beach at this time. When the tactical situation permitted, vehicles were inspected for completeness of de-waterproofing.

b. Recovery teams were in daily contact with all units to evacuate all unserviceable American and captured enemy ordnance equipment.

c. The following items were critical during the period: binoculars; rifle auto Browning caliber 30, 1918A2; launcher grenade M-7; launcher, rocket, 2.36"; gun MG, 1917A1; Mount, tripod, caliber 30 1917A1; Gun MG 1919A4; Mount tripod, caliber 30, M2 and; 60mm mortar, complete; 81mm mortar, complete; watch, wrist.

d. The refitting of a Battalion of Infantry, which landed on the beach without weapons or equipment created a serious problem. Every possible source was used to re-equip these troops. Weapons left by the airborne troops were recovered, hospitals were checked several times a day as were beach dumps. Quantities of small arms were secured from service troops and from the 4th Division Clearing Station.

e. As a result of the high mortality of BARs and a lack of replacements for these weapons, it became necessary to substitute light machine guns to keep up the volume of automatic fire necessary for the successful assault of hedgerows. This weapon as designed was not satisfactory for hedgerow

fighting due to the tripod standing too high and being extremely hard to set up in hedgerows when the weapon was emplaced. When the weapon was used for marching fire, the barrel became hot and the ammo belt was cumbersome to feed. A "spike mount" was designed by 1st Lt. Daniel L. Donnelly of I Company 358th Infantry which gave the gunner both a hand hold and ammunition box and carrier when the weapon was used for marching fire and a very compact mount for the weapon to sit on when it was emplaced in hedgerows. After the design was perfected, the 790th Ordnance Company produced approximately 200 spike mounts and all light machine guns in the Division were equipped with this new mount.

### III - EVACUATION:

a. The work of the medical department in the care and evacuation of casualties has been gratifying. The personnel, both officer and enlisted, who were inexperienced in combat, distinguished themselves by their display of courage and devotion to duty.

b. The administration of blood plasma in Battalion Aid Stations has produced spectacular results in many instances and the benefits derived from its use cannot be emphasized too much. Jeeps equipped to carry litters proved invaluable in evacuating wounded from the front lines. Evacuation was very rapid during this period as the cover afforded by hedgerows permitted the litter carrying jeeps to operate very close to the front lines.

c. The report of casualties evacuated for the period 8 June to 30 June '44 inclusive is as follows:

	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Disease</u>	<u>Injury</u>	<u>Exhaustion</u>	<u>Total</u>
Division Total	2072	426	26	283	2807
Evacuated	2069	386	24	258	2737
Returned to duty	3	40	2	25	70
Allies total	182	55	21	6	264
Evacuated	181	55	18	4	258
Returned to duty	1	0	3	2	6
Civilian total	58	4	1	9	72
Evacuated	53	3	0	9	65
Discharged	5	1	1	0	7
Prisoners total	70	0	1	0	71
Evacuated	70	0	1	0	71
Returned to duty	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	2382	485	49	298	3214

### IV - BURIAL:

The Division dead were evacuated to the Division Cemetery at Ste. Mere Eglise. VII Corps took over the operation of this cemetery on June 26. During the period the Ste. Mere Eglise cemetery was operated by the 90th Division, it was necessary to hire French civilians and use prisoners to dig graves.

### V - SALVAGE AND CAPTURED MATÉRIEL:

a. The following quantities of captured and destroyed enemy matériel were reported during this period:

(1)	<u>Weapons</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Self-propelled guns	11
	Artillery (all types)	16
	Tanks (all types)	23
	Antitank guns	9
	Machine guns	9
	Mortars	11
	Bicycles	153
	Motorcycles	9

(2) Field hospital with miscellaneous medical supplies at Orglandes.

(3) Ammo dumps containing large supplies of small arms and all types of ammo, including four loaded trucks.

(4) Warehouse containing large quantity of French cheese.

(5) German ration dump containing sugar, coffee, cheese, bread and individual canned rations, located in a château near Amfreville.

#### VI - TRAFFIC:

a. Main supply roads were adequate and kept in a fairly good state of repair. All other roads were narrow with clay services, forcing traffic to move at a slow rate of speed. In few instances was a circulation plan necessary as the units were spread over a wide front and the amount of traffic on any one secondary road was light.

#### VII - SERVICE TROOPS AND TRAINS:

a. Service troops and trains functioned smoothly throughout the period.

MCLAIN  
OFFICIAL:  
ANDREWS  
G-4

## INTRODUCTION

At the close of June 1944, VIII Corp occupied a general East-West line across the base of the CONTENTIN PENINSULA, blocking to the south while VII Corps, the main Army effort, completed reduction of the CHERBOURG area.

90th Infantry Division, attached to VIII Corps, held the left of the Corps Sector with its positions generally as follows:

(a) 359th Infantry on the right, extended from its contact point with the 82nd Airborne Division just short of PRETOT, southeast to vicinity of PORT AUNY.

(b) 358th Infantry, on the left, extended from its contact point with a 359th Infantry to BAUPTE where contact was maintained with the 83rd Infantry Division.

(c) 357th Infantry, having been relieved by the 79th Infantry Division on the Corps right (PORTBAIL-ST SAUVEUR LE VICOMTE), was assembled vicinity PICAUVILLE as Division Reserve.

(d) Division CP was located at BEUZEVILLE LA BASTILLE.

The CHERBOURG CAMPAIGN was nearly at an end. CHERBOURG itself had fallen and the 4th and 9th Divisions were completing mop-up operations on the city's flanks. VII Corps was being reoriented for an attack south out of the peninsula, on the left of and in conjunction with VIII Corps. The new offensive would begin as soon as troops became available from the CHERBOURG area and the artillery ammunition situation clarified.

VIII Corp planned to attack South, divisions abreast (79th, 82nd and 90th), between the sea and the PRAIRIES MARECAGEUSES DE GORGES to initially seize the ground immediately North of LESSAY-PERIERS. The main effort was to be made on the left – the zone of the 90th Division.

### 1 July 44

Division Field Order for the attack, prepared, after detailed terrain analysis and several staff and commander conferences was released at 1300. The plan in brief was as follows:

(a) 359th Infantry, on the right, to seize and consolidate the FORET DE MONT CASTRE, a rugged and heavily wooded hill mass which dominated the entire Corps zone. Thereafter to continue the attack southward on order.

(b) 358th Infantry, on the left, to force the corridor between the FORET and PRAIRIE, block to the East, South of the PRAIRIE, and finally assist the 359th Infantry on order.

(c) 357th Infantry, in Division reserve, prepared to pass through the 358th Infantry to seize the Division objective.

### 357th Infantry:

3rd Battalion passed to Division control and relieved the 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry on the left of the Division; 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached to 3rd Battalion to patrol BAUPTE area connecting up with 83rd Division. Regiment (-) remained in assembly area vicinity of PICAUVILLE.

### 358th Infantry:

2nd Battalion, relieved after dark by the 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry, side-slipped to the right to assembly position in rear of 1st Battalion. 3rd Battalion continued occupation of its assigned sector. 1st Platoon of L Company made a reconnaissance in force towards LES SABLON, meeting stiff resistance.

### 359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion relieved the 1st Battalion during the day by infiltration. 1st Battalion moved into the zone of 82nd Airborne Division to a position in rear of its LD. 2nd Battalion remained in assembly area.

### 2 July 44

357th Infantry (less 3rd Battalion) moved by infiltration across the DOUVE RIVER Causeway to a new assembly area vicinity of APPEVILLE.

358th and 359th Infantries readjusted positions, closing assault battalions on their respective LDs. Final reconnaissance, briefing and supply checks were given the top consideration during the day.

4th Division Artillery, made available to support the attack, moved into prepared positions under cover of darkness.

Division CP opened at CHÂTEAU FRANQUETOT at 1700.

### 3 July 44

The Division attacked at 0530, following a 15 minute Artillery preparation which included the 4th Division Artillery and the massed fires of the heavy weapons of the 357th Infantry and the reserve battalions of the assault regiments.

### 359th Infantry:

1st Battalion, right assault Battalion of the Division, met heavy resistance at the LD from the German garrison vicinity of PRETOT. Enraged by an incident which cost the life of a Battalion staff officer, the unit bored into a vicious close quarter fight in the orchards Southwest of PRETOT. That fight ended only with the annihilation of the defending German battalion and left the 1st Battalion disorganized and heavily drained of strength. Having broken the Boche resistance by mid-afternoon, the battalion was able to push through the woods in its zone to reach the high ground north of STE SUZANNE where it halted, incapable of further offensive action.

2nd Battalion, attacking on the left of the 1st, initially made better progress until it forced the crossing of a highway South of PRETOT. Thereafter, under the direct observation of the guns on the north slope of the FORET, and faced by a determined force entrenched at STE SUZANNE, the progress of the 2nd Battalion was slow and costly. But by 2100 STE SUZANNE had been secured and contact established with the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry West of ST JORES.

3rd Battalion was moved into position in rear of gap between 1st and 2nd Battalions in preparation for its commitment 4 July to relieve the 1st.

### 358th Infantry:

1st Battalion, attacking on the right, reached the crossroad North of ST JORES by midmorning against moderate resistance. As the battalion moved South towards the town, a Boche infantry-tank assault struck its right flank and forced it back on the crossroad. The fight in this area see-sawed throughout the day, with ST JORES changing hands thrice. Finally, the advance of the 2nd Battalion, 359th Infantry, relieved pressure on the West and the 1st Battalion's leading elements secured ST JORES, with the bulk of the unit disposed for protection of the crossroad, whose retention was vital to the integrity of the

Division's position.

2nd Battalion, on the left, made excellent progress during the early hours, reaching the railroad within its zone en-route to LA BUTTE. Here again, a Boche counterattack spearheaded by tanks struck the battalion right, disorganizing G Company and widening the existing gap between the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The thrust was stopped generally along the railroad but Battalion control was weakened to the extent of prohibiting appreciable further advance for the remainder of the day.

3rd Battalion, initially in reserve, was committed at 1230 to restore the situation in the center of the regimental zone, effecting relief of the 2nd Battalion. The German penetration between the assault battalions regained possession of LES SABLONS and forced the 3rd Battalion to again reduce the town as a preliminary to execution of its assigned mission. By 2000 LES SABLONS was firmly in our hands and the 3rd Battalion had advanced to connect up with the 1st and 2nd Battalions. A counterattack against K Company was beaten off prior to dark.

#### 357th Infantry:

Regiment, less 3rd Battalion, moved to forward assembly area vicinity PORT AUNY closing at 2100.

3rd Battalion moved from its original positions at 1800, leaving L Company to secure the causeway at BAUPTE. Remainder of the Battalion was disposed to outpost the area from BAUPTE to the regimental assembly area.

90TH Reconnaissance Troop, reverting to Division control, patrolled the North edge of the PRAIRIE MARECAGEUSES.

By the day's end, the Division could count an average advance of 1200 yards at a cost of over 600 casualties. The 82nd Airborne Division on our right had made an equal gain in the left of their zone and the 79th Infantry Division reported only negligible progress. The enemy, contrary to general expectations had disclosed his intentions of defending in place to the end, whatever the price. Captured documents revealed that his position, the "MAHLMAN LINE" (named for the commander of the 353rd German Infantry Division opposing us) ran from BEAU COUDRAY on the East through the FORET DE MONT CASTRE to the West Coast. We had driven in his OPLR but stiffer fighting against his main defense was in the offing.

#### 4 JULY 44

The day was hours old before all battalions were organized within defensive perimeters. The Boche gave no respite – aided by his excellent observation which pinpointed our dispositions as of dusk, he continued a hail of artillery, mortar and harassing machine gun fire which increased the problem of re-supply and readjustment of local supports and reserves. The attack was continued at 0600.

#### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion drove forward from STE SUZANNE towards its objective on the East nose of the FORET and reached the ST JORES-LA HAYE DU PUITTS Road. Counterattacked there both frontally and on the right flank by a combined infantry-tank force, it fell back on STE SUZANNE to defend from its night perimeter positions. The Boche furiously attempted to retake the area but was consistently repulsed, the last assault coming late in the afternoon. Thereafter, pressure relaxed sufficiently to allow the Battalion to resume the advance and by dark it controlled the road, connecting up with the 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry, by patrols.

3rd Battalion, passed through the left of the 1st Battalion and made limited progress until stopped

by a formidable German position in a wooded ravine, perpendicular to its advance, the fight raged all day without gain.

With both assault battalions in difficulty and out of contact with each other, the restoration of the situation fell to the 1st Battalion. It attacked through the gap and blasted its way towards the road down the ravine, which had served as the original Battalion boundary in the morning attack. While A and B Companies fought southward, C Company was diverted to the West, clearing of the Boche resistance in the draw in front of the 3rd Battalion. By midnight the battalion had reached the road, connecting up with the 3rd Battalion to its right rear.

#### 358th Infantry:

1st Battalion, 358th Infantry, heavily opposed to its front and harassed by accurate fire from the nose of the FORET, fought its way South across the railroad and captured LES BELLES CROIX.

2nd Battalion was badly handled at daylight by a Boche attack, which split the leading companies and disrupted its own attack preparations. The constant mortaring received by this unit made regrouping difficult but by 1700 had reorganized and was able to push on to take LA BUTTE.

3rd Battalion had the mission of making a limited attack to high ground to its immediate front and from that position to assist by fire the advance of the 1st and 2nd Battalions until they made contact, one with the other, permitting reconstitution of the 3rd as regimental reserve. The Battalion secured its objectives, but physical juncture was not made by the 1st and 2nd Battalions and it consequently remained in the line.

#### 357th Infantry:

The advance of the 83rd Infantry Division had covered the BAUPTE Crossing and L Company was therefore released to its Battalion at 1500, on Division order 1st Battalion moved to ST JORES to fill the gap between the 2nd Battalion, 359th Infantry and the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry. Regiment was alerted to pass through 358th Infantry the following day and continue the attack south through BEAU COUDRAY.

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Casualties for the day were considerably higher than on the 3rd; every inch of ground had been gained at a terrific cost. The rapid capture of the FORET DE MONT CASTRE loomed increasingly important -- without it we had no observation; with it the Boche had too much.

#### 5 JULY 44

The attack to assigned objectives was continued at 0845.

#### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion (reinforced by C Company, 712th Tank Battalion), attacking in column of Companies, passed through the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry and advanced to the South astride the ST JORES-LES PLESSIS Road. By virtue of aggressive infantry action and coordinated tank support the leading Company (A) made excellent progress and by noon had reached a point some 500 yards North of BEAU COUDRAY. B Company was committed wide on the right of the 1st Battalion. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion (moving to the attack through the zone of the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry) was swung to the right to position it directly in rear of the 1st Battalion.

The road from ST JORES South to BEAU COUDRAY bisects a narrow corridor of normal hedgerow country flanked on the East by the (PRAIRIES MARECAGEUSES DE GORGES) and on the West by flat grassy meadow devoid of all cover. The PRAIRIES extends South to GORGES, but immediately Southwest of BEAU COUDRAY bocage country resumes. Debouchment from the bottleneck represented by the corridor, was contingent upon the prior capture of BEAU COUDRAY and its successful assault was necessary preliminary to the further development of Regimental Plan.

Company A received increasingly stronger enemy reaction and was unable to force its way into BEAU COUDRAY. B Company, counterattacked on its right flank when approximately abreast of A Company and faced to meet this threat. C Company was committed on the right of B Company to secure the right flank. Thus the 1st Battalion with 3 Rifle Companies committed was unable to force its way into or through BEAU COUDRAY. As a result there was insufficient maneuver room for the employment of the 3rd Battalion on the right; moreover a considerable gap existed between A and B Companies which could not be readjusted because of the continuous fire to which the 1st Battalion was subjected. A change of plans was necessary and consequently the 3rd Battalion initiated reconnaissance with a view to a projected attack through the lines of the normal 1st Battalion the following day.

The 1st Battalion 358th Infantry which had been operating under Regimental control since passed through by the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry was protecting the right flank of the Regiment. At 1600 this Battalion was ordered to move to the Southwest toward the tip of the FORET DE MONT CASTRE to relieve pressure on the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry.

2nd Battalion 357th Infantry, in Regimental Reserve, moved to the area vacated by the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry.

#### 358th Infantry:

1st Battalion passed to the control of 357th Infantry at 0845 after the 1st Battalion 357th Infantry passed through it. The remainder of the regiment after being covered by the advance of the 357th Infantry assembled in the vicinity of ST JORES as Division Reserve, closing in that area at 2100. L Company out-posted the Division left flank from BAUPTÉ to contact with the 357th Infantry.

#### 359th Infantry:

Initiated its attack with the 2nd Battalion on the left and 3rd Battalion on the right to seize and hold the high ground in the FORET.

3rd Battalion, after a violent but short-lived skirmish in the vicinity of its LD, broke through the German defenses and advanced relatively unopposed to seize and secure the high ground on the North side of the FORET.

2nd Battalion, attacking to secure the Northeast nose of the FORET, encountered heavy resistance throughout the day. It was finally held short of its objective. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry on Division order moved Southwest from the vicinity of ST JORES to come abreast of and relieve the pressure on the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry. By 2300 the 2 Battalions had made physical contact and the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry was attached to the 359th Infantry for the continuation of the attack the following day.

1st Battalion was moved to an assembly area in rear of 3rd Battalion with the mission of protecting the right flank of the Regiment.

#### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Was attached to the 359th Infantry at 1200 to maintain contact between the right of 359th Infantry and left of the 82nd Airborne Division.



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At the end of the day's fighting the Division had advanced its lines approximately 2000 yards. While the fighting had been severe and the casualties heavy the Division had secured a foothold on the FORET DE MONT CASTRE – a foothold which we were never to relinquish and which provided the initial key to the success of the Division's operations.

6 JULY 44

357th Infantry:

Attacking at 0800, C Company, on the right flank of the 1st Battalion, made limited progress and forced its way across the East-West Road through BEAU COUDRAY; the other Companies were stopped without gain.

3rd Battalion with 2 Companies abreast and K echeloned to the right rear moved into the gap between A and C Companies to restore the momentum of the Regimental offensive. By 1500 the 3rd Battalion attacking against increasingly strong resistance had reached the high ground immediately south of BEAU COUDRAY. In view of the isolation of A Company from the remainder of the Battalion and the necessity for unified control over the 3 Companies exposed to enemy pressure from the Southwest, the 2 Battalions were regrouped by the attachment of A to the 3rd Battalion and K to the 1st Battalion.

Shortly before midnight the 15th German Parachute Regiment which had replaced the original defending troops, launched a violent counterattack against the 3 Companies (I, L & C) south of BEAU COUDRAY. C Company was forced back with heavy casualties and became intermingled with K Company; these 2 Companies were subsequently reorganized as one unit and fought as such for the next several days. I and L Companies held firm but with both flanks exposed they were soon cut off from the remainder of the Regiment by German infiltration. Enemy mortar and artillery fire was hourly increasing in intensity.

2nd Battalion, initially in Regimental Reserve, passed to Division control at 2000 and was moved (less E Company) to assembly area Southwest of ST JORES. E Company, which had been placed astride the ST JORES - BEAU COUDRAY Road, remained in that location.

359th Infantry:

1st Battalion, attacking at 0800, scaled the North slopes of the FORET on the right of the 3rd Battalion and, swinging wide, advanced against sporadic resistance to seize the high ground in the vicinity of LA VILLE which provided dominant observation over West half of the Corps zone. The importance of this ground to the Germans was to be made plain in the next few days.

3rd Battalion, initiating its advance when the 1st Battalion came abreast, was met by heavy opposition in the thick woods on the summit of the FORET. It soon developed into a close-quarter grenade and bayonet melee, which continued with unabated fury until mid-afternoon when the German resistance was broken and the Battalion was able to push to its objective East of the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion sustained a counterattack before it could organize its objective and repulsed it with difficulty.

The existence of a sizable German force between the 1st and 3rd Battalions made the establishment and maintenance of firm contact between these 2 units an impossible task for the moment. Both Battalions were low on ammunition, without AT protection and were under heavy enemy fire. Re-supply and evacuation were serious problems because of the absence of roads and the presence of small

German groups in the rear of the 2 Battalions. During the night, partial re-supply was effected by using attached tanks as cargo carriers.

2nd Battalion 359th Infantry and 1st Battalion 358th Infantry (now attached 359th Infantry) attacked at 0830 and reached without difficulty their objectives on the East nose of the Foret. The positions were organized and preparations made for the expected counterattack. Prisoners taken during the morning provided evidence of the presence of other German Paratroopers, the cream of the Nazis, in the Division zone. The presence of this unit meant only one thing – counterattack to restore position. The full importance of the nose had not become apparent until we secured it. It provided perfect observation to the North and the East and consequently was more important to the Boche defensively than to us in our offensive plans. It did however control an excellent road net and good flank observation on Boche units facing 357th Infantry.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Continued to screen the right rear of the Regiment, blocking approaches up the valley north of the FORET from the West.

358th Infantry (less 1st Battalion):

At noon, on Division order, the 3rd Battalion was directed to move from its assembly position in vicinity of ST JORES to attack West through the valley to clean out the resistance in the rear of the 359th Infantry as far as the town of LITHAIRE. Advancing rapidly at first, the Battalion soon encountered enemy in strength and at darkness was still held East of LITHAIRE; it had succeeded however, in guaranteeing a safe line of communication to the summit of the FORET in rear of the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 359th Infantry.

At 1715 the Regiment (less 2 Battalions) was directed to move to the vicinity of LE FRY in preparation for its commitment the following day in a zone of action between the 357th and 359th Infantries. The situation was sufficiently critical in the area of the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry that the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry was directed to move to occupy the high ground from which the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry had jumped off in the morning, filling the gap between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of 359th Infantry. This position was occupied and organized without incident.

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In the course of the day's operations the Division had strengthened its hold on the FORET by 4 Battalions as the right flank swung considerably forward. The 357th Infantry, hampered by poor ground and insufficient maneuver room had been roughly handled, but was capable of containing within its zone, while the main Division effort veered to the right. Across the entire front enemy reaction was intensified and with 8 out of 9 infantry battalions completely committed, the possibility of a damaging enemy counter-thrust loomed large. The only additional reinforcing troops available were the 315th Engineer Battalion, now assembled in the vicinity of ST JORES and the 121st Cavalry Squadron elements of which were patrolling the PRAIRIE from the left of the 357th Infantry to the BAUPTE Causeway.

Elsewhere on the Corps front the fighting had been equally hard. 82nd Airborne Division to the North was encountering heavy resistance Northeast of LA HAYE DU PUIITS. 79th Infantry Division on the right flank of the Corps had sustained enemy counter-attacks West of LA HAYE DU PUIITS throughout the day. On the Northeast side of the PRAIRIE, 83rd Infantry Division, operating with the VII Corps, could count as gains only a few hedgerows. The German defense had been well-planned and superbly executed.

7 JULY 44

The entire front was alive throughout the night. Small German groups continued to attack and harass I and L Companies of the 357th Infantry. Shortly after midnight a paratrooper battalion, scaled the wooded south slopes of the nose occupied by the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry and launched a noisily fanatical assault which retook the high ground driving the 1st Battalion back onto the reverse (North) slope. Paratrooper elements infiltrated down into the valley. The Boche, between the 1st and 3rd Battalions 359th Infantry were active and small-scale attacks against the 3rd Battalion continued from the East and South. Enemy mortar and artillery fell everywhere on the Division front. At 0400, Division issued instructions that all units would mop up rear areas, consolidate and improve positions and continue pressure by patrols and fire, but that a resumption of the general attack would be delayed.

357th Infantry:

B Company, in 1st Battalion reserve, supported by tanks attacked Southeast at 0900 to seize BEAU COUDRAY and reestablish contact with leading companies of the 3rd Battalion. Its advance was stopped by heavy resistance on the outskirts of town. At 1450, a violent counterattack hit B Company on the right flank and although repulsed by our tanks caused heavy casualties including all officers and noncommissioned officers. The remnants withdrew into the A Company perimeter. Meanwhile the remainder of the 1st Battalion, the fused C-K Company force, held in place throughout the day, sustaining a total of 15 separate counterattacks. At 1635, a carrying party from the isolated companies broke through the German lines and reached the 3rd Battalion area in greatly decimated strength. It reported that the companies were under continuously heavy pressure and were very low on ammunition. Later in the day a runner from L company slipped through the lines reporting that I Company CP had been overrun by tanks and the entire CP group killed or captured. Regiment directed that E Company, under the control of the 3rd Battalion and supported by tanks, attack at once to relieve the situation of I and L Companies. Heavy fire delayed organization of the attack and it was subsequently postponed until dawn.

2nd Battalion was released to Regimental control at 1550 and was moved to a forward assembly area in the vicinity of LES BELLES CROIX.

358th Infantry:

3rd Battalion continued the attack to the West at 0900. After breaking resistance immediately in front of it, it made excellent progress. By noon it was on the East edge of LITHAIRE and had taken a total of 50 prisoners. At 1345 it passed to the control of 359th Infantry for the completion of mop-up operations West to the Division boundary.

At 1017 the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry and 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry passed to the control of the 358th Infantry. At the same time the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry passed to the control of the 359th Infantry for employment between the 1st and 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry. B Company, 315th Engineer Battalion was attached to the 358th Infantry to occupy and hold the high ground which would be vacated by the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry when that Battalion initiated its advance.

1st Battalion 358th Infantry had sustained an attack shortly after midnight which drove it off the high ground on the Northeast corner of the FORET DE MONT CASTRE. 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry, unmolested by this attack, remained in position on the high ground East of this point. The Boche had thus driven a salient square into the middle of the Division zone and was in a favorable position to exploit against the right flank of the 357th Infantry or to split the Division in two. 358th Infantry was ordered to retake the nose. At 1645 the 1st Battalion, supported by the fire of the 2nd Battalion 359th

Infantry launched a frontal attack against the German position on the crest. In a bitter fight the Battalion twice reached the crest and twice was driven off and at midnight reorganized to just short of their objective.

B Company, 315th Engineer Battalion, relieved the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry on the latter's position, at 1500. At 2200, remainder of the Engineer Battalion was attached to the Regiment and its C Company moved into position to reinforce B Company. The remaining Company assembled in the valley directly in rear of the leading two.

### 359th Infantry

1st the 3rd Battalions maintained and improved their advanced positions throughout the day against repeated attacks and heavy fire. In the valley Southwest of the 3rd Battalions position, around the town of VESLY and MOBECQ considerable troop concentrations were observed and engaged with devastating effect by the massed fires of the Corps Artillery. 5 large scale attacks were launched from that direction but never reached the 3rd Battalion, thanks to the superior work of the artillery observers and infantry commanders.

At 1520, the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, now attached to 359th Infantry, moved into the Regimental zone and fought its way forward with the mission of filling the gap between the two leading battalions. By 2250 it had cleared the resistance between these battalions and established contact laterally. The three battalions were now firmly linked and our hold on the FORET secure.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry passed to 359th Infantry control at 1345. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was in turn attached to it for assistance in its mop up operations to the West. By 1800 the Battalion, in a well-coordinated maneuver, had seized LITHAIRE and its garrison of 75 Boche. It continued its advance to the West, holding for the night in the clear, on a predetermined line through the East slope of the FORET.

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The 8th Infantry Division in Corps Reserve, was originally under orders to relieve the 90th Division elements in the FORET on 8 July, and continue the attack to the South. The 90th Division, with its zone delimited to the area now held by the 357th Infantry, would continue the attack south until pinched out by the juncture of the 8th and 83rd Infantry Divisions on the right and left respectively. However, during the day, captured documents, substantiated by air reconnaissance reports and our own observations, developed evidence of the presence of the Das Reich Division in the Corps zone. Captured officers reported that it would attack on 8 July on a northeast axis to recapture the FORET DE MONT CASTRE. The direction of its attack would strike the 8th Division squarely in the flank. Based on this information the Corps order was revised, shifting the zone of action of the 8th Division westward and changing its attack direction to the southeast line in order that it might in turn strike the probable attack of the German Division in the flank. During the afternoon and night, arrangements for the passage of elements of the 8th Division through the 359th Infantry zone were completed. It was strongly recommended that the 121st Infantry on the left of the 8th Division veer to the left of its zone and approach its line of departure (our present front lines) over ground which had been cleared by our units thereby bypassing the scattered resistance still remaining west of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. Numerous guides were posted and officer liaison established to facilitate execution of this plan. The decision not to follow the suggestion was to result in a 48 hour delay in the Corps offensive.

79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on the extreme right of the VIII Corps had advanced practically abreast of the 90th Division, bypassing LA HAYE DU PUIITS. On our left, in 3 days' stiff fight, the 83rd Infantry Division had made only limited progress. Across the entire front of the VII and VIII Corps German resistance was as strong as on the first day of the offensive.

8 JULY 44

The Division plan for the resumption of the attack was briefly as follows:

(a) When passed through by the right regiment of the 8th Division the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry and 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry would sideslip to the East and attack Southeast through the FORET on the left of the 8th Division with the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry following in reserve.

(b) The 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry would relieve the 315th Engineer Battalion and in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry would initiate its attack when the 359th Infantry had come abreast. The 1st Battalion 358th Infantry would consolidate the nose and reorganize as regimental reserves.

(c) 357th Infantry would execute a holding attack until pinched out by the advance of the two right regiments, at which time it would revert to Division Reserve.

As it actually developed, the failure of the 8th Infantry Division to clear our front lines on this day postponed the attack.

#### 357th Infantry:

The planned attack of E Company did not materialize because of failure to organize it properly. The CO of the 3rd Battalion was relieved and the entire force, consisting of the intermingled 1st and 3rd Battalions, was placed under the command of the CO of the 1st Battalion. At 0900 Field Train and Regimental Headquarters personnel were formed into a provisional Company and occupied positions astride the ST JORES-BEAU COUDRAY Road South of the Regimental Headquarters.

During the morning hours, a very few men from I and L Companies worked their way back to our lines and reported that the great bulk of the two isolated companies had been killed or captured. There was no sound of battle from their last reported positions and it was consequently clear that our resistance in that area had ended.

For the remainder of the day emphasis was placed on the regrouping and position improvement of the remaining effective companies of the combined force (A, B, C and K). Boche pressure slackened; it was later determined that the paratrooper force, having accomplished its mission of restoring the line, had been replaced by a less elite combat group.

E Company was withdrawn and rejoined the 2nd Battalion, which again passed to Division control and moved to its original assembly area Southwest of ST JORES.

#### 358th Infantry:

The 358th Infantry now consisted of its organic 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry and the 315th Engineer Battalion.

Throughout the hours from midnight until dawn the Boche in the Regimental zone continued to probe the hilltop positions, but no attack developed. At 1045 the 3rd Battalion, having been covered by the advance of the 8th Infantry Division across its front, was relieved from attachment to the 359th Infantry and returned to Regimental control. It assembled in the valley north of the Engineer position preparatory to its attack through that position. Based on the forecast of the expected progress of the 8th Division, the time of attack of the 3rd Battalion in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry was tentatively set at 1500. The attack was finally postponed until the next day, and in lieu thereof plans were completed for the relief of the Engineer Battalion by the 3rd Battalion under cover of darkness.

The three battalions on the Hill maintained their positions against the German reconnaissance in force, which increased in frequency toward evening. The reported concentration of three companies of paratroopers on the south slopes of the FORET were "serenaded" by the Corps Artillery.

359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion 358th Infantry in the center of the Regimental line was attacked at 0330 by an estimated German Battalion. This attack was finally repulsed at dawn. Heavy pressure against the center and right of the line continued through the morning and afternoon, climaxed by a strong attack at 1500 designed to split the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry. The enemy penetration was neutralized by a counterattack and the lines restored. At 1930 still another attack, supported by heavy artillery concentration, was launched against the entire front line. Our superior artillery and the determination of the infantry repulsed it without gain. At midnight, therefore, the line still held, despite heavy casualties, (particularly among officers and NCOs).

To the right rear of the Regiment, the 8th Division was advancing slowly, having initiated their attack at 0600. They approached our positions through a zone which took them in front of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry rather than through the cleared area in its (3rd Battalion's) rear. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, when its front had been covered by their advance, was released from 359th Infantry control and rejoined its Regiment.

Although our guides and liaison officers were in contact with the left elements of the 121st Infantry (left assault Regiment of the 8th Division) and the area between their left front and the rear of our hilltop position was clear, scattered enemy resistance remained in the right of the 121st Infantry zone and slowed their progress. Thus at midnight the 8th Division had not yet passed through our lines and our resumption of the offensive was consequently postponed.

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The 79th Infantry Division on the extreme right of the Corps had taken LA HAYE DU PUIITS and was consolidating its positions.

9 JULY 44

357th Infantry:

The Regimental front was relatively quiet throughout the day. Readjustment and improvement of the positions of the combined 1st and 3rd Battalions continued. The provisional Company, after weathering two hours of concentrated shelling, extended its dispositions to the Southeast to prevent further enemy infiltration which previously had caused a great deal of the harassment and to firm contact with elements of the 121st Cavalry Squadron, out-posting the left flank and rear of the Division zone.

2nd Battalion remained in position as Division Reserve, patrolling to contact with the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry.

358th Infantry:

The 1st Battalion 358th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry in close contact, one with the other, consolidated their positions and made those readjustments requisite to a continuation of the attack. Observers with the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry, utilizing the excellent enfiladed observation available, directed heavy fire into the German positions in the vicinity of BEAU COUDRAY.

3rd Battalion completed relief of Engineer Battalion at dawn and the latter reverted to Division control. A gap existed between the right of the 3rd Battalion and the left of the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry and into that gap the Boche probed vigorously. At 1700 a vicious German attack struck the right front and flank of the 3rd Battalion. Although it was repulsed, some infiltration continued around the right. To fill that gap, B Company 315th Engineer Battalion was reattached to the Regiment and

moved to positions on the right flank of the 3rd Battalion. Subsequently the remainder of the Engineer Battalion was attached and C Company moved into the line to reinforce B Company.

359th Infantry:

The 1st and 3rd Battalions together with the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry maintained what was tantamount to regimental strongpoint against continuous probing and attack. At 1930 a German attack drove a wedge between the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry and 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry but counterattack restored the lines.

To the left rear of the Battalions, the Regiment had deployed a miscellaneous force of cooks, drivers, clerks and the dismounted 90th Reconnaissance Troop to fill the gap between its 3rd Battalion and the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. They were likewise employed to guard communications from the regimental CP across the wilderness to Battalion forward positions.

Guides were still waiting for the 121st Infantry, but that unit was having difficulties on its right front. As of midnight, the 121st was no nearer our lines than 24 hours previously.

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The 4th Infantry Division, having been committed in the right of the original zone of action of the 83rd Infantry Division, made small progress on our immediate left.

10 JULY 44

357th Infantry:

Based on information from Corps of the evidence of a general enemy withdrawal on our front, Division ordered strong patrols to determine the presence or absence of the enemy in the BEAU COUDRAY area. The Regiment was to be prepared to immediately exploit any verified withdrawal; in any event it was to exert strong pressure beginning 1400 to assist the attacks of the 358th and 359th Infantries.

All patrols drew heavy fire; the Boche was still there.

At 1400 an advance was initiated with 2 company groups to secure the East and West road through BEAU COUDRAY. A Company on the extreme left received heavy machine gun fire from its left front the moment it moved forward. Neither artillery nor mortar concentrations had any effect in reducing the volume of enemy fire delivered from what subsequently was found to be cut-and-covered emplacements and the company's advance was completely blocked. B Company, adjacent to and on the right of A Company, had been reinforced by 5 medium tanks and was set up as the main effort. However, the extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire absorbed by this company broke its spirit and the prevalence of stragglers denied it any successful offensive action. C Company, now reconstituted, attempted to attack Southeast to fill the existing gap between B Company and K Company on the right but was unable to make any progress. K Company on the extreme right reached the road and attempted to turn East on the road to roll up resistance in front of the other companies, but withering fire hitting both exposed flanks made this an impossibility and it withdrew to its original position. Shortly before dark all 4 companies consolidated on their original positions and the regimental front became stabilized.

358th Infantry:

During the early part of the day, the three battalions in line (in order from right to left, 3rd, 2nd 359th Infantry, 1st) on Division order maintained their positions on the eastern portion of the FORET prepared to initiate the attack pivoting on the 1st Battalion. The resumption of the attack (in a southeasterly

direction) had been planned as a coordinated effort by the 359th and 358th infantries. However, the slow advance on the 8th Infantry Division and the improbability of its passing through the 359th Infantry at any reasonable hour caused the Division Commander to order the 358th Infantry to attack at 1500, with the 359th Infantry following as soon as practicable after it could sideslip into position (the sideslip itself hinging upon its relief by the 8th Infantry Division).

At 1400, the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry attacked southeast into the heavily wooded reverse slopes of the FORET. 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry jumped off parallel to and on the left of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry when the latter's advance had brought them abreast.

The terrain onto which the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry attacked was rocky and densely wooded and control immediately became a major problem. The only route through the attack area was a firebreak on which Company I, the left assault Company, guided. Despite heavy resistance the assault companies initially made good progress but halted on their first phase line to reestablish the lateral contact, which had been lost almost at the jump-off. After reestablishing contact and determining their position by colored smoke shells fired by supporting artillery, the battalion commander ordered a resumption of the advance. Almost immediately all assault platoons met fierce resistance from the fanatically determined paratroopers defending that area. The Boche engaged our infantry with hand grenades and close range machine gun fire from trees, spider trap holes and carefully camouflaged dug-in positions in the tangled undergrowth, inflicting heavy casualties. The assault units extricated themselves only by the gallant action of those men not pinned to the ground, who charged the Germans with bayonet, grenades and hip-fired machine guns. The command group itself was attacked by a bypassed German squad; the latter was dispatched by the timely intervention of a reserve platoon of L Company which turned back upon hearing the sound of the firefight.

After beating the immediate resistance, the Battalion halted for reorganization prior to resumption of the advance. A considerable gap had developed between the leading assault companies as a result of the divergent attack of Company I to storm and carry a rocky knoll on its left flank from which a German platoon had been delivering particularly devastating fire. Despite heavy artillery and mortar fire, which continued to rain upon the Battalion area, the reorganization was quickly completed and the attack was resumed at 1800. Since adjacent units were considerably to the rear, the original assault companies were faced left and right respectively to protect the flanks, while K Company assaulted through the gap with the support of one platoon of medium tanks. K Company broke out of the woods and reached a position overlooking the road to LASTELLE, the Battalion objective. The supporting tanks were immediately knocked out by German self-propelled guns or immobilized in the sticky underfooting. Deprived of their tank support and heavily engaged by small arms, flat trajectory, mortar and artillery fire from three sides, their position became untenable and the company was withdrawn at dusk to form the frontal side of the Battalion parameter. Meanwhile B Company, which had been brought down the Battalion route as a reinforcement reached the Battalion area and was placed on the right of L Company to complete the all-around defense.

In tribute to this Battalion it is considered that its gallant action in the face of great odds on this day broke the German mainline in the FORET and occasioned their withdrawal along the entire Division front 24 hours later.

2nd Battalion 359th Infantry initiating its attack when the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry came abreast, met severely strong resistance on its left flank. G Company on the Battalion right by-passed this resistance and by dusk had drawn abreast of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. Remainder of the Battalion was held by the dogged enemy some distance to its left rear.

1st Battalion, in position unsuitable for a jump-off, supported the attack of the right two battalions by fire, but made no advance.



### 359th Infantry:

All battalions held in place until 1600 at which time the 121st Infantry on the left of the 8th Infantry Division passed through their lines and continued the attack. As soon as covered, the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry and 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry moved rearward and swung obliquely left into their new zone of action. Both battalions encountered terrain difficulties and resistance comparable to that experienced by the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, but by dark had secured the southernmost hill mass of the FORET and had reached the far edge of the woods. Lack of routes and bypassed groups of Boche made communications and supply an extremely difficult and hazardous problem.

1st Battalion remained in its original position until the reserve Battalion of the 121st Infantry had come abreast through it and then moved left to an assembly position as Regimental Reserve.

The 315th Engineer Battalion moved into position to reoccupy the high ground vacated by the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, when the latter attacked, to guarantee the integrity of the Division front. 90th Reconnaissance Troop assembled in the valley north of the FORET as Division reserve.

### 11 JULY 44

### 358th Infantry:

Beginning at 0600, 1st Battalion 358th Infantry and 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry mopped up the reentrant between them formed by the flanking attack of the 2nd Battalion on the previous evening. By 1000 the task had been completed and they were in full control of the long disputed "NOSE" on the Northeast edge of the FORET. During the same period, 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, still under heavy fire from enemy mortars, continued reorganization. B Company was released from attachment to 3rd Battalion and moved to rejoin its parent unit.

At 1030, 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry, attacking generally in an easterly direction moved forward from the "NOSE", crossed the road to LASTELLE and attacked into the hedgerows to enfilade the resistance confronting 357th Infantry. The area of the attack was of limited width, flanked as it was on both sides by swampy, open meadows. The straight frontal attack into which the Battalion was forced by terrain limitations was slow and costly and by 1500 all progress was stopped.

3rd Battalion, resuming the attack in mid-afternoon, reached the LASTELLE Road and turned South with it as an axis. It overcame the resistance at the bridge just North of LASTELLE at dusk and, in conjunction with the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry, which had meanwhile come abreast of it at the right, advanced to and occupied the town of LASTELLE shortly after midnight.

1st Battalion regrouped on the "NOSE" and completed plans for passage through 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry at dawn the following day.

### 357th Infantry:

While the remainder of the regiment held its now stabilized position North of BEAU COUDRAY, 2nd Battalion moved to an assembly area just Northeast of the "NOSE". The Division plan visualized the commitment of this Battalion on the left of the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry after the latter had reached the eastern extremity of the narrow corridor through which it was attacking and had turned to the Southeast. As stated above, the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry did not possess sufficient power to break out and it was consequently decided to commit the 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry in column of companies through its left to give added drive to the bogged down attack.

2nd Battalion went into action at 1500, passing through the left company of the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry. Despite its canalization and the stubborn fight put up by superbly dug-in Germans, the Battalion drove ahead and by dark had reached the far end of the corridor and had gained for itself the

maneuver room necessary for the development of its full offensive strength.

### 359th Infantry:

The few available hours of darkness had been inadequate to effect re-supply and establish communication to and within the assault Battalions; it was nearly noon before the battalions were in proper shape for a continuation of the attack.

At 1400 the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry and 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry moved forward, advancing to the East-West road just south of the FORET. At this point they came under extremely heavy fire from Hill 92 to their immediate front. To give renewed momentum to the attack, 1st Battalion 359th Infantry was moved through the woods to the left rear of the 3rd Battalion. At 1930 1st Battalion, in a coordinated effort with 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, attacked out of the FORET and advanced to the town of LASTELLE.

### 12 JULY 44

During the early morning hours the Boche withdrew to a position, which was subsequently discovered to be some 3000 meters rearward. The battle of the FORET DE MONT CASTRE had been won. Blood, guts and superior equipment had finally broken the Mahlman Line. The cost to the 90th the Division had been high; some 5000 had been killed, wounded or captured. But the German losses were heavier. The 90th Division, drained as it was of key officers and non-commissioned officers had undisputedly proven its combat effectiveness. For 9 continuous days and nights it had fought without respite against a seasoned and entrenched enemy, and its wounds notwithstanding, emerged from the fight victorious and high-spirited.

### 357th Infantry:

The 2nd Battalion attacked at 0800 and meeting practically no resistance, advanced rapidly to LE PLESSIS. After mopping up the Boche stragglers in that area it was redirected south along the west edge of the swamp in conformity with Division orders. The movement of the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry obliquely across its front in the vicinity of LA COUTRIE stopped further progress. Although every effort was made to shift the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry to the right into its proper zone of action, this was not accomplished until well after dark and the 2nd Battalion could but remain where it first halted. Under cover of darkness it moved forward and out-posted the left of the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry while that latter unit side-slipped to the right.

While the 2nd Battalion was investigating LE PLESSIS, the 1st and 3rd Battalions now reorganized, moved forward over the bitterly contested ground of the preceding few days, assembled in vicinity of BEAU COUDRAY as Division Reserve.

### 358th Infantry:

Shortly after midnight the 1st Battalion, previously regimental reserve, initiated relief of the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry. Upon completion of the relief, the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry assembled just North of the "NOSE" and when closed was detached from the 358th Infantry and passed to division control.

At 0800 the 1st Battalion on the left and the 3rd Battalion on the right, moved rapidly Southeast against negligible resistance.

By 1400 the 1st Battalion had reached the stream line just North of GORGES with its left at the swamp and is right opposite the town. Patrols which attempted to cross the stream drew heavy fire from

the buildings lining the far bank and the Battalion was engaged in a hot firefight. All efforts to force the stream line were repulsed and the Battalion secured for the night on the positions it had won by mid-afternoon. Under cover of darkness, it side-slipped to the right to conform to the new Regimental Zone and to permit the employment of the 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry.

3rd Battalion on the regimental right, advanced abreast of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry from LASTELLE through LA SALMONNERIE with the objective of seizing the main crossroad at ST GERMAIN. This Battalion had been so greatly decimated in the preceding few days that its rifle elements consisted of but 4 officers and 122 enlisted men were organized into a single battle group. It reached the crossroads without difficulty but was ambushed by flanking machine gun and tank fire as it moved to the ground beyond. In the ensuing fight it sustained approximately 40 additional casualties including 4 officers. By late evening the remnants had routed the Boche and, reinforced by 2 Antitank Platoons, had organized the crossroads for defense. Contact could not be established with the 1st Battalion on the left.

#### 359th Infantry:

1st Battalion moved from vicinity LASTELLE at 0800 on the right rear of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. After an uninterrupted advance of 2 km it encountered a heavily defended strong point in a sunken road midway between LA SALMONNERIE and ST GERMAIN. Although reinforced by tanks, it was unable to reduce this pocket of resistance. With the advance thus effectively blocked, the Battalion Commander left one Company in place to contain frontally and swung the remainder of the Battalion left into the zone of the 358th Infantry to tie in with the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry for the night.

2nd Battalion 358th Infantry from its position on the South slopes of the FORET advanced due East towards LASTELLE avoiding Hill 92. From LASTELLE it moved South and secured LA BAGOTTERIE thence Southeast abreast of 1st Battalion 359th Infantry. The contour of the enemy's new delaying position was definitely established when this Battalion hit determined resistance a short distance south of PIERREPORT. This Battalion could advance no further. In addition to the enemy position immediately to its front, its left flank had been exposed by the divergent maneuver of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry.

The 3rd Battalion now in regimental reserve, moved throughout the day, echeloned to the right rear of 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry. Closing for the night in an assembly area Southeast of LA BAGOTTERIE. As a matter of interest, this Battalion was forced to fight for its night assembly position.

2nd Battalion 359th Infantry, Division Reserve, was ordered forward at 1400 and marched to assembly area at the crossroads at LA BAGOTTERIE.

#### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Returning to action after a brief rest, moved to LASTELLE and with dismounted patrols, maintained contact with the 8th Infantry Division.

#### 315th Engineer Battalion:

Which had for the past 5 days operated almost exclusively as a combat unit, was relieved at daylight from its position atop the FORET and returned to much neglected Engineer work.

\* \* \* \* \*

The entire Corps front on this day advanced a comparable distance. The 8th Infantry Division on our immediate right moved rapidly until encountering the reverse slope position of Hill 92. The 79th Infantry Division on the Corps right remained abreast of the 8th Infantry Division. On our left the 4th Infantry Division maneuvering deliberately through difficult swampy terrain made excellent progress.

#### 13 JULY 44

The Division plan for the resumption of the attack called for simultaneous jump off of all 3 regiments at 0645. However because the 8th Infantry Division had been held a considerable distance to our right rear, the attack with the 359th Infantry was postponed until that Division should come abreast.

#### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion had moved one Company forward under cover of darkness to outpost its Line of Departure generally along the line vacated by the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry in its side-slip to the right. The lateral movement of the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry was not completed during the night, and consequently at daybreak elements of the 2 Battalions were intermingled. Completion of the readjustment slowed by the harassing fire of the enemy South of the stream, consumed a considerable portion of the morning and the 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry did not cross its line of departure until 1030. E Company, the assault unit, met heavy machine gun fire from the houses fringing the south bank of the stream immediately as it had started its forward movement. Unable to silence this fire with either mortars or artillery, E Company rose to the man and charged across the stream, overrunning the German positions. A second line of resistance was encountered a few hundred yards south of the stream but the bridgehead established was sufficient to permit the crossing by infiltration of F Company, which swung into action to the left rear of E Company. G Company, in Battalion Reserve, moved to the right, north of the stream, to assist the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry in its attack against GORGES. After the seizure of GORGES by the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry, G Company returned to its own zone, across the stream and split to protect the flanks of the Battalion in the positions it organized for the night. The action of this Battalion, although its gains measured in yards were negligible, unhinged the right flank of the enemy's defense position, forcing him into a general withdrawal.

The remainder of the regiment remained at BEAU COUDRAY training replacements and continuing reorganization.

#### 358th Infantry:

The 1st Battalion on the regimental left, attacked at 0645. During the preceding night the enemy returned in force to the north bank of the stream and from hastily prepared positions stoutly resisted the advance of the Battalion. It required a half-day to eliminate these surprise positions. At 1900 leading elements of the Battalion forced the stream and entered GORGES. By 2100 the town had been locked up, Battalion perimeter established and contact firmed with 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry on the left. 3rd Battalion held in place throughout the day reorganizing. 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry by Division order was scheduled to revert to regimental control at such time as it should be passed through by the advance of the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry.

#### 359th Infantry:

Maintained its positions prepared to attack when the 121st Infantry on its right came abreast. 121st Infantry did not come abreast and consequently no attack was made. The only offensive action on the part of the regiment was the elimination by the 1st Battalion of the strongpoint, which had checked its

advance the previous day.

14 JULY 44

357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion advanced at 1000 meeting no resistance. By 1145 the I and R Platoon was operating to the front and to the left of the Battalion. By mid-afternoon the Battalion had completely cleared the regimental zone to the North and to the East of Boche stragglers and had assembled in the vicinity of LA CELLERIE awaiting regimental orders. Remainder of the regiment was staged forward to the vicinity of GORGES preparatory to the relief of the 358th Infantry.

358th Infantry:

1st and 3rd Battalions advancing abreast moved on the general axis GORGES-GONFREVILLE, against slight resistance. DURAUVILLE and GONFREVILLE, and the crossing East of the latter town were seized without incident and the regimental front advanced to the high ground overlooking the SEVES RIVER from NAY inclusive westward to contact the 359th Infantry. Patrols crossing the SEVES RIVER drew heavy fire from the ground to the South, which in the ensuing days was to become so well known as the "ISLAND".

2nd Battalion upon being covered by the advance of the 359th Infantry side-slipped to the left and assembled south of GORGES as regimental reserve. F Company was attached to the 3rd Battalion in position to back up the greatly reduced latter unit.

359th Infantry:

1st Battalion advancing without resistance moved rapidly within its zone and by mid-afternoon had secured CRs North of SEVES. The Boche outposts North of the RIVER were quickly overrun and one platoon was pushed toward SEVES to secure the stream-crossings. It proved inadequate for the job and since a general engagement was not indicated at this time the attack was abandoned. 2nd Battalion, passing to the right of the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, advanced on the right rear of the 1st Battalion, seized LA COMMUNE and continued to the RIVER to establish contact with the 1st Battalion on its left, and shortly before dark with the 121st Infantry on its right.

3rd Battalion followed by bounds in trace of the 2nd Battalion and assembled East of HAUTE PERREY.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Alerted immediately the enemy's general withdrawal had become apparent, the troop went into action at 1200. One (1) platoon assisted the 357th Infantry in mop up on its area. Remainder of the Troop moved to GONFREVILLE, from that point Northeast on to the neck of land leading to the zone of the 4th Infantry Division. By 1600 it had cleared the area of German resistance taking numerous prisoners, and established contact with 4th Reconnaissance Troop and had organized its outposts.

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90th Infantry Division had reached its assigned objectives and with them secure the 1st Phase of the VIII Corps offensive ended. Army strategy dictated that the Corps hold in place for the time being, pending development in other areas. This announcement was not disappointing for while the Division still

possessed the capacity for continued offensive action, the opportunity to reorganize was an unmitigated blessing.

#### 15 JULY 44

##### 357th Infantry:

Immediately after midnight, 1st Battalion on the right and 2nd Battalion on the left, relieved 358th Infantry in place. The 3rd Battalion assembled in Regimental Reserve North of GONFREVILLE. Throughout the day positions were readjusted and improved without molestation from the enemy on the far side of the SEVES RIVER.

##### 358th Infantry:

Upon relief, assembled all units of regiment in the general area of GORGES.

##### 359th Infantry:

Firmed its position on the Division right and instituted an effective harassing fire plan directed at the Boche confronting them.

##### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Was assigned continued responsibility for the spit of land on the Division left and maintenance of contact with the 4th Infantry Division.

Given thus a breathing spell, the Division entered upon an extensive program of reorganization, rehabilitation and training. Particular attention was given to the integration of replacements and the bathing, reequipping and re-clothing of combat units.

#### 16 - 18 JULY 44

During this period 357th and 358th Infantries maintained their positions overlooking the SEVES RIVER, harassing the enemy on the ISLAND with fire of all types. Because of the open nature of the ground to the immediate front, patrol activity was limited to night work.

The entire VIII Corps was inactive, its resumption of the offensive to the South being contingent upon the initial success of a strong effort planned by the VII Corps in the area Northwest of ST LO. The VIII Corps follow-up attack contemplated a straight push with 4 divisions abreast (in order from right to left, 79th, 8th, 90th, 83rd) to seize the high ground vicinity COUTANCES. The axis of the 90th Division attack was the PERIERS-ST SAUVEUR LENDELIN Road.

On the 18th of July the 4th Armored Division, available for employment in a defensive role only, replaced the 4th Infantry Division in the interval between the 90th and 83rd Divisions.

The immediate stumbling block within the 90th Division zone was the passage across the ISLAND, the approaches to which were devoid of cover and swept by enemy fire. It was felt that the ISLAND should be captured and held as a preliminary operation to provide the Division with a better line of departure. VIII Corps agreed to this plan and preparations were immediately initiated for a dawn attack by the 358th Infantry on 19 July.

All units continued training and rehabilitation. Particular stress was placed on Infantry-Tank training, familiarization firing with all weapons and the indoctrination of infantry officers in field artillery forward observer methods.

## 19 JULY 44

The attack of the 358th Infantry was postponed 24 hours by Corps direction to permit the acquisition of artillery ammunitions necessary for the support of the operations.

Through inexplicable circumstances elements of the 4th Armored Division launched a limited objective attack to seize NAY, a locality, which had been held by our troops for a period of five days. The attack was eventually stopped, after several casualties had been inflicted on the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry.

Late in the day information was received on the indefinite postponement of the projected attack of the 358th Infantry. However, 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry effected relief of the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry to place the attack Line of Departure under Regimental control.

## 20 - 21 JULY 44

[VIII] Corps and Division awaited the jump-off of the VII Corps, which had been daily postponed because of unfavorable weather. During the lull thus afforded Division continued to fully utilize the available time to bring the units to fullest possible combat efficiency.

358th's attack was finally and definitely set for 220600.

## 22 JULY 44

1st and 2nd Battalions 358th Infantry initiated movement at 0100 from vicinity GORGES to forward assembly areas designated for the attack, closing there at 0400 hours.

At 0628 when the preparation started, both battalions were rearward of the prescribed Line of Departure. Immediately the preparation lifted at 0630 the Boche began the most intense and sustained counter preparation fire that the Division had experienced to date. Whether the Boche were forewarned of the impending attack or whether the inactivity on the remainder of the Corps front permitted him to concentrate all available artillery on the attack area has never been accurately determined; the bitter fact remains that the heavy artillery fire which began at H-Hour and continued throughout the day from the outset disrupted and disorganized the assault echelons and foredoomed to failure the well-planned and the well-coordinated attack.

The entire attack plan had been premised upon the rapid movement of the leading waves across the barren approaches to the "ISLAND" and the quick overrunning of its first line of defense. Because of tardiness in reaching the Line of Departure and more especially because of the heavy barrage sustained at the jump-off time, the assault as conceived was never launched. Once aware of the point of our attack, the enemy shifted more troops to the South bank of the stream to oppose us and began mortaring and machine-gunning the deployed troops. The assault companies, abhorrent as the phrase may be, were "pinned to the ground" and notwithstanding the heroic actions of their leaders, remained immobile throughout the forenoon.

Finally at 1100, elements of F Company pushed across the stream West of SEVES and secured a lodgment but no additional 2nd Battalion troops effected a crossing. These troops subsequently withdrew to allow tanks to fire into the buildings in SEVES.

At 1300, C and B Companies ignoring flanking machine gun fire jumped to the "ISLAND" and overcoming the immediate resistance advanced South about 1 km. They were, however, unable to expand their bridgehead West sufficiently to uncover the South approach to the only road onto the "ISLAND".

Battalion altered forward motion after cutting main lateral road on the "ISLAND" awaiting armored and antitank support. Elements of A and D Companies crossed at 1800. Behind them, enemy

mortar, artillery and enfilade machine gun fire blocked all efforts of the engineers to provide a vehicular crossing. The existing road to the ISLAND was denied by the Boche infantry, supported by self-propelled guns, who held the far approach.

In an attempt to exploit the momentary success of the 1st Battalion, the 2nd Battalion was directed to cross in the former's wake and then attack East. But disorganization in the Battalion was so widespread that only G Company was able to cross. It remained in a position of readiness immediately rearward of the 1st Battalion.

At 2000, German paratroopers and tanks struck the East flank of 1st Battalion in two-company strength under the cover of an intense artillery preparation. The attack was firmly repulsed at dusk but its weight and fury had delimited the bridgehead to a scant 300 yards depth South of the stream. An all-around defense was established, covered by all available artillery, pending the arrival of reinforcements in men and equipment.

#### 357th and 359th Infantries:

Holding in place, supported the attack by fire and drew in turn considerable enemy reaction. Added to all other difficulties, a dense fog overhung the Division area rendering the much depended upon liaison planes useless.

#### 23 JULY 44

During the early morning hours the SEVES River overflowed its banks and became un-fordable in most spots. This situation together with the fire, which continued to fall on both banks accentuated the difficulties attendant upon re-supply of ammunition to the 1st Battalion and G Company. At first light there was still no tank crossing and only a handful of ammunition had reached the assault troops. No additional troops of the 2nd Battalion had joined G Company.

At 0830 mortar and artillery fire in the 1st Battalion area increased perceptively and shortly after 0900 the Boche attacked both flanks of the Battalion in considerable strength. Tanks operating with both attacking groups made deep penetrations as bazooka team after team was picked off by the supporting enemy infantry. Worn by fatigue, decimated in strength and bewildered by the success of the German attack, the Battalion broke and began withdrawing to the North bank of the River. Many men swam the water and reached our lines safely but 11 officers and approximately 200 men were cut off and captured. By 1030 all fighting on the "ISLAND" had ceased and the Boche was in firm control of the South bank.

The stragglers from the 1st and 2nd Battalions were quickly reformed and placed on the left of the 3rd Battalion, which throughout the attack had maintained its positions to counter any possible German breakthrough. Division ordered the 357th Infantry to extend its 1st Battalion to the right to contact with the left of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. Coincidental with this readjustment, 1st and 2nd Battalions 358th Infantry were withdrawn to rear assembly areas in vicinity of the Regimental CP at GONFREVILLE.

The battle of the "ISLAND" had been a costly failure, shattering as it had 2 battalions of infantry. In the eyes of higher headquarters the Division setback was inexplicable but in vindication of the officers and men who had fought, bled and died in the heroic attempt to make the attack a success it must be stated that a curious series of cumulative circumstances had combined to deny success.

(1) Except in the narrow zone of the attack, the entire Army front was inactive and the Boche was able to give undivided attention to this sole threat to the integrity of his front. While its infantry strength could not be diverted to the extent of opposing us with numerical superiority, all artillery within range could be and was directed against us.

(2) During both days of the attack weather conditions deprived us of air support and, of more



immediate concern, prevented the use of artillery liaison planes to find and adjust on counter-battery targets.

(3) The success of the attack was contingent upon the element of surprise to the extent of rushing the open ground North of the "ISLAND" before the Boche could react to the sudden pressure. However, the infantry was not at the line of departure at the prescribed hour and preparation fires were not followed up. The enemy emerging from cover after the completion of the preparation and not finding himself attacked at close quarters was alerted to and ready for the attack when finally launched.

(4) Although Regiment entered the battle at full strength, well over 50% of its Battalion strength were replacements for whom this was the first fight. Caught at the line of departure by heavy enemy fire, and unable to fight back effectively, they could not be expected to react like seasoned veterans. The instinct for self-preservation outweighed obedience to orders and posed insurmountable obstacles to rapid reorganization.

(5) The inability of cross supporting weapons to effectively engage enemy tanks had a definite psychological reaction on the infantrymen up front.

#### 24 JULY 44

The experience of the last two days indicated that now the enemy was aware of our intentions, any further attempts to assault the "ISLAND" frontally when the Corps moved forward held scant chance of success. Consequently the Division attack plan was radically revised. 359th Infantry's effort remained unchanged, their attack being directed South toward PERIERS along the Division right boundary. The 358th Infantry, extending to the left (East), 90th Reconnaissance Troop extending to the South would relieve the 357th Infantry and initially contain the "ISLAND". Regimental Combat Team 357, upon relief would move to a line of departure along the existing boundary between the 4th Armored Division and the 83rd Infantry Division. From this position in a coordinated effort with the right Regiment of the 83rd Infantry Division, (329th Infantry), Regimental Combat Team 357 would attack Southwest along CARENTAN-PERIERS Road, cutting off the "ISLAND" and making contact with 359th Infantry North of PERIERS. When this maneuver had developed sufficiently, 358th Infantry would mop up the ISLAND and assemble thereon as Division Reserve.

D-Day for the big drive had been announced as 25 July. With time at a premium, arrangements for the movement of Regimental Combat Team 357 and coordination of plans for the 83rd Infantry Division were pushed with all vigor. Fortunately, D-Day was postponed for a minimum of 24 hours by unfavorable weather.

#### 25 JULY 44

##### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion moved by marching at 1300 via GONFREVILLE-BLEHOW-SAINTENY to forward assembly Northeast of RAIDS. 1st and 3rd Battalions moved at 1700 and 1800 respectively after their release by elements of 358th Infantry. By 2145, the regiment was completely closed in its new area Southwest of SAINTENY. Relief and movement were made without enemy interference.

Regimental plan called for an attack in column of battalions, through the right of the 329th Infantry, in order 2nd, 1st, 3rd. 329th Infantry with its left Battalion on the assault was to attack simultaneously to seize a parallel objective. 7th Armored Division on the right while holding in place was to support the attack with all available artillery.

358th Infantry:

2nd Battalion initiated relief of the 3rd Battalion and elements of the 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry at 1500 while 3rd Battalion extended to the left to equalize the sector's relief was completed and sector responsibility passed to Commanding Officer 358th Infantry at 1800. 1st Battalion, deep in reorganization remained vicinity GONFREVILLE as Regimental Reserve.

By dark, Regiment had completely readjusted and had positioned all weapons to support the attacks of the 357th and 359th Infantry by fire.

359th Infantry:

Maintained its positions and completed preparation for its attack on the Division right. 2nd Battalion moved to forward assembly positions on the right rear of 1st Battalion.

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At 251100, under cover of a tremendous bombardment, VII Corps initiated its assault from position West of ST LO. VIII Corps H-Hour was finally set at 250530.

26 JULY 44

The entire VIII Corps flamed into action at 0530.

357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion attacking on a narrow front, which permitted the employment of only 1 Company encountered heavy resistance almost at the line of departure. The entrenched enemy although buffeted by heavy mortar and artillery concentrations could not be unloosened. On the left the 329th Infantry was stopped for no gain. By noon it had become obvious that the stalemate would not be immediately broken and plans were initiated, in conjunction with 329th Infantry, for that latter unit to side-slip to the left, punching at a new point and giving the 357th Infantry some maneuver room on the left of the 2nd Battalion; both Regimental attacks to be renewed at 1900.

329th Infantry experienced great difficulty repositioning its troops and late in the afternoon decided to postpone the effort until the following morning. 357th Infantry followed suit and spent the remaining hours of daylight in preparation for a dawn attack.

359th Infantry :

Attacked in column of battalions at 0530 with the 2nd Battalion leading. As was the case in the 358th Infantry attack a few days previously, the Regiment was faced with the SEVES River as an immediate obstacle.

G Company crossed the River without difficulty and overran the first German entrenchments. 200 yards beyond however, they were stopped by heavy fire. F Company followed and was committed on G Company's left. At 0900 an enemy counterattack supported by tanks and artillery struck between the 2 Companies and forced them back into the first German entrenchments from which point they successfully repulsed the Boche. Heavy enemy fire, both artillery and flat trajectory, continued to rain upon the only vehicular approach route and thwarted all efforts of engineers to construct a ford for the passage of tanks.

Enemy tanks from well defiladed positions on the flanks of the 2nd Battalion, harassed the infantry

and prevented their advance. By 1300 two additional counterattacks by the enemy had been launched and repulsed. At 1430 Company E was committed to fill the gap which had developed between the two assault Companies after the first counterattack; it came into the line in time to meet squarely another counterattack which developed into a hand grenade fight. Bazooka teams tried valiantly to dislodge the enemy tanks but one by one fell to enemy fire. By 2000 2nd Battalion, fighting heroically to maintain its position, had repulsed 3 additional tank and infantry attacks. All in all five Boche tanks had been put out of action – 3 by bazookas and 2 by artillery. But more were available and caused particular havoc by enfilading our lines at ranges sometimes as small as 100 yards.

3rd Battalion, at mid-afternoon, had removed to position immediately behind 2nd Battalion to counter any possible German thrust across the River. This Battalion was ordered to effect relief after dark of the 2nd Battalion, which by this time had suffered heavy casualties.

1st Battalion throughout the day maintained its positions protecting the left of Regiment.

#### 358th Infantry:

From its position North of the "ISLAND" fired throughout the day in support of the 359th Infantry.

#### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Moved from its position on the Division left flank to maintain contact with the 121st Infantry on the Division right.

\* \* \* \* \*

On this day the VIII Corps met uniformly strong and determined resistance along its entire front and by dark had registered only negligible gains. However to our Southeast the attack of the VII Corps was developing into a breakthrough and could be expected to have an immediate effect upon the Boche forces confronting us. Realizing this, all units at dark began a sustained probing of enemy positions for evidence of withdrawal.

#### 27 JULY 44

During the night 26-27 July the Boche made a major withdrawal but our foot patrols were unable to penetrate the thick covering shell, which remained in position until first light.

#### 357th Infantry:

Patrols of the Regiment failed to discover the withdrawal and the attack, postponed until 0900 to complete coordination with 329th Infantry, jumped off into thin air. The 2nd Battalion advanced rapidly hampered only by mines. As the 4th Armored Division on the immediate right was holding fast, the 1st Battalion was swung into the gap, which thus developed and followed on the right rear of the 2nd Battalion. 3rd Battalion executed similar maneuver on the left flank of the 2nd Battalion and in this wedge formation the Regiment advanced to its initial objective cutting the PERIERS-CARENTAN Road, 2 km Southwest of RAIDS.

At noon Division ordered Regiments to turn South, cross the TAUTE River and seize the high ground south of ST SEBASTIAN DE RAIDS. 3rd Battalion moved abreast of the 2nd Battalion and swung left, crossing the TAUTE River at LA POSSAIRIE. Reconnaissance for a suitable site consumed a considerable amount of time and it was well towards evening before the 3rd Battalion completed crossing. Battalion ran into a delaying position just a North of the PERIERS-ST LO Highway, which it

overwhelmed at dark. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had crossed South of the River; the 1st Battalion was scheduled for crossing at daylight.

359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion, which completed the relief the second time at 0600, advanced due South at 0900. 1 km North of PERIERS it swung Southeast and halted astride the PERIERS-CARENTAN Road. The 1st Battalion followed in trace behind 3rd Battalion to LONGUET. At this latter point it turned due East to LES MILLERIES and then South through GRUCHY drawing abreast of the 3rd Battalion.

Renewing the advance at 1600, 3rd Battalion bypassed PERIERS and moved astride the PERIERS-COUTANCES Road. 1 km South of PERIERS it passed through the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and took up the fight against a strong Boche blocking detachment on that road. The presence of Boche tanks on the one side and the inability to move antitank or tank destroyer weapons to position to oppose them on the other resulted in a stalemate until dark.

1st Battalion advancing South encountered comparable resistance and eventually halted for the night a few hundred yards to the left front of the 3rd Battalion.

2nd Battalion moved from its original position at 1600 and completed the mop up of PERIERS occupying that town for the night.

358th Infantry:

At midmorning 3rd Battalion patrols reported the town of SEVES clear of enemy. Acting on Division instruction Companies of the 2nd and 3rd battalions began a systematic search of the "ISLAND" while remainder of the Regiment was alerted for immediate movement. The "ISLAND" was soon reported devoid of Boche but littered with mines.

By 2000 two routes across the "ISLAND" had been cleared by the Engineers and the Regiment moved south to an assembly area vicinity GRUCHY.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Was alerted at 1000 and given a mission to proceed South through PERIERS to contact the enemy. Delayed by bridge construction and mines on the main road to PERIERS the Troop did not initiate its movement until 1330. Moving for the most part dismounted, it reached PERIERS at 1530, passed through town and continued South in the direction of ST SAUVEUR LENDELIN. 1 km South of PERIERS it encountered enemy infantry and tanks. The limited road net did not permit the Troop to bypass this resistance and it made no additional progress during the day. 1 Platoon was eventually diverted East of PERIERS and contacted 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry.

\* \* \* \* \*

The entire VIII Corps had surged forward and the proportions of the breakthrough were now plain to all. It was consequently directed that the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions pass through the 90th and 79th Infantry Divisions respectively and drive towards COUTANCES and points to the South. During the night the Division staff completed necessary arrangements for the passage of the armor while the engineers worked with feverish speed to de-mine the CARENTAN-PERIERS Road and provide a passable route through the demolished town itself.

28th JULY 44

At 0600 357th and 359th Infantries resumed their advance to the South keeping entirely clear of the PERIERS-COUTANCES ROAD. At 0800 the head of the 4th Armored Division column passed through PERIERS and rolled unopposed southward to ST SAUVEUR LENDELIN.

Hampered only by mines and the inadequacy of routes, the leading regiments advanced rapidly, initially deployed and subsequently, in route column. By 1300 all leading elements had reached the ST SAUVEUR LENDELIN-MARIGNY ROAD. Some 3 km South thereof, vicinity of BUCHEUX, the 357th Infantry was stopped by contact with elements of the 1st Infantry Division moving West directly across our front. 359th Infantry halted on Division order on the general line from LA HOUSSAYE (259522)-HAUTE CAPAIRE (300525). Both regiments secured their positions and gained firm lateral control to prevent the infiltration southward of bypassed enemy elements. The only enemy contact during the day had been Boche stragglers who had been overrun by the rapidity of the advance.

By dark the entire Division together with supporting units had crossed South of the PERIERS-ST LO ROAD. 358th Infantry assembled in vicinity of CATHELINAIS while the Division opened at CHÂTEAUX PERRON (284697).

\* \* \* \* \*

Late that day the 8th and 79th Infantry Divisions were ordered to follow by marching and motor the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions respectively, clearing the West half of the NORMANDY PENINSULA and driving on AVRANCHES. The 90th and 83rd Infantry Divisions, still abreast, were directed to maintain position and await future orders.

29 - 31 JULY 44

While the VII Corps smashed the encircled Boche in the trap its maneuver had sprung and VIII Corps drove south through AVRANCHES, 90th Infantry Division remained in the general area secured 28 July welcoming its first breathing spell since D-Day. Reorganization, rehabilitation and training were prosecuted with vigor in preparation for imminent future operations. Preliminary plans were discussed with representatives of XV Corps, the unit to which the Division was earmarked for attachment, and route reconnaissance southward as far as GAVRAY initiated by responsible agencies.

The first phase of the battle for FRANCE had ended. During it the 90th Infantry Division played a vitally important part. It had met the best the German could offer by way of resistance and although bloodied, had bested him. It had developed battle experience and equally important, battle confidence. And the brief respite afforded in the last few days of July had permitted revitalization of both individuals and units. Thus on the eve of August the 90th Division was spiritually and physically ready for the stellar role that was about to be given.

McLAIN  
COMMANDING  
STILWELL  
G-3

## PART I

### PERIERS TO LE MANS

The 90th Infantry Division passed from VIII Corps and First Army into the XV Corps and Third Army at noon 1 August 1944. At that time it was in bivouac in the vicinity of PERIERS. It had just advanced out of the CHERBOURG PENINSULA.

During the day the Division received orders to move on ST HILAIRE DU HARCOUET by motors. The initial missions were as follows: (1) To seize and secure the bridges over the SELUNE RIVER near ST HILAIRE. (2) Block the advance of enemy to the WEST on AVRANCHES, between the SELUNE RIVER and the SEE RIVER. (3) Relieve elements of VIII Corps and protect the DAMS on the SELUNE RIVER between ST HILAIRE and AVRANCHES. (4) Be prepared to move EAST, NORTHEAST, or NORTH. This mission was later expanded. (5) To capture the town of LOUVIGNE and extend the zone to the SOUTH to connect with the 79th Infantry Division operating on our right.

This move was to have had priority on the road to the SOUTH from PERIERS. Many other units, which moved on this road caused this to be a very ragged march. However, units closed with reasonable expeditiousness, and the combat elements promptly took up positions.

The movement to this position was preceded by a special force, which acted as an advance cavalry. This force, "TASK FORCE RANDOLPH", commanded by Lt. Col. George B. Randolph, composed of 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company D 712th Tank Battalion (Lt), moved forward with all possible speed. It promptly destroyed or pushed aside the light resistance, which it met. TASK FORCE RANDOLPH was followed by a special task force commanded by Lt. Col. Christian N. Clarke, Jr. This force was composed of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry (Mtz) (Lt. Col. Jacob W. Bealke, Jr.), 344th FA Battalion (105 mm howitzers) (Lt. Colonel Merton Munson), 1 platoon Company A 315th Engineer Battalion, 607th TD Battalion less one platoon. Medium tanks were left in rear so as not to impede mobility of either TASK FORCE CLARKE or the main body.

The vicinity of ST HILAIRE DU HARCOUET was found to be defended and the railroad bridges had been blown. The main bridge, however, was found to be intact when leading elements reached the high ground overlooking it. The road leading to the bridge came under heavy artillery fire as the troops approached and it was decided to pass rapidly through the area by rushing the bridge from front and close flank simultaneously, and at the same time to make a wider envelopment toward the high ground on our right front. Both of these missions were launched simultaneously without reconnaissance except what could be seen from the observation post near the road. A base of fire was quickly built up and the artillery was positioned. The attack drew enemy fire, which was quickly neutralized and the town was occupied. Security forces pushed to the EAST and SOUTH and immediately began patrolling their part of the area.

The attack of ST HILAIRE was characterized by aggressive action of the advance guard, which quickly organized a base of fire to support the charge on the bridge and maneuvered fast to prevent its destruction. The platoon forming the advance party moved down the road at double-time just after crossing the River and quickly deployed as enemy machine guns opened fire on it. Light tanks, which had moved up, moved across the bridge and facilitated the reduction of the small arms fire. Although enemy high velocity weapons were firing into the zone, the tanks moved so rapidly that none were hit and the resistance ceased immediately. Their approach was defiladed to within 100 yards of the bridge. A small arms fight NORTH of the town was characterized by infantry moving forward rapidly shooting as they advanced, using walking fire. Attack had started at 1100 and by 021430 August the town was taken. The position was held during the 3rd and 4th. Mission accomplished.

The 1st Division was moving EAST along the SEE RIVER on MORTAIN. It closed in an area short of the town. Its left rear was still not secure. Our left following the 1st Division was advanced to JUVIGNY.

An additional mission was then received to move SOUTH and to capture and extend the zone to LOUVIGNE DU DESERT. This mission was accomplished with minor resistance and patrols at once started toward LANDIVY. Resistance to LANDIVY quickly withdrew and a small force was left in the town to hold it against the German's return.

On 5 August the Division was given the mission of marching on the MAYENNE RIVER in a zone, the right of which was LAVAL (exclusive to the 79th Division), to seize and secure crossing NORTH of LAVAL, within zone. It was also given a contingent mission that unless the 1st Division on our left, then at MORTAIN advanced on MAYENNE, the 90th would swing left in front of the 1st Division wherever it stopped, to capture and secure the bridges at and near MAYENNE. To accomplish these missions only one regiment of infantry was motorized. A special force was organized, called TASK FORCE WEAVER, commanded by Brigadier General William G. Weaver, Assistant Division Commander. It was composed of TASK FORCE RANDOLPH (90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company D 712th Tank Battalion (Lt) plus CT 357 (Col. William B. Barth)) remainder of tanks, a battalion of medium artillery and staff and limited amount of communications.

The 1st Division did not move forward of MORTAIN and the 90th began the advance. It was relieved of all other missions. TASK FORCE WEAVER advanced rapidly preceded by the special force of reconnaissance, light tanks and sub-group under Randolph, which reduced several roadblocks in time for the main column to keep up a continuous movement. The town of ERNEE was not defended. Resistance encountered in the woods between ERNEE and MAYENNE was rapidly pushed back and bypassed. The force arrived just WEST of the city at 1200 after having marched a distance of 37 miles.

Weaver found the bridge that crossed the MAYENNE RIVER at the city still intact and determined to capture it before the enemy could destroy it. He organized his force into two sections and sent Colonel William B. Barth commanding officer of the 357th Infantry, with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 357th to cross the River SOUTH of the town and make the main attack on MAYENNE from the SOUTH in an attempt to secure a bridgehead. The remaining elements he dispatched under Major Edward S. Hamilton in a direct frontal attack down the road from the WEST, across the bridge and on into the town. Although Barth's effort was planned to be the chief way of attack, Hamilton's progress forward was so rapid, that the bridge was seized and the enemy pushed to the other side of the city by the time Barth had made the crossing and could organized his men for combat. The bridge was found to have been prepared for demolition but the speed of the attack had been such that the enemy could not find time to destroy it. The TASK FORCE then occupied the city of MAYENNE and organized all around defense for the night.

The 358th and 359th Infantry Regiments had started marching on foot. The 358th, which had been in ST HILAIRE, marched on GORRON, covered a route distance of 27 miles and closed late in the afternoon. They sent reconnaissance and established a bridgehead at the blown bridge near ST GERMAIN midway between LAVAL and MAYENNE. The Engineers began to rebuild the bridge about noon the next day. The following morning, 6 August, this regiment marched on MONTSURS and arrived at the bridge before it was completed. The foot elements crossed via the DAMS and rafts. When the bridge was completed about 1745 the motor elements crossed and the regiment went into bivouac about 5 miles short of MONTSURS. The 359th, having closed on LANDIVY the preceding day, after a foot March of 22 miles, marched on ERNEE, went into bivouac in the afternoon just SOUTH of the town and was moved early in the evening farther SOUTH to the vicinity of ANDOUILLE where it bivouacked for the night. They moved early the following morning, by truck, over a bridge NORTH of LAVAL, which had been constructed by the 106th Cavalry. They marched on LE MANS.

The following day (6 August 1944) the Division was informed that the 1st Division would relieve it of defending the bridgehead at MAYENNE. It was ordered to move the elements at MAYENNE on LE MANS by the most expeditious routes. It was decided to move the column in two echelons, one under Weaver moving on ARON-EVRON-ST SUZANNE-ST DENISE D'ORQUES-LE MANS.

Infantry elements motorized under Barth were to move SOUTH thru MONTSURS-ST SUZANNE-BERNAY-LE MANS. Weaver's column preceded by Reconnaissance Troop less 1 platoon, tanks, and 1 Battalion of Infantry and 1 Artillery Battalion advanced against the town of ARON. Barth's column composed of the remainder of the 357th Infantry (reinforced by 2 platoons medium tanks) followed by a Battalion of 359th which had been moving to MAYENNE to take over the bridgehead before it was known that the 1st Division would relieve us of this mission. Weaver's force met a German force moving up with the mission to recapture MAYENNE. A battle was fought until late that evening at the town of ARON. The enemy was driven back several hundred yards. Barth's force rushed through MONTSURS and his leading elements reached ST SUZANNE during the evening. However, his column was caught by a small force and rear Battalion of Barth's force was cut and did not reach MONTSURS. It did brush aside the resistance and advanced early the next morning and closed up on the rear of Barth's force at ST SUZANNE. After having been relieved by the 1st Division near ARON, Weaver reversed his column. Moving SOUTH through MONTSURS he found the 359th Infantry (Commanding Officer, Colonel Robert L. Bacon) engaged with the enemy forward of the town of VAIGES.

After Weaver's column cleared, Clarke followed Barth on foot toward ST SUZANNE.

All columns had now emerged successfully and the Division was intact within its Division Zone. However, it was necessary to block all roads to the NORTH and EAST at MONTSURS because heavy forces were reported in the woods between MAYENNE and ST SUZANNE. The 106th Cavalry had been stopped in front of EVRON. They contained an opposing force and continued their reconnaissance to the EAST. The enemy attempted to reach MONTSURS and his armored vehicles were destroyed by our roadblocks.

At ST SUZANNE, Barth encountered heavy artillery fire and a determined attack of infantry and about 15 tanks. Supported by the artillery, he drove the enemy back into the woods SOUTHEAST of the town. While his route was still under fire, he rushed his column in motors by the enemy position and past BERNAY. The head of his force arrived at the road junction short of LE MANS early the following day (8 August 44). It extended along the route well back towards ST SUZANNE. Clarke immediately closed up making a solid column along this route. A Battalion was left in the rear to cover the zone of advance from MONTSURS to the rear of Clarke's regiment.

Weaver finding Bacon already engaged in front of VAIGES, turned the column toward ST SUZANNE with the plan of bypassing the enemy at VAIGES by way of CHAMMES. At CHAMMES, however, he ran into elements of the same force, which had attempted to regain ST SUZANNE, and although the attack made progress forcing the enemy back into the woods, he found the reduction of this route would be prolonged. Leaving a small containing force, he reversed his column. Since Bacon at that time had cleared the enemy at VAIGES, he passed through Bacon and moved his motorized column on LE MANS.

Bacon was later given the task of reducing the pocket at ST SUZANNE-CHAMMES.

Successive centers of resistance were encountered by Weaver at ST JEAN SUR ERNEE, ST DENISE D'ORQUES, JOUE EN CHARNIE, CHAISSILLE, BRAINS SURE GEE, COULONS, and CHAUFFOUR NOTRE-DAME. This resistance became more intense as the advance progressed. At first it was thought the resistance was only a minor force but in view of the fact that approximately 1200 prisoners were captured in this area, there must have been a very considerable force defending the area. The prisoners were captured by being forced back by Weaver's attack down the main road. They ran into the columns of Barth and Clarke, who had faced in along the ST SUZANNE-BERNAY-LE MANS road, as the enemy attempted to escape to the NORTH.

When Clarke arrived, Barth immediately moved one Battalion on LE MANS via the main road. It ran into resistance just after passing the road junction. All other units were held in place by the Division Commander until later in the afternoon during the process of closing in. These troops on the NORTH were not permitted to advance but held their position in order that the two forces would not mistake their



positions and shoot into each other. All possible means were used to mark their relative positions. The NORTH troops were fixed along the road and their position was sent to the SOUTH column by organic radio, artillery radio, tanks and in the final stages an artillery liaison plane was ordered to circle over the leading elements of each group and in particular over the road junction then held by Hamilton's Battalion. Barth's Battalion moving on LE MANS immediately, encountered strong roadblocks and reduced them successfully.

By 081945 August 44, the situation had clarified so that the Division Commander ordered Clarke to proceed by a route which he had reconnoitered, to cross the River NORTH of LE MANS, to cut the roads running to the NORTH and NORTHEAST and to move on LE MANS from the NORTH, while Barth's column pushed down the road and passed through the city.

A force was left along the road to continue to pick up the prisoners as they came forward.

Shortly after midnight in the morning of August 9th patrols from Mason's Battalion (3rd Battalion 357) operating with Weaver made contact with Hamilton's Battalion (1st Battalion 357) across the road junction and the two forces were merged, the pocket reduced. Some small enemy forces were located and the area continued to receive some harassment from these forces.

Barth's advance on LE MANS was successful and early in the morning (090030B August 44) it had reached the River in the town.

Clarke moved promptly at 1945 the 8th of August and placed roadblocks along the reconnoitered route leading NORTHWEST from LE MANS. On one of these routes before the advance of his column reached it, the roadblock encountered a large German force moving out of the town. He immediately opened fire and took approximately 40 or 50 prisoners. Because of the small strength roadblock many others escaped before assistance could arrive. Clarke crossed the river during the night and by morning was astride the NORTH ROAD. He moved promptly toward the city. He had been preceded by elements of the 79th Infantry Division, which had entered their zone of the city from the SOUTHEAST. The 5th Armored Division had encircled the city from the SOUTH. The following morning all combat elements of the Division promptly moved through the city, took positions NORTH and EAST of the city and prepared to move to the NORTH, NORTHEAST, or EAST.

The Artillery under Brigadier General John M. Devine always kept pace. The Division Commander seldom gave a thought except when he needed it. It was always there. All missions were accomplished.

The Division had marched 140 miles in 10 days, 53 hard engagements, and numerous skirmishes. 1517 prisoners were taken in the five days during the advance from MAYENNE RIVER to the SARTHE at LE MANS. Practically all were from the pocket ST SUZANNE-VAIGES-LE MANS. Many were killed. Our killed, wounded and missing were less than 300. Many tanks, armored and other vehicles were destroyed. The force defending LE MANS was completely destroyed.

McLAIN  
COMMANDING  
OFFICIAL:  
STILWELL  
G-3

## PART II

### LE MANS to CHAMBOIS

#### Battle of the open "Pocket"

As of midnight 9-10 August, the 90th Division was disposed to the North and East of LE MANS in a position of readiness for movement to the North. 79th Infantry Division, also a part of the XV Corps

was South of LE MANS, the 5th Armored Division generally East of the town and the newly joined the 2nd French Armored Division was passing through the 90th Division enroute North.

At 1000 10 August, XV Corps issued an order for an advance of the Corps to the North to seize the line CARROUGES-SEES. Advance was to be made with 5th armored Division followed by the 79th Division on the right and 2nd French Armored Division followed by the 90th Division on the left. All units were immediately alerted for movement. At 101200, 90th Division issued orders for the advance in three columns on order. (1) RCT 9 motorized, followed by 357th Infantry in the right column, (2) Engineers and Artillery in the center column and (3) RCT 8 followed by the Tank Battalion in the left column. 358th Infantry was also responsible for the left flank protection of the Corps, utilizing for this purpose a reinforced motorized battalion.

At 1800 the three CTs were instructed that they would move at 110600. Meanwhile liaison was established with 2nd French Armored Division which had initiated movement to the North the previous day and was advancing rapidly against scattered resistance chiefly in the nature of roadblocks.

The Division advanced throughout the day of 11 August by bounds behind the 2nd French Armored Division and at nightfall had closed in the general area RENE-FRESNAY SUR SARTHE-ORNE RIVER. Elements of the 357 and 358th Infantries provided protection for the crossings of the ORNE RIVER within the Division zone.

During the night of 11 August and morning of 12 August, the 5th Armored Division broke through to SEES and the 2nd French Armored Division to ALENCON, and was approaching the FORET D'ECOUVES. At 121050, Corps ordered the 90th Division to advance without delay to complete the capture of ALENCON and advance North through the FORET D'ECOUVES and secure the high ground in the vicinity of LE CERCUEIL (2802) and establish contact with the 2nd French Armored Division in the vicinity of CARROUGES. Upon receipt of this order the Division was immediately put in motion, side-slipping to the East slightly to avoid FORET DE PERSEIGNE, which was reported to contain a sizable German force.

RCT 9 moved by motors on ALENCON to relieve elements of the 2nd French Armored Division in that town and to continue to the North to final objective. RCT 7 followed in trace of RCT 9, and RCT 8 moved by marching in the left Division column, maintaining the left flank security. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was directed to assemble at ST PATERNE to contact Assistant Division Commander at that point for detailed instructions and to precede the 359th Infantry screening their advance North from ALENCON. 90th Reconnaissance Troop forged ahead of the 2nd French Armored Division and made first contact with the enemy on the high ground just South of FORET D'ECOUVES. In mid-afternoon they were passed through by elements of the 2nd French Armored Division who engaged the enemy in what developed to be a comparatively stiff fight.

Since it had become apparent that the enemy was in some force in the FORET D'ECOUVES, the CG XV Corps changed the orders for the day for the 90th Division as follows:

(1) Establish ALENCON bridgehead.

(2) Do not commit the division in the FORET. Reconnaissance elements only will enter the FORET.

These changed orders were communicated to the Regiments enroute. RCT 9, which had closed on those elements of the 2nd French Armored Division, engaged at the southern edge of the FORET, was directed to occupy positions astride the roads North and Northeast out of ALENCON. RCT 7 was directed to move through ALENCON to Northwest and occupy positions from the left flank of the 359th Infantry to the SARTHE RIVER inclusive. 358th Infantry was directed to move into assembly position South of ALENCON, with 1st Battalion of that Regiment out-posting the area to the West and Southwest of ALENCON generally a long continuation of the SARTHE RIVER as far Southwest as FRESNAY-SUR-SARTHE. The Division CP moved to location 1 mile South of ALENCON.

Due to the confused situation to the Northwest of ALENCON and our inability to determine exact location of French in the direction of CARROUGES, 357th Infantry occupied positions short of the

assigned line. All units closed into assigned areas by 2200.

On 13 August the Division expanded and consolidated the ALENCON bridgehead. RCT 7, with 345th FA Battalion attached, moved to the Northwest and established itself on the dominating ground Southeast of CARROUGES. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry was moved North of the SARTHE RIVER relieving the left elements in the original zone of action of RCT 7 and establishing contact with the 357th Infantry and 1st Battalion 358th Infantry which remained South of the SARTHE RIVER. The remaining Battalion, 358th Infantry, was retained as mobile reserve in vicinity of Division CP. The 357th Infantry took numerous prisoners during the day chiefly in the nature of disorganized remnants moving eastward to escape encirclement. 359th Infantry, late in the day, pushed 1 Battalion North through the FORET D'ECOUVES to block the CARROUGES-SEES road. Meanwhile, the 2nd French Armored Division and the 5th Armored Division were heavily engaged in the CARROUGES-ECOUCHE-ARGENTAN area and 79th Infantry Division was assembled in the vicinity of MELESUR-SARTHE.

Information was received early in the day that XX Corps, with 80th Infantry Division on the right, had attacked at daylight on the left of the XV Corps with an objective already occupied by XV Corps. By mid-afternoon reports were received from left flank elements of the Division that 1 motorized CT of the 80th Infantry Division was moving Northeast through the Division. Unsuccessful attempt was made to halt this unit pending reorientation. Corps was promptly notified and the information relayed to Army. This particular unit of the 80th Infantry Division was eventually ordered to assemble North of the FORET D'ECOUVES pending return to its unit. Subsequently XX Corps was redirected to the South and East of XV Corps.

On 14 August, 90th Division was directed to mop up the FORET D'ECOUVES. This was accomplished without incident by 2 Battalions of the 359th Infantry and 1 Battalion of the 357th Infantry. At 1600, Division was alerted for move to the East on 15 August. 1 RCT was to remain to protect ALENCON bridgehead, facing West and Northwest. Upon receipt of these warning orders, all units were alerted and 357th Infantry was directed to send 1 Rifle Company to relieve the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry in position on the CARROUGES-SEES Road. Later that night an Army directive was received by XV Corps which divided Corps into two parts. 5th Armored Division and the 79th Infantry Division were to advance to the East on 15 August with a mission of seizing bridgehead over the SEINE RIVER North of PARIS. 2nd French Armored Division was to remain in its present position, general area ECOUCHE-ARGENTAN. 90th Division was to relieve the 5th Armored Division by 151100 in the area Northeast of SEES, maintaining 1 RCT in position protecting ALENCON from the North and Northwest.

RCT 9 was given the mission of effecting this relief and moved by motor 150800 preceded by a reconnaissance detail to effect the relief. The remainder of the Division, less RCT 7 and service elements, followed RCT 8 by marching and motor and by 2100 and closed in its new area. Division CP was established 2 miles Northeast of SEES.

The dispositions of the Division as of 2200 were generally as follows: RCT 9 protecting the Division front maintained a series of roadblocks on the arc LE BOURG ST LEONARD-EXMES-CROISILLES-LE MERLERAULT. The 358th infantry less 2nd Battalion, occupied assembly area astride the SEES-NONANT LE PIN Road, vicinity of CHAILLOUE. The 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, less Company E was at ALMENECHES while E Company had moved to the high ground just Southeast of ARGENTAN to provide infantry protection for elements of 773rd TD Battalion, which covered by fire the main road East from ARGENTAN and was interdicting the town itself. RCT 7, which had relieved the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, remained as a bridgehead force for ALENCON and extended from the SARTHE RIVER North to the CARROUGES-SEES Road. At 1800 the 357th Infantry at the earnest plea of the CG 2nd French Armored Division, moved their right flank Company westward along the CARROUGES-SEES Road into CARROUGES itself to assist the French in the protection of that town. This Company reported upon its arrival that no enemy resistance or threat existed.

During the night of 15-16 August the left flank elements of the 359th Infantry received a considerable amount of Artillery fire but reported no physical contact with the enemy. In the early morning reports were received of considerable enemy activity in the North of the FORET DE GOUFFERN and shortly after noon, A Company of the 359th Infantry, which was maintaining the roadblocks at LE BOURG ST LEONARD received a sharp attack by a superior enemy force of Infantry with Tanks and Artillery support. The weight of this attack forced A Company South and East of the town. A platoon of tanks was immediately dispatched to the site. After the first onrush, the German attack subsided and within 2 hours A Company was able to fight its way back to the southern portion of the town. At 1730, again backed by considerable artillery and a tank company, the Boche, in definitely determined battalion strength, renewed the attack with greater fury. B Company 359th Infantry which had been in Battalion Reserve was moved up to the left of A Company to support this Company and 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry alerted for movement. Division directed the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry to secure the FORET DE PETITE GOUFFERN and to continue to the crossroad immediately West of LE BOURG ST LEONARD. The Assistant Division Commander proceeded to LE BOURG ST LEONARD, to coordinate the elements of the two regiments. Before the reinforcements could become effective, the renewed German attack again forced A Company out of the town and threatened to envelop that Company on both flanks. Prompt and aggressive action, however, on the part of the supporting tanks and 1st Battalion Command Group neutralized the left enveloping force while the arrival of the 2nd Battalion at its appointed place secured the West flank of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry. Heavy fighting continued until dark, and then quickly subsided. The 1st Battalion then reestablished itself within the town.

Meanwhile, elements of the VII Corps, in particular, the 3rd Armored Division had come abreast of the 357th Infantry to the West and permission was secured from XV Corps to establish CT 7 in the new Division area. CO CT 7 was directed to move 1 Battalion immediately to MARMOUVILLE prepared to relieve the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry and to move remainder of CT 7 at dawn 17 August to the area recently occupied by 358th Infantry. Simultaneously, 358th Infantry was alerted for movement to vicinity ALMEMECHES.

To the Northeast of the Division's position lay the town of GACE on the slopes of a hill mass, which completely dominated the area to the North and Northeast. With the approval of the Army Commander, the Division had initiated plans and reconnaissance during the day for an attack on 17 August to secure this terrain feature. The assault was to be made by the 359th Infantry committing initially 1 Battalion. As a prelude to the attack, 358th Infantry was alerted to relieve during the night of 16-17 August those elements of 359th Infantry in the LE BOURG ST LEONARD area. These plans were never put in the execution.

At 2300 the XV Corps relinquished command of the 90th Infantry division and 2nd French Armored Division and a Provisional Corps composed of these two divisions and the 80th Infantry Division (to join later) was constituted under the command of General Gaffey, (Third Army Chief of Staff). This Corps was given the mission of attacking on order to the Northwest to seize and secure TRUN. The 90th Division was to attack to the North to seize OMMAEL and the high ground Northeast of CHAMBOIS, to secure a bridgehead for the passage of armor. The Division plan contemplating the main effort to be made by the 358th Infantry (less 2 Battalions) attacking on the right of 359th Infantry from an LD at EXEMES. 359th Infantry initially with 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry attached was to complete occupation of LE BOURG ST LEONARD and to continue the attack to HILL 129 Southwest of CHAMBOIS.

At dawn 17 August the Bosch renewed his attack against A and B Companies 359th Infantry at LE BOURG ST LEONARD. It had become apparent the day before that we were faced with something different than the disorganized resistance encountered in the previous campaign, which initiated at ST HILAIRE. This was a desperate and well coordinated German force in 2 Battalion strength, fighting savagely to maintain the shoulders of the gap through which the German 7th Army was fleeing. The

area around LE BOURG ST LEONARD dominated the valley to the Northwest and provided observation over the entire escape route leading through CHAMBOIS. By 0900, 2 Battalions 358th Infantry had moved into position at EXMES in preparation for the attack in the direction of CHAMBOIS, and had relieved company C 359th Infantry, garrisoned in that area. This relieved Company was immediately set in motion westward to join up with the remainder of their Battalion engaged at LE BOURG ST LEONARD. At the same time, the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry initiated the relief of the 2nd Battalion and L Company 359th Infantry, the relieved elements moving by motor to the vicinity of LE PIN AU HARAS. The battle at LE BOURG ST LEONARD continued throughout the day. Contact was established between the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry and 1st Battalion 359th Infantry just South of the town, about noon. But the Boche retained control of the town proper. At one time an attempted German envelopment temporarily cut off elements of B Company who held positions in the southern portion of the town. But effective work by the attached tanks and the movements of 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry to a position generally astride of the Y east of the town eliminated this threat.

At 1400 the 90th Division along with the 2nd French Armored Division and the 80th Infantry Division passed to the control of V Corps and First Army. The CG V Corps after surveying the situation, altered the Corps attack plan and postponed its execution until 180800. The revised plan was in substance as follows: the two Infantry Divisions, 90th on the right and 80th Division on the left, would attack to secure the line: high ground Northeast of CHAMBOIS to ARGENTAN inclusive. The 2nd French Armored Division was to remain in position protecting the left flank of the Corps. Juncture with elements 21st Army Group was anticipated in the vicinity of CHAMBOIS. The Division order directed the attack to be launched by 359th Infantry on the right and the 358th Infantry on the left while the 357th Infantry maintained the roadblocks within its sector of responsibility. As a preliminary to the attack, the 358th Infantry less 2nd and 3rd Battalions displaced to the North edge of the FORET DE PETITE GOUFFERN. The 3rd Battalion 358th remained in the vicinity LE PIN AU HARAS. 357th Infantry moved the remainder of the regiment to vicinity of NONANT LE PIN and assumed responsibility for the roadblocks at EXMES. E Company 358th Infantry rejoined its Battalion and the entire 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry was earmarked for return to regimental control on clarification of situation at LE BOURG ST LEONARD. CO 359th Infantry was directed to secure LE BOURG ST LEONARD by the midnight to guarantee a reasonable LD for the morrow's attack.

At 1800, the Germans, under the increasing pressure from our augmented forces, withdrew slightly to the North and Northwest and the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry was passed through the 1st Battalion to mop up the town. By midnight, the 359th Infantry had accomplished its mission and was in complete control of LE BOURG ST LEONARD.

The division attack was launched on schedule the 180800. The 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry attacking Northwest, cross-country, from an LD on the LE BOURG ST LEONARD-EXMES Road, flanked the resistance on the LE BOURG ST LEONARD Road and made excellent progress aided by remarkable observation from the LD. 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry initially held its position at LE BOURG ST LEONARD, while the first Battalion continued reorganization in an area 2 km South of LE BOURG ST LEONARD. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry attacked North on the axis MEGUILLUME-ST EUGENIE with an initial objective of the latter town. It met considerable resistance along ARGENTAN-LE BOURG ST LEONARD Road and not until midday was it able to force entry into the FORET. The 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, less 1 Company, which remained at the crossroads it had been occupying, moved West astride of LE BOURG ST LEONARD-ARGENTAN Road to clear that road and prepared to follow the 1st Battalion. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry was moved by marching to the north edge of the FORET DE GOUFFERN. Throughout the day, ground and air observation reported huge columns of vehicles moving Northeast across the Division front through ST LAMBERT SUR DIVES and CHAMBOIS. All agreed that these columns were Krauts moving out of the trap. Liaison officer from the Canadians had reported, however, that his elements were in CHAMBOIS and "No Fire" line which excluded ST LAMBERT and CHAMBOIS to us was restated by the Canadians

when a radio request was sent to them for permission to fire on these two localities. The evidence of a fight on the TRUN-CHAMBOIS Road North of ST LAMBERT SUR DIVES was conclusive evidence that no friendly troops were in or near CHAMBOIS, and the Commanding General V Corps authorized the Division to shoot into that area. This was initiated with vehemence by 11 battalions of artillery with amazing results.

The 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry continued its advance, and by a wide employment to the Northwest, cut the LE BOURG ST LEONARD-CHAMBOIS Road midway between the two towns and causing great havoc among German personnel and equipment retreating into their very arms. The 2nd Battalion moved Northwest from LE BOURG to annihilate the Boche force at FOUGY while the 1st Battalion, still in regimental reserve, moved up to replace the 2nd Battalion in the town, the control of which was the first key in the closing of the gap.

The 1st Battalion 358th Infantry made good progress towards ST EUGÈNE until stopped late in the day by an enemy group astride the road. The poor visibility in the damp, dense woods, heightened by the thick smoke from the timber set ablaze by our WP made accurate appraisal of hostile strength and dispositions and control of our forces difficult and definitely slowed the prosecution of the attack. As the Division picture unfolded, it became apparent that additional punch on the right of the Division would afford the greatest measure of success and consequently the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry passed to Division control and was moved to the Y east of LE BOURG ST LEONARD. 1 Company of this Battalion was placed on Hill 137 to control the RJ there and to protect the right rear of the 359th Infantry.

The close of the day's fighting found the 90th Division halfway to its objectives, with sufficient reserves trying to punch through on the morrow. Artillery and the British Air had had a field day in the pocket.

V Corps ordered continuation of the attack on 19 August to assigned objectives and attached to the 90th Division, one Combat Command of the 2nd French Armored Division. The missions of the 358th and 359th Infantry remained the same, with the latter prepared to capture CHAMBOIS on order. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry was directed to attack to the North on right of the 359th Infantry to seize the high ground Northeast of CHAMBOIS and cut the exit roads from that town. General Le Clerc, CG 2nd French Armored Division with Colonel De Langlade, whose CC was to be attached, arrived at Division Headquarters late in the evening. The mission presented for Colonel De Langlade and agreed to by his Division commander, was to attack North from EXMES, block the road leading East from CHAMBOIS and assist the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry in securing its objectives; thereafter it was to protect the right flank of the Division.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry advanced with speed on 19 August and had cut the road leading East from CHAMBOIS by midmorning. K Company was pushed aggressively onto the high ground Northeast of CHAMBOIS where it controlled the road leading Northeast from that town. It soon set an ambush and had destroyed 12 tanks in a matter of half an hour. L Company soon joined them and between them they captured and killed Krauts by the score, as they came out of CHAMBOIS. Recognizing this serious threat to their line of retreat the Boche attacked the third Battalion from both flanks and forced the right of the Battalion backward. In general, however, the Battalion stood firm and continued its work of destruction. Tanks were sent to assist this unit along with some additional TDs and this situation was restored. The German continued to counterattack until late in the evening, but was completely repulsed. The aggressive action of this Battalion was a material factor in the rapid closing of the gap and resultant wholesale destruction of the German force left in the pocket.

The 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry advanced toward Hill 129, but was initially unable to seize that Hill because of friendly fire on it by the Allied Forces to the Northwest. After a radio message to the British had secured a "No Fire" line, the 3rd Battalion was able to continue. En-route it destroyed numerous tanks and captured and killed truckloads of Infantry who thought their avenue of escape was safe. The 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry, after occupying FOUGY without resistance, was redirected on

CHAMBOIS. Crossing behind the 3rd Battalion, it fought its way North to control the southern half of the town. Again friendly artillery fire from our Allies prevented complete occupation. This Battalion also created widespread damage and destruction to German personnel, vehicles and tanks. 1st Battalion 359th Infantry advanced Northwest from LE BOURG ST LEONARD along the left of the regimental zone of action, mopping up the eastern edge of the FORET DE GOUFFERN and occupying the high ground North of the FORET. 1 Composite Company of Engineers was dispatched to garrison LE BOURG ST LEONARD.

The 1st Battalion 358th Infantry advanced through the woods without opposition and captured ST EUGÉNIE. From this area it was also in a position to raise havoc among the retreating Germans. This Battalion continued the attack to the West to capture LE BON MENIL and by dark was on the high ground dominating the town but not in physical possession of it. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry had advanced through the woods to hold ST EUGÉNIE.

CCL of the 2nd French Armored Division secured OMMAEL and pushed a patrol to FRENEE on the right flank of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry but did not hold this ground in force.

3rd Battalion 357th Infantry had been moved to vicinity of Hill 137 in position to support the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry and CO 357th Infantry was alerted to be prepared to take over the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry for further operations in that zone. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry was passed to control the 357th Infantry when communications were established late in the day. When second counterattack developed against the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, L Company 357th Infantry was moved to vicinity of LE FEL and attached to 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry.

At the close of the day's operations, the Division had substantially occupied all portions of its assigned objectives. It had captured nearly 5000 prisoners and killed a considerable but undetermined number. It had captured or destroyed hundreds of German tanks, vehicles and artillery pieces. It had made junction with the Polish Reconnaissance elements in vicinity of CHAMBOIS. The Artillery, reinforced by five (5) Corps Battalions, had plastered the escape area from dawn to dark and aided by magnificent observation, had effected wholesale destruction.

The 20th of August, the day planned for the consolidation of the Division's position developed to be one of the most momentous in the Division's history. Shortly after daylight, as the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry was consolidating its position on the Northwest slope of Hill 129, it was struck in the fire-covered gap between the two leading companies by a column of tanks and Infantry in halftracks. It was not in any sense an attack but rather a last desperate attempt to break out to safety on the part of the Boche. A portion of this column did break through the murderous hail of fire leveled upon it by Tanks, TDs, Artillery, AT guns and the organic weapons of the 3rd Battalion, bounced off the left of the 2nd Battalion, which further cut down its original strength, ran into L Company of the 357th Infantry which further mauled it and the 3 remaining halftracks were sniped at in passing by the Regimental Command Group of the 357th Infantry. The 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry completed the conquest of CHAMBOIS against heavy but sporadic resistance. 773rd TD Battalion moved into position to support in depth the zone of the 359th Infantry and the regimental position was consolidated. CHAMBOIS throughout the day continued to be the hotspot and veritably the coffin corner for the cornered Krauts. During the day, the Polish, in contact with 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry in CHAMBOIS were cut off from their current unit, and were resupplied by the 90th Division.

1st Battalion 358th Infantry captured LE BON MENIL while 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry mopped up FORET DE GOUFFERN.

The 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry consolidated its position Northeast of CHAMBOIS only 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry remained in supporting position behind it. 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry, motorized, was passed to Division control and was moved along LE BOURG ST LEONARD-ARGENTAN Road on the left flank of the 358th Infantry from which point it established contact with right regiment of the 80th Infantry Division and mopped up the FORET DE GOUFFERN along Division boundary. Subsequently it was moved in an assembly area South of 3rd Battalion 357th

Infantry.

On this day the Polish in contact with the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry and 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry linked up with their Division to the North of CHAMBOIS and the gap was closed.

The result of the operations for the day will forever stand as an imposing record. The Division maintained and improved defensive organization on assigned objectives, forming contact with 80th Infantry Division on its left and the Polish elements on its right. It withstood with negligible casualties, continuous pressure on the part of the enemy. It inflicted terrible casualties in both personnel and equipment on remnants of the 7th German Army, took 5500 prisoners, destroyed 150 tanks and a miscellany of 4000 vehicles and killed or wounded more than 4000 Germans. It resupplied and evacuated wounded and prisoners of our allies with whom contact had been made at CHAMBOIS.

August 21 brought the end of the pocket. Throughout the day the destruction continued. It was strictly in the nature of mop-up operations as all pressure ceased and the Germans remaining, continued mass and individual surrender. Two German Field Hospitals were evacuated through our lines to continue operations under Army control.

Late that day, arrangements were made for the relief of our units by the British 50th Division.

On 22 August, the relief was initiated and completed and the Division infiltrated to assembly positions South of ARGENTAN-EXMES Road. The campaign had ended and the Division was alerted for movement to the East.

The campaign which began with the advance North from LE MANS and culminated with the juncture of American and British forces North of CHAMBOIS will forever be regarded as one of the most brilliant episodes in the Battle of France. The 90th Division, initiating the campaign in a support role, subsequently became the motivating factor in the success of the scheme. In the first 3 days the Division closely followed and in effect pushed the 2nd French Armored Division, consolidating the French gains and successfully sealing the escape route through ALENCON and through SEES. After relieving 5th Armored Division Northeast of SEES, it was not content to remain passive, but immediately initiated plans to rapidly close the narrowing gap. It stood firm against the repeated attempts of the Deutschland Regiment to open up LE BOURG ST LEONARD as an escape exit and beat that unit to its knees. With the control of LE BOURG ST LEONARD secured it utilized this point as a pivot and swung rapidly to the Northwest, outflanking the resistance on the LE BOURG ST LEONARD-CHAMBOIS Road, captured CHAMBOIS and the high ground to the Southwest and Northeast. From these positions, it set the greatest ambush of the war and aided by effective leadership and aggressive action by all units maintained that ambush against all counterattacks. The Division Artillery for 4 straight days capitalizing upon excellent observation, the magnificent work of its ground and air observers and the splendid organization developed in anticipation of the course of the action, delivered murderous fire on the pocket area causing untold destruction and lowering the German morale to and below the breaking point; unquestionably the Artillery was largely responsible for the resulting mass surrender.

In a period of 4 days, the Division took over 13,000 prisoners, killed or wounded 8000 Germans and destroyed 1800 horses, freeing 1000 more.

The matériel box score, based on an incomplete inventory, is as follows:

Tanks-220

SP Artillery Pieces-160

Towed Artillery Pieces-700

AA Artillery Pieces-130

Halftrack vehicles-130

Motor Vehicles-5000

Wagons-2000

Areas of Ammunition in Miscellaneous Dumps of which time prevented inventory.



(Included upon these vehicles were valuable technical equipment of all descriptions, including high-powered radio and cryptographic sets, mobile ordinance shops, medical laboratories and surgical instruments, the importance of which to our technical intelligence service has not yet been completely estimated.)

If the Division had not been held back for over 24 hours in attack on CHAMBOIS the results would have undoubtedly been greater.

All this the Division accomplished as the cost of 600 casualties and a loss of 5 tanks, 2 AT guns and 6 vehicles for the entire campaign.

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G-3

### PART III

#### SEES to REIMS

#### 23 AUGUST

The Division spent this day in rehabilitation of personnel and equipment, while out-posting a sector of the Corps assembly area with a minimum of force. V Corps headquarters initiated its displacement to the PARIS area to take command of the troops designated to liberate PARIS.

#### 24 AUGUST

Division remained in assembly area continuing rehabilitation and training. At 1200, Division was alerted to send an advance party to XX Corps Headquarters in anticipation of movement to their control on or about 26 August. Representative of Division Headquarters proceeded to MILLY to make preparatory arrangements with XX Corps.

#### 25 AUGUST

Advance party left at 1000 for XX Corps area. 166 trucks reported to the Division for this movement. Further instructions from higher headquarters indicated that Division would pass to the control of Third Army at LA HARTE BERNARD and continue movement East to an assembly area in the vicinity of FONTAINEBLEAU. The day was spent on completion of all preparations for the movement the following morning.

#### 26 AUGUST

Division initiated movement to FONTAINEBLEAU. Division with its normal attachments crossed IP at SEES at 0600. March Group I crossed IP at 0600. March Group II crossed IP at 0631. March Group III crossed IP and 1000. March Group IV crossed IP at 1203. March Group V crossed IP at 1420. March Group VI crossed IP 1550. March Group VII crossed IP at 1800. Insufficient trucks available to motorize more than 2 Combat Teams, and consequently CT 9 initiated its movement by shuttling. 2nd Battalion was moved on the 712th Tank Battalion as far as MONTMIRAL while the 3rd Battalion

moved on the organic kitchen trucks. By the night, March Groups I, II, III and IV had closed in assembly area. March Group V was still enroute. March Group VI had closed in temporary assembly area West of CHÂTEAUDUN while CT 9 had closed all but the 1st Battalion in assembly area vicinity MONTMIRAIL. 1st Battalion awaiting transportation remained in original location. CT 8 (March Group II) after closing was ordered by Corps to move North across SEINE River to establish bridgehead for the Crossing at FONTAINBLEAU and MONTERAU.

## 27 AUGUST

At 0100, 90th Division received instructions to move early on 27 August to assembly position in the area MAISON-ROUGE CHENOISE-JOUY-NE-CHATEL-GASTINS leaving bridgehead force over the SEINE River crossing until relieved by XX Corps Headquarters. Division was further alerted for an attack to the Northeast late 27 August. Instructions were issued to CT 7 reinforced by the 345th Field Artillery Battalion to move by motor at 0800 to outpost Division assembly area. CO 712th Tank Battalion was ordered to assume command of force consisted of Company D of his unit, 90th Reconnaissance unit to precede CT to screen its movement. (While columns of the 7th Armored had traversed portion of this area, the extent to which it had been cleared was not known).

March Group V closed assembly area at 0330. Screening force and CT 7 initiated their movement per schedule but were considerably delayed because of change of priorities on the bridge at FONTAINBLEAU. At 1015, the Division was directed to send a force to DONNEMARIE to wipe out pocket of resistance reported in that area. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, which was bridge-heading MONTERAU, was designated for this task while 1 Company of 2nd Battalion was dispatched to replace them. CT 7 and 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry had accomplished their mission without incident at 1600. March Group VI closed FONTAINBLEAU at 1430. It was re-gassed and was redirected to move to Division assembly area. At 1645, Division directed that 1 Battalion 358th Infantry be retained as bridgehead force over the 4 crossings and the remainder of the Regiment moved to its assigned portion of assembly area. It closed these locations of 2200.

Entire Division, less 2nd and 3rd Battalions 358th Infantry, closed in assembly area at 280200. 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry was released to the Division at 272200 and was scheduled for movement to the Division area at daylight 28 August. 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry was retained at DONNEMARIE under Corps control.

## 28 AUGUST

Present Corps mission was the establishment of the bridgehead centered around REIMS and the seizure of crossings over the AISNE River further to the North. 7th Armored Division operating in multiple columns over the entire Corps zone initiated its movement North at 271400, to seize crossings of the MARNE and AISNE Rivers, respectively. 5th Infantry Division was to closely follow the 7th Armored Division on the right of the Corps, capture REIMS and occupy its portion of its bridgehead line. 90th Division assigned to the mission of closely following 7th Armored Division on the left of the Corps, assisted the 5th Infantry division in the capture of REIMS and finally occupied its portion of the bridgehead line. At 0300, Division field order for the execution of the Corps mission was issued to subordinate units. The plan in brief was as follows: CT 7, providing the left flank security of the Division was to move by shuttling in two columns. CT 9 on the right to move by shuttling in one column, followed by CT 8. Remainder of Division Trains to displace on order by all available routes. Units initiated their movement at 1000 and by midafternoon had closed upon the 7th Armored division. 3rd Battalion 357 Infantry crossed the MARNE at CHATEAU THIERRY and relieved units of the 7th Armored Division guarding the bridge thereat. CT 9 closed vicinity of DORMANS and made preliminary preparation for the construction of a bridge at that location. All units of the Division closed

North of MONTMIRAIL-VIELS-MAISON by dark. Orders were issued for the continuation of the advance on 29 August.

One Combat Command of the 7th Armored Division was across the MARNE River North of CHÂTEAU THIERRY. Elements of the Armored on other routes were blocked for want of bridges. 5th Infantry Division was at the line of the MARNE with its advance temporarily stopped because of the absence of crossing sites. 9th Infantry Division on the right flank of the adjacent VII Corps, was one day's march behind.

### 29 AUGUST

CT 7 and 358th Infantry initiated their movement at 0730, across the MARNE River at the CHÂTEAU THIERRY-MAZY bridges, respectively. The advance of CT 9 was to be initiated upon completion by the Engineers of an infantry support bridge at DORMANS. This bridge was completed in 1430. The advance of all elements of the Division was slowed by 7th Armored columns to the front. 357th Infantry by passing the armor rolled Northward to occupy march objectives at FISMES-PONTAVERT and GUIGNICOURT on the final bridgehead line. Their march on this day was a model of aggressiveness. 358th Infantry, moved by organic transportation only, had reached their march objective vicinity of TRIGNY by nightfall. CT 9 considerably delayed by bridging activity over the MARNE, closed in vicinity of CUEUX by dark. Meanwhile 7th Armored Division reached the AISNE River on the left of the Corps zone and had partly encircled REIMS, while one CT of the 5th Infantry Division reached Southern outskirts of REIMS.

### 30 AUGUST

At 0200 XX Corps issued warning order for movement eastward from REIMS to secure of VERDUN and bridgehead over the MEUSE River. Advance was to be made by the 7th Armored Division followed by the 5th Infantry Division, while the 90th Infantry Division, pending its reversion to XV Corps, was to occupy and protect the REIMS bridgehead line. CT 9 initiated movement by marching and shuttling to occupy the line NEUCHATEL-ST LOUPE and reached these positions at 1300. 358th Infantry moved to assembly area vicinity VILIERES-FRANQUEUX. Division CP displaced to FORT BRIMONT, opening there at 1500. Occupation of REIMS bridgehead was completed at 1500. At 2100, 90th Division took control of REIMS and made plans for re-disposition the following day for the occupation of the complete bridgehead line.

### 31 AUGUST

358th Infantry was moved by marching to a position Northeast of REIMS and occupied that portion of the bridgehead line formally in the zone of the 5th Infantry Division. The advance of the 9th Infantry Division to the Northeast covered the zone of the 357th Infantry and that Regiment was alerted for movement 1 September to reserve position in rear of 358th Infantry. CT 7 was placed on 2 hours alert status for movement to the East as Corps Reserve.

No definite instructions reached Division concerning reversion to XV Corps and contingent plans were laid for movement to rejoin the XX Corps. Meanwhile Division entered on a limited training and rehabilitation program

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## INTRODUCTION

The opening of the month of September found the 90th Infantry Division out of contact with the enemy, occupying a bridgehead line, with the mission of protecting the city of REIMS from enemy attack from the North and Northeast. The bulk of XX Corps, to which this Division was then assigned, was consolidating its MEUSE River bridgehead in the VERDUN area. Indications pointed to the detachment of the Division from XX Corps and its assignment the XV Corps, when the latter became operational in the Third Army area; the Division was prepared, however, to rejoin XX Corps on short notice. Meanwhile on the left (West) of the Division, VII Corps had moved through SOISSONS and swung to the East on the North bank of the AISNE River.

Dispositions of the Division were as follows:

a. 358th Infantry occupied the right sector of the bridgehead line extending from PROSNES to WARXERSVILLE where it made contact with the 359th Infantry.

b. 359th Infantry extended from the left of the 358th Infantry North and the Northwest to NEUFCHATEL.

c. 357th Infantry moved on 1 September from positions west of the 359th Infantry, now covered by the advance of the VII Corps, to an assembly area in the vicinity of BERRU.

d. Remainder of the Division was disposed centrally in the rear of the two front-line regiments with Division CP at FORT BRIMONT.

e. Detachments of the Division were covering the REIMS bridges, the great airport North of REIMS and other captured installations.

Pursuant to a Corps directive, a Battalion Combat Team of the 359th Infantry (3rd Battalion) moved Northeast and occupied a line from RETHEL to ATTIGNY inclusive, to deny to the enemy the AISNE River crossings in that area.

Company I, 358th Infantry, reinforced and motorized, moved South from REIMS to investigate a will-o'-the-wisp FFI report of enemy activity in the CONGY-TALUS area.

### 2 SEPTEMBER 44

CT 357 was placed on an alert status as Corps Reserve.

The entire Third Army was immobilized as the increasing gasoline shortage assumed critical proportions. Preliminary arrangements were made at the Army level for the air supply of gasoline. 315th Engineer Battalion initiated and completed the repair work necessary on the REIMS Airport to permit its utilization by transport planes.

### 3 SEPTEMBER 44

The Division less 1 CT, was alerted for motorized movement to the East to expand the North flank of the VERDUN bridgehead. CT 9 was to remain in the REIMS area to protect the bridgehead on a greatly foreshortened line. The necessary plans for the movement of the Division and redistribution of CT 9 were completed but immediate movement was out of the question in view of the gasoline shortage.

### 4 SEPTEMBER 44

The day passed without incident, except for the arrival of sufficient gasoline to move CT 7, reinforced, and 90th Reconnaissance Troop the following day to the VERDUN area.

## 5 SEPTEMBER 44

CT 7 moved by motor from reserve area to occupy with two Battalions an extended position East and Northeast of ETAIN pending arrival of the remainder of the Division. 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry with Company C, 712th Tank Battalion attached was diverted from the route of march in the ARGONNE FOREST to secure a large enemy ammunition dump South of CORRUPT and liquidate enemy resistance in that area. The ammunition dump, aggregating 30,000 tons, was promptly secured and demined and some 50 Germans flushed North and East into the hands of FFI groups which had been containing the wooded area around its perimeter. This operation lasted the entire day and the Battalion remained in position there overnight.

90th Reconnaissance Troop moved east, crossing the AISNE River at VOUIERS, and then south toward Verdun. Arriving in the Division area it established, per prearranged plan, a line of outposts to protect the north flank of the Division area.

Meanwhile the availability of extra fuel permitted motorized movement of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry to an assembly area in the zone of action prescribed for the 358th Infantry.

The CT earmarked by Corps for protection of the REIMS bridgehead was relieved from that mission and all preparations were made for the movement on 6 September of all elements of the Division to the ETAIN area.

## 6 SEPTEMBER 44

The Division made its shuttle move to the bridgehead area in remarkably expeditious style in spite of absence of road priorities. All elements had closed by dark.

XX Corps resumed the attack at 1400, with a long range objective of capturing the city of FRANKFURT deep in Germany. The advance was to be again led by the 7th Armored Division advancing on a broad front and closely followed by the 5th and 90th Infantries abreast with the latter on the left. The advance of the 90th Division was to be initiated as soon as the columns of the 7th Armored Division had gained sufficient headway. Division set a tentative H-Hour for the initiation of the advance at 070800.

The specific missions assigned the 90th Division were:

- a. Advance in zone behind elements of the 7th Armored Division.
- b. Destroy all enemy within zone.
- c. Capture THIONVILLE and establish bridgehead over the MOSELLE River.
- d. In conjunction with 43rd Cavalry Squadron, protect North flank of Corps.
- e. Maintain contact with V Corps.

The enemy had been given a breathing spell while we were immobilized for want of gasoline. He, the Boche, had been facing West on the threat of death on the line of the MOSELLE and was in force to our front and our North. The Division zone was 30 odd Kilometers in width. We were faced with two alternatives; (1) we could advance deliberately on a wide front, clearing zone as we advanced or (2) we could drive a wedge rapidly in the direction of THIONVILLE. The Division adopted the former plan. V Corps, with whom we were to maintain contact, was 60 Km to our rear and the enemy was in between. To further complicate the Division's problem it was soon ascertained that no elements of the 7th Armored Division were operating in our zone.

## 7 SEPTEMBER 44

In the early hours of the morning a German reconnaissance in force moving South from LONGUYON drove elements of the 90th Reconnaissance Troop out of the town of SPINCOURT and presented a serious threat to the left flank of the Division. 358th Infantry was ordered to retake the town in the

morning at daylight, utilizing not to exceed 1 Battalion. Meanwhile Div Arty concentrated its fires on the town. At daylight and 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed reconnaissance elements into SPINCOURT and reported that the enemy had withdrawn to the North after receiving heavy Artillery fire.

The Division attack order called for the capture of the high ground west of the MOSELLE River as a preliminary operation to the capture of THIONVILLE and the forcing of a bridgehead across the MOSELLE River.

357th Infantry, operating on the right of the Division, advanced at 0900 on the general axis ETAIN-BRIEY, the 1st Battalion on the left, 3rd Battalion on the right, 2nd Battalion following in trace of 3rd Battalion. The 1st Battalion moving cross-country, advanced without opposition to the TRIEUX-AVRIL Road, occupied Hill 313 and pushed reconnaissance to the East towards the regimental objective. The 3rd Battalion encountered enemy resistance west of BRIEY which it disbursed after a sharp fight. It then swung to the Northeast, marching on AVRIL, while the 2nd Battalion continued the advance on the town of BRIEY proper, with the intention of leaving one company there as a flank block when it too veered to the Northeast in accordance with the Regimental plan. However a sharp fight developed on the West outskirts of BRIEY and the 2nd Battalion made only slight progress for the remainder of the day. Prisoner reports indicated that the heights of the town were garrisoned by a complete German Battalion. By nightfall the 1st and 3rd Battalions had linked up at AVRIL prepared for continuation of the advance of the following day.

358th Infantry marched the 1st Battalion on SPINCOURT at daylight. The 3rd Battalion followed by the 2nd Battalion advanced at 0900 on the axis LANDRES-FONTOY. Slight resistance was met and brushed aside at MONT, but the advance of the 3rd Battalion was blocked in the woods to the East thereof. Because of the difficulty of movement through the woods, they were bypassed to the South by both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions and the advance continued in the direction of TRIEUX. Some 1000 yards West of TRIEUX both the 3rd and 2nd battalions were heavily engaged by the enemy from the high ground West and North of that town. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion, after relief of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry, was moved by motor to the vicinity of MAIRY West of the leading two battalions. From this point it dispatched 1 Company to contain, from the South, the enemy in the woods which had previously blocked the advance of the 3rd Battalion.

359th Infantry advanced in Division reserve, echeloned to the left rear of the 358th with the mission of protecting the North flank of the Division. 1st Battalion 359th Infantry relieved 1st Battalion 358th Infantry at SPINCOURT with one company and was given the additional mission of blocking the approaches to the Division area from the North as our advance to the East continued. By nightfall the remainder of the regiment, leapfrogging the 1st Battalion, had closed in assembly area Northeast of LANDRES and had established outposts to the North and Northeast.

90th Reconnaissance Troop and newly attached Troop B, 43rd Cavalry Squadron operated throughout the day East and Northeast of Infantry elements. Enemy resistance prevented their movement as far North as the Division left boundary.

Division CP moved just prior to dark to an exposed position West of the town of MAIRY.

## 8 SEPTEMBER 44

Shortly after dark 7 September the newly formed and newly equipped 106th Panzer Brigade moved South through AUMETZ and, utilizing side roads, penetrated the Division zone. Whether this unit had for its mission a reconnaissance in force, a raid or the relief of the garrison at BRIEY has never been accurately determined. The net effect of the foray, at the cost of complete destruction, was to enforce a day's delay of the advance of the 90th Division.

The route of the 106th took them through the middle of the Division CP area. A considerable portion of the column had cleared the crossroad South of the Division CP when they were discovered

and fired upon by local security elements about 0300. The Germans returned the fire promptly and vigorously and caused casualties within the Signal Company and Division Artillery Headquarters. But confused by the presence of our troops in this unexpected quarter, the column halted and consequently lost contact with those elements which had already moved through. A company of the 712th Tank Battalion was moved into the Division CP area to be in a position to counter any action on the part of the Boche and/or to destroy them in place at first light. The 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry was alerted and started in motion South to assemble immediately West of the Division CP and attack North in conjunction with the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry to destroy the hostile force. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry was directed to move from MAIRY West to Division Artillery CP, relieve pressure there, and attack to the North on the right of and in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry. At first light the Division Headquarters displaced to HIGNY, opening a temporary CP at that location in conjunction with 359th Infantry. Division Artillery Headquarters, which had borne the brunt of the enemy night fire and was almost completely encircled by German troops, coolly evacuated itself on foot southward to the CP of the 358th Infantry.

#### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion marched South through LANDRES dropping off AT and TD elements at that location and reached Division CP shortly after daylight, where it teamed with 712th Tank Battalion and made preparations to reverse its direction and attack generally North to the town of BONVILLERS. It launched its attack at noon and by midafternoon had reached BONVILLERS. The elements left at LANDRES intercepted and destroyed 7 enemy tanks, a part of a force which had cleared South through the CP area and turned West only to find themselves at daybreak cut off from the rest of their unit. They had attempted to break back out to AUDUN only to meet annihilation at LANDRES. Other elements of their particular group were destroyed by Corps TDs further to the West. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion was moved a short distance South thus cutting the LANDRES-AUDUN Road midway between those two towns. It also intercepted and destroyed Panzer elements. The situation in the 359th Infantry area had clarified sufficiently by midafternoon so that regiment could be reoriented to the Northeast in preparation for an advance on AUDUN.

#### 358th Infantry:

1st Battalion had been ordered to attack West and North in conjunction with 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry. However they were heavily engaged at MAIRY itself by those elements of the 106th Panzer Brigade, which finding their advance blocked at the Division CP, had driven East on the road to MAIRY. In the engagement which lasted throughout the day the 1st Battalion captured or destroyed 7 tanks and 43 halftracks and took 125 prisoners. When it became apparent that the 1st Battalion could not participate in the attack originally planned, the 2nd Battalion was ordered to execute the original mission of the 1st Battalion. However the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were so heavily engaged in front of TRIEUX that no elements could be disengaged. As it developed, 1st Battalion had eliminated all enemy resistance in the MAIRY area by 1800 and was able to move North to join 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry per original plan.

#### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion had been started East from Hill 313 toward NEUFCHEF but had been recalled by Division in the light of developments in other sectors of the Division area. Shortly after its reestablishment on Hill 313, a German battalion supported by tanks, attacked West toward the unoccupied hill immediately North of the 1st Battalion position. Unobserved, and withholding their fire until the German advance had exposed the flank of the entire column, all weapons took up a murderous fire of artillery, mortar, MG and flat trajectory cannon which in a space of a very few minutes annihilated the force. Those few remaining were quickly taken prisoner. The 2nd Battalion committing all three companies, surrounded

BRIEY on three sides and forced the surrender of the German garrison of upwards of 300 men. 3rd Battalion remained at AVRIL connecting up the two flank Battalions.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was badly handled just short of AUDUN by a German tank force.

The Division gained no appreciable amount of ground on this day but it had completely destroyed the 106th Panzer outfit and captured, intact, a Battalion of the newly committed 559th Division. At the conclusion of the day's fight, the Division had captured or destroyed 30 tanks, 60 halftracks and an estimated 100 miscellaneous vehicles and captured 764 prisoners. PW reports and captured documents gave strong indications that the 106th was but the vanguard of a much larger force moving South through ESCH and the Division was alerted to repel a strong attack during the night or following day.

#### 9 SEPTEMBER 44

The anticipated counterattack did not materialize and by midmorning the Division was prepared for the resumption of the attack.

##### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion cleared the woods East and Northeast of BONVILLERS and captured AUDUN against slight opposition at 1600. 3rd Battalion, after capture of AUDUN, skirted the Northwest edge of that town and occupied the high ground to the North. By this maneuver it had placed itself in the rear of those enemy elements still at FILLIERES and the intervening woods. Shortly after consolidation of its position, a force of approximately 200 Germans debouched from the woods in front of that high ground and promptly were slaughtered by our fire. 1st Battalion in Regimental Reserve, closed on the rear of the 2nd Battalion just Southwest of AUDUN.

##### 358th Infantry:

3rd Battalion attacked at 1100 and seized TRIEUX. The advance was continued from TRIEUX to FONTOY which was captured with the aid of tanks after a stiff fight. The 1st Battalion attacked Northeast on the left of the 3rd Battalion, captured SANCY and halted for the night astride the road connecting AUDUN and FONTOY. 2nd Battalion in regimental reserve moved to TRIEUX.

##### 357th Infantry:

357th Infantry was initially held in place pending developments in the left sector. After the occupation of TRIEUX by the 358th Infantry, 1st Battalion advanced to the North and seized the high ground vicinity of NEUFCHEF which commanded a considerable portion of the Division zone East as far as the MOSELLE River. 2nd and 3rd Battalions remained in place at BRIEY and AVRIL respectively.

In the south of the Corps zone the 5th Infantry Division and pushed a precarious bridgehead across the MOSELLE River in the vicinity of CORNY but was unable to reinforce it. Further North the 2nd Infantry Regiment and elements of the 7th Armored Division were making next to no progress West of METZ. What was originally assumed to be stout rear guard action on the part of the enemy soon disclosed itself as organized defense of positions. Our elements were in fact hammering on the outer fringes of FORTRESS METZ which the enemy had decided to hold. On our North flank the 43rd Cavalry Squadron had established initial contact with elements of the V Corps in the vicinity of MONTMEDY.

#### 10 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion advanced with slight opposition North to HAYANGE, a sizable industrial town in the gorge between Division Objectives 2 and 3. The leading company cleared the town and was well up on



the side slopes of the eminence to the North when a German column reentered the town from the East. This force was liquidated after a considerable fight. Shortly before dark the company on the high ground North of the town was counterattacked and driven back. 2nd Battalion, relieved at BRIEY by Company A 315th Engineer Battalion, moved eastward through the thick country and occupied the regimental objective. 3rd Battalion remained at AVRIL.

#### 358th Infantry:

Closed in the FONTOY area as a preliminary to further advance. 1st Battalion moved Northeast and occupied ANGEVILLERS preparatory to the attack on the high ground Northwest of THIONVILLE. 3rd Battalion advanced in midafternoon and occupied ALGRANGE, a town in the gorge Northwest of and adjacent to HAYANGE. From that point it launched an assault up precipitous slopes to secure a foothold on the dominating plateau which marked the West extremity of Division Objective Number 2. Its advance was fiercely resisted by the Boche entrenched high up on the slopes. The fight was joined at close quarters, but the Germans held firm and at darkness the Battalion was still short of its objective. During the night the Boche withdrew.

#### 359th Infantry:

Attacked Northeast at 0700 and by 1400 had secured all assigned objectives. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions advanced in a coordinated effort and secured AUMETZ and the high ground to the North and West thereof. The Maginot defenses in this area were unmanned. 1st Battalion following in their wake completed mop up of the large forest West of AUDUN. Motor patrols from the Regiment entered the town of LONGVY within LUXEMBOURG border and made fleeting contact with elements of V Corps.

#### 90th Reconnaissance Troop and the 43rd Cavalry Squadron:

Were enabled by the slackening German resistance to push their reconnaissance several miles beyond leading infantry elements, in the northern sector of the Division Zone.

### 11 SEPTEMBER 44

#### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion recaptured the high ground North of HAYANGE and consolidated its position in that area. 2nd Battalion shifted its position northward to occupy MORLANGE. E Company of that Battalion was dispatched late in the day to occupy FLORANGE and protect the right rear 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. 3rd Battalion sent strong patrols East to the MOSELLE River in the southern half of the regimental zone discovering that UCKANGE was strongly held and considerable German traffic was moving South along the River Road.

#### 358th Infantry:

3rd Battalion resumed attack at daylight and had seized the high ground East of VOLKRANGE by noon. 1st Battalion attacked East from ANGEVILLERS on the heels of a bombing mission directed on the southern slopes of the objective. By nightfall the 1st Battalion, advancing over rugged terrain and against determined resistance, was short of its objective but in an excellent position for the resumption of its attack on the morrow. 2nd Battalion was moved to the vicinity of VOLKRANGE and started East through the corridor between 1st and 3rd Battalion objectives, with the mission of capturing THIONVILLE. It made little progress.

#### 359th Infantry:

Displaced East from AUMETZ to occupy a new reserve position Northeast of ANGEVILLERS and in conjunction with the 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed reconnaissance eastward to GAVISSE.

By this time the V Corps had come abreast of the XX Corps and the 5th Armored Division was definitely determined to be close to the German border East of LUXEMBOURG. The covering of our previously extended left flank permitted the Division to reorient itself to the East. The nature of the MOSELLE River within our zone made desirable both from a technical and tactical standpoint, the forcing of the crossing North and East of THIONVILLE, perhaps at MALLING or even at REMICH. From the Corps standpoint, however, a crossing in the immediate vicinity of THIONVILLE was required and our movements were consequently governed by this consideration.

In the South Corps sector the 5th Infantry Division had evacuated its initial bridgehead and had forced a more substantial crossing to the South thereof. Meanwhile in front of Metz itself, the 7th Armored Division made no progress against the perimeter of the METZ fortifications. Although the original plan contemplated our crossing in the THIONVILLE area and swinging South to link up with the remainder of the Corps East of METZ, the situation in the Corps sector gave rise to the possibility that the Division might simply contain THIONVILLE with a minimum of force while the bulk moved South to assist in reducing the German salient.

#### 12 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

2nd and 3rd Battalions cleared the last remaining enemy resistance West of the MOSELLE with the 3rd Battalion attacking and capturing UCKANGE. With the River line thus exposed, reconnaissance for crossing sites and to determine the character of the enemy resistance on the East bank was vigorously pushed.

##### 358th Infantry:

1st Battalion completed occupation of the high ground Northwest of THIONVILLE. 3rd Battalion remained in position sending one company to garrison the town of TERVILLE and furnish right flank protection for the advance of the 2nd Battalion. 2nd Battalion, continuing the attack down the alley, fought its way into THIONVILLE. By nightfall it had closed in a tight arc South and West of the bridge approach and some 300 yards short thereof. The advance of this Battalion was considerably hampered by house to house defense, demolitions and roadblocks within the town. In particular were the approaches to the bridge well barricaded.

##### 359th Infantry:

Displaced again to the vicinity of HETTANGE GRANDE prepared for rapid movement of the East to seize that key terrain feature, BASSE KONTZ, which dominated the area for miles around.

Visual reconnaissance of the East bank of the MOSELLE River by the 358th Infantry had disclosed prepared positions and strong enemy garrisons. Report of our organic and attached Cavalry units operating in the direction of BASSE KONTZ revealed similar enemy strength East of the MOSELLE in this area. The mean of all intelligence reports placed at least an enemy division opposite us. As the Corps had disapproved the plan of crossing wide and East of THIONVILLE a decision was made to establish this bridgehead at THIONVILLE.

#### 13 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 358th Infantry:

2nd Battalion assisted by the 1st Battalion operating to its North, cleared THIONVILLE of enemy to the river, consolidating its position and immediately initiating reconnaissance for crossing sites. The single remaining bridge had been blown during the previous night.

### 359th Infantry:

Dispatched 3rd Battalion to FORET DE CATTENOM with the mission of patrolling to the river between MALLING and KIESELRAU, making an obvious display of force in that area.

### 90th Reconnaissance Troop and 43rd Cavalry Squadron:

Continued reconnaissance toward the river line East and North of the 359th Infantry. Although enemy elements prevented their actual approach to the river they were able to establish a series of OPs which kept both banks of the river under continuous surveillance.

The Division plan contemplated initiation of the bridgehead operation the following morning with the 358th Infantry making the main effort crossing at THIONVILLE. 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry and 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry were prepared for the execution of feints in the vicinity of UCKANGE and CATTENOM respectively. That portion of THIONVILLE East of the MOSELLE was strongly garrisoned and the approaches difficult. Faced with a major operation in the face of strong resistance and because reconnaissance had been inadequate and plans incomplete, the division commander postponed the operation for 24 hours. The operation never materialized for XX Corps issued instructions shortly before midnight for the 90th Division to extend southward, relieving those elements of the 7th Armored Division and 5th of Infantry Division facing the German defenses West of METZ.

### 14 SEPTEMBER 44

The revised mission of the Division read as follows:

- a. Contain THIONVILLE and vicinity with minimum force, vigorously patrolling line of the MOSELLE River within zone in conjunction with 43rd Cavalry Squadron.
- b. Relieve the 7th Armored Division within the zone by 142000B. Priority of relief to 2nd Infantry Regiment (at this time attached to 7th Armored Division). Relief in the form of coordinated attack to prevent disruption of position. Main effort on the South.
- c. Attack 150715B to destroy enemy within zone West of the MOSELLE River.

### 358th Infantry, (less 3rd Battalion):

Reinforced by the 344th FA Battalion, 1 Battery of 345th FA Battalion, Company A 607th TD Battalion, 1 Light and 1 Medium Platoon 712th Tank Battalion and Company B 315th Engineer Battalion, was left in the original zone of action with the mission of holding the river line from UCKANGE North to GARCHE inclusive. The 43rd Cavalry Squadron took over the zone from GARCHE North and East to the Division boundary maintaining contact with the right elements of the 5th Armored Division.

The remainder of the Division was set in motion southward while command reconnaissance parties went ahead to make the necessary arrangements with XX Corps and 7th Armored Division. After being appraised of the situation in front of METZ the following plan was formulated and immediately executed:

- a. 90th Reconnaissance Troop to patrol the river from UCKANGE South to TALANGE.
- b. 357th Infantry to relieve CCA and CCR of the 7th Armored Division and takeover and East-West line from ST PRIVAT exclusive, eastward to contact with the 90th Reconnaissance Troop.
- c. To fill the gap between the 357th and 359th Infantry and to cover the open ground Northwest of AMANVILLERS a specified force (Task Force Randolph) was created comprising the 712th Tank Battalion (-), 2 Engineer Companies and 1 TD Company.
- d. 359th Infantry to relieve the 2nd Infantry and 87th Reconnaissance Squadron in the sector from the AMANVILLERS-HABONVILLE Road South to GRAVELOTTE.

The relief was completed and the other elements of the Division closed in new location by midnight.

Division CP open West of BATILLY.

#### 15 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

Launched an attack on the right of its zone with the 1st Battalion in the assault. Advancing through thick woods and under conditions of poor visibility, the Battalion initially seized a quarry at the little town of MARENGO, to protect its right flank and then changed direction toward FORT AMANVILLERS. By late afternoon it had advanced well up the North slopes of the Hill mass, on the summit of which lay the fort, but increasing enemy resistance brought the advance to a halt. The 2nd Battalion on the left of the 1st Battalion improved its positions and reconnoitered for a jump-off line.

##### 358th Infantry:

Was frustrated in every attempt to get patrols across the river. As an interesting sidelight, on this day 10 fortress guns in the casements Northwest of THIONVILLE were put into action by our troops and began interdiction of the approaches to THIONVILLE from the East. 3rd Battalion was moved by motor to an assembly area at ST MARIE AUX CHENES as Division Reserve, and I Company dispatched to AMNEVILLE to assist the 90th Reconnaissance Troop covering the river line.

##### 359th Infantry:

Attacked on the right of its zone with the 2nd Battalion, which had for its mission the capture of JEANNE D'ARC. Vicious fighting developed in the draw Northeast of GRAVELOTTE and progress was extremely slow. I Company was dispatched at noon to clean the woods North of the 2nd Battalion to protect its rear.

As a result of the day's activities, the Division was now fully aware of the immensity of its task. It was obvious that we could contain the 3500 troops estimated to be opposing us in FORTRESS METZ, but equally obvious that an unsupported assault was out of the question. The Division plan, therefore, was the nibble by making a series of limited objective attacks, to harass the enemy by fire and to keep him off balance by aggressive patrols.

#### 16 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion, committing all companies, made a strong bid to force its way into the FORT area, but to no avail. The road access was barricaded and covered by MG and flat trajectory weapons. All other approaches on the flanks were denied by the existence of a wide and deep moat. The enemy reaction to the attack of the 1st Battalion initially made itself felt with the increasingly heavy mortar and artillery fire. Subsequently the enemy counterattacked in company strength and did considerable damage to C Company before being repulsed.

##### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion continued its attack to clean out the draw East of GRAVELOTTE. The Boche were exceedingly well dug-in and progress was slow and costly. By nightfall the enemy had been liquidated as far South as the road East from GRAVELOTTE, but the price had been high, as a continual hail of mortar and artillery fire fell on this Battalion.

Up to the North excitement reigned at THIONVILLE as an American patrol battled on the East bank of the river, while a German combat patrol engaged our forces on the West, all in the inky blackness of the night.

South of METZ, in the bridgehead area, the 5th Infantry and 7th Armored Divisions were making

negligible progress in the face of stout resistance and sporadic enemy counterattacks.

#### 17 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion attempted still another assault on FORT AMANVILLERS but made no gain. Later in the day the 3rd Battalion relieved 1st Battalion.

##### 359th Infantry:

1st and 2nd Battalions mopped up their sectors and improved their positions. During the night the 3rd Battalion relieved the 2nd Battalion.

Throughout the day, and in all sectors, enemy artillery fire became increasingly heavy. Would the enemy counterattack in force? We were ready for him, but the thinness of our line in certain places presented a serious problem.

#### 18 SEPTEMBER 44

The Division engaged in no offensive action beyond patrols which continued development of the contours of the enemy's defenses. Our counterbattery was largely ineffectual either because of the enemy's well protected emplacements or because of his constant shifting of position areas.

At a secret meeting in MARS LA TOUR the Division General Staff was oriented on the XX Corp plan, "OPERATION THUNDERBOLT". "THUNDERBOLT" was a large-scale operation envisaging reduction of FORTRESS METZ by the coordinated efforts of XIX TAC and XX Corps. Basically there was no change in the 90th Division mission except that we were committed to putting the weight of our attack South of GRAVELOTTE. Plans were initiated at Division level, although it was felt that the assault would not be ordered while the 90th Division occupied its extended front.

#### 19 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion was reoriented to face East, taking over responsibility for the area previously held by I Company 358th Infantry and the 90th Reconnaissance Troop. One company was dispatched to RICHEMONT to clean up enemy patrols which had entered that town the previous night. This mission was accomplished without incident and contact secured with E Company 358th Infantry at UCKANGE. 3rd Battalion sustained a counterattack on its right flank and 1000, but repulsed it without loss of ground.

##### 358th Infantry:

A sizable German patrol penetrated UCKANGE on 3 sides, only to be driven back with heavy losses. I Company was released from attachment to 357th Infantry and rejoined its Battalion during the night. 1st Battalion relieved 2nd Battalion.

##### 359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion made a limited objective attack to the South and secured a quarry from which the enemy had been embarrassing our supply routes to the front. Mission was accomplished without difficulty.

All available intelligence showed that METZ FORTRESS consisted of an outer and inner belt of mutually supporting forts situated on commanding ground and individually capable of all-around defense. All approaches were difficult and well covered by fire. The original construction had been strengthened by the Germans since 1940. All in all the fortress was well-nigh impregnable to a frontal

assault.

#### 20 SEPTEMBER 44

Work continued on the Division portion of "OPERATION THUNDERBOLT". Aside from a small flurry on the right flank of the 359th Infantry, artillery exchanges and patrol activity, the day passed without incident.

#### 21 SEPTEMBER 44

All units initiated training of assault detachments in preparation for the attack on METZ. Our artillery continued planned harassing fires on the German positions; heavy retaliatory fire was concentrated in the GRAVELOTTE area. Our patrols, which were able to cross the MOSELLE River in the 358th area, met uniformly strong outposts.

#### 22 SEPTEMBER 44

The stalemate continued on the entire Corps front.

The Army Commander sat in on a Division conference on "OPERATION THUNDERBOLT".

Preliminary plans were made for the relief of 358th Infantry by Task Force Polk (attached to the 83rd Division).

#### 23 SEPTEMBER 44

No change in the general situation.

#### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Was attached to 357th Infantry to fill a gap between the 1st and 2nd Battalions. 1st Battalion 357th Infantry seized and out-posted the town of HARANGE SILVANGE. An attempted advance of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry southward on the right flank of the regiment was stopped abruptly by enemy resistance.

#### 24 SEPTEMBER 44

#### 357th Infantry:

Captured the towns of BRONVAUX and TERNEL. A French detachment operating in conjunction with the 1st Battalion seized the high ground in the BOIS de L'ABBE in the left center of the Regimental zone.

Liaison was established with the 83rd Division and plans completed for the relief of 358th Infantry on the night of 25-26 September.

To the South, the 2nd Battalion 11th Infantry was poised for the assault on FORT DRIANT, the capture of which was essential to the success of this Division's participation in "THUNDERBOLT". With DRIANT in our hands, an advance East from GRAVELOTTE could be vigorously prosecuted.

#### 25 SEPTEMBER 44

#### 359th Infantry:

Shifted the 3rd Battalion to GRAVELOTTE in preparation for the limited objective attack planned for the 26th.

357th and 358th Infantry:

Stepped up patrol activity along the river.

Division CP moved to DONCOURT.

26 SEPTEMBER 44

359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion, supported by C Company, attacked at 0515 to extend the right flank of the regiment and secure a firm hold on the road from GRAVELOTTE East as far as ST HUBERT'S FARME. C Company and L Company on the left moved rapidly and had secured their objectives by midmorning. K Company on the right, hampered by enemy mine fields and exposed ground, was badly handled throughout the day by enemy fire and one counterattack. By dark it was still short of its objective and was relieved by I Company preparatory to continuation of the attack in the morning.

358th Infantry:

Was relieved, under cover of darkness, by the 3rd Cavalry Group reinforced (Task Force Polk) and by E Company 357th Infantry which latter unit occupied UCKANGE.

27 SEPTEMBER 44

359th Infantry:

I Company resumed the attack at 0515 to complete the capture of the objective originally assigned 359th Infantry. Though it made some progress and secured the right flank of the Battalion, it was unable to reach the desired position. The enemy threw the book at the 3rd Battalion in so far as artillery and mortar fire were concerned. The penetration of the 359th Infantry toward FORT JEANNE D'ARC had obviously caused him considerable embarrassment. His reaction was to manifest itself in a more direct way the following day. F Company moved to GRAVELOTTE to further bolster the regimental right flank. The regiment was now completely committed and had exhausted its potentiality for further offensive action.

358th Infantry:

Moved by motor and marching from the THIONVILLE area to assembly area in the vicinity of ST MARCEL and VIONVILLE, with the 1st Battalion replacing the 3rd Battalion at ST MARIE AUX CHENES as Division Reserve. L Company was dispatched to GRAVELOTTE under regimental control to relieve F Company 359th Infantry. Division ordered full reconnaissance of the proposed zone of action South of GRAVELOTTE now occupied by the 3rd Cavalry Squadron.

28 SEPTEMBER 44

359th Infantry:

At daybreak a counterattack was launched against the 3rd Battalion from the West and from the South. It was repulsed with heavy enemy losses. One hour later and enemy force of approximately 200 men moved West against the 1st Battalion from the direction of MOSCOU FARME. Withholding their fire until the enemy had advanced within 20 yards the 1st Battalion practically annihilated this group; those remaining alive were either taken prisoners or fled in great disorder back to the FARME. There they were halted, regrouped and reinforced and promptly caught in the massed fires of 5 Battalions of artillery. For the remainder of the day the enemy was quiet in this sector. Shortly after dark he again attacked I Company on the extreme right of the regiment, but made no impression on our defenses.

In our first mission in 10 days a group of fighter-bombers blasted JEANNE D'ARC with negligible results.

At a unit Commanders' conference, called by the Commanding General, plans were discussed for the thinning out of our position areas in order that more men might be made available for assault training and for rehabilitation. Construction was initiated on shelters for front-line troops with the primary objective of providing for them a drying and warming place.

#### 29 SEPTEMBER 44

Division issued a long-range plan for the ultimate capture of FORT JEANNE D'ARC, visualizing the coordinated efforts of the 358th and 359th Infantry. Training in assault tactics was accelerated. Support aviation was particularly active during the day in the Division zone engaging targets at LA FOLE FARME, LEIPZIG FARME, SEMECOURT and MAIZIERES.

The Boche played possum, firing only a scattering of mortar, artillery and anti-aircraft.

#### 30 SEPTEMBER 44

Except for patrol activity and sporadic artillery exchange, there was no activity in the Division zone. The 358th and 359th worked on preliminary plans for their joint participation in the capture of JEANNE D'ARC. 357th Infantry made plans for the capture of MAIZIERES LES METZ. In all regiments the training and the rotation of front-line units was continued.

At 2000, 358th Infantry was placed on a one-hour alert status for movement on order to the zone of action of the XII Corps.

The end of August had found the 90th Division, as part of a larger force, racing pell-mell across France hot on the heels of the shattered German Armies of the West. But at this point logistics had tempered strategy and slowed the advance while supplies, the wherewithal for the continuation of the pursuit, were rushed forward. Given thus a breathing spell, the Germans slowed, stopped, turned and began to present something approaching a uniform front of resistance. At the end of September, therefore, we were, from the Division standpoint, at a stalemate. But elsewhere the shape of the final blow was developing.

McLAIN  
COMMANDING  
OFFICIAL:  
STILWELL  
G-3



## INTRODUCTION

The end of September found the 90th Division together with elements of the 5th Infantry Division and 3rd Cavalry Squadron containing the western half of FORTRESS METZ. The dispositions of the Divisions were generally as follows:

a. 357th Infantry with Company A, 315th Engineer Battalion and 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached, held the MOSELLE River line from UCKANGE South to TALANGE with the remainder of the regiment on the East-West line from TALANGE to ST PRIVAT exclusive.

b. TASK FORCE RANDOLPH, comprising the 712th Tank Battalion (-3 Medical Companies in support of Infantry Regiments), and B Company 315th Engineer Battalion, with elements of the 607th TD Battalion in direct support defended the triangle ST PRIVAT-STE MARIE-HABONVILLE, connecting on the left and right respectively with the 357th and 359th Infantries.

c. 359th Infantry held a North-South line from a 600 yards West of AMANVILLERS South to cut the road from GRAVELOTTE just West of ST HUBERT'S FARM.

b. The 3 Battalions of the 358th Infantry occupied assembly areas in the towns of STE MARIE (1st), ST MARCEL (2nd), and VIONVILLE (3rd), the first mentioned as Division Reserve. L Company occupied GRAVELOTTE.

e. Division CP was located at DONCOURT.

In the preceding two weeks, limited progress had been made in small-scale attacks against the METZ defenses. Planning continued meanwhile, for the eventual capture of GROUPE FORTIFIE JEANNE D'ARC subsequent to the reduction of FORT DRIANT by the 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry.

On the remainder of the XX Corps front, the 5th Infantry Division maintained its bridgehead across the MOSELLE South of METZ while the 83rd Infantry Division, reinforced, connecting with the 90th at UCKANGE patrolled the line of the MOSELLE and SAUER North to contact with the VIII Corps (Ninth Army).

### 1 OCTOBER 44

#### 358th Infantry:

Previously on a 1 hour alert status for employment in the XII Corps zone, was released to the Division.

#### 359th Infantry:

Effected redistribution, thinning the frontline garrison and replacing the 3rd Battalion with elements of the 1st.

Patrolling, training in assault tactics and rehabilitation continue.

### 2 OCTOBER 44

No special activity on the Division from.

#### 357th Infantry:

Assigned the mission of capturing the high ground Northwest of MAIZIERES-LES-METZ, as a prelude to the assault of the town itself, made necessary re-dispositions to gather sufficient force to launch the attack.

#### TASK FORCE RANDOLPH:

Was dissolved and TASK FORCE SUNDT (Troops: 607th TD Battalion (-), Company B, 315th Engineer Battalion, and Company A plus Assault Gun Platoon, 712th Tank Battalion), assumed same mission within present boundaries effective 1330. 712th Tank Battalion (-) was placed in Division

Reserve.

### 3 OCTOBER 44

#### 357th Infantry:

Attacked at 0430 with C and G Companies and gained the North portion of a huge slag pile Northwest of MAIZIERES against slight resistance. By midday they had driven South to control the entire heights and dominate enemy positions in the town. Enemy reaction manifested itself in an attack in company strength against G Company at 2100. The fight continued until midnight when the Boche withdrew with heavy losses.

#### 358 Infantry:

2nd Battalion, per Corps order, was moved at 1500 to GORZE prepared to prevent an enemy breakthrough around the flanks of the 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry (now assaulting FORT DRIANT) and/or to relieve the 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry after that unit had completed reduction of FORT DRIANT. Its employment could be ordered by Corps only. E Company was subsequently moved at midnight to a position 2500 yards Northeast of GORZE on alert status.

Elsewhere in the Division zone, construction of shelters, improved battery positions and Fort mockups continued. Patrol activity was stepped up as German fire and movement decreased.

### 4 OCTOBER 44

#### 357th Infantry:

Consolidated positions newly won by the 2nd Battalion and continued plans for the assault on MAIZIERES.

#### 358 Infantry:

1st Battalion, still earmarked as Corps Reserve, moved to the vicinity of ST MARCEL to occupy reserve area vacated by the 2nd Battalion.

Training and rehabilitation continued in all units.

### 5 OCTOBER 44

XX Corps ordered the originally prescribed boundary between the 83rd and 90th Infantry Divisions into effect as of 061200 October. The net result of the delimitation of our North boundary was the release of E Company, 357th Infantry and Company A, 315th Engineer Battalion now garrisoning UCKANGE and RICHEMONT, respectively.

Activity within the Division zone was limited to patrols, harassing fire and training.

2nd Battalion 358th Infantry remained on alert status at GORZE prepared to occupy FORT DRIANT after its reduction. Meanwhile, the attack itself, now under the direction of a special task force headquarters was making no appreciable progress.

### 6 OCTOBER 44

#### 357th Infantry:

E Company was relieved at UCKANGE at 0645 by elements of the 3rd Cavalry Group; relief of Company A, 315th Engineer Battalion was completed in 1145 and that company reverted to Battalion control. 1st Battalion attacked to gain the South edge of the BOIS DE L'ABBE to protect the right flank of the 2nd Battalion and secured its objective at 1830.

Support aviation bombed WOIPPY, MAIZIERES and AMELANGE FARM by way of preparation for the following day's attack.

#### 7 OCTOBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

The 2nd Battalion plan for the assault of MAIZIERES LES METZ was generally as follows:

- a. F Company from position on the South edge of the slag pile to support the attack by fire; thereafter to relieve E Company in northern half of town;
- b. E Company from forward assembly position between BOIS DE L'ABBE and the slag pile to attack to East, South of the slag pile to cut the town in two; block to the South and mop up the northern half;
- c. G Company to follow E Company E to RR tracks; then turn South and capture factory area.

At 0500 the Boche garrison debouched from the town and assaulted F Company position up the steep barren slopes of the slag pile. F Company quickly repulsed the effort, massacring the Boche with the coordinated fires of infantry weapons and artillery. Conceivably it was a desperate attempt to stall our attack but it went for naught since it was directed at the holding force and completely missed the assault company.

E Company moved off on schedule and catching the Boche on the rebound overran the northern half of town. But the prosecution of the attack southward was a different matter. Mines in profusion, dogged house-to-house resistance and heavy artillery fire slowed the assault to snail-like progress. By dark the Battalion was in possession of the factory area and the western portion of town but otherwise had registered but negligible additional gains.

Elsewhere on the Division front there was little activity. 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry remained in the GORZE area prepared to back up the 5th Division's Task Force Warnock (3 Infantry battalions with Engineer, TD and Tank attachments) which had been stopped at FORT DRIANT.

#### 8 OCTOBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

During the night the Boche moved the greater portion of a Battalion into MAIZIERES-LES-METZ. This latter force attacked our positions in town at 0600, but was repulsed without gain. Although the Boche was defeated in this encounter he hung on grimly to his portion of the town and consequently the southward advance of the 2nd Battalion was tediously slow.

Units not in the line continued training and rehabilitation. Units engaged set up additional OPs, kept patrols constantly probing and consumed the meager ammunition allowance harassing the German position.

#### 9-10 OCTOBER 44

During this period the attack against MAIZIERES progressed slowly South with 1 Company only in the assault. A series of demonstrations were conducted by the Infantry Regiments in the assault of pillboxes with the idea of developing the best possible technique.

10 October was highlighted by the brief visit of the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General George C Marshall accompanied by Lt. General Patton, CG Third Army and Lt. General Handy, Chief of OPD.

#### 11 OCTOBER 44

The type of resistance encountered by the 2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry in MAIZIERES-LES-METZ

made it clear that a complete Battalion of that Regiment would have to be freed of other missions to prosecute a general assault. Such a redistribution however was impracticable in view of the extended frontage of the Regiment. Consequently the decision was made to temporarily attach the 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry to the 357th Infantry to relieve the 3rd Battalion of the latter unit. Simultaneously the 359th Infantry was directed to relieve prior to 2130, I Company of the 358th Infantry then occupying GRAVELOTTE.

The 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, less I Company, en-trucked at VIONVILLE and moved by motor to MALANCOURT, arriving at 1700 and assembling there for the night. I Company 358th Infantry was relieved by A Company, 359th Infantry in GRAVELOTTE at 2050 and marched to VIONVILLE preparatory to further movement to MALANCOURT the following morning.

Two important directives received from XX Corps at 2115:

a. 83rd Infantry Division on the North flank of the Corps passed to control of Ninth Army in place. Task Force Polk composed of 3rd Cavalry Group (3rd and 43rd Cavalry Squadrons), 135th Engineer Battalion, 807th TD Battalion and Groupe Tactique Lorraine (2 partial strength French Regiments) attached to the 90th Infantry Division at 112400. The order specified the Task Force Polk was to be employed in place for the protection of the North flank of the Corps from RICHEMONT and BASSE KONTZ both inclusive.

b. 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry previously earmarked as Corps Reserve was released to Division control as of 120800. Simultaneously the Division right boundary was extended southward to include the area South of GRAVELOTTE presently held by the 3rd Cavalry Squadron.

In conformity with the 2nd of the above messages the 358th Infantry was directed to relieve, with not to exceed one Battalion, the 3rd Cavalry Squadron on its present line prior to 130001 and to maintain contact with the 359th Infantry on the left (North) and 3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry on the right (South). 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry (now at GORZE) was released to Regimental control effective 120800.

#### 12 OCTOBER 44

All planned dispositions were accomplished without incident on this day; 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry completed relief 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry at 0900; 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry moved from GORZE to assembly area vicinity VIONVILLE closing 1730; 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry relieved 2nd at MAIZIERES at 2050, the latter assembling at ROMBAS for a brief period of rehabilitation and rest. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry relieved 3rd Cavalry Squadron on line at 2225. 3rd Cavalry Squadron assembled for the night in rear of the 1st Battalion preparatory to movement into the Zone of Task Force Polk.

To adequately cover the extended flanks of the Division, arrangements were made with XX Corps Artillery for the assignment of one light and one medium Artillery Battalion to support Task Force Polk and two medium Battalions to support 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry.

#### 13-17 OCTOBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

The all-out assault on MAIZIERES was relegated to the discard in view of the Army order freezing ammunition above the 3". In lieu thereof the Regiment converted MAIZIERES into a practical training ground for house-to-house fighting. 3rd Battalion for these 5 days assaulted with never more than 1 Company and usually with 1 Platoon: each step was deliberately calculated and purposely slow, but a definite technique was being developed – a technique which was the payoff at the close of the month.

Elsewhere within the Regiment patrolling, planned harassing fires and position improvement were continued. A Regimental rest camp was organized at ROMBAS equipped to accommodate a Battalion at a time.

On the 17th 1st Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry and the latter was released to its parent unit.

### 358th Infantry:

Generally inactive during this period holding line with 2 Battalions plus 1 Company. The remaining Battalion continued training in the vicinity of BAGNEUX FARM. Regiment continued rotation of front-line units and the operation of Regimental rest camp as AUBOUE.

On the Division North flank Task Force Polk continued patrolling on the West bank of the MOSELLE River within Zone. Groupe Tactique Lorraine was returned to control of the French Government on 16 October. 1 Company 135th Engineer Battalion occupied THIONVILLE with 3rd and 43rd Cavalry Squadrons covering the remainder of the Zone South and North, respectively, of that town.

The freezing of artillery ammunition greatly complicated the problem of Artillery support but at the same time gave full play to American ingenuity. The organization finally developed exploiting captured guns and ammunition was generally as follows:

#### 357th Sector:

1 Company, 609th TD Battalion)	
2 Platoons, 607th TD Battalion )	Under 343rd FA Battalion
2 Platoons, 712th Tk Battalion )	
4 88's (German)	Under 282nd FA Battalion
3 105's (German)	Under 345th FA Battalion
1 4.2" Cml Mortar Company	Under 357th Infantry

#### 358th Sector:

1 Company, 609th TD Battalion)	
3 100's (French)	Under 344th FA Battalion
2 Platoons, Co. A, 712th Tk Bn )	

#### 359th Sector:

1 Company, 609th TD Battalion)	
1 Platoon, Co. A, 712th Tk Bn)	Under 915th FA Battalion
1 4.2" Cml Mortar Co)	Under 359th Infantry

#### Task Force Sundt:

2 Platoons, Co B, 712th Tk Bn  
2 Platoons, to, 607th TD Bn

#### Task Force Polk:

807th TD Battalion

On 15 October, Major General McLain was advanced to command of XIX Corps and the following day turned over command to Brigadier General Van Fleet who had arrived to succeed him as CG 90th Infantry Division.

## 18 OCTOBER 44

95th Infantry Division, newly assigned to XX Corps, initiated relief of the 5th Infantry Division in the bridgehead East of the MOSELLE River. 5th Infantry Division began assembly vicinity of PIENNES for a 10 day training program. The Corps planned the eventual relief of the 90th Infantry Division by the 5th to afford the former an equivalent rest.

2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry relieved by 1615 by the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry in the Zone extending from right flank 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry Southeast to NOVEANT where contact was established with the left of the 379th Infantry on the MOSELLE. The Division Zone was now some 57 km in width – perhaps a record under conditions of close contact with enemy in strength.

At Corps plans were developing for the continuation of the offensive. All hands were now in unanimous agreement that direct assault of METZ was out of the question. Envelopment being indicated, the problem became one for Army to coordinate. Meanwhile the newly arrived 10th Armored Division initiated assembly West of MARS LA TOURS as the fourth Division in the Corps.

## 19-22 OCTOBER 44

During this period, thanks to favorable weather, close support fighter-bombers stepped up attacks against installations in the METZ area, striking, at Division request, CPs, supply points, communications and troop concentrations.

The prospect of spending the winter before METZ gave rise to instructions designed to dispel the inactivity attendant upon position warfare. Patrolling, both day and night, was accelerated partly as a training medium but more especially to develop in greater detail the contours of the Boche's defense line. A program of planned fire utilizing all weapons to the maximum was initiated. Reserve units pushed training in the apropos subjects of mines, night operations, assault detachment technique and physical conditioning. Each Regiment was by this time running a rest camp for a minimum of 1 Company on a 48 hour basis.

The situation in MAIZIERES-LES-METZ continued to be definitely sticky. 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry positioned a 155 mm SP gun in the factory area to engage ready targets.

## 23-25 OCTOBER 44

The entire Division front was inactive except for artillery exchanges, patrol actions and harassing fires.

Division ordered several readjustments of unit zones to the end that 1 Infantry Battalion per Regiment might be released for training and rehabilitation. These readjustments as outlined below were completed by midday 25 October.

a. 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry extended northward and relieved 359th Infantry vicinity GRAVELOTTE.

b. As 359th Infantry extended northward 200 yards and relieved elements of Task Force Sundt covering draw leading East from HABONVILLE to AMMANVILLERS. Regiment redispersed to occupy line with 2 Battalions.

c. Task Force Sundt was augmented by Company C, plus 1 Platoon, Company A, 315th Engineer Battalion and 4-80mm German mortars. Coincident with this increase in strength, Task Force Sundt was assigned responsibility for the area occupied by the 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry, less its left company.

d. 2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry extended westward to relieve the left Company, 1st Battalion.

MAIZIERES, although, worthless itself, possessed importance in that it sat squarely astride the most direct and best protected route to METZ; moreover its capture would threaten German supply routes into the north forts. The joint occupation of the town by Americans and Germans for a prolonged

period was disappointing to higher headquarters, XX Corps secured an ammunition allowance which it promptly earmarked for the 90th Division for the reduction of that town. Division promptly issued instructions to 357th Infantry to capture the town at the earliest practicable moment, while containing enemy in remainder of Zone with minimum force. Target date for completion of operation was set at 2 November.

#### 26 OCTOBER 44

XX Corps issued for study and planning at Division level their basic plan for the reduction of METZ as the first phase of a far-reaching drive. Basically the plan involved:

a. 95th Infantry Division, attacking in conjunction with XII Corps, to encircle METZ from the South.

b. 5th Infantry Division, operating from present 90th Division Zone, to contain enemy salient initially, prepared to assault on order.

c. 90th Infantry Division, making Corps main effort, to cross MOSELLE Northeast of THIONVILLE, establish bridgehead and drive South to contact 95th Division, completing encirclement of METZ.

d. 10th Armored Division and 3rd Cavalry Group (Reinforced) to pass through left (East) of 90th Division bridgehead and attack South, Southeast and East.

In the 357th Infantry Zone, elements of K Company made the second assault on the strongly fortified city hall of MAIZIERES, a building which eventually became the symbol of that battle scarred town. Entry was forced through the wall of the building and 5 PWs taken, but the enemy blocked the corridors with burning mattresses. Shortly thereafter the Boche counterattacked with flame throwers, forcing the detachment to withdraw.

#### 27 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry continued probing in MAIZIERES from the North to set the stage for the main attack which was to hit due West from the factory area. Four 10-man assault detachments attacked the City Hall from four directions after a thorough mortar preparation. Three detachments were denied entrance by mines and thickly piled Barb wire concertinas which blocked doorways and windows. The 4th group entered the building through a wall breached by the 155mm SP. Inside the detachment met bitter hand-to-hand fighting which caused 9 casualties. The wounded withdrew under the covering fire of the remaining soldier, who refused all German demands for surrender.

1st Platoon, A Troop, 43rd Cavalry Squadron, was attacked in MANOM by numerically superior Boche combat patrol which hit the outpost at the Southeast corner of town. Counterattack plans had contemplated such an occurrence and were rapidly put into execution. The Boche, disorganized by entanglements with our minefields, were shattered by the weight of the platoon's counterattack and withdrew, leaving an abundance of weapons and equipment.

Instructions were issued by XX Corps directing relief of 90th Infantry Division by 5th Division and infantry elements, 10th Armored Division by midnight 02-03 November. 90th Infantry Division, on relief was to assemble in vicinity AUDUN-PIENNES for rest, rehabilitation and training.

#### 28 OCTOBER 44

Maintaining pressure from the North, Company C attacked at 1530 and captured a block of buildings East of the City Hall in MAIZIERES. Our own Artillery had nearly destroyed the houses and the heavy German mortar and artillery fires which fell immediately after our troops moved in, completed the job. Cellars being nonexistent, the area became untenable and the Company withdrew but retained control by

fire. With the enemy thus diverted B, I and L Companies moved into the factory area in preparation for the following morning's assault. Meanwhile the Corps Artillery poured 8" and 240mm Howitzer shells into the City Hall creating widespread damage. The attack plans had been well-developed and firmly coordinated; any reasonable breaks would assure success.

Details of the relief and movement of the Division were worked out in detail and coordinated with all concerned. The attached 3rd Cavalry Group (Reinforced), 614th TD Battalion, 607th TD Battalion and 282nd FA Battalion were to be left in place under Corps or 5th Infantry Division control.

#### 29 OCTOBER 44

The assault of MAIZIERES was launched promptly at 0730 without Artillery preparation, affecting complete surprise. At 0715, the enemy apparently worried by activity in the factory, delivered a terrific mortar barrage on the railroad tracks and canal which lay between the factory and the town proper. This barrage, however, lifted at H-Hour and the assault troops drove forward rapidly, traversed the open space and succeeding in overrunning the near portions of town before the Boche could react.

With C Company maintaining pressure from the North and B, I and L Companies, in order from North to South, assaulting abreast from the West, the Boche were fronted by the fully developed power of 4 Companies and were driven back in confusion. Effective artillery support and flank machine guns blocked escape routes to the East and South and hemmed him into an increasingly small area. By noon, 3 complete city blocks had been captured with the momentum of the attack continually rising.

B and I Companies thrust straight through the town by 1600 had reached the East edge, cutting the German garrison in two. L Company and A Company (which had been swung around from the North to follow B Company) widened the breach to the South and North respectively. The Boche remaining alive, disorganized by the onslaught, began surrendering in groups. By dark the 357th Infantry controlled all the town except the City Hall area a demolished section of the South end and a block of buildings which C Company had captured and relinquished the preceding day.

Elsewhere in the Division zone, there was little activity by us and no reaction from the Boche.

#### 30 OCTOBER 44

At 0600, Company B, 357th Infantry enveloped from the South and East the buildings confronting C Company and secured them. A combat patrol from I Company moved South through the destroyed section of town and secured the cemetery, overrunning a German mortar platoon. At 1100, troops closed in on the City Hall and found only dead inside. Patrols moved Southeast from town and reported the Château and woods 1 kilometer away clear of enemy. The capture of MAIZIERES was complete.

In this operation the Regiment killed or captured the equivalent of an infantry battalion at the cost of 55 casualties. Moreover, we were now in a position to threaten his supply route to the North forts and to exploit the best approach to his inner defenses. The success of the operation was attributable to a number of reasons, each considered worthy of mention hereinafter:

a. Careful Detail Planning. – The movement of troops to forward assembly areas was carefully regulated and cloaked in secrecy. Each leader, from squad leader up, had ample time for personal reconnaissance. Each squad or half squad had a specific mission(s) and knew, to the man, its route and method of approach.

b. Fully exploited base of fire and Integrating Fire Plan. – All infantry supporting weapons, as well as Tanks and TDs, were in position prepared to fire on all planned concentrations as well as on targets of opportunity.

c. Dynamic Leadership. – All officers led their units into the fight while seconds-in-command pushed from the rear. Rapidity of movement throughout held down casualties.

d. Artillery Support. – Excellent throughout the attack. During the afternoon 29 October, 8" and



240mm howitzers adjusted on and destroyed the City Hall (75 yards from the frontline troops). Remarkable Shooting! Moreover the Artillery destroyed practically all booby traps and mines. Finally it denied to the enemy that freedom of movement which prevented him from shifting troops to meet our strength.

During the late afternoon, 1st Battalion took over all of MAIZIERES, releasing the 3rd Battalion for movement to ROMBAS and Regimental Reserve.

31 OCTOBER 44

Shortly after midnight, XX Corps issued instructions radically altering the relief plans. 95th Infantry Division would be relieved by 5th Infantry Division in bridgehead East of MOSELLE and in turn relieve 90th Infantry Division within present Zone South to GRAVELOTTE exclusive – both reliefs to be completed by 022400A November. 10th Armored Division was directed to relieve the 358th Infantry by the same hour.

The Boche received only secondary consideration this day, while reconnaissance of assembly area, arrangements for revised schedule of relief and movement of Division was pushed with all possible speed.

\* \* \* \* \*

October was the month of waiting – waiting for supplies and reinforcing troops. Only negligible gains and been made against the METZ fortifications. But the Division was at full strength; it had tried leaders in all echelons; it had "shaken down" through all echelons. In short, it was ready for the operation which was to add fresh laurels to its already notable battle record.

VAN FLEET  
COMMANDING  
STILWELL  
G-3

## PART I

### THE MOSELLE CROSSING

9-19 NOVEMBER 44

#### INTRODUCTION

On 9 November 1944, XX Corp, with the 90th Division making the main effort, initiated an encircling attack designated to reduce and trap the garrison of FORTRESS METZ, the most formidable German stronghold in France. On 19 November the 90th Infantry Division joined hands with the 5th Infantry Division east of METZ and the following day, the METZ Garrison, less the fanatics in a few forts, succumbed. The intervening 11 days were replete with heavy and vicious fighting as the Germans resisted stubbornly from extraordinarily fine defensive positions. But the 90th drove forward without pause, until the enemy faltered, broke and fled, completing on schedule what the Army Commander publicly announced as the greatest military achievement of the war. The accomplishment of this magnificent feat of arms was made possible not by the suicidal courage of any individual nor by the overwhelming success of any single unit; it was accomplished by the combined team play of the 16,000 officers and men who comprised the 90th Division, reinforced, each of whom, properly briefed and possessing the will to perform his particular task without regards to plaudits, executed with precision a well-conceived plan. For the moment at least, it was the climatic performance of a battle tried division, which had fought without respite since 8 June 1944.

Within the zone of operations of the XX Corp, the summer pursuit had come to an abrupt end with the German decision to hold METZ. Committed to a broad front, and with insufficient reserve strength to press home a decisive blow at any one spot, the Corps was forced to adopt the role of an aggressive containing force for nearly 2 months. The 90th Division, disposed on a wide arc, pressured that portion of the METZ perimeter fortifications west of the MOSELLE RIVER, while the 5th Infantry Division maintained a scant bridgehead across the same river to the south of the city; the 3rd Cavalry Group patrolled the West Bank of the MOSELLE from RICHEMONT north to THIONVILLE and thence northeast to the eminence of BASSE KONTZ.

But while the lines remained relatively static from mid-September to the first week in November, there was anything but idleness in the Corps. By limited objective attacks and continued patrolling the contours of the defensive area were fixed and plotted. Troops were thoroughly trained in assault tactics. The infantry, by judicious rotation policy, were rested frequently, permitting the building of a reserve of physical strength for the trying days to come. Supplies of equipment and ammunition were accumulated in considerable quantity. And finally two fresh divisions arrived and were placed in the line for the desirable seasoning prior to commitment in an offense of action.

Given the mission of encircling and reducing the METZ fortifications as the initial phase in the resumption of the offensive towards the RHINE, XX corps prepared and implemented a sound plan:

1. 5th infantry Division, attacking on the Corps right had in conjunction with XII Corps, to thrust northeast from its bridgehead, forming the southern arc of the pincers.
2. 95th Infantry Division, secretly relieving the 90th, to contain the enemy's salient west of the MOSELLE and on order, when the pincers began to close, to attack to reduce the salient and capture the city.
3. 90th Infantry Division, the Corps main effort, to drive a bridgehead across the MOSELLE northeast of THIONVILLE, roll up the MAGINOT LINE, and eventually teaming with the 10th Armored Division close the pincers east of METZ.
4. 10th Armored Division, crossing behind the 90th, to attack parallel to and on the left of the 90th, simultaneously pushing columns east to the SAAR RIVER.

5. 3rd Cavalry Group, crossing behind 10th Armored, to swing northeast into the SAAR-MOSELLE triangle and probe towards SAARBURG.

In furtherance of the plan, the 95th Infantry Division quietly relieved the 90th Infantry Division during the period 31 October-2 November and the latter moved, ostensibly for training, to the AUDUN-AUMETZ-MORFONTAINE-MERCY LE BAS quadrangle, an area which had previously been occupied by the preceding two reserve divisions. Training was actually prescribed and initiated, but the Division, faced with knowledge that the target date of the operation could be the 6th and definitely would be not later than the 9th, had scant time for anything beyond the preparation and coordination of the multitudinous arrangements attendant upon an opposed river crossing.

## THE PLAN

From THIONVILLE northwest to the German boundary the MOSELLE RIVER flows swiftly along its winding course traversing a comparatively broad river land. The river itself under normal conditions has an average width from 300 to 350 feet, with moderately abrupt to gently sloping banks. The ground contiguous to the river is predominantly marshy and during wet periods is subject to sheeting. This latter condition while posing no restriction to assault boat crossing, definitely limited the development of bridge sites to those points where civilian bridges had previously existed and thus telegraphed our plan for floating bridge construction to the enemy once the crossing had been initiated. Some 2 km north of the river a large wooded expanse, the FORET DE CATTENOM, containing an adequate road net, provided an excellent Divisional assembly area; its sole disadvantage lay in the fact that its forward slope location necessitated entry therein to the hours of darkness. Between the FORET and the river the ground was smooth and devoid of cover and completely under observation from the high ground across the river; more than that it was enfiladed by enemy positions on the bald knob LE STROMBERG, west of the MOSELLE and just outside the Corps left boundary.

Analysis of the terrain north of the river had a definite influence on the development of the plan and the execution of preliminaries thereto. If secrecy was to be preserved the 90th Division would have to stage into the FORET DE CATTENOM at night and at the latest possible time. Coincident with the foregoing, a thickening of the cavalry along the river was indicated to make completely effective the counter reconnaissance screen which previously had been unable to entirely thwart German patrol penetrations. Of even greater importance however, was the obvious requirement for a limited attack by other forces to drive the German from his West Bank positions in the BASSE KONTZ-LE STROMBERG area prior to the initiation of the crossing thereby protecting the assault troops from the flank observation which threatened the success of the assault. The completely open nature of the terrain from the south edge of the assembly area to the river made mandatory a night crossing prosecuted with the maximum speed and the utmost of silence to permit the establishment of the initial bridgehead prior to dawn.

Across the river the enemy-held terrain was most formidable. For the depth of 1 to 2 km the ground possessed characteristics similar to the flats adjacent to the near bank and then sloped abruptly to the ridges running perpendicular to the river line. In the right of the Division sector, on a hill apart, stood the GROUP FORTIFIE DE KOENIGSMACKER, a METZ type fortress which commanded the entire crossing area. True, it could be bypassed by leading elements, but upon its speedy neutralization and reduction depended the success of the maneuver. And shades of FORT DRIANT, this was a task of tremendous proportions! Squarely down the middle of the Division zone ran a heavily wooded, rugged ridge which contained the main fortifications of the MAGINOT LINE. While constructed primarily to resist attack from the east, study of the fortifications immediately disclosed that in conformity with universal defense doctrine the defensive areas had been designed for all-around and mutual support, and consequently, if properly manned would present a serious obstacle, regardless of the direction of the assault. The initial problem was the METRICH GROUP, the northern-most of the strong points which

commanded the river line as superbly as did the KOENIGSMACHER fortifications. Further to the east the heights were even more commanding, although not known to possess man-made fortification. Still eastward, outside the Division zone of action, lay the highest ground of all. Four axial roads lay within the Division zone traversing the valleys between the parallel ridges and, providing at first glance, adequate communications; but study soon indicated that their usefulness was seriously limited by their geographical location since they would be commanded for considerable distances in rear of frontlines by enemy held side slope positions.

It was requisite that the assault not only be initiated under cover of darkness but also that the leading elements, disregarding the known limitations on night attacks, drive forward and secure by daylight, a toehold on the foothills to deny to the enemy close observation of the crossing area. A railroad and highway closely paralleling the river provided initial phase lines, but beyond that point, success hinged upon the daring of the individual soldier and the control of his leader. However desirable an encircling maneuver might be on the right flank, the commanding position of the GROUP FORTIFIE DE KOENIGSMACHER dictated a frontal assault upon this stronghold. With bridging operations definitely limited by terrain obstacles to the CATTENOM and GAVISSE bridge sites, initiation of bridging operations was entirely dependent upon the removal of the enemy's close direct observation. And so from the start it was realized by all ranks that ultimate success lay in the hands of the infantryman smashing with indomitable courage directly into the prepared fortifications of an alert and tenacious foe. Supporting arms and services were equally aware of their responsibility to furnish that infantryman with the maximum of support.

The Division plan of attack was simple and sound in conception and thoroughly prepared. To develop the maximum strength at the earliest practicable moment, the assault was to be made with two regiments, each with two battalions abreast. Three general crossing areas were possible, astride the towns of RETTEL, GAVISSE-MALLING and CATTENOM respectively. The RETTEL area was discarded because of its proximity to the dominating ground along the German border east of the attack zone, ground to which no troops could be diverted. Consequently, the left regiment was earmarked to cross in the GAVISSE-MALLING area and drive rapidly east and southeast to secure the high ground parallel to and east of the RETTEL-KERLING Road. The right regiment, crossing in the vicinity of CATTENOM, was to capture KOENIGSMACHER FORTRESS with minimum force, simultaneously pushing the assault to secure a lodgment on the high ground on the right of the Division sector. Since the town of KOENIGSMACHER, along the river, was squarely in the middle of the Division zone, its inclusion within the objective of either assault regiment would necessitate a divergent effort by the regiment which would only serve to detract from the strength of the respective main efforts. As a result KOENIGSMACHER and the ground immediately adjacent thereto were boxed off as a "No Maneuver" area and turned over to the Division Artillery to neutralize until such time as the third regiment could mop up. The third regiment initially held in reserve, was to cross behind either of the assault regiments at the earliest possible moment and swing into action down the MAGINOT LINE Ridge to complete and solidify the bridgehead. A Corps engineer battalion was to support each of the assault regiments and subsequently provide the necessary bridging while the Divisional engineer battalion was kept intact for assault operations with the infantry in general engineer work on the far shore. 90th Reconnaissance Troop, reinforced was to mop up on the right of the Division zone and eventually link up with a secondary crossing of the 95th Division in the UCKANGE area. The Divisional Artillery, greatly reinforced, had a number of tremendous tasks. In consonant with the desire to maintain secrecy to the last possible moment, no preparation was contemplated, although the battalions were prepared to deliver planned fires on call prior to H-hour and to counterbattery effective counter-preparation fires. At H-hour a heavy program of destruction fires was to be laid on the KOENIGSMACHER and METRICH fortifications and on the close-in towns of BASSE HAM, HAUTE HAM, KOENIGSMACKER, METRICH, MALLING and HUNTING.

This then, in broad outline, was the plan for the establishment of the bridgehead, time tabled as a two day operation. It incorporated the recommendations of the unit commanders and Division Staff and in final form, therefore, gave voice to the best considered thoughts of the Division in matters both tactical and technical after consideration of all possible angles. Communicated via conference to commanders and staff down to and including battalions on the 3rd of November, it became the point of departure for the preparation and implementation of unit plans.

## THE PREPARATION

With the closing of the 90th Division in its rear assembly area on 3 November began a period of intense activity.

Reconnaissance of the area of future operations was energetically pushed within the limitations made necessary by security considerations. Artillery positions, engineer equipment parks, infantry assembly areas, routes of approach to the river, crossing zones and the road net, were all reconnoitered and/or chosen by small officer parties who moved as inconspicuously as possible without divisional insignia on their clothing and in vehicles of the 3rd Cavalry Group. This sketchy reconnaissance was not at all desirable but it was felt that the preservation of secrecy regarding the contemplated operations of the 90th Division and its point of impact outweighed the advantages accruing from a more detailed survey of the attack zone. The supporting engineer battalions, upon designation by Corps, were wedded with the 358th and 359th Infantry Regiments, chosen as the right and the left assault regiments respectively. Training in basic assault boat technique from the infantry standpoint was given to each soldier since battle casualties during the preceding 5 months had cut to a mere handful those former members of the 90th who had had ample experience in river crossing operations. Simultaneously, infantry staffs and commanders planned to the last detail the composition of the boat waves and individual boat loadings; this included the 357th Infantry which although earmarked to cross by footbridge or raft was none-the-less prepared for the eventuality of an assault crossing. When the regiments departed from the rear assembly area, each individual soldier knew his wave and boat number and his chief of party. Further, supply echelons prepared an operational plan and organization designed to maintain, and provide evacuation for, their regiments by assault boat and motorboat if vehicular ferries or bridges failed.

The supporting arms and services were equally busy. The Corps Engineer plan was modified where necessary and integrated with that of the 90th Division. Steps were taken to stage forward additional equipment reserves, DUKWS and accessory supplies to meet unforeseen contingencies. The problems of signal communications were given careful consideration. In addition to a double tactical net, an engineer and a traffic control net were organized and linked laterally. The laying of wire to and within the forward assembly area was carried out under cover of darkness for several nights prior to the target day. Weighted cable was prepared beforehand to permit bridging of the River gap away from the projected bridges. Realizing the unusual demands which would be placed on radio until such time as adequate bridging could be provided, stocks of batteries were accumulated. At the Divisional level supply agencies were prepared for the movement of necessities considerably further forward than normal to allow unit echelons to concentrate their efforts forward of regimental dumps.

The 90th's crossing was phased to follow by one day a great air strike designed to neutralize the major Metz forts and other critical areas in the attack zone provided that airstrike came by the 8th of November (inclusive); in any event, the assault was to take place by the 9th. The 5th and 6th of November were days of heavy rain, thereby granting 48 valuable hours for continuation of preparations. At Divisional Headquarters, loose ends were gradually tied together and with regimental plans firm, the Field Order was issued at 2200 hrs 6 November.

Movement to forward assembly areas was complicated by the great number of units involved, both Division and Corps, (all of whom had to move at night), coupled with the inadequate and tortuous road

net. The march table, after close coordination with Corps, was based on the movement of the Division on the nights of D-3,-2 and D-2,-1. As it developed, the successive postponement of D-Day permitted scheduling of the move over a 3 night period. The artillery displacing on the nights of 5, 6 and 6, 7 November was completely positioned by daylight 7 November. This move, accomplished without benefit of moon and under incessant rain on slippery, narrow roads was a tribute to the driving skill and discipline of the artillery battalions. The remainder of the Division displaced on the night 7, 8 November, a move of even greater difficulty. The distance involved being too great for marching, the displacement was made in marching and shuttling and involved two round trips for the attached transportation. Timing and road clearance to avoid interference with Corps columns made necessary a 4 hour wait in the rain and mud by the 357th Infantry – a distasteful episode, accepted without murmur by men of that regiment. By dawn 8 November, the Division and all supporting elements had closed within the protective cover of the FORET DE CATTENOM and the defiladed area immediately rearward thereof. On the preceding 2 nights the Division complete, plus 6 battalions of artillery, 2 battalions of tank destroyers, 1 battalion of tanks, 3 battalions of engineers and 3 bridge trains moved with but three accidents an average distance of 15 miles over the most difficult road conditions imaginable.

7 November had been a dark and rainy day and the target day was definitely set as 9 November. And so, 8 November, the initiation date for the XII Corps offensive to the South, became a day of final preparation and coordination for the morrow's assault. Artillery battalions registering skillfully with but one gun for a battalion prepared their final data. Communications were extended forward and laterally throughout the Division area. Lower echelon commanders made their reconnaissance of routes of approach and crossing areas and surveyed from a distance their far bank objectives. Personnel concerned with traffic circulation and bridge control received their final instructions and departed for their posts. In the early afternoon all men of the Division were thoroughly briefed on the Division mission, its importance to the Army scheme and their individual parts in it. In the driving rain and mud of the FORET THE CATTENOM, company commanders and platoon leaders gathered their man into small knots for the planning and detailed briefing of their particular unit's job. The emplacement of supporting weapons on the near bank to cover the crossing, scheduled for implementation at dark, was carefully coordinated with cavalry unit screening the riverbank. By dark 90th Division was ready and poised, its men, faced with the knowledge that theirs was a tough job, were eager.

Prior to midnight, supporting machine guns and mortars and tanks in place for direct fire were positioned to support the crossing from the near bank. Advanced regimental CP's were established on the towns of GAVISSE and CATTENOM. Under the cover of accelerated night harassing fires of the Cavalry, trucks of the supporting engineers moved forward to the boat unloading points. Preparations had been completed.

### THE ASSAULT

Shortly after midnight 9 November the assault battalions of the 358th and 359th Infantries moved from their assembly areas to the boat stations previously established by the engineers. The restricted road net precluded the trucking of the boats any closer to the river than 400 yards at the nearest point and consequently the hand carry was extremely difficult, for in addition to the sheer weight and cumbersomeness of the assault boats the ground to be crossed was swampy, interlaced with irrigation ditches, fences and barbed wire. But the infantry and engineers, driven by their own determination and inspiration of their officers, struggled forward. The left battalion of each regiment, the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry and the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry hit the water at precisely the given time, 0330 hours, and the first wave started across the rapidly rising stream which had already begun to inundate its banks. The right battalion of each regiment, 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry and 1st Battalion 358th Infantry were somewhat delayed because of their longer and more arduous routes of approach. Meanwhile the reserve

battalions scheduled to cross by footbridge had assembled in the town of GAVISSE in the case of the 359th Infantry and CATTENOM in the case of the 358th Infantry.

By 0500 the left assault battalions had completed their crossing and the right assault battalions were astride the river. The enemy, recovering from the initial surprise, began shelling and monitoring the near bank and among the infantry waiting to cross and the engineers struggling with foot bridges and rafts, men began to fall. At the same time the swirling waters of the river rising with unheard-of vehemence, posed additional problems. As the river spread out from the banks loading and unloading were carried out in water first knee, then waste deep. The increasing current tossed the heavily laden boats like match boxes. Engineer crews returning for additional loads discovered their boats unmanageable and were swept far downstream. It became necessary to double boat crews and halve the number of returning boats with each successive trip. Footbridge cables could not be anchored and despite its undesirability, assault boat crossing remained the only solution. With increasing speed the infantry continued to move across, spurred by the realization that only their mounting buildup on the far bank and fast movement inland would ensure the success of the attack.

By Dawn the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry's loading elements bypassing MALLING had cut the main lateral road in two places and were on the outskirts of HUNTING; the reserve company was mopping up MALLING. 2nd Battalion on the right was approaching the towns of PETITE HETTANGE and METRICH. 3rd Battalion had initiated crossing in the wake of the 2nd Battalion. In the zone of the 358th Infantry the 3rd Battalion's leading elements passing to the east of FORT KOENIGSMACHER had secured a footing on the ridge just short of their initial objective, while the remainder of the Battalion mopped up the pillboxes adjacent to the riverbank. 1st Battalion had driven C Company halfway through BASSE HAM, while A Company had daringly scaled the heights of FORT KOENIGSMACHER and was involved in a bitter fight on the summit. The 2nd Battalion had begun to cross. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry was moving to CATTENOM with the remainder of the regiment in the vicinity of SENTZICH still prepared to cross in either zone.

The first prisoners tracking back announced that the crossing had been a complete surprise until they were forcibly ejected from their foxholes and dugouts. The enemy's outpost resistance had been overrun with bayonet and grenade or bypassed and left for reserve elements. Assault elements and maintained their impetus per order and per schedule and thereby ensured the success of the initial lodgment.

As the morning wore on the MOSELLE RIVER became the most formidable foe. From its normal width of 350 feet it had been expanded to 400 then 600 then 800 yards – 2400 feet of swirling treacherous water. And still the rain fell! More and more boats were lost, some by shellfire, but the majority swept downstream and smashed against obstacles or stranded on the muddy fringes of the stream. A support raft was constructed at the GAVISSE site which promptly capsized with its first payload. At the CATTENOM site shell fire destroyed the first five truckloads of bridge equipment and temporarily forced abandonment of operations. Six battalions of infantry were making excellent progress, but faced the German and his entrenchments and fortifications and armor with naught but their small arms and flesh and their indomitable spirit. Our own tanks and anti-tanks and tank destroyers were desperately needed to support the infantry and bridging was therefor ordered resumed despite all odds.

In the 359th Infantry zone the assault Battalion continued to make excellent progress. The 1st Battalion skillfully handled, had pushed due east and north from HUNTING pushing the enemy before them until they were stopped just short of the high ground which was the regimental objective. One platoon only of A Company had been left to reduce the German pocket at MALLING, while the remainder of that company was dispatched north from HUNTING to block the approach into the Division zone via the road from RETTEL. The 2nd Battalion, after capturing PETITE HETTANGE and METRICH continued to the southeast until halted some 1500 meters from OUDRENNE by extensive minefields. 3rd Battalion (- I Company dispatched to hold METRICH and protect the right flank)

moved into the center of the regimental zone seizing KERLING and the high ground to the north thereof where contact was made with the 1st Battalion. The 359th Infantry therefore at the close of the day could plot its disposition, count its hundred plus prisoners and congratulate itself on a job well done.

C Company, 358th Infantry completed the reduction of BASSE HAM in the face of most tenacious resistance. Throughout the day A and B Companies hung grimly to their toehold on the top of FORT KOENIGSMACHER. A Company thrice counterattacked and sustaining 40 casualties gave not an inch. Instead their assault teams blew open, cleaned out and occupied the nearest troop shelter. B Company abandoned its penetration and swung in behind A Company to give depth to the assault. 3rd Battalion had pushed to the woods southeast of KOENIGSMACHER where they consolidated their position. The 2nd Battalion finally completing its crossing mainly through heroic efforts of its officers who ranged the banks to locate boats, was assembled just west of the town of KOENIGSMACHER preparatory to its commitment to following morning.

3rd Battalion 357th Infantry crossed under grueling mortar fire immediately on the heels of the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, an operation which took three full hours because of the length of the haul and difficulty of managing the boats. To speed the deployment of the regiment, the 2nd Battalion was ordered to GAVISSE, crossed in power launches and assembled in METRICH. Patrols from the 2nd Battalion entered the town of KOENIGSMACHER after dark and found it unoccupied.

As darkness closed in supply officers moved provisions in and ammunition and similar necessities to the riverbank and, combining their personnel with the tiring engineer crews, initiated what was to be a nightly ferry service. Throughout the night the small boats plied back-and-forth moving supplies across and bringing wounded back. On the far bank carrying parties moved supplies forward to front-line units. Throughout the night also enemy mortar and artillery fire interdicted both banks rendering doubly difficult their tremendous task.

At midnight, 20 hours after initiation of the assault, Division could look with justifiable pride at the day's accomplishment. It had achieved complete tactical surprise and by dawn had breached the enemy's first line of defense. It had crossed eight infantry battalions despite a torrential river and the resistance offered by a stubborn foe. Without benefit of armored support it had penetrated to the depth of 3 km, overrunning seven towns and capturing 200 prisoners. It had made the first penetration into a Metz type fort, a fort defended by an entire German Battalion. It had secured the planned initial bridgehead.

### CONSOLIDATION OF THE BRIDGEHEAD

At 0300 10 November a strong enemy infantry and tank force had hit the several outposts of the 3rd Battalion (-) and smashed its way into KERLING. (It was later determined through interrogation that our dispositions had been pinpointed for the Germans by sympathizers who had gone over to their lines during the night). L and K Companies fought gallantly to stem the confused night assault, the machine gunners remaining at their posts until ammunition was exhausted. But the power of well-planned attack was too great and the companies, hinging on their left, fell back to the high ground to the northwest for reorganization. The road from KERLING to PETITE HETANGE was thus uncovered but the German had been so weakened by his costly attack that he could not press on his advantage. At daylight I Company was pushed to block the crossroad southeast of PETITE HETTANGE while G Company was moved to position astride PETITE HETTANGE-KERLING road some 1500 m eastward. With the center of the regimental zone thus bolstered and with the massed Division Artillery heavily hitting KERLING and surrounding ground the enemy was effectively contained.

At 0630 the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry moved from its assembly area west of the town of KOENIGSMACHER to seize the METRICH group of fortifications, the initial regimental objective. In the misty morning twilight that Battalion advanced through rear element of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry down the road to ELZANGE until abreast of the wooded nose containing the forts. At that



point the leading company (I) made a right angle turn and assaulted up the steep slopes. Advancing rapidly, two platoons, in line of skirmishers and employing marching fires, routed the German defenders from their hilltop entrenchments, killing 60 and capturing or dispersing the remainder. By 0800 the Battalion had overrun the west half of the METRICH GROUP. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had initiated an assault on the eastern METRICH forts from the direction of METRICH. F Company moved across the open ground without opposition halfway to the objective. A few hundred yards further however, it was caught by tremendous heavy cross machinegun fire from the concrete fortifications which no amount of artillery fire was able to neutralize. With this thrust effectively stopped the Battalion Commander gradually withdrew F Company to its starting point and pushed E and G Companies south from KOENIGSMACHER down to join 3rd Battalion on the right portion of the objective. 3rd Battalion moved to the left (east), mopped up the remaining forts of the group and both battalions squared away for the continuation of the attack.

On the right of the Division zone the advance of the 358th Infantry was bitterly contested. 3rd Battalion on the regimental left, after repelling counterattacks on both flanks, advanced 500 yards against stubborn resistance and consolidated its positions on the initial objective. 2nd Battalion, attempting to swing onto the right flank of the 3rd Battalion was badly cut by flanking fire from the emplacements on the south side of FORT KOENIGSMACHER. After relief of its blocking mission on the right flank by elements of the Regimental Security and I and R platoons, C Company joined the remainder of its Battalion on the northern portion of FORT KOENIGSMACHER. Continued prosecution of the assault on the forts required explosives in quantity and since supplied by boat across the river was impracticable due to the current and the accuracy of the enemy's fire on the crossing sites, other means had to be provided. Disregarding the enemy's flak a convoy of five liaison planes, heavily laden with C2 winged their way across the river and dropped the explosive into the hands of the 1st Battalion. Thus reinforced, the Battalion continued the attack, blowing open and securing a lodgment in two tunnel entrances. There they maintained themselves throughout the day, undaunted by the murderous hail of mortar and artillery fire which German defenders, completely underground, were able to call down on their own positions.

Throughout the day rain continued and the river steadily rose. The inundated area was now 1 1/2 miles wide, water standing in the streets of both CATTENOM and GAVISSE. Bridging construction at the GAVISSE-MALLING crossing was slowed by the greatly restricted work site and the standing water on the approach road, as well as the continuing shellfire which from time to time forced the cessation of operations. Flood crest and a break in the weather was expected momentarily, but the effect of the river at its height on the bridge approaches was a matter of conjecture.

At day's end the Division situation was critical. The first major German reaction could be expected at any time. The eight infantry battalions were still unsupported by armor and the speedy implementation of this support was doubtful. The infantry moreover who had fought constantly for two days and nights, were rain drenched, numbed with cold and utterly fatigued in body; they had no blankets, were on much reduced rations and had barely sufficient ammunition. (The projected attack of the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry for the capture of KERLING had been postponed on the latter account). Battle casualties had been severe and the toll from exposure and trench foot was beginning to mount. The enemy with his observation on the bridging sites, together with the worst river conditions in history, had so far nullified bridging effects despite the heroic work of the engineers. On the completion of a bridge – a bridge for armor, or antitank guns, for supply, for evacuation – lay the key to ultimate success.

At dark the long supply trek started. Small boat traffic presented even greater navigational hazards than during the preceding night. Starting from the streets of CATTENOM and GAVISSE boat crews groped their way across the water covered fields. Time and again boats smashed into submerged fence posts and sank. Fence wires and tangled hedges fouled propellers rendering motorboats helpless.

Out in the stream the boats were rocked and tossed and swept off their course. But somehow supplies got across, thanks to the courage and determination of the men in charge. From the far shore the hand carry was in many instances upwards of kilometers through the black of night. Heavily burdened both ways by litter cases or supplies the carrying parties made their way forward and back over routes interdicted by enemy fire. No unit as yet had a protected axial Road. No regiment in fact had more than two vehicles, although horses, wagons, and even baby buggies had been pressed into service.

In 0200 hrs on the morning of the 11th the MALLING bridge was completed, but the odds were still against the 90th, for the water on the causeway approach was now at a depth of 58 inches and the bridge was consequently unusable by any vehicles, wheeled or tracked, in the Division.

The attack was resumed prior to dawn 11 November. 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 357th Infantry, attacked abreast, drove forward down the line of Maginot Forts. Operating through rugged, wooded terrain, devoid of routes, they made excellent progress bypassing and leaving for containing forces those emplacements which could not quickly be reduced. The day's attack was a brilliant performance by two well-trained, well-controlled battalions for, although fighting every step of the way, leading companies were on the high ground one kilometer northwest of BRIESTOFF-LA-PIETE by dark. Battalions were deployed in considerable depth for their gains had placed them well in front of the adjacent regiments and had dangerously exposed their flanks; this depth also protected the supply route to the center of the regimental zone from potential interference by the still manned pillboxes in the rear areas.

At midmorning all three battalions of the 359th Infantry lunged ahead. 1st Battalion on the extreme left, which had maintained itself against heavy enemy pressure for the preceding two days, attacked with companies abreast. A Company drove north and after a six hour stiff fight seized and blocked the main crossroads one kilometer southeast of RETTEL, firming the left flank of the Division. B and C Companies secured the commanding ground north and south of KOENGISBERG FARM. K and I Companies attacked southeast towards KERLING against heavy fire. Determined to avenge its loss of the previous day the battalions succeeded in reaching the road junction west of town with I Company and Hill 287 to the north with K. L Company was moved to the left and abreast of K Company, gaining contact with the 1st Battalion. 2nd Battalion advanced E and F Companies southeast along the two roads leading to OUDRENNE through dense minefields while holding G Company as a block in depth along the KERLING-PETITE HETTANGE road. The regiment now controlled its portion of the bridgehead objective with the exception of the towns of KERLING and OUDRENNE.

On the right of the Division's sector, 358th Infantry was having an exceptional day. Under cover of darkness the 2nd Battalion less G Company had slipped past the machine guns and observation which had denied its advance the previous day and positioned itself on the wooded ridge on the right of the 3rd Battalion; G Company was faced to the west and left behind to contain the rear of FORT KOENIGSMACHER. As 0800 the 3rd Battalion was stiffly counterattacked but K Company, withholding its fire until the enemy assault was within 50 yards of its position, annihilated the enemy. Thereafter both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions moved ahead, their advance greatly slowed by strong resistance and the most concentrated mortar fire the regiment and yet experienced. Meanwhile the indomitable 1st Battalion was making great progress against the Fort. Under continual artillery fire, adjusted from armored OP's 100 yards away, assault teams blasted their way through structure after structure driving the defenders into a gradually constricting area. Shortly after noon G Company on the outside of the Fort, tiring of the incessant harassing machine gun fire from the emplacements on the southeast corner of that fortification, assaulted them. Reducing two pillboxes they regained an entry and found themselves face-to-face with the enemy garrison retreating from the onslaught of the 1st Battalion. Caught in a nutcracker 372 able-bodied Germans set up a white flag and the capture of the first Metz Fort was completed. A full strength German Battalion had fought its last fight for, in addition to the prisoner take, Germans littered the perimeter field fortifications and the blasted passageways. Late in the afternoon the 3rd Battalion spurred by the success in its rear assaulted and took Hill 252

killing or capturing its considerable garrison. 2nd Battalion to its right rear positioned itself for the assault on VALMESTROFF the following morning.

On this the 3rd day of the battle, the Division, still astride a difficult river and without a bridge, nearly doubled the area of its penetration. Fighting with a fury and determination which knew no brooking they routed the German infantry from fieldworks and emplacements, killed them by the droves and took upwards of 500 prisoners. They carried by storm the redoubtable FORT KOENIGSMACHER, the reduction of which became a symbol for every rank in the Division.

At 1800 the river reached its crest and with maddening slowness began to subside at the rate of 3/4 of an inch an hour. It would be dawn before the MALLING bridge could be put into operation and another night must therefore elapse without suitable support for the infantry. Again the arduous task of resupply by assault and motorboat proceeded under the trying conditions which had characterized the past two nights. Across the river carrying parties, particularly in the 357th and 358th zones, struggled forward over five to six kilometers of steep slippery ground, through dense woods and through the enemy fire. Some few vehicles had been crossed during the day by light ferries but basically resupply was a foot problem. Surgical teams operating across the river, working calmly and rapidly, prepared the wounded for the rough boat crossing to the waiting ambulances. With priority going to ammunition, food and medical supplies, no individual roles could be transported nor did the men demand that – they understood the difficulties and patiently waited for the morrow's attack signal.

During all this time the artillery had been doing yeoman work. Its forward observers and liaison officers were responding to all infantry needs. Gun sections working night and day knee-deep in mud maintained an even peak of efficiency. Defensive of fires elaborately planned boxed off the assault units from enemy encroachment. Despite the unprecedented rate of expenditure, adequate ammunition stocks were constantly at gun positions.

By midnight 11-12 November the water on the causeway leading from GAVISSE had receded to an extent which permitted the movement first, of M4 artillery tractors towing engineer trailers, and, two hours later, of engineer bridge construction trucks with heavy payload. In this matter considerable supplies and a few trailer loaded 1/4 ton trucks were ferried across the river. Forecasts indicated that by dawn the water would be below fording depth of tanks and self-propelled tank destroyers.

At 0300 hours a German attack in regimental strength with artillery and tank support was launched against the entire line of the 359th Infantry. Against the 1st Battalion what was obviously the holding attack made but little progress, but the main effort directed along the KERLING-PETITE HETTANGE road was pushed with strength and skill. The weight of the assault, striking the right flank of I Company, drove that unit northwest away from the road and lunged ahead to encircle G Company and continued toward PETITE HETTANGE where the I and R Platoon, Security Platoon, cooks and headquarters personnel were hastily mobilized to block the road junction southwest of town. G Company, completely encircled, formed a tight perimeter defense and with a skillfully adjusted close box barrage covering it on four sides, held off that portion of the enemy force earmarked to mop up. The fire of all twenty artillery battalions available to the Division were brought into play; a deep draw in front of the 1st Battalion, the town of KERLING, the KERLING-PETITE HETTANGE road and all other approaches were rapidly and heavily hit and hit again. While the 1st the 3rd Battalions stabilized their positions the remainder of the 2nd Battalion on the regimental right, assembled for a counterattack on the flank of the enemy penetration. Just east of the crossroads of PETITE HETTANGE a furious fight was raging with small arms fire reaching the regimental CP. The mixed force at the crossroads held their ground and slowed the German assault. The German SP guns were destroyed but the remainder were circling their position.

Back at the river the receding waters permitted the movement of the tank destroyers, and a company started for the bridge. The first two, earmarked for the 357th Infantry crossed safely and, diverted into the 359th Infantry, rolled towards PETITE HETTANGE. In the half-light of the early morning they were initially mistaken for German armor and only the prompt action of an unidentified

sergeant prevented a bazooka team from destroying them. Before these TDs had rolled to a stop they had destroyed two self-propelled guns and immobilized a third. Thus reinforced, 359th Infantry fought with even greater fury, stopping the Germans and forcing them back. As the Germans retreated toward KERLING the counterattack of the 2nd Battalions struck them squarely on the flank, cutting them to pieces and turning the initially orderly withdrawal to a precipitous route. G Company and I Company further harassed their flanks. Simultaneously the artillery continued its murderous pounding. When the smoke had completely cleared 200 Germans lay dead around the crossroads and in the fields east of PETITE HETTANGE and more bodies littered the attack area and, as it was subsequently discovered, KERLING. 150 Germans were taken prisoner and four tanks and five SP guns destroyed. 359th Infantry was ordered to attack to reestablish all positions. In his night attack, launched by the 35th Regiment of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, the German had penetrated nearly to the bridge site, threatening to cut the bridgehead in two. But the cool courage and fighting spirit of the infantry, the tremendous and accurate artillery support, and the timely arrival of tank destroyers, had stopped and smashed the effort.

After the second Tank destroyer and cleared, a particularly heavy artillery concentration had damaged the treadway bridge puncturing half of the pontoons. With air compressors placed to maintain buoyancy of the punctured floats and in view of the critical need for armor, it was decided to resume operation. Unfortunately, with the third Tank destroyer in midstream the combination of swift current and the additional damage caused by the shrapnel of a near miss, the bridge broke in two and swept 800 yards downstream. Salvage operations immediately got underway and the construction of a tank raft was started. At the same time bridge construction became feasible at the CATTENOM site and work was ordered initiated. The first DUKWS were at this time enroute from Army depots.

In the 357th Infantry zone. 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked at daylight after beating off local, but aggressively executed counterattacks. 1st Battalion, which had been released from its Division reserve status and which had crossed with great difficulty the preceding day, mopped up the bypassed pillboxes and forts in the KOENIGSMACHER Woods and the BILLING GROUP. 3rd Battalion overran BREISTROFF LA PETITE and forged ahead until stopped by a fortified belt halfway up the slope south of that town. With the leading elements pinned by heavy fire, an heroic machine gunner made his way through the barbed wire and before being killed enfiladed and crippled the enemy first line of defense, permitting the company to continue the advance. 2nd Battalion on the right, able to bypass this resistance, secured the west half of the high ground dominating the town of INGLANGE from the east. At the close of the day 3rd Battalion deeply refusing its left flank because of the situation in the 359th zone, advanced its right company abreast of the 2nd Battalion.

2nd and 3rd Battalions 358th Infantry in a coordinated attack drove ahead in bitter fighting to secure by midafternoon the line ELZANGE-VALMESTROFF, both inclusive. Advancing south from VALMESTROFF, 2nd Battalion developed a fortified area to his right front, sustaining heavy casualties. 1st Battalion was disposed in depth from VALMESTROFF to FORT KOENIGSMACHER buttressing the Division right flank.

During the latter part of the day a heavy ferry was successfully put into operation at the MALLING sites and by midnight two platoons of tank destroyers and two platoons of tanks crossed the river along with an equivalent number of command and litter 1/4 ton trucks. Bridge construction at both the MALLING and CATTENOM site was renewed with vigor as the fall of the river accelerated. The first DUKW became operational and performed valuable work in the transportation of miscellaneous supplies and evacuation of wounded.

At the close of the 4th day the Division could tabulate additional gains in ground and reassure itself that it had effectively stopped a major German counterthrust. Although casualties had been severe (6 battalions were at 50% effective combat strength) and the infantry was still without dry clothes and blankets, the punch still remained. The orders for 13 November were to continue the attack.

Throughout the early morning hours of 13 November, ferrying operations at the MALLING site and bridge construction at the CATTENOM site continued apace with the small boat traffic. By dawn the CATTENOM bridge, constructed from both sides of the river, was two thirds complete. To insure freedom from observed enemy artillery fire elaborate screening measures were prescribed and implemented; in addition to 2 sections of a smoke generator company, which blocked the site proper, 2 battalions of artillery smoked the high ground to the Southwest while a 4.2 chemical mortar company completed the coverage to the southeast. So effectively were these missions accomplished at no time during the day did a break in the smoke occur. At 1000, with the bridge nearly completed, a DUKW clamoring up the far bank was blown sky high by a box mine, disclosing an unexpected hazard. The receding waters of the river uncovered a dense minefield squarely astride the bridge site which extended for some distance under the bridge. After first clearing the exposed mines, it became necessary to remove 50 feet of the completed bridge, grope for and detonate those mines still underwater, a task which consumed 5 valuable hours.

The presence of mines in profusion elsewhere in the Division zone was creating a serious problem. Extensive fields were discovered across the entire Division front 2 complete kilometers from the river's edge. One belt, a kilometer in depth lay across the 358th Infantry zone beyond FORT KOENIGSMACHER blocking the road south from both BASSE-HAM and KOENIGSMACHER. Mine sweeping details working on the road from METRIC to OUDRENNE uncovered an elaborately placed and camouflaged field containing 12,000 mines in a distance of 15 km along that route. Still another field lay southeast of the METRIC group of fortifications and had already taken a sizable toll in the 357th Infantry.

3rd Battalion 359th Infantry attacked toward KERLING at 1200 and within 2 hours recaptured the town and the high ground immediately north thereof. 1st Battalion maintained its positions against continued enemy pressure. 2nd Battalion given the mission of seizing the western half of the REITHOLTZ woods and establishing contact with a 357th Infantry in vicinity of OUDRENNE attacked to the southeast at 1500. Only slight enemy resistance was encountered by F Company and its supporting armor, but the force was abruptly stopped by a dense minefield. 3 tanks were blown up in rapid succession. After reconnaissance failed to locate a suitable bypass, that gallant company resumed their advance through the minefield accepting 10 casualties in reaching their objective.

The 357th Infantry consolidated its positions, cleared up the forts in its rear with flamethrowers and explosives, and reached out to the flanks to establish contact with the 358th and 359th Infantry respectively.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry continued its advance along the ridge. By dark it had captured Hill 262 and with a strong combat patrol had developed the enemy resistance in INGLANGE. 2nd Battalion on its right, assaulting and carrying the strong position which had occasioned so much trouble the preceding day, advanced to the high ground midway between VALMESTROFF and DISTROFF. The 1st Battalion refreshed by a day of rest attacked to the southwest and secured the high ground in the strangely named wooded area, LE QUART EN RESERVE. I and R Platoon cleaned out the town of HAUTE HAM.

At 1740 the first vehicle crossed the now complete CATTENOM bridge and its crossing marked the final phase of the consolidation of the bridgehead. Behind the organic transportation of the 357th and 358th Infantry rolled the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and the light tanks which swung into action on the Division right flank with the mission of establishing contact with the secondary bridgehead forced by the 95th Infantry Division at THIONVILLE. One gun from each of the light artillery battalions was crossed immediately before dark to register in forward position areas so that the remainder of the battalions might be crossed at night without impairment of artillery support; the advance of the infantry had carried them to the limit of light artillery range and the continuation of the effort was counting on prompt forward displacement of the supporting Battalion. Throughout the black of the night, traffic

rolled across the bridge in a steady stream, a tribute to driving skill, traffic control and the vehicle reception provided on the far bank.

During the night, orders were received that the 10th Armored Division would cross at the THIONVILLE bridge upon its completion, pass through the Division rear and assemble in the left of the 90th Division zone preparatory to the initiation of its attack. Simultaneously one squadron of the 3rd Cavalry Group would cross behind the Division on the CATTENOM bridge to take over its assigned mission. Work continued apace on the new bridge at the MALLING sight, an M2 span suitable for the modified tank treads, which would eventually serve the 10th Armored Division.

## BREAKOUT

By dawn 14 November regimental transportation, all light artillery battalions, the tank destroyer battalion and the vehicles of the engineer battalion had cleared the bridge. For the first time since the initiation of the assault the small boat ferrying operation was suspended, except for the essential evacuation of wounded. Delay in the completion of the THIONVILLE bridge postponed for the time being any interference between our column debouching from the bridge site and the armor of the 10th moving east from THIONVILLE.

At 0800 2nd and 3rd Battalions 359th Infantry advanced to maintain pressure against the enemy within their respective zones. 3rd Battalion quickly captured FRECHING, mopping up LE SILLEREY woods and pushed combat outposts to the stream beyond. F Company, its advance still slowed by mines, drove in a light enemy screen and cut the KERLING-LEMESTROFF Road south of the LE SILLEREY woods. G Company, also picking its way through minefields, occupied OUDRENNE in the middle of the afternoon and firmed contact with the 357th Infantry.

357th Infantry completed mop up operations in its rear area and maintained strong combat patrols to its front to thoroughly develop enemy dispositions preparatory to renewal of the attack.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry advanced against continuingly stubborn resistance and secured a firm foothold astride the INGLANGE-DISTROFF road. Hesitating to commit the weight of his unit in a divergent effort to capture INGLANGE, the Battalion Commander probed its defenses. It developed, however, that that town had been converted into a strong point, its garrison heavily reinforced by armor and antitank guns. Plans were accordingly drafted for a full-scale assault upon it the following morning prior to daylight. 2nd Battalion driving forward at 1400 advanced 2 km and in particularly bitter fighting captured DISTROFF. Prior to the attack artillery observers with 2nd Battalion spotted and fired on an enemy mechanized column of 100 vehicles moving from DISTROFF to STUCKANGE. The effect of the accurately adjusted mass fires seriously crippled that enemy force and greatly weakened the blow it struck against the bridgehead force at UCKANGE the following morning. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion, its flank protection mission taken over by the Reconnaissance Troop, assembled in VALMESTROFF as regimental reserve.

90th Reconnaissance Troop, with attached light tank company, bridged the gap between the 95th Division bridgehead at THIONVILLE and that of the 90th, firmly linking the two and providing a protracted route for the passage of the 10th Armored Division. Other elements of that force, probing southwest, captured KUNTZIG and linked up with the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry.

By 1500 all but a few miscellaneous vehicles had crossed the river. In 23 hours the 90th Division, complete with attachments and four reinforcing battalions of artillery, had crossed on a single span. At 1530, 3rd Cavalry Squadron initiated movement. Coincidental with the cavalry crossing, the first combat command of the 10th Armored Division passed through THIONVILLE on to the east bank of the MOSELLE and rolled to its assembly area in the vicinity of KERLING. The merging of cavalry and armored column was skillfully handled by the 90th Division Military Police – at no time did traffic congestion develop or even tend to arise. During the early evening hours the MALLING bridge site was open for traffic and the remainder of our supporting tanks crossed at that locality.

Under cover of darkness the 3rd Cavalry Squadron relieved 1st Battalion 359th Infantry in place and that latter unit assembled at HUNTING. 2nd and 3rd Battalions 359th Infantry remained in position out-posting the assembly area of the armor.

For the first time in six days and six nights of continuous fighting the infantry had available to them overcoats and blankets and also a change of socks; some few among the reserve elements were provided with a hot meal. Throughout this period the deprivation by force of circumstances of those things normally considered necessities had impaired in no wise their will to fight and to win. By sheer guts, determination and reckless courage that had continued to drive the Hun before them, breaking his every defense and bloodily repulsing his every counterattack.

Exactly at dawn 15 November the most violent counterblow of the campaign struck the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, positioned in and around DISTROFF. Preceded by a fierce artillery preparation two battalions of the 25th Panzer Division drove abreast into the town from the south, while a third in tanks and halftracks, enveloped from the east. The left (west) battalion never reached the town in strength thanks to the annihilating effect of the Division Artillery. But the other two, overrunning outposts, drove a wedge into the town splitting the defending garrison. The regimental reserve was alerted and placed in motion while the 3rd Battalion postponed its attack against INGLANGE to await further developments. In the town the 2nd Battalion, disdainful of odds, fought back with deliberate fury. The tanks, tank destroyers and infantry, stood their ground and, recoiling from the initial blow, exacted a heavy price. A reserve platoon of TDs attempting to roll south across the summit of the barren hilltop north of town came under direct fire from enemy self-propelled guns and suffered one casualty. Masking their movement with smoke the platoon continued to move forward and entered the fray. After four hours of savage fighting the attackers, recognizing the town to be impregnable and accepting failure, gradually withdrew. Behind them they left over 150 dead and wounded, 40 prisoners and the chartered hulks of four tanks, four assault tanks, and 16 halftracks. The artillery which had rendered magnificent support throughout the engagement covering all routes of approach for a considerable distance, maintaining heavy fire on the withdrawing Germans, completely disorganized them. When it had become apparent the 2nd Battalion could handle the situation, the 1st Battalion was diverted to the southeast and assembled in the vicinity of the 3rd Battalion preparatory to taking over the left regimental zone of the action the following day.

2nd 3rd Battalions 357th Infantry continued their attack at 0645. In a short-lived but brisk fight the Battalion ploughed through the German defenses and reached the forward slopes overlooking the valley road which ran east to BUDLING. It was at this point that these units, particularly the 3rd Battalion on the left, came under the most excruciating and sustained artillery fire yet experienced in combat. Artillery officers attempting to pinpoint the caliber and source, counted one round per second over considerable periods of time! It was finally determined that the fire was coming from the belt-fed casemated and turreted cannon of the HACKENBERG fortifications to the left front. Tank destroyers jockeyed into position were ineffective against the concrete and steel emplacements. 8" and 240 mm Howitzers were adjusted from air OPs but failed to diminish the fire. With the fort guns commanding the entire open valley in front of the next objective and because of heavy casualties among the attacking troops further advance was considered in practicable until the guns could be neutralized. Position reconnaissance was immediately initiated for the self-propelled 155 mm rifles available to the Division. In the meantime the 1st Battalion was staged forward to take over the right half of the regimental zone. 2nd Battalion was scheduled to side-slip to the left relieving the 3rd Battalion while that latter unit veered to the southeast to mop up the HACKENBERG fortifications, after the assault had progressed to the initial objective 16 November.

10th Armored Division passed through the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry in the middle of the morning and that Battalion assembled at KERLING. 2nd Battalion remained in position awaiting such advance of the 10th Armored Division as would cover it. A G Company patrol dispatched to

LEMESTROFF (now in zone of the 10th Armored Division) found that town still defended by the enemy.

Just prior to dawn the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry assaulted INGLANGE from the commanding ground on the west. K Company with able tank and TD support made the penetration while the remainder of the unit enveloped the town from both flanks. By 1000 the Battalion, skilled in house to house fighting, was in complete possession of its objectives; it had destroyed three pillboxes, two antitank guns, had taken 30 prisoners and had killed the remainder of the garrison. Its mission accomplished, it reverted to regimental reserve. 1st Battalion attacking along the high ground south from the 3rd Battalion's position, mopped up LE JUNGWALD WOODS and carried Hill 226 southwest of BUDING against strong opposition. 2nd Battalion still reorganizing after the savage fight of the preceding day patrolled towards METZERVISSE and found the railroad track north of that town heavily defended. Moving forward at 1400 2nd Battalion swung southeast onto the high ground and then turning abruptly to the right approached METZERVISSE from the northeast under the cover of the massed artillery of the Division. The unexpected direction of the attack took the defenders unawares and by dark 2nd Battalion had cleaned out the town, capturing or killing its entire garrison. 1st Battalion extended to the southwest and made contact with the 2nd Battalion on the extension of the railroad east from town.

In the 357th Infantry zone the self-propelled guns positioned under the cover of darkness methodically went about the work of reducing the HACKENBERG guns from a range of approximately 2000 yards. Teaming with 8" howitzers, these potent weapons effectively silenced the enemy fires. Thus relieved of the flank threat 1st and 2nd Battalions attacked across the valley and captured the steep wooded ridge running from BUDING to VECKRING. A coordinated infantry-tank assault secured BUDING while 2nd Battalion elements seized HELLING.

On the right flank 90th Reconnaissance Troop, supported now by a platoon each of light tanks and tank destroyers, continued screening and contact mission. During the morning it captured STUCKANGE and, finding its continued progress eastward blocked by dense minefields, swung south along the Division boundary. In a dismounted assault on REINANGE it took 50 prisoners and began cleaning the heavily mined approaches. On the opposite flank of the Division, 359th Infantry, now completely covered by the advance of the 10th Armored Division, assembled in OUDRENNE as Division reserve.

Teamwork among the several components of the Division developed in five months of hard combat was paying off. The artillery was meeting every demand for fires and anticipating the bulk of the requests. Tanks and tank destroyers rendered close effective support at all times. The Engineers were closely integrated with the infantry in the assault team formations and had the routes open to traffic immediately behind the leading infantry elements. The pressure exerted by the Division on the METZ garrison was making itself felt as evidence came to light of accelerated movement to the east from that town. The north pincers of the Corps was advancing on schedule.

Attacking 0900 17 November, 1st Battalion 358th Infantry dispatched one company reinforced to secure the crossroad atop Hill 253 while the bulk of the Battalion moved into LE STOLBUSCH WOODS. The latter objective was taken against light infantry resistance but under terrifically heavy mortar and artillery fire. After the woods had been consolidated 2nd Battalion was staged forward into the western half while 3rd Battalion displaced to METZERVISSE. Regimental plan for the continuation of the effort called for the coordinated effort by the 1st and 2nd Battalions on METZERESCHE. At 1400 2nd Battalion moved to close with the town supported by the fire of the 1st Battalion. Spearheading the attack with tanks, the town was quickly overrun and secured. 1st Battalion then leapfrogged forward and secured the timbered high ground east and slightly south of the town pushing combat outposts to cut the road west from HOMBROUG-BUDANGE.

1st and 2nd Battalions 357th Infantry attacking against moderate resistance had secured by noon ELZING and the ridge line to the east. 3rd Battalion moved through BUDLING and cleaned out the



HACKENBERG fortifications. Inspection indicated that the direct fire of the 155 mm self-propelled guns had demolished the walls and turrets, torn the guns loose from their mountings and had killed all occupants of the turrets and casemates. A small infantry-tank force dispatched south from ELZING developed a brief battle in KEDANGE against 3 enemy tanks which were quickly dispersed. As the 1st Battalion advanced rapidly onto the high ground in the BOIS DU COMTE D'HUNOLSTEIN overlooking HOMBURG-BUDANGE, 2nd Battalion uncovered an enemy strong point in the town of KLANG. A gap in depth between battalions thus developing, 3rd Battalion which had completed its mission, was rapidly staged forward and thrown into the gap from the northwest to consolidate the left half of the regimental objective pinching out the 2nd Battalion. In the KLANG action E Company was maneuvered to a position southwest of the town while F Company contained it from the northeast. When supporting tanks arrived from KEDANGE E Company assaulted the town. As the tanks approached, the enemy left his prepared position and fled toward KEMPLICH and in so doing was annihilated by the concentrated fire of F Company north of the road and the reserve company of the 3rd Battalion south of the road.

90th Reconnaissance Troop on the right flank, in a brisk fight, captured VOLSTROFF, moving in on the town from the west and the north. Subsequently it developed considerable resistance at the crossroad west of METZERESCHE. Contact with elements of the 95th Division was made by a circuitous route for the Troop and their continued westward probing had developed the existence of a continuous mine belt paralleling the river for 3 or 4 km eastward. [Page 26 missing]...

...ditch blocked the road. The Battalion reversed direction but finding all of the routes impassable, assembled at EBERSVILLER until road repair could be consummated. By late afternoon the 1st Battalion reached BOCKANGE, destroyed a German supply column and took the survivors prisoner. With all routes further south blocked by mines and craters or cut by anti-tank ditches, the regiment halted in column of battalions pending engineer operations.

On the Division right the 90th Reconnaissance Troop cleared VIGY and VRY and established itself at AVANCY and on Hill 296 astride the main road northeast from STE BARBE. At 1700 a motorized column moving east from STE BARBE was trapped between these two points and destroyed. Throughout the night additional columns jammed against the effective roadblock thus created; the vehicles were set afire by the supporting tanks and tank destroyers and the personnel killed or taken prisoner. When dawn broke the Troop could count, as a result of its operations, some 500 prisoners and 30 destroyed vehicles of all types.

At daybreak 19 November 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry moved southwest on LES ETANGS capturing that town at 0930 in a surprise attack which netted a complete headquarters battery of an anti-aircraft battalion. The seizure of LES ETANGS blocked still another escape route. Additional columns moving from GLATIGNY were trapped. German transportation glutting the road were destroyed by the combined efforts of the artillery and the superbly functioning fighter-bombers. 1st Battalion pushed a strong patrol towards VOLMARANGE which was subsequently recalled on Corps order.

357th Infantry advanced to the NIED capturing ROUPELDANGE, GUINKIRCHEN and HINCKANGE. It then prepared for an assault across the NIED river to seize BOULAY. However at this juncture the Division was ordered to halt an online of the NIED and all patrols were recalled.

At 1100, 90th Reconnaissance Troop advanced south across the Division boundary and make contact with reconnaissance elements of the 735th Tank Battalion, supporting the 5th Division, thus completing the encirclement of METZ which by this time had been half reduced by the 5th and 95th Divisions. 90th Infantry Division's role in the METZ operation was completed.

## THE SUMMARY

The foregoing account, written strictly from an operational standpoint, has concerned itself mainly with the movement of infantry battalions since it is through them alone that the course of an action can be charted. As a consequence, that which has been left unsaid of the actions and acts of some units and individuals has left great gaps in the narrative – gaps which must be plugged with a miscellany of detail if the narrative is to have full body and life and present a true and comprehensive picture. No mention has been made for example of the company commander who having lost KERLING joined another assault Company, lead it back and gave his life in the retaking of the town; nor of the Lieutenant who personally placed charges and blew open the first shelter on FORT KOENIGSMACHER; nor of the wiremen who worked unceasingly in bitter cold waste deep water to maintain cross river communications; nor of the forward observers who lying in exposed positions cooling and calmly adjusted the fire which repulsed many a counter attack; nor of the engineer soldiers who groped in the dark to find, disarm and remove the devilish Schu or plastic mine, knowing full well the odds were against survival; nor finally of the individual riflemen – cold, wet, hungry, tired – to follow his leader wherever he led, always under fire, risking his life a hundred times a day, but always moving forward. Omitted also is the sterling work of the fire direction personnel who constantly at their posts fired every mission with great speed and accuracy; and supply people who produced at the desired time and in the desired quantity every requested item it was humanly possible to procure. The citations are innumerable but in final analysis, it was everyone performing his particular task as best he knew how that produced the perfect team-play.

West of the MERDERET RIVER and in the FORET DE MONT CASTRE, in the bitter fighting which characterized June and July, this 90th Infantry Division had demonstrated its capacity to slug it out and win against the best and most determined soldiers of the Reich. In the rapid encircling maneuver which turned the flank of the German Seventh Army yet had shown its aptitude for bold, daring strokes where flanks and contact were forgotten and the payoff was speed of execution. At the FALAISE GAP it had proved that it could develop and maintain its terrific punch. But it was the MOSELLE crossing which called upon the Division to display the full extent of its versatility and of courage. It was the MOSELLE crossing, climaxing the proud history of a tried division, which called for the prompt and unerring application of every lesson learned in five months of combat. The demands were met in full measure and the success of the operation, a foregone conclusion to the men of the 90th, thereby insured.

In eleven days and nights of continuous combat the 90th Division won a brilliant victory. Attacking across a major river in the face of strongly manned fortifications which had been months in the making, it had achieved complete tactical surprise and overrunning the first line of defense insured its maintenance on the far bank. In so doing it had succeeded in the triple combination of the night assault, a river crossing and the penetration of a fortified area. Hampered by the worst river conditions in history and despite heavy resistance on all sides it had nonetheless deployed eight battalions in the first 24 hours and had relentlessly driven forward to secure its initial objective. It had assaulted and gained in 60 hours the formidable and off-time called impregnable FORT KOENIGSMACHER with its complete Battalion garrison. It had reduced all MAGINOT fortifications within its zone. Without benefit of armor or antitank support it had seized and consolidated its bridgehead. For four days and four nights it had maintained itself without a bridge and had supplied itself across a mile and a half of swirling treacherous waters. It had withstood three major counterattacks (two in regimental strength, all supported by armor) and numerous lesser ones. Its infantry, with indomitable courage and resolution, despite all handicaps had gained each objective. With a bridge established behind it the Division had lashed out with renewed vigor and advanced beyond expectations. From concrete emplacements, trenches and fortified houses it had taken 2100 prisoners. When the enemy defenses crumbled it was

primed for the pursuit – though it had sustained 2300 casualties in a week of constantly heavy fighting, it still possessed the dash and spirit to advance 21 km to the final objective in the closing hours of the operation. It had captured or destroyed 25 tanks, 15 assault guns, 75 artillery pieces and over 200 vehicles. It had accomplished on schedule is every assigned mission.

VAN FLEET  
COMMANDING  
STILWELL  
G-3

## PART II

### THE DRIVE TO THE SAAR

24-30 November 1944

The fall of METZ on 20 November brought to completion the first phase of the XX Corps offensive and steps were immediately initiated to reorient the Divisions to the East. CCA 10th Armored Division was turned North to pass through the 3rd Cavalry Group and attack up the SAAR-MOSELLE triangle to SAARBURG. Meantime, however, the 95th Infantry Division, which was to pass through the 5th Infantry Division and drive towards SAARLAUTERN, was still mopping up in the METZ area. Consequently the 90th Infantry Division, ordered to expand Northeast to contact with CCA, 10th Armored Division and hold along the line of the NIED River until the 95th Infantry Division should come abreast, planned the maximum possible rest for the bulk of the troops. In announcing the details of the re-dispositions, Division directed that Regimental zones be out-posted lightly with the bulk of the units held in reserve.

(a) 359th Infantry on right to hold the zone from LES ESTANGS (inclusive) Northeast to GUIRLANGE (exclusive).

(b) 357th Infantry on left to hold the zone from GUIRLANGE Northeast to GUICHING.

(c) Task Force Spies (773rd TD Battalion (-2 Companies) and 90th Reconnaissance Troop) to relieve elements of 10th Armored Division in area from right boundary of 357th Infantry to FILSTROFF.

(d) RCT 358th Infantry, now attached to 10th Armored Division, was alerted for movement to the zone of action of that unit.

#### 21 November 44

During the morning hours, unit commanders reconnoitered newly assigned zones of responsibility and at 1200, Division ordered immediate initiation of the planned re-dispositions.

#### 357th Infantry:

By 1800, the regiment had occupied its new zone with dispositions as follows:

(a) E Company out-posted FREISTROFF, DIDING and GUICHING, contacting Task Force Spies at the latter point; F Company occupied ANZELING and patrolled to FREISTROFF; G Company remained in Battalion Reserve at HOBLING.

(b) K Company out-posted 3rd Battalion zone, placing 1 platoon at GOMELANGE with the remainder of the Company at RURANGE; bulk of the 3rd Battalion was held at BOCKANGE.

(c) 1st Battalion prepared for move to HESTROFF as Regimental Reserve upon relief in the GUINKIRCHEN-HINCKANGE area by 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry.

#### 359th Infantry:

By 2000, regiment was disposed as follows:

(a) 1st Battalion occupied NORTHEN with reinforced platoon outposts in the towns of VOLMERANGE and CONDE-NORTHEN.

(b) 2nd Battalion was held at LES ETANGS with one reinforced platoon at GLATIGNY

(c) AT Company out-posted in the vicinity of VRÿ.

(d) 3rd Battalion remained in position, prepared to take over responsibility for 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry's area on the morrow.

#### 358th Infantry:

Still in its assembly areas at METZERVISSE, METZERESCHE and LULLANGE, awaiting call from 10th Armored Division. Meanwhile that latter unit, having passed through the 3rd Cavalry Group, was finding going difficult where just previously the cavalry had been making excellent progress. Immediately beyond the relief line, they unexpectedly encountered a switch position of the SEIGFRIED LINE, stretching in a continuous belt from the SAAR River through OBERLEUKEN and TETTINGEN to the MOSELLE. Although lightly held at the outset, the armor's initial hesitation had given to the enemy two precious days to greatly reinforce the defending garrison and the task of penetration became hourly more formidable.

Regiment moved by motor at 1200, through METZERVISSE, INGLANGE, ELZANGE, KOENIGSMACHER and SIERCK. The entire CT had closed by 1600 with Regimental Headquarters and 2nd Battalion billeted in SIERCK, 3rd Battalion in RETTEL 1st Battalion in MANDEREN. The latter Battalion was attached to CCA and told to expect movement orders during the night or following morning.

Anticipating orders reorienting the Division to the East, the Division CP moved to VECKRING BARRACKS and dispatched the 712th Tank Battalion to DALSTEIN.

#### 22 November 44

1st Battalion, 357th Infantry was relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry and assembled at HESTROFF closing by 1215.

#### 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry:

Occupied GUINKIRCHEN and HINCKANGE with one reinforced platoon of L Company each while the remainder of the Battalion displaced to CHARLEVILLE-sous-BOIS.

#### 358th Infantry:

Was ordered to attack the following morning to breach the LINE, seizing SINZ and MUNZINGEN and establishing a bridgehead for the armor. Initial assault was planned for the 2nd and 3rd Battalions supported by the entire Division Artillery, with the 1st Battalion prepared to assist either assault unit.

Intelligence estimates showed elements of the 416 German Division to be holding the line generally between NENNING (0204) and MERZIG (2094). The total frontline strength of the Division was estimated at 1000 men, most of whom were in concrete pillboxes. Some were in open

emplacements between the pillboxes. It was estimated this line was supported by 4 Battalions of Field Artillery and some 12 cm mortars. Number of enemy tanks was unknown. Shortly before the 358th Infantry's attack the enemy's strength in the TETTINGEN-OVERLEUKEN area was estimated to be around 300 men. But due to the previous activity of the 10th Armored Division in the area, there were already indications of heavy reinforcements arriving in the area.

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In accordance with the new Corps order, the 95th Infantry Division was to make the main effort, forcing a bridgehead across the SAAR River in the vicinity of SARRLAUTERN. 90th Infantry Division, initially less RCT 8 was to attack abreast and on the left (N) of the 95th as far as the SAAR; the crossing of the SAAR within zone was contingent upon the success of the 95th in uncovering the chosen bridging site at REHLINGEN. 10th Armored Division was to continue its drive towards SAARBURG, while at the same time probe toward MERZIG. 5th infantry Division was left behind to contain those METZ forts which had not yet capitulated.

The zone assigned to the 90th was delineated on the South by the NIED River as far as NIEDALTDORF thence ran to East to include BUREN and REHLINGEN; on the North, it included HALSTROFF and MONDORF thereafter following the valley to the river. The 357th Infantry and 359th Infantry were earmarked for employment in the right and left zones respectively and so notified.

23 November 44

The Division proper spent a comparatively quiet Thanksgiving day. Reconnaissance parties from the 357th and 359th contacted elements of the 10th Armored within the rear zone of action and checked assigned assembly areas.

358th Infantry:

During the early morning hours, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions moved to forward assembly areas vicinity WOCHERN and BORG and at 1000, crossed their respective LDs.

3rd Battalion advanced through the woods East of the WOCHERN-TETTINGEN road under heavy artillery and small arms fire. Maneuvering with skill, the Battalion pressed the attack and by 1800 had cleared the woods, destroying 15 pillboxes and capturing 85 PWs. But between the woods and TETTINGEN, the initial objective, other pillboxes squatted in sullen defiance and with darkness fast approaching continuation of the assault was postponed until daylight.

2nd Battalion, moving from its assembly area in the woods East of BORG was hit by a concentration of high velocity fire just as it cleared the woods. This fire, coming from the left rear, disorganized the attacking troops and forced postponement of their assault until 1400. Starting afresh in the afternoon, the Battalion advanced to the high ground West of OBERLEUKEN against heavy resistance. Here the Battalion consolidated for the night with G Company on the reverse slopes of the hill and E and F Companies just inside the dragon's teeth. Some 40 POWs had been taken.

24 November 44

357th Infantry:

Leaving behind a covering shell to be relieved by elements of the 95th Division and 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Regiment moved by shuttling at 1030. 1st Battalion assembled at COLMEN, pushing A Company to NEUNKIRCHEN and REMELSDORF. The remainder of the regiment

assembled in a column formation with 2nd Battalion vicinity of BIBICHE and 3rd Battalion in vicinity of DAMPONT FARM.

359th Infantry:

Initiating movement at 0800, sent its 2nd Battalion to outpost a line from FLASTROFF to LE GROSSENWALD WOODS; relief of the Armor in that area was completed by 1600. 1st 3rd Battalions assembled at WALDWEISTROFF and HALSTROFF respectively. The shell left in the old area was relieved late in the day by elements of the 379th Infantry and closed into the regimental assembly area after dark.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Was ordered into positions along the NIED to maintain contact between 357th Infantry vicinity FILSTROFF and 379th Infantry initially as CONDE-NORTHEN.

Completing its re-dispositions, Division ordered an attack at 250730 to secure the high ground on the West Bank of the SAAR RIVER.

\* \* \* \* \*

358th Infantry:

At 0630, 2nd Battalion continued the attack against Hill 388, its advance slowed by heavy direct fire from the North and more particularly by enfilading machine gun fire from a huge pillbox in the outskirts of OVERLEUKEN. At noon, the flanking fortification was reduced by an assault team, but the attack on the Hill continued to make little progress as the German tenaciously defended this excellent approach down the hogback ridge to SAARBURG.

To provide additional punch for the right effort, the 1st Battalion was alerted to assault OBERLEUKEN at 1530 and moved forward from its assembly in OBERPERL. Quickly overrunning the scattered resistance short of the town, A and B Companies smashed into the first buildings and by dark had secured the southern half of the objective.

3rd Battalion, after repulsing a strong counterattack against K Company on the Battalion right, attacked at 0800. I Company working with machinelike precision reduced the 16 pillboxes between the woods and TETTINGEN but postponed the assault on the town until morning. Unaware of this decision and working deeper in the belt of pillboxes, Company K attacked and captured BUTZDORF (North of TETTINGEN), where it remained un-located and out of communication with the Battalion Headquarters, a factor in its subsequent disaster. Company K fought all night long as elements of the 21st Panzer Division counterattacked from SINZ with tanks and infantry. Encircled and isolated, the men of that company fought furiously with every available weapon against the enemy armor which rumbled up to fire at point-blank range. All officers were casualties; there was no armored support; ammunition was fast dwindling; but still the 35 survivors held out against all odds, beating off thrust after thrust.

\* \* \* \* \*

On this day, elements of two regiments of the 90th Division were fighting inside Germany for the first time.

25 November 44

357th Infantry:

1st Battalion pushed a strong combat patrol into SCHWERDORF in the face of small arms and mortar fire from the high ground vicinity FURWEILER. From that point the regiment echeloned to the right rear connecting with the 90th Reconnaissance.

359th Infantry:

2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked abreast at 0730, the latter on the left, K Company captured BIRINGEN while L Company cut the ZEURENGE-WALDWISSE Road and occupied the high ground South of BOIS GERMEST. 2nd Battalion reached positions West and Southwest of OBERESCH without difficulty but drew heavy fire from the town itself. By 1400 completion of bridging operations at ZEURANGE allowed forward movement of supporting tanks and thus bolstered, 2nd Battalion assaulted OBERESCH. F and G Companies occupied the town while E Company stood fast to refuse the right flank. 1st Battalion assembled at ZEURANGE.

358th Infantry:

At daylight I Company, followed by L Company, attacked and secured TETTINGEN and pushed North to contact K Company, all unaware of K's critical situation. It smashed into the besieging Germans and, teaming with the remainder of K Company, drove them back to the North edge of BUTZDORF. In the action I took considerable casualties and emerged with the one officer.

1st Battalion continued the mop up of OVERLEUKEN until hit by a strong tank and infantry counterattack from the Northwest across the front of the 2nd Battalion. After a house to house fight, the attack was driven off with the helpful assistance of the 2nd Battalion's flanking fire and the artillery. 1st Battalion remained in possession of its portion of town.

2nd Battalion found the going equally difficult. It had secured the bald Hill 388 but there was subjected to blistering high velocity fire from the dominating ground beyond. By day's end the cumulative total of enemy action and trench foot had reduced the effective rifle strength of the Battalion to bare 100.

During the night, Corps, appraised of the condition of the regiment after its excruciating three-day fight, directed relief of the 358th Infantry as soon as possible and its return to the 90th Division. The regiment had acquitted itself nobly – it had captured 500 prisoners, 2 towns and a part of a third and had reduced 26 pillboxes. It had made the deepest penetration into the switch position of the SEIGFRIED to be effected by any unit during the year 1944.

26 November 44

357th Infantry:

At 0900, C Company advanced into the woods Southwest of COTTENDORF, securing them without difficulty and subsequently capturing the town itself and forming contact with 359th Infantry at that point. Meanwhile a strong patrol and a platoon of B Company were repulsed in their attempts to enter OTZWILLER.

3rd Battalion attacked through the 1st Battalion at 1100 from the direction of SCHWERDORF. I Company, leading, drove a wedge into the heavily defended town of FURWEILER. K Company was moved up on the right of I Company and together these Companies finally reduced the stronghold,

taking 107 PWs. I Company then displaced to the East to outpost the Battalion zone, while L Company move forward to the town.

359th Infantry:

K Company attacked at 0730 and with tank support secured the high ground in LES SILLENBERG WOODS, overlooking SILWINGEN. At 1100, 2nd Battalion advanced to the East and despite a profusion of antitank ditches and mines was in possession of the high ground midway between OBERESCH and GERLFANGEN by dark. L Company was swung into position between K and the 2nd Battalion to firm the line. Strong patrols probed enemy defenses to the East.

358th Infantry:

Was relieved during the day by the armored infantry somewhat rearward of the existing frontlines and reassembled in the towns originally occupied. Arrangements were quickly completed for the movement of the unit to VECKRING BARRACKS the following day for thorough rest and rehabilitation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Throughout the day, forward elements of the Division had been subjected to a sustained pounding by enemy artillery from across the SAAR River, supplemented by SP guns still on the West Bank. While infantry resistance had not yet been particularly strong, rapid forward movement was greatly hampered by the effectiveness of enemy demolitions and minefields which made the attack zone and engineers' nightmare. Meanwhile, on both flanks, adjacent divisions were echeloned to the rear, experiencing similar obstacles and responsible for a wider front.

27 November 44

Except for the occupation of OTZWILLER by B Company, 357th Infantry and a 500 yard advance of dominating ground by K Company, 359th Infantry, the Division made no appreciable progress during the day. The greatest emphasis was placed on the improvement of route communications behind the leading elements to allow forward staging of tanks and tank destroyers preliminary to the final assault to the river. At the same time patrols operated continuously in both regimental zones to fix the enemy dispositions.

358th Infantry:

Closed VECKRING BARRACKS at 1515.

28 November 44

357th and 359th Infantries continued preparation for the attack to the river scheduled for 290600. At 1500 a combat patrol from the 1st Battalion 357th Infantry entered and cleared the town of NIEDALTDORF. Shortly after dark the engineers, covered by a combat outpost, moved forward from OBERESCH and began bridging operations on the huge antitank ditch halfway to GERLFANGEN; the bridge was completed at 2330.

In the past two days the Division had consolidated its gains, firmed its communications and through patrols, obtained an accurate picture of the enemy resistance west of the SAAR River. With the



95th Division coming up rapidly on the right rear, it was prepared for an unchecked assault on the SAAR 29 November.

29 November 44

357th Infantry:

At 0600 3rd Battalion attacked due East from FURWEILER and by noon had secured without appreciable resistance, the left half of the Regimental Objective, the high ground overlooking the SAAR. K and L Companies occupied the objective, patrolling toward the River, while I Company was positioned in GERLFANGEN.

1st Battalion by 0800 had cleared the wooded expanse on the high ground North of HEMMERSDORF. Proceeding into the town of HEMMERSDORF, A Company encountered considerable resistance and it was not until 1700 that the coordinated action of A Company from the Northeast, a Tank Platoon from the North and G Company 379th Infantry (95th Division) from the southwest had cleared the town. With this action completed the remainder of the 1st Battalion assembled in SCHWERDORF preparatory to commitment south of the NIED the following day.

2nd Battalion, swinging into the gap developed by the divergent attacks of the 1st and 3rd Battalions, reached the high ground Northwest of SIERSDORF without resistance. E and G Companies consolidated the position and contacted L and A Companies respectively on the left and right flanks. F Company remained in FURWEILER.

359th Infantry:

1st Battalion passed through 2nd Battalion at 0600 and bypassing GERLFANGEN to the North secured the high ground West of FREMERSDORF against scattered resistance. Immediately thereafter A Company, the Battalion Reserve, entered and mopped up the town of GERLFANGEN. 3rd Battalion, attacking abreast of and on the left of the 1st Battalion, pushed I and L Companies eastward to secure the high ground Southeast of MONDORF; Companies reported themselves on objective by 1100. Meanwhile 2nd Battalion, less G Company, assembled at OVERESCH, while G Company was left to protect the Regimental left from positions overlooking SILWINGEN.

During the late afternoon and evening patrols from the front line battalions hit the river at several places earning for the Division distinction of being the first element of XX Corps to reach the SAAR. As the Division consolidated upon its assigned objectives Regimental areas were subjected to an unusually heavy and continuous artillery bombardment presaging the enemy's reaction to further encroachment upon his SAAR defenses.

30 November 44

357th Infantry:

The remaining untaken objectives were BUREN, SIERSDORF and REHLINGEN located south of the NIED in the southeast corner of the Division area. Since the approach from the 2nd Battalion's area was exposed to the full view of the enemy, the logical solution was to cross the NIED at rearward points and attack East astride the NIEDALTDORF-BUREN Road.

1st Battalion assembled at NIEDALTDORF at 0600 and crossed to the South bank of the NIED in assault boats. Its organic transportation and supporting tanks and tank destroyers were routed via the BOUZONVILLE bridge. B Company, the leading assault unit, passed through G Company 379th Infantry South of HEMMERSDORF and continued eastward unopposed until the BOIS DE KERPRICH

was reached. From this point on the advance to BUREN was marked by heavy enemy artillery and Nebelwerfer fire and gradually increasing Infantry resistance. By dark however, B Company had fought its way well into BUREN. The battle raged throughout the night with undiminished fury. A and C Companies staged forward but held in column to protect the Battalions' extended right flank.

2nd and 3rd Battalions maintained their positions patrolling to the river in the left of the zone and to SIERSDORF and HEMMERSDORF on the right.

359th Infantry:

B Company, supported by TDs, occupied the river town of FREMERSDORF without resistance, while A Company, echeloned forward from GERLFANGEN to occupy its vacated position. 90th Reconnaissance Troop relieved K and G Companies of their block missions on the Regimental left flank.

358th Infantry continued its rehabilitation program at VECKRING BARRACKS, but was alerted for eventual employment on the Division's right when the 90th's crossing was ordered.

\* \* \* \* \*

In both Regimental zones, reconnaissance of apace for fire positions for tanks, tank destroyers, antitank guns, 40 mm AA guns and 50 caliber machine guns to the end that a concerted program of direct fires might be rapidly placed on the plainly visible pillboxes across the SAAR. Simultaneously patrol plans were completed for the cross river reconnaissance scheduled to begin that night. The Division had reached the SAAR in comparatively easy fashion but the most formidable task lay ahead – beyond the water barrier lay the thickest portion of the vaunted SIEGFRIED LINE.

Its ranks thinned by lack of reinforcements to replace those casualties suffered in the MOSELLE crossing and subsequent hard fighting, the Division gathered its limited strength in preparation for the grueling task to come. Many key officers and men had been lost, but in the eyes of those remaining there was naught but determination as they surveyed the SAAR and the pillboxes beyond. This fighting team had met and conquered obstacle after obstacle in its drive from UTAH BEACH. Now Germany itself was entered. Further penetration could not – would not – be denied.

VAN FLEET  
COMMANDING  
STILWELL  
G3

## DECEMBER

### INTRODUCTION

The dawn of December found the 90th Division, an interior unit of XX Corps, poised on the high ground west of the SAAR between MERZIG (exclusive) and REHLINGEN. With the exception of a small area in the extreme southern portion of its zone, it had driven the enemy from the west bank of the river and in so doing had all but completed its initial assigned mission. On its right the 95th Division, charged by Corps with the establishment of a bridgehead in the general vicinity of SAARLAUTERN, was rapidly approaching the SAAR. To the North the 10th Armored Division, blocking the Corps left flank between the MOSELLE and SAAR with a secondary force, was converging on MERZIG.

The dispositions of the 90th Division were generally as follows:

(a) 357th Infantry on the Division right held the forward slopes of the high ground due East of GERLFANGEN with 3rd Battalion, while echeloning the 2nd Battalion to the right rear overlooking the towns of EIMERSDORF and SIERSDORF. Its 1st Battalion was battling for the town of BUREN South of the NEID River.

(b) 359th Infantry with 1st and 3rd Battalions abreast occupied FREMERSDORF on the riverbank and from that point echeloned to the left rear to include Hill 348. 2nd Battalion in regimental reserve was assembled in vicinity of OBERESCH.

(c) 358th Infantry (Division Reserve) was a considerable distance to the rear at VECKRING BARRACKS, midway through an intensive rehabilitation program.

(d) 90th Reconnaissance Troop, operating from SILWINGEN, maintained contact between 359th Infantry and the 10th Armored Division.

(e) Division CP located at HALSTROFF, was prepared to displace to HEMMERSDORF when the right flank had clarified.

#### 1 December 44

At 0600 F and I Companies, 357th Infantry, advanced to and occupied the towns of SIERSDORF and EIMERSDORF respectively without opposition other than artillery fire of considerable magnitude. Following the consolidation of these towns, a 3rd Battalion outpost was positioned on the East edge of LORWALD. South of the NIED, B Company continued its attack and by noon, had liquidated all remaining resistance in BUREN. Simultaneously A Company was swung to the left of B Company to clean that portion of SIERSDORF south of the NIED and the high ground overlooking REHLINGEN (Hill 308). A Company had completed its mission by dark and C Company dispatched two combat patrols through it, around both sides of the Hill mass, to investigate REHLINGEN. Their forward progress blocked at all turns by a profusion of mines, these patrols failed to reach REHLINGEN.

359th Infantry made minor adjustments during the morning hours. MONDORF and MECHERN were occupied without resistance by L and I Companies respectively, while the garrison of FREMERSDORF was reinforced by the remainder of B Company.

Heavy and sustained enemy artillery lashed the forward areas throughout the day, denying any appreciable freedom of movement. Despite this however, reconnaissance continued apace for position areas for direct fire weapons of all types and for routes to these positions with a view to their occupation under cover of darkness. Organic and supporting engineers worked steadily to span the NIED at NIEDALTDORF, HEMMERSDORF and SIERSDORF and to demine the areas contiguous to the NIEDALTDORF-REHLINGEN road.

#### 2 December 1944

The XX corps plan envisaged that the 95th Infantry Division in addition to driving the initial bridgehead across the SAAR River would swing north to seize the high ground opposite REHLINGEN to cover the 90th Division's crossing at that latter point. But as indications mounted of the buildup of enemy strength in the SEIGFRIED defenses the practicability on the 95th Division accomplishing such a difficult maneuver became more and more remote. The Division consequently, having anticipated the necessity of an assault crossing within the zone for several days now took steps to develop such a plan.

Across the SAAR within the present zone of action lay a towering, steep slope Hill mass, studded with pill boxes and entrenchments. A firm foothold on this terrain feature would effectively remove observation from a possible bridge site at FREMERSDORF and for that reason the Division speculatively eyed this ground. On the other hand, a skillful and tenacious defending garrison could annihilate a regiment as it struggled up the precipitous slopes. Without a detailed and accurate intelligence picture the risk was too great and the Division pointed at sights to the South. Corps approved the request that the Division boundary be swung southeast to include the town off WALLERFANGEN and across the SAAR, where it coincided with the PRIMIS River. This accomplished, 359th Infantry was directed to relieve elements of 357th Infantry south to the NIED River and to outpost its broadened zone with minimum force, holding the bulk of the Battalions in defiladed areas. 357th Infantry was thus enabled to concentrate its Battalions vicinity of BUREN. Simultaneously 358th Infantry was alerted for movement to forward assembly areas generally along the new Division right boundary.

The daylight hours passed without appreciable activity except for the excellent work of the emplaced TDs against the located pillboxes of the LINE, some six of which were destroyed. But as darkness closed, the Division front became alive. C Company 357th Infantry, its path cleared by the engineers, moved towards and entered REHLINGEN. Engineers swept the BUREN-REHLINGEN road for the passage of tanks. Elements of the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry were relieved in position by 2nd Battalion, 359th Infantry. All along the front of the 359th Infantry additional 50 caliber MGs, AT Guns, tanks, TDs, as well as 155 mm SP guns were emplaced. The artillery accelerated its program of harassing and destruction fires across the SAAR and shifted two Battalions south of the NIED.

### 3 December 44

By 1000, 359th Infantry utilizing its 2nd Battalion, had completed relief of elements of 357th Infantry West of the NIED River and had accepted responsibility for its new zone. The river line was out-posted lightly (commensurate with tactical security) while the bulk of the troops assembled in covered areas. Throughout the day, considerable fire was maintained on the SIEGFRIED defenses across the SAAR in a continuing attempt to force the enemy's attention on this particular area.

357th Infantry assembled its 2nd and 3rd Battalions in the area BUREN-SIERSDORF-HEMMERSDORF while devoting its principal attention to the establishment of OPs and the opening of routes to REHLINGEN.

Meanwhile in the 95th Infantry Division zone, elements of the 379th Infantry had forced a crossing of the SAAR and had secured the main bridge in SAARLAUTERN. But however suspicious this initial success was, the immediate prospects for exploitation were unfavorable: the Division was scattered and the attack could only be prosecuted piecemeal; the attack area was small and allowed the enemy to contain the effort. And so the long expected order came from corps: cross within zone at the earliest practicable hour.

358th Infantry was directed to move 4 December to BISINGEN-OBERLIMBERG-STE BARBARA, to outpost river and reconnoiter for possible crossing sites. The tentative boundary between regiments was drawn to include ITZPACH to the 357th and PACHTEN to the 358th.

### 4 December 44

358th Infantry initiated movement by motor from VECKRING BARRACKS at 0900 and proceeded without incident (save sporadic shellfire interdicting routes near destination) to designated assembly area. By 1700, the regiment had closed into localities as follows:

1st Battalion in STE BARBARA, Regimental Headquarters and 2nd Battalion in GISINGEN and 3rd Battalion in OBERLIMBERG.

2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry moved to ITZBACH while the Division CP opened for the first time on German soil at GROSS HEMMERSDORF.

All activity during the day was directed toward preparation for the coming assault. OPs were established on the wooded high ground dominating the West Bank of the SAAR, in the same area, reconnaissance continued for firing sections for TDs and SP 155 mm Guns. Engineers swept and improved the axial roads leading from BUREN, ITZBACH and STE BARBARA to the river as well as the river road connecting WALLERFANGEN and REHLINGEN. Assault battalion commanders and staffs surveyed their general crossing areas and selected positions for supporting weapons. Corps support in the matter of engineer troops and equipment was at length firmed. Patrols scheduled to investigate the defenses across the SAAR were thoroughly oriented and given final briefing just before dark. Target date for the operation was final as early morning, 6 December.

#### 5 December 44

The prospective zone of action of the Division presented problems of even greater magnitude than had the MOSELLE operation. Although providing excellent observation, the high ground adjacent to the West Bank was so rugged in character that it delimited approaches to the river to the roads from ITZBACH and through WALLERFANGEN. The SAAR itself, a stream of only 200 feet in normal times, was at flood stage and inundated the far banks for a considerable distance making cross-country movement extremely difficult. The SEIGFRIED LINE began literally at the riverbank and extended in a solid belt of unknown kilometers eastwards. The great density of the mutually supporting pillboxes was apparent to observers. Between the river and the MERZIG-SAARLAUTERN Railroad which paralleled the river 1 km inland, the flat, open ground was dissected by entrenchments and completely covered by the weapons in the fortifications. In the right half of the zone, where the 358th Infantry was to operate lay the heavily fortified, adjoining towns of PACHTEN and DILLINGEN. In the 357th Infantry zone the terrain sloped gently from the railroad to a wooded ridge which ran northeast along the Division axis of advance – it was down this ridge that the Division main effort was to be directed. To the North loomed a towering and forbidding Hill mass which would flank the Division advance all the way to the initial objective (the high ground between DEPPENWEILER-PIESBACH) and in addition provided observation on the proposed bridging sites. Finally, the Division's left flank was unprotected – and would always be! Establishment of a bridgehead was feasible but the course of action thereafter remained a moot question.

The Division attack order, issued after a unit commander and staff conference, called for a two regiment assault:

(a) 358th Infantry, two battalions abreast, to initially capture PACHTEN and DILLINGEN and blocking the DILLINGEN-DIEFFLEN corridor, drive down the high ground toward PIESBACH.

(b) 357th Infantry, in a similar formation, to drive rapidly inland to gain the ridge, block to the North and be prepared to continue abreast of the 359th Infantry when that unit had cleared DILLINGEN.

(c) 359th Infantry, initially exerting pressure by fire against the high ground confronting it, was prepared to cross behind either regiment and swing northeast to assault the high ground north of BECKINGEN or to attack the same area directly across the SAAR from present position if the area was lightly held.

(d) The Engineer support closely paralleled the MOSELLE crossing plan with the 179th Engineers earmarked for the 357th Infantry and the 206th Engineers behind the 358th Infantry.

Faced again with the triple operation of an attack against a defended River line, a night assault and the breaching of the vaunted SIEGFRIED LINE, the Division, its ranks decimated by previous replaced losses, gathered its remaining strength accepting the challenge, turned its eyes eastward, determined to succeed.

The closing hours of the 5th were replete with activity. Supporting weapons were positioned; engineer equipment staged forward, advance CPs and control posts installed at designated points; guides spotted to assist troop movement. Preparations were complete.

#### 6 December 44

One to two hours after midnight the assault troops moved silently from forward assembly areas and threaded their way through the inky blackness of the night to the river bank. At 0415 the leading waves of four battalions shoved off for the far bank and crossed with nearly complete tactical surprise. Only on the extreme Division left in the zone of the 1st Battalion 357th Infantry was there any enemy reaction to the activity on the near bank; and this due to the accidental firing of a multiple 50 caliber antiaircraft gun positioned in REHLINGEN.

In a 358th Infantry zone, 1st Battalion on Regimental right crossed with B and C Companies abreast just downstream from the destroyed bridge and pushed across the open ground towards DILLINGEN astride the road from the bridge site. Bypassing defended pillboxes en-route, the Battalion reached the railroad track which bisected the town, prior to dawn and there halted for reorganization and the gaining of contact with 3rd Battalion on the left. At daylight assault teams worked their way backward to reduce those pillboxes which, avoided during the night advance, were now harassing the rear elements. The line of pillboxes south of the PRIMIS River, outside of the Division zone of action, delivered withering fire into the extreme right flank of the Battalion and forced the positioning of A Company in depth to engage this threat. At the same time a 155 mm SP, working with A Company began the methodical destruction of three particular pillboxes.

3rd Battalion Crossing abreast of and on the left of the 1st Battalion had secured a firm foothold on the western portion of PACHTEN by daylight. After initial reorganization, Battalion began a systematic reduction of the houses and camouflaged pillboxes in the town which brought it, by dark, to within one block of the railroad track. The attack the first day developed the existence of a strong belt of moated fortifications along the left regimental boundary which stubbornly defended, nullified all attempts at lateral contact with 357th Infantry for a solid week.

2nd Battalion, originally scheduled to cross in trace of the 1st Battalion was redirected to follow the 3rd Battalion and at 0800 initiating crossing on a footbridge which had been constructed by the engineers. The existence of this bridge was almost immediately discovered by the enemy and subjected to intense machine gun and mortar fire delivered or directed from the pillboxes just off the regimental left flank. But with great gallantry all men of the 2nd Battalion infiltrated across in fast rushes and by 1500 2nd Battalion was completely assembled in the West end of PACHTEN.

1st Battalion 357th Infantry after the brief confusion caused by the enemy mortar and artillery fire which greeted the outburst of the multiple 50 caliber mentioned above, crossed rapidly just South of REHLINGEN, and avoiding an unproductive fight in the flat open ground adjacent to the river, wound its way in a long column through the manned pillboxes. By dawn it had reached the BECKINGEN-DILLINGEN road and leaving one platoon of C Company to block to the North drove inland to the high ground in a PACHTEN area and there halted faced to the North and East, awaiting the arrival of the 2nd Battalion.

2nd Battalion Crossed in column of Companies just South of the destroyed railroad bridge. G Company leading, gained the barracks area on the BECKINGEN-DILLINGEN road without appreciable

resistance while E Company second in column, moved off to its left flank and captured a group of pillboxes on the high ground to the Northeast. F Company caught on the open ground midway to the barracks area by daylight was abruptly stopped by flanking machine gun fire from the pillboxes along the railroad embankment on the left bank and the fortified area between regiments on the right flank. A well coordinated fire and smoke plan which involved a portion of G Company (faced to rear) the supporting TDs and artillery, finally shook this company free and by 1600 it was enabled to join G Company.

At 1730 the first enemy reaction to the Division's attack other than artillery and mortar fire, which had increased in intensity throughout the day, made itself felt in the form of an infantry-tank assault which struck the 1st Battalion from the Northeast; this effort was repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy by the artillery and the excellent defensive work of the Battalion. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion, taking its cue from the experience of F Company postponed its crossing until darkness; by 2400 it had assembled in the barracks area.

To the North the 359th Infantry maintained its West Bank positions and pounded away on the visible fortifications studding the opposing hills. It executed four demonstrations with smoke and the concentrated fire of all weapons which drew in turn a considerable amount of retaliatory mortar and artillery.

However successful the Infantry assault, bridging operations made no progress. Beginning at midmorning the enemy lashed the river banks with artillery and mortar concentrating on the only two points technically suited to bridging operations. He was able in fact to place machine-gun fire on both sites throughout that first day. The component parts of the first draft were destroyed by fire before they could be launched into the water. The footbridge used to cross 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry was shot out by day's end and all the assault boats which had not been removed from the water's edge were punctured by shell fragments. Smoke operations were generally unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons:

Firstly; lack of organization.

Secondly; variable wind which blew fitfully up and down the SAAR Valley.

Lastly; inability to cross the heavy drums of fog oil to the East bank of the River.

And so as the day drew to a close, there was no span of any sort nor even a ferry operating across the SAAR. Profiting by their experience on the MOSELLE, the regiments had established supply dumps as close to the near bank as practicable and had organized their carrying parties. Throughout the night food and ammunition were hand-carried to the river, loaded into assault boats and crossed with great difficulty through the raging waters of the rapidly rising SAAR. And on the far bank carrying parties again went into operation, toiling forward with heavy loads through machine gun, mortar and artillery fire to reach the front line elements with the necessities for tomorrow's operation. They sustained that first night, and in the nights to come, casualties – considerable casualties – but they did their job without complaint. Movement of supplies to the 357th Infantry was seriously curtailed by the necessity of waiting until the 3rd Battalion had been ferried across.

In the first day of the operation the Division had successfully crossed the foot elements of two regiments and had made a deep penetration into the SIEGFRIED defenses; but success was by no means assured. No transport had been crossed through the lack of a bridge or even a ferry and the commanding observation maintained by the enemy permitted no assumption of quick and easy construction. No contact had been established between regiments; no firm contact existed in fact between battalions. In the rear areas of both regiments the enemy tenaciously held pillboxes which denied any freedom of movement between riverbank and advanced elements during daylight hours. Before any general advance could be prosecuted therefore three conditions must needs be met:

1. The cleaning up of rear areas.

2. The establishment of a firm lateral contact between all units, a requisite all the more necessary since the enemy was already beginning to infiltrate through the existing gaps.

3. The construction and maintenance of bridge or other means for crossing supplies and supporting armor.

7 December 44

While supplies were laboriously moved across the SAAR during the early morning hours, additional attempts were made to provide more expeditious crossing means. Three times a cable was stretched across the river in the zone of the 357th Infantry; three times it was broken by the force of the current. A second treadway ferry set was damaged by velocity fire en-route to the crossing site opposite PACHTEN.

Shortly after daylight 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry and supporting artillery broke up a strong tank-supported attack before it reached their leading elements. Thereafter that Battalion continued work on the fortifications along its left flank and assisted the advance of the 2nd Battalion. 2nd Battalion moved at daylight from its assembly area in western PACHTEN swung onto the right flank of the 3rd Battalion and attacked generally East in a step-by-step reduction of the pillboxes which during the first day had prevented contact with the 1st Battalion. In a bitterly contested daylong fight it cleared the area in the center of the regimental zone and linked the flank battalions establishing a firm regimental front along the West side of the railroad tracks.

Despite the fluid situation in the area, 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry drove ahead at 0700 and after a hotly opposed advance came up on line with the 1st Battalion. These two units readjusted to establish a tight perimeter defense on the high ground which commanded approaches from the North and Northeast. Scarcely had these readjustments been executed when a concentric assault was launched from three directions, the main force of the effort striking G Company from the Northeast. The attack was prosecuted with determination and skill by high grade troops; but our infantry, no less tenacious, and abetted by the massed artillery firing at maximum rate, slowed, stopped and threw back the onslaught; the enemy withdrew in disorder leaving no less than 150 dead on the field. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion set about the difficult task of clearing the precarious supply routes. L Company attacked to the South to eliminate those fortifications along the inter-regimental boundary; K Company moved North, to clear the pillboxes along the North arc of the railway embankment; and I moved East from the barracks area to secure a lodgment on the high ground to the right of the 2nd Battalion. The work was slow and arduous, with artillery and direct fire support made difficult of coordination by the fact that the bulk of the troops were forward of the points of attack.

Throughout the day in the 357th Infantry zone the enemy continued infiltration and reoccupation of every pillbox not physically held by our troops. Even after his bloodily repulsed attack against the 1st and 2nd Battalions the Boche maintained steady pressure in the area allowing our men no freedom of movement – forcing them to remain continuously in their waterlogged foxholes. At 1730 tanks moved South from BECKINGEN along the road to DILLINGEN but were dispersed with three casualties by alert artillery observers and accurately delivered fire.

The high ground North of BECKINGEN had been smoked continuously by the artillery, but while that area afforded the enemy his most dominating vantage point he could also view the crossing area from many additional points on a 180 degree arc. Windy conditions, the worst yet encountered, made impossible the maintenance of an effective smokescreen on the river line proper and, with every indication of construction drew immediate fire, bridging operations were postponed till dark. Darkness though masking our activity had its own peculiar drawback, for the rainy, moonless night retarded operations to maddening slowness. While supporting engineers struggled to get their heavy equipment to the riverbank, carrying parties in assault boats again went into action to provide a human supply line. 358th Infantry, with excellent communications behind them and the supply routes free of enemy interference except for heavy artillery fire on the river itself, resupplied expeditiously and fully. In the 357th Infantry sector the story was different. Here the river was swifter and the management of assault



boats a difficult problem. The supply route, traversing the marshy ground, was cut sporadically by machine-gun fire from the unreduced pillboxes along the railroad embankment. The 1st Battalion carrying party was driven back by Boches who had infiltrated to the rear of the Battalion area.

The situation of the 357th Infantry presented additional problems. Because of the infiltration tactics of the enemy it was imperative that each pillbox be physically out-posted. Each required a minimum of a squad to allow rotation and rest. There was no shelter of any sort in the area occupied by the 1st the 2nd Battalions and the men, forced to occupy continuously their water filled foxholes without opportunity to care for their feet, were already developing symptoms of the dreaded trenchfoot. The regiment was subjected to enemy pressure from the North, East and Southeast: moreover its rear area was not completely cleared. In view of these facts, Division revised the original scheme of maneuver and began to plan on the employment of the 359th Infantry between 357th and 358th Infantries to reduce the resistance between regiments, to relieve the pressure on the right of 357th Infantry, and to crack the stalemate in DILLINGEN by the capture of the high ground beyond the town. The contemplated maneuver was made known to the 359th Infantry in the form of a warning order.

#### 8 December 44

All attempts of the engineers to provide a vehicular ferry service were unavailing: bridge trucks bogged down en-route to the river; artillery fire destroyed the only crane; and control was lost of working parties in the dark. The 3rd day – the a day of continual counterattacks – dawned with the infantry still unsupported by armor, AT guns or adequate supplies.

1st Battalion 358th Infantry jumping off, across the railroad tracks was immediately engaged by heavy fire from the large, staunchly constructed buildings which fronted the open siding area. No amount of artillery fire could lessen the strength of the enemy opposition, and the 1st Battalion, except for a portion of G Company which secured a footing in the railroad station across the tracks, was stopped for no gain.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry sustained an attack at 0700 from 200 infantry and five tanks. Except for a shallow penetration between the 2nd and 3rd Battalions this assault was effectively contained. However, the Boche maintained a steady pressure throughout the day by heavy artillery, by machine-gun fire and by the skillful use of his roving tanks. By so doing, he effectively prevented the 2nd and 3rd Battalions from resuming the offensive but he paid a considerable price: two tanks were destroyed, enemy in abundance were killed or wounded and some 50 taken prisoner.

The defenses of the 1st and 2nd Battalions 357th Infantry were severely tested by a series of attacks which continued without abatement from morning to night. All were repulsed with extravagant losses to the enemy. Battalions reported that these Germans were fanatical, that they advanced in close formation through terrific artillery fire until their ranks were decimated. Never, they said, had they seen so many dead as littered the battlefield by the end of the day. I and L Companies were likewise struck by an infantry-tank assault; they too held their ground. Although the regiment had yielded not an inch, the constant pressure was beginning to make itself felt on the fatigued, exposed, casualty ridden ranks of the infantry and plans were made to withdraw the 1st the 2nd Battalions slightly so that the regimental front might be firm and supply line shortened.

At 1200, 359th Infantry was directed to assemble in the BUREN-ITZBACH area preparatory to crossing in the zone of the 357th Infantry at midnight. The directive further required that the direct fire weapons, so laboriously emplaced during the preceding week, be left in position together with shell and three platoons all under the command of a designated staff officer. 357th Infantry was directed to report NCO guides to the advance CP of 359th Infantry to assist the movement through the former's area. Arrangements were made for the Division Engineer to provide two foot bridges for the regiment's crossing and the supporting engineers directed to stand by with assault boats in the event the foot

bridges should fail. By dark 359th Infantry had closed into its designated assembly areas and had completed the necessary route reconnaissance for its night movement.

Two regiments fighting with great courage and determination had scarcely been able to sustain themselves in the face of the enemy's savage reaction to this penetration into the SIEGFRIED Defenses. Under orders to continue the drive and to gain contact with the equally hard-pressed 95th Infantry Division on the South and without expectation of outside assistance the Division was now prepared to deliver its remaining punch. Once the 359th Infantry was committed, the issue must be decided by the 90th Infantry Battalions with the support of the Division Artillery.

At Division level the greatest task was to provide that minimum bridging which would allow passage of the armor and expedite the follow of supplies.

9 December 44

359th Infantry began their crossing in 0050, Battalions in column in the order: 1st, 2nd, 3rd. The swift current of the swollen SAAR had nullified all attempts at the construction of a footbridge and the crossing was consequently made by assault boats. The 1st Battalion crossed rapidly but the continued reduction of the number of available boats due to the necessity of combining of engineer crews for the return passage slowed the passage thereafter. 2nd and 3rd Battalions completed their cross river movement at 0440 and 0700 respectively, under intermittent artillery fire. At daylight 1st Battalion on the right and 2nd Battalion on the left were in the high ground a kilometer East of the barracks area battling among a nest of pillboxes. 3rd Battalion assembled initially in the barracks area and from that point moved south to establish contact with the left of the 358th Infantry. This contact was denied by a long slender enemy salient of pillboxes which extended nearly to the river, bolstered at its extremity by two deeply moated forts which had resisted the direct hits of 240 mm Howitzers. 3rd Battalion drove into this salient but the open ground and excellent defenses made progress slow and costly. The advance of the 1st and 2nd Battalions was no more rapid as the enemy fought back with great fury.

To the North enemy pressure continued strong against the 357th Infantry. The situation in the 1st Battalion was particularly critical. Trench foot had seriously cut the number of combat effectives; many men, unable to walk, had to be carried from the pillboxes to their foxholes to man the defenses when Boche attacks were imminent. Elements of the 3rd Battalion continued the work of cleaning out the pillboxes along the curve of the railroad track Southwest of the 1st Battalion's position, finding that the Krauts reoccupied every box not strongly held. Almost forgotten in the general melee was the action of the 1 platoon of C Company which had been left astride the BECKINGEN-DILLINGEN road on the first morning. Daily at dawn this platoon was attacked and surrounded; daily also this gallant little band fought back savagely until the enemy withdrew to lick his wounds.

2nd and 3rd Battalions 358th Infantry resumed the attack 0700. 3rd Battalion cleaned the enemy from the West side of the railroad track while the 2nd Battalion drove across the tracks. F Company discovering a tunnel under the railroad yards pushed through it and gained the exit where they were immediately engaged by pillboxes and a strong Boche assault group. In the ensuing fight elements of that company were cut off and even considered to have been captured. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion was attacked by a numerically superior force which pressed it until nightfall. Behind the Battalions an Infantry support raft was finally made operative and began crossing AT guns and jeeps, welcome reinforcements for the embattled doughs.

At 1415 medical supplies arranged for with the XIX TAC the preceding day were dropped in the 1st Battalion 357th Infantry area by four P47's. The pilots did an excellent job, coming in fast as treetop level and hitting the drop zone squarely in the middle.

Two hours later the first treadway ferry was completed and ready for tanks. It was discovered however that a tank could not negotiate the existing approaches and a three-hour delay was enforced to properly prepare them. The first tank was safely crossed at 1930. One phase of the battle with the river

had been won! Unfortunately, although across the river, tanks could not yet be dispatched to those units who most needed them because of the unreduced fortifications blocking contact between 358th and 359th Infantries.

The left two regiments were again supplied by assault boats and carrying parties, the latter now numbering 200 men in the case of the 357th Infantry and something over 100 in the 359th Infantry. Unsung heroes, these men, for they braved the river, all manner of fires, and worked throughout the hours of darkness, returning in the morning to resume their normal duties.

As the Division took stock of itself, it could but question the ultimate future of the operation. All Battalions were committed and a majority of these were not disposed for an attack but rather fighting desperately to hold their hard-won gains. The men of the 357th Infantry exposed to the elements for four days, were developing trench foot in increasing number; the 359th Infantry operating in an area similarly devoid of cover could logically be expected to fall prey to the same malady in short order. Although a vehicular ferry was operating behind 358th Infantry it was with no value to the left two regiments until the savagely held enemy salient in the middle of the zone could be reduced. There was no immediate prospect of a junction with the 95th Division on the South since that unit was hotly engaged with the defenses in the town of SAARLAUTERN. Notwithstanding the heavy losses which had been inflicted on the enemy to our immediate front and the capture of some 600 prisoners, he continued to marshal strength against our regiments. All this the personnel of the Division knew. They knew too that there was no alternative and accepted the challenge.

10 December 44

Beginning at daybreak, piecemeal attacks were launched against all portions of the Division front, providing further proof of the enemy's determination to throw us back across the SAAR whatever the cost.

An enemy group, supported by five tanks, penetrated the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry's line from the Southeast, up the DILLINGEN-BECKINGEN Road. The Boche infantry was thrown back in disorder but the tanks carried on, three reaching a point less than 100 yards from the Battalion CP before they were destroyed by the bazookas. The remaining two turned tail and were immobilized by artillery while in flight. At the same time, a strong force attacked and flanked C Company on the 1st Battalion left; the entire day was consumed in eliminating this threat. This action, similar to those during the preceding four days, made requisite a shortening of the regimental front and the formation of a regimental reserve to adequately cope with the situation. The 3rd Battalion, considered free after the passage of the 359th Infantry, was not in reality so; on the right flank the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 359th Infantry had been stopped short of a complete passage of lines and elements of the 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry were consequently still in close contact.

All Battalions of the 359th Infantry continued hammering at the pillboxes which, thickly clustered in their zone, confronted them on all sides. The enemy still held the high ground in the area of the 1st and 2nd Battalions and from that commanding terrain counterattacked each forward thrust by the assault elements. It was a fierce fight with each individual pillbox an objective, calling for a coordinated attack, a rapid consolidation and an equally swift organization for defense.

The problems confronting the 3rd Battalion Commanding Officer were at least as difficult – the unit had become widely spread as a result of the preceding day and night of fighting and could not be reassembled in daylight because the entire zone was raked with intense enemy fire. Several platoons were known to be in captured pillboxes but contact with them was either lacking or limited to voice radio. Nonetheless the immediately available elements of the Battalion continued the attack south towards the 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, eliminating several pillboxes.

The heaviest enemy pressure on the Division right was sustained and absorbed by the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 358th Infantry. The latter unit quickly repulsed the attack directed against it during the early-

morning accounting for four tanks in the brisk fight. But the weight of the Boche assault was aimed at the 1st Battalion and that unit was heavily engaged until dark. On its extreme right, the attackers isolated the two platoons of A Company occupying the fortified slaughterhouse (which provided the regiment with ample rations since 6 December) and pounded their stronghold with terrific artillery concentrations. But they were unbeatable though contact with them was not reestablished until the following day. In view of the developments on both flanks, 2nd Battalion withdrew its F Company elements to the West side of the tracks and prepared to move to the aid of either adjacent Battalion. It was evident that the Germans were bent on an all out effort for their attacks were supported by a sustained cannonading which smashed into PACHTEN and West DILLINGEN from dawn 'til dark.

Difficulties in abundance continued to arise on the river. By 0800, the rapid fall of the SAAR grounded the ferry just off the near approach and effectively stopped operations. While the approaches were being extended (a corduroy job requiring hours), to allow loading in deeper waters the smokescreen dissipated momentarily. Given a brief glimpse of the activity on the near bank, the krauts loosed heavy and accurate concentrations which partially destroyed all floats. For the remainder of the day, enemy artillery raked the worksite sufficiently frequently to prohibit effective salvage operations. It was apparent that bridging could be successfully carried on only under an absolute smoke cover but although every resource had been mustered, the maintenance of that cover was a doubtful quantity. Twenty odd smoke generators emplaced on both sides of the river provided the basic screen, supplemented by floating and land smokepots; the artillery and 4.2" chemical mortars blinded the enemy observations and covered the breaks in the fog oil screen. It was the biggest operation of its kind yet attempted in combat. But nature was pro-German! High winds whipped through the valley, first North, then South, changing directions several times a day. The smoke organization established for the morning might well be completely ineffective by noon. Those in charge did their best – all too frequently they were thwarted by the elements.

At 2000, in a conference held in the 359th Infantry CP, decision was made to withdraw the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 357th Infantry to more favorable ground to firm the regiment on a line which could be held with its greatly reduced strength. At the same time the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry was directed to relieve all elements of the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry to permit that latter unit to clear all enemy resistance along the railroad north to a point abreast of the 1st Battalion.

During the night, the assault boat ferry service functioned rapidly and smoothly, thanks to the decreasing current and receding waters of the SAAR. All units crossed and desired supplies in the desired quantities and evacuated the bulk of the wounded and prisoners.

11 December 44

At 0200 the Germans supported by the ever present tanks drove between the 1st and 3rd Battalions 359th Infantry and overran 3 pillboxes before being brought under control. The status of those elements of the 3rd Battalion in the pillboxes in question remained obscure. Since the 1st Battalion was at the time side-slipped into the right (Southeast) it counterattacked in daylight to recover the lost ground but made little progress. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion continued its painfully slow regrouping and probed to the South to accurately determine the enemy dispositions in the still existent salient. 2nd Battalion maintained its position and cleared two (2) rear area pillboxes which had been reoccupied by infiltrating Krauts the preceding day. During this period, the 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the 359th Infantry and given responsibility for the out-posting of the Division North flank along the West bank of the SAAR. The Infantry of the shell was assembled in BUREN preparatory to joining their Battalion at dark.

1st and 3rd Battalions 357th Infantry accomplished their planned re-dispositions withdrawing South and Southwest an average of 500 m. K Company continued the attack against the enemy held

pillboxes on the north side of the embankment of the East-West portion of the railroad and in the days fight captured 3 pillboxes and some 80 PWs.

By midafternoon 1st Battalion 358th Infantry had reestablished contact with the 2 platoons of A Company in the slaughterhouse, finding them somewhat shaken but completely intact. All battalions in the regiment continued reconnaissance and development of enemy positions across the railroad track but attempted no forward movement. Detailed route reconnaissance failed to determine a passable lateral route for tanks in accordance with the proposed plan of running the gauntlet of enemy defenses to deliver armored support to the 359th and 357th Infantry. In front of the 3rd Battalion positions, a multiple track railroad ran through a deep cut, spanned by a concrete overpass which connected with the BECKINGEN-DILLINGEN Road. Possession of this overpass and the intersection beyond it would provide the necessary armor route and at the same time block the approach to the 359's position via which the Boche had been making his harassing flank sorties.

In the area now occupied by the 90th Reconnaissance Troop the enemy stepped up his artillery and mortar fire and for the first time opened up on the outposts with sustained machine-gun fire. His program of fires increased in intensity throughout the day. While not particularly uneasy of the situation the Division faced the fact that its strength was committed across the SAAR and that no troops were available to reinforce the 90th Reconnaissance in the event of an enemy crossing opposite the latter. These circumstances were communicated to Corps and resulted in the alerting of the 10th Armored Division to be prepared to move one Combat Command to that area in the event anything untoward developed.

12 December 44

Work continued all night on the vehicular ferry and the equally important approaches while supplies flowed across river at the fastest rate since the beginning of the operation. Small boat ferry was greatly facilitated by the installation of two support cables in the zone of the 359th Infantry.

K Company, 357th Infantry, completely relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry, resumed the attack North to clear the railroad embankment and succeeded in eliminating all but the northernmost two pillboxes. This advance broadened the base of the bridgehead, firming the left flank of the Division and more than recompensing for the slight withdrawal of the 1st and 2nd Battalions a day previously. While each of the Battalions was reconstituting a reserve company, 2nd Battalion was attacked by a Boche Battalion, striking from the draw generally East of that unit's position. This effort was repulsed with characteristic thoroughness and the foe, contented himself thereafter with sharp probes into the 1st and 2nd Battalions' perimeter.

The vehicular ferry was reconstructed and fully operative by the morning and the crossing of armor reinitiated. A particularly effective smokescreen masked operations and the delivery of tanks and TDs proceeded with dispatch. When it became necessary to suspend ferrying late in the afternoon, by reason of the impassability of the approach route to PACHTEN (the rapid rise of the SAAR having inundated the dirt road), better than a company each of tanks and TDs had been delivered to the far bank.

8" and 240 mm howitzers pounded away all morning at the pillboxes in the enemy held salient separating the 358th and 359th Infantry. At 1300, a Luxembourger volunteered to induce the Kraut defenders to surrender and moved out to the pillboxes. Through his efforts, a total of five pillboxes showed the white flag discharging some 40 Germans. A 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry patrol moving North through the fortified area immediately thereafter established at 1530 the long-awaited contact with a platoon of the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry, holding a large pillbox in advance of the 359th's line. This latter unit, given up for lost 2 days previously, had successfully captured the box thus greatly aiding the junction. Two platoons of armor were quickly dispatched through the 359th Infantry to the 357th Infantry.

This day was notable for two reasons – the 358th and 359th were finally joined and armor was henceforth available to all battalions. In a normal operation these might be matters of negligible import but the 90th on the seventh day of combat east of the SAAR they were accomplishments of considerable magnitude. I Company, 357th Infantry topped off the activities by reducing the two remaining pillboxes along the railroad in a skillfully executed night assault.

13 December 44

Although the Division was concentrated in the smallest attack area in its combat history, the combination of circumstances made the problem of maintenance of gains difficult. The opposing troops while not acting in concert were excellent individually and skillfully led. They infiltrated boldly. They took and reoccupied undermanned pillboxes and once regained they fought savagely to hold them. Therein lay the crux of the problem: pillboxes by the score dotted the bridgehead area and the depleted strength of all units made the manning of all boxes within 500 m of the frontline a physical impossibility. All regiments had already pressed into service as infantry, personnel of Cannon and Antitank Companies, guard platoons and miscellaneous other personnel not required for service as carrying parties. An additional complication lay in the fact that the character of the resistance demanded that mobile support or counterattack group be habitually available to each Battalion Commander. Each passing day saw the number of combat effectives dwindling from wounds, trench foot, exposure and sickness. The obvious solution of blowing all pillboxes not required for shelter fell short of realization because of the inadequacy of the demolition supplies which could be transported to the bridgehead.

The ultimate security of both the 90th and the 95th Divisions lay in the consolidation of the two separate bridgeheads. Such a maneuver would give each unit a protected flank and moreover make available to the 90th the SAARLAUTERN Bridge. The first step towards fulfillment of this objective from the standpoint of the 90th was an expansion of its holding DILLINGEN and the capture of the PRIMIS RIVER bridge (or bridge site) on the DILLINGEN-SAARLAUTERN Road. Should success be limited to the foregoing, it was felt that the Divisions left flank could be contracted towards DILLINGEN and PACHTEN, pulling the bulk of the left two regiments undercover to increase their staying powers. Division was confident that while the 357th and 359th Infantries could not maintain themselves on their present positions for any protracted period under continuously heavy pressure, the town of DILLINGEN could be held indefinitely as a Division strong point. Consequently plans were issued for a partial readjustment preliminary to a continuation of the attack to seize the remainder of DILLINGEN on 15 December. Precedent to this assault, 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry was to secure the overpass and road intersection beyond, thereby facilitating the planned sideslip of the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry.

Ferrying continued eminently successful with the bulk of the armor, wire and litter jeeps, command vehicles and ammunition trucks crossing prior to dark. But an entirely new problem was developing. The road from the ferry site to PACHTEN was deeply inundated and was disintegrating; each vehicle had to be meticulously guided through the mile stretch with the least mishap spelling disaster in the shape of a roadblock.

For the most part the battalions regrouped in preparation for further action. 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry, partially relieved by 1st Battalion elements, side-slipped Southwest and took over from the remaining platoons of L Company, 357th Infantry; the Battalion also recovered the pillboxes lost the preceding night. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, employing the TDs, hammered at the pillboxes surrounding its limited objective – the railroad overpass. Throughout the zone, the enemy pressure slacken perceptibly.

14 December 44

At 132300A, enemy attacked the I Company platoon manning the northernmost pillbox along the railroad spur and after routing the outposts, forced the surrender of the occupants. Countermeasures were immediately planned and at daylight a reinforced platoon of L Company moved north and in a well-planned assault retook the fortification; the charge which blew the door killed 16 enemy and the remaining 25 surrendered promptly.

For three days the enemy dispositions in the vicinity of the overpass and main road intersection opposite the 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry had been minutely reconnoitered. During the night, TDs and tanks were emplaced in selected direct fire positions and an elaborate fire plan developed. At 0730, in the half-light of the misty morning, I and L Companies assaulted abreast, supported by murderous fires, both direct and indirect. The careful planning paid off – by 0900, the Battalion was on its objective, controlling the road intersection. Four pillboxes had been reduced and 70 prisoners taken. Following the action, 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry moved southwest and relieved the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, the latter assembling in PACHTEN as regimental reserve. For the remainder of the day, 358th Infantry continued preparation for the morrow's attack.

The vehicular ferry was damaged at 1200 by a heavy artillery concentration and operations were suspended. Movement of supplies proceeded on a well-organized basis. 29 cargo carriers had replaced the bulk of the carrying parties, and trail ferries had replaced assault boats. All units had a reserve stock on the far banks with large dumps building up in PACHTEN.

15 December 44

The 358th Infantry together with the 359th Infantry through the early morning hours of the 15th laid the groundwork for the renewal of the assault against the tremendous strength within the enemy positions embedded along the East side of the railroad tracks in DILLINGEN. These defenses consisted mainly of many mutually supporting pillboxes and fortified buildings well manned by a stubborn enemy.

1st Battalion, 358th Infantry, due to the difficulty in getting its supporting TDs into position, was delayed somewhat initially while the 2nd Battalion, moving off on time, was halted just over the line of departure by the intense enemy mortar, artillery and machine-gun fire from the East portion of town. The Battalion immediately called for the 4.2" mortars to lay a smoke concentration to their front and flanks. Under cover of the smokescreen the two assault companies forced their way across the exposed railroad tracks to the protection of the buildings and were able at the same time to maneuver three tanks into position with the assault waves. The advance, at first, was slow but with the armor and tank destroyers employed in full, thus placing an overwhelming amount of accurate fire against the enemy fortifications, and the infantry's skillful and aggressive action, it soon became possible for the Battalion to break into the enemy positions causing the Boche to, in some cases, surrender themselves due to the utter confusion caused by the fury of our combined attack. After the initial delay the 1st Battalion pushed off without the TDs and succeeded in gaining a foothold on the east side of the tracks at which time the enemy laced every inch of the Battalion zone with devastating fire. The Battalion, through difficulty, maneuvered the TDs and tanks into position and together in a coordinated effort by all supporting weapons, allowed the infantry to capture, destroy and drive out the enemy from his MLR.

Only through the perfect cooperation between the armor, TDs and infantry did it become possible to capture the regimental objective some 300 m east of the railroad tracks.

During the night the companies were forced to send patrols back through the once cleared area to clean out the few pockets bypassed during the attack and a Boche infiltrators.

The 359th Infantry on the 358th Infantry's left, attacked at 1330 with the 3rd Battalion on the right followed by the 1st and 2nd Battalions at 1500. Meeting, initially, organized resistance, the Battalions routed the Boche and pushed forward some 500 yards. The 3rd Battalion linked up with the 2nd

Battalion of the 358th Infantry and the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry at 1745, thus securing the left flank of the 358th Infantry and improving the division's foothold within the SAAR Bridgehead.

The 357th Infantry maintained its position Northeast of PACHTEN moving Task Force Thompson across the SAAR River to relieve the 1st Battalion who, greatly diminished in strength was tired and in need of, in many cases, medical attention due to trench foot and sickness. Task Force Thompson consisted of all personnel from the regimental Antitank Company, personnel from the Battalion Antitank platoons and the drivers from the Cannon Company.

16 December 44

The assault regiments consolidated their positions within DILLINGEN while the 357th Infantry had an unusual but very pleasant surprise. A soldier, who had been isolated in a pillbox for three days with 15 other members of I Company, escaped by working his way carefully through the surrounding enemy's lines, returned to the 3rd Battalion Commanding Officer, obtained aid from the TDs and infantry nearby and managed to drive away the enemy thus freeing the beleaguered pillbox and the trapped soldiers.

The Division had reached a very critical situation. Men were altogether too few within the rifle companies and replacements in the near future were not contemplated. A decision had to be reached in order to maintain the effectiveness of the Division as a fighting unit.

The solution:

The reduction of the Cannon Companies, elimination of the Antitank platoons of the Infantry Battalion Headquarters Companies, the reduction of the 81 mm mortar platoons of Heavy Weapons Companies to one platoon of three squads, eliminating three section Headquarters and three mortar squads, the transfer to infantry unassigned Privates and Pfc's in a number equal to 5% of the T/O strength of each Company except rifle companies, was the plan established at this time.

VECKRING BARRACKS was to be the training ground.

17 December 44

The 358th and 359th were to continue the attack on the 18th to clear the remainder of DILLINGEN. Plans, reconnaissance and resupply were the main points emphasized throughout the day in the bridgehead area.

The 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry was ordered to return to PACHTEN, upon closing to revert to regimental control.

The principal point to be exercised in the execution of this future attack was caution.

(a) To gain with the absolute minimum in casualties the assigned objectives.

(b) To hold, upon reaching the objective, until the 5th Division in the SAARLAUTERN Bridgehead was able to move abreast of the 358th Infantry.

18 December 44

The 359th Infantry, with the 1st and 2nd Battalions establishing a base of fire against the high wooded ridge North of DILLINGEN, moved the 3rd Battalion (right flank Battalion) at 0800 through the northern portion of DILLINGEN to a coordinated attack with the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 358th. The 3rd Battalion moved quickly through the streets to clear 10 city blocks, meeting negligible resistance and blocking all approaches into the town from the North with L and K Companies; completing this move by 1000.

The 358th Infantry with the 2nd Battalion on the left and the 1st on the right attacked with the 2nd Battalion, who pushed on, rapidly clearing 11 city blocks and destroying five pillboxes making junction



with the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry in consolidating the final objective by 1100. The 2nd Battalion began immediately to probe with patrols, the factory area now to the Battalion's South. The 3rd Battalion, to the right rear of the 1st Battalion, faced to the South protecting the right flank of the Division along the PRIMS River.

The 357th Infantry remained in place protecting the left flank of the bridgehead. The 1st Battalion began to move across the river from WALLERFANGEN to PACHTEN at 1830 closing in PACHTEN at 2000.

The regiments were alerted during the night for fear of possible paratroop landings. Indications greatly favored the possibility that the Boche would employ such tactics.

19 December 44

An increase in the enemy activity was quite noticeable East and South of BECKINGEN. The men of the 357th Infantry, few that were physically capable, were on a constant alert for another German challenge to our hard-won positions. Information obtained from a prisoner indicated that a Battalion of picked men was going to attack the regiment on the 20th. A Company, 357th Infantry, less one platoon, was moved to a position on the ridge line directly South of Task Force Thompson, ready in the event that such an attack did materialize.

Supplies were still ferried through interdictory shellfire. The mud, rain and ever present cold weather made the difficulties along the riverbank more numerous.

The situation in the ARDENNES was still quite fluid and indications were more numerous that there was a buildup in the SAAR-MOSELLE triangle.

The Division was ordered during the afternoon to begin immediately the withdrawal of all units to the West Bank of the SAAR.

It promised to be one of the most delicate operations ever undergone by the 90th Division. It involved transportation of nine battalions of infantry and over 100 vehicles, including tanks and TDs, across a river that was under enemy observation as well as within artillery range and without a single span. The entire operation would have to depend on a single ferry, the footbridge and a few assault boats.

The following was the plan as to sequence of events for the withdrawal:

(a) 19-20 December, bulk of the armor.

(b) 20-21 December, wheeled transportation (less the essential minimum).

One Battalion, each Regiment.

Regimental CP, 357th Infantry.

Excess supplies – US Dead.

(c) 21-22 December, all remaining, including engineer equipment on River in following order:

(1) Remaining armor and wheeled transportation.

(2) Bulk of troops.

(3) Shells.

(4) Engineer Equipment.

Orders were issued that the following units would move to the West side of the River during the first night; Company B and Company C, 773rd TD Battalion, Company C, assault guns, 712th Tank Battalion. By midnight, 11 TDs to 2½ ton trucks, 9 jeeps and 1¼ ton truck, 2 M-20's and 2 M-8's, had moved to the West Bank of the river.

On the return trip was necessary to return approximately 12 2½ ton trucks and 7 jeeps for the resupply of the troops in the bridgehead.

By the end of the first night the withdrawal was moving along smoothly and without incident.

20 December 44

Engineers and infantrymen, worked feverishly all-night to speed the safe transportation of the armor and TDs to the West side of the River. By 0930, 12 TDs, 21 trucks, 1 halftrack, 3 assault guns, 1 M-2, 4 2½ ton trucks, 9 jeeps, 2 M-8's, 2 SPs and 2 ammo carriers were ferried to the West Bank.

Engineers continued successfully to maintain a constant flow of traffic to the West Bank. Additional fuel drawn for the smoke generators was rushed to the East bank of the river to aid in the screening of the withdrawal.

During the day, the expected counterattack that was to hit Task Force Thompson did not materialize due to the excellent interdiction fire placed in the suspected assembly areas. 357th, 358th, 359th and the 315th Engineers in the towns of DILLINGEN and PACHTEN began on the laborious work of systematically placing booby traps, AP and A/T mines as well as completely destroying all pillboxes and fortifications within the entire bridgehead.

A footbridge was constructed in order to move the foot elements back to the West Bank. By midnight the 357th had the 1st Battalion across and proceeding well to their new assembly area in BURN. 359th Infantry withdrew their 1st Battalion to BUREN at 1730 completing the operation at 2358. The 358th Infantry began withdrawal of their 3rd Battalion to assemble in WALLERFANGEN, the 3rd and last Battalion to cross the river, closed in WALLERFANGEN by 210200A.

21 December 44

The Division was to complete its withdrawal by 0800 on the 22nd. The regiments were to withdraw a bulk of their force from the line during the night of 20th and 21st leaving only a covering shell which in turn would withdraw at the last moment. The regiments were directed to destroy as much enemy material, military and civilian, as was possible prior to their departure.

The 357th Infantry outpost positions were taken by Company B at the commanding positions, from a point dominating the curve in the river below the 357th Infantry crossing site to approximately 1000 yards North of REHLINGEN, reinforced by patrols who were to contact the fixed posts at regular intervals. In addition, positions were occupied at the entrance of SIERSDORF. As the balance of the regiment was preparing to begin his withdrawal, Task Force Thompson received two counterattacks which were decisively punished by our artillery and mortar fire, the Boche evidently in desperate need of substantial information concerning the inactivity of the forward elements of the regiment.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 359th Infantry, minus shells, initiated withdrawal in 1900. The 2nd Battalion was completely across minus the shell by 1949. The 2nd moved from the river to OBERESCH. The 3rd crossed at 2045. Company C, being the covering force, established their new line that was the link with the remaining covering forces of the division.

The 3rd Battalion, 358th had withdrawn and was to remain in WALLERFANGEN. During the morning the Battalion moved by motor to OBERLINBERG. The 2nd Battalion, minus shell, began his withdrawal of 1900 across the footbridge with the 1st Battalion, minus shell, prepared to follow at 2045. The footbridge was all that remained in addition to Company A, the covering force.

Vehicles, tanks and TDs continued to move across the river at which time the enemy began to increase the well-placed artillery fire on the bridge and ferry sites. The enemy from time to time placed intense artillery fire on WALLERFANGEN and other approaches to the ferry sites making the work for the engineers more and more dangerous. Difficulty after difficulty arose. The roads on the East side of the river were becoming increasingly worse, which caused tanks and vehicles alike to become frequently stuck, greatly slowing the entire operation. To further handicap the evacuation, the river now at its lowest ebb, caused great difficulty on the part of the tanks and TDs as they had to be winched out one by one over the steep slippery bank. To make matters even worse, artillery fire, well-placed, destroyed the

vehicle ferry stopping all operation on the riverfront for the remainder of the afternoon. The men laboring at the water's edge were nearing the peak of exhaustion.

It was fast becoming a race against time for by midnight with only a few hours remaining the division still had approximately 25 armored vehicles on the East bank.

22 December 44

Work was continued with the roads becoming more and more of a hazard at the bridge site. The men, under increasing pressure, worked in complete darkness under artillery fire and increasing cold to complete the withdrawal with a minimum loss to material. Orders were issued for the smoke generator company to begin smoking the ferry sites at 0830 for it was quite evident that all the vehicles could not possibly be evacuated before daylight.

The withdrawal of the covering shell began at 0300 and was completely clear of the East side by 0545. However there still remained 8 TDs and 5 tanks on the East bank together with one smoke truck and 10 odd jeeps. The men were bending every effort to rescue the remaining vehicles before the Boche became aware of the fact that the Division was going back to the west shore. By 0830 there were three pieces of armor, 5 jeeps and one smoke truck left to be evacuated. Each man was waiting, half expecting the Boche to move in to stop the evacuation of the remaining vehicles. There was no longer that secure feeling that the protecting shell would stave off the enemy when there wasn't any shell now.

At 0955 the German for the first time became aware that there was a withdrawal in process. At this time the ferry site began to receive mortar and direct machine gun fire. Immediately the Division Artillery began to smash the western outskirts of PACHTEN and DILLINGEN with a barrage after barrage to block off the enemy pursuit. 45 minutes later the Division had on the West Bank everything that could possibly be transported across, free from capture by the enemy. The Division left behind a total of two TDs, two disabled tanks, one ¼ ton truck and one 2½ ton truck which were destroyed before abandoning completely the East bank.

The engineers were forced to destroy the ferry and the boats that were left in the river. At 1000 the smoke was lifted only to reveal a burning mass of twisted structures and bloody memories of battles hard-won and ground gallantly gained. There was a lump in the throats of many who left the SAAR Bridgehead.

The 358th Infantry moved by motor to effect the relief of the right flank elements of the 3rd Cavalry Group and establish a defense line from a point just East of BUSCHDORF to RIPPLINGEN. The 1st Battalion upon arriving on the West Bank entrucked and moved to ...ADES...ORF, FRANCE as regimental reserve. The 3rd Battalion to WALDWISSE, detrucking at 1130 and occupied a line through WELLINGEN BUDUGEN with the OPLR along the river's edge. The 2nd Battalion moved by motor to LAUNSDORF, FRANCE.

The 359th Infantry upon completing his withdrawal across the SAAR immediately moved to take up positions along the river with the 1st Battalion on the left from RIPPLINGEN South to MECHERN and the 2nd Battalion on the right from MECHERN South to the NIED RIVER, the 3rd Battalion in reserve in the vicinity of BIRINGEN.

The 357th Infantry moved in the order of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Battalion, AT, cannon, Headquarters Company and the 1st Battalion less outposts. The movement began at 1300 through narrow, muddy and congested roads but with excellent road and traffic supervision under the circumstances. The regiment closed in the 3rd Battalion of 1430 at OUDRENNE. The 2nd Battalion finding other units in the town of LAUNSFELD was forced to move to KALENBORG. Billeting was quite a problem due to the crowded conditions of all the small villages in the rear division area. The 1st Battalion moved into HAUTE-SIERCK after finding KIRSCHNAUMER occupied by Corps troops. With considerable juggling the regiment succeeded in getting all troops under cover and a program for rehabilitation was immediately set up as well as a plan of defense and counterattack.

Division CP moved back to VECKRING BARRACKS.

This marked the end of the strenuous operations East of the SAAR River and the beginning of a period of a more static and less active type of warfare.

23-31 December 44

The division establishing its defense, with the 3rd Cavalry Group attached, from the MOSELLE River East to the SAAR, then South to the NIED RIVER. At this point the left flank of the 358th Infantry linked with the 3rd Cavalry group. The 358 Infantry linked on the right with the 359th Infantry at RIPPLINGEN to the North bank of the NIED River where visual contact was made with the 95th Infantry Division. Initially the regiment constructed hasty field fortifications with some difficulty due to the frozen ground.

The division immediately began laying plans for the employment of the Corps and Division Reserve as did the regiments lay plans for the employment of their reserve battalions. An elaborate system of demolitions, roadblocks and minefields, AT and anti-personnel, was instigated. The 773rd and 774th TD Battalions, prepared many secondary positions throughout the division zone. The TDs and at all AT guns alike prepared and occupied primary positions in immediate support of the infantry battalions.

The regiments made extensive reconnaissance of rear areas and the MAGINOT LINE in anticipation to the possibility of being forced to occupy positions behind those presently held in the face of a strong German effort emerging from either the "SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle" or the MERZIG area.

The regiments rotated their battalions in the line enabling all the personnel to share the comforts of a hot shower and a change to clean clothes.

During this period the Division's two weeks training school, established at VECKRING BARRACKS, was in full operation, training approximately 300 men taken from the Division and attached units.

On the 27th the Division began to receive the first group of scantily trained replacements, who had received a mere two days training at METZ prior to their joining the Division. They had been freshly called into the infantry from other branches of the services and were to make up three out of each four men, on an average, in the rifle squads of the Division. Little did they know that in the not-too-distant future they were to participate in one of the most important of operations.

Patrol activities were once again strongly enforced and from the 27th of December to the end of the month, the regiments planned carefully, raiding parties, combat and reconnaissance patrols with the main purpose of capturing prisoners, keeping the enemy constantly on the alert and prevent the Boche from withdrawing his forces to reinforce his Divisions in the ARDENNES.

The Luftwaffe during the closing days of the year was unusually active in the Divisions sector.

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#### OBSERVATIONS ON THE SAAR RIVER CROSSING

Crossing of the SAAR RIVER and the subsequent operations resulted in a number of conclusions which are briefly set out below. Lessons gained are applied separately to the operations: 1-River Crossings; and 2-Attacks on pillboxes and their fortified positions. Certain problems dovetailed in our experience, making the problem appear as one, although in fact, the Crossing complicated the pillbox attack, and the existence of the pillboxes complicated the problems offered by the river.

**SUPPLIES.** As a result of the experiences in crossing the MOSELLE, all plans for the current operation were based on the assumption that there would be no bridges. As a result, the movement of supplies was underway without confusion or loss of time as soon as tactical conditions permitted; in this case the inability to cut off the enemy's observation of the Crossing site limited all movement to after dark. This particular problem was more difficult than would normally be expected because of the swollen river. In spite of these added difficulties, our supply movement was satisfactory for minimum purposes because of prior planning. Steep banks and fast current eliminated possibility of using either the alligators or dwks provided the regiments. After considerable searching, five M-29's were located and placed in operation; they were particularly effective in negotiating these extremely soft mud and water holes in the river bottom. Their quiet operation was also a value as the nearness of the enemy lines and the activity of pillboxes still occupied by the enemy made advisable the elimination of all possible noise.

**HELP FOR ENGINEERS.** In the handling of supplies the strain on the engineers in maneuvering the assault boats in the swift current made it apparent that some relief would have to be provided. Instead of the usual six engineers to a boat, two infantryman (in this case personnel from the carrying party) were assigned, their activities supervised by four engineers. This allowed rotation of the available engineering personnel, without which the ferry operations would have been interrupted before minimum supplies could be crossed each night.

**CABLE FERRY.** On the sixth night of the operation, the ferrying problem was somewhat eased by the installation of two cables, one for safety purposes, directly across the current and fastened to "dead men" at each side. Four assault boats were coupled together in sets of two; two pulleys were run from corners of the long side of the "ferry" to the cable. Motivating power was provided by the current by playing out one of the pulley lines, depending on the direction desired, it was possible to make a round trip across the river in 20 minutes under ideal conditions, including loading and unloading. Personnel capacity was 16 men, with two engineers doing the operating.

**PRIORITY OF SUPPLIES.** Supply needs of the battalions were made known to the officer in charge of dispatching prior to darkness. This allowed sufficient time before the start of movement each night to have the necessary items on hand and ready to go. Priorities varied from day to day, with the greatest need on any occasion ranging from medical supplies to rations or ammunition.

**PILLBOXES.** Effect of firing: Destruction of pillboxes encountered in this area by SP TDs or 155's could not be classified as successful; however, direct hits by either of these guns around the apertures provided enough shocking power to stun the occupants beyond fighting condition and the subsequent capture of the individual box could be more readily accomplished. In the event of boxes supported by direct fire from others, it is, of course, necessary to apply the same neutralizing treatment to those covering the particular box under attack. Experiences of the regiments proved beyond question the absolute necessity of either protecting the boxes against recapture, even though behind the forward elements, or destruction by demolitions. In this case, limited manpower made both solutions very difficult. Another point of vital importance – in the protection of the box against recapture it is necessary that the main defense be afforded from the outside from dug-in positions.

**THE IDEAL ATTACK.** While the successful attack against any pillbox must be considered as a separate problem certain standard operations do exist. The site of the attacking force will vary dependent on terrain and the size of the pillbox to be taken. The assault group should be composed of infantry with automatic weapons and bazookas, engineers with satchel charges and a self-propelled gun. The number of infantryman will vary from a squad to a platoon, or possibly even a company. Usually

four engineers is sufficient to place and detonate the satchel charges, under covering fire of the infantry and a self-propelled gun. From the jump-off the gun should begin firing on all known and observed embrasures. This will greatly reduce the hazard of hostile small arms fire. Speed is always essential in an operation of this type because there's always the threat of mortar or artillery fire which the Germans will call down on their placement to break up the attack. As the assault group moves forward the infantrymen will continue to neutralize any resistance from the outside of the box and also aid in "buttoning up", already begun by the SP. Upon containing the enemy inside the pillbox engineers move forward, place and detonate the satchel charge. Once this has been done there is little "mopping up" to be done.

The 357th was fortunate in having one of those "ideal attacks" during the SAAR operation. The assault team consisted of 2 squads of infantry, 4 engineers and one TD, attacking a three room pillbox. As the group moved forward the SP opened fire and in all, directed three rounds at the target. Two rounds penetrated an exposed port and exploded inside, the third round going through the box out the rear door and exploding in a field beyond. The assault group moved up quickly, the engineers setting off three satchel charges which shattered the door and turned the inside of the pillbox into a pile of debris without effecting the main structure. There had been 20 occupants in the box; at the end of the operation 12 of these were, in fair condition. Precaution: the satchel charge by no means demolished the pillbox and had it not been heavily guarded from the outside, it could have been re-occupied by the enemy and would have again become a very serious obstacle.

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