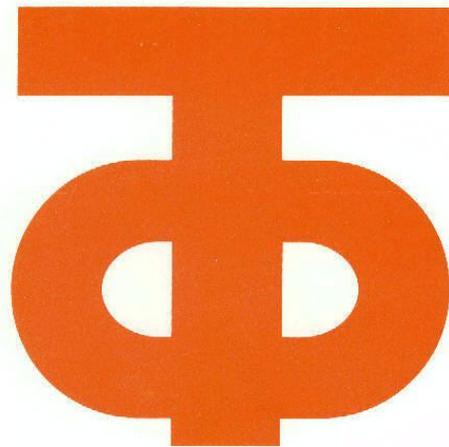


# **90th INFANTRY DIVISION**

## **WORLD WAR II**



### **AFTER ACTION REPORT**

**JANUARY THROUGH MAY 1945**

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## PART I

### SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

#### 1-5 January 1945

The turn of the year disclosed little change in the Division's activity. With 3rd Cavalry Squadron attached, the 90th covered a sector from the NIED to the SAAR. All units continued to probe with patrols enemy defenses in depth, harassing their positions with artillery fire and limited objective attacks. An extensive obstacle barrier containing 14,402 antitank mines, 477 AP mines, 120 flares, 136 craters, 50 bridges, and 27 debris prepared for demolition and 13 craters, five bridges, and 9 debris blown for a total of 55,338 pounds placed and 5,835 pounds of explosive blown, had been arranged. Delaying positions had been reconnoitered in event of any attack in strength.

Although the Division was offensively situated, the Division Staff had for some days been preparing plans for an attack to the confluence of the SAAR and the MOSELLE Rivers through the SEIGFRIED switch position. These had been developed to the extent of conferences with the Commanding General and Staff of 10th Armored Combat Command "A" which was to be attached. Personnel of this Combat Command reconnoitered assembly positions. Regimental Commanders were oriented as to their probable employment of three regiments abreast in order 357, 359, 358 from left to right on a narrow front and had begun reconnaissance of their areas. All PW information was carefully sifted as were patrol reports for indications of enemy defenses and strength. A march table was prepared for re-dispositions. Engineers experimented with methods of bridging AT ditches. Then without warning, on night of 5 January, Corps phoned a cryptic message: "Be prepared for movement." Nothing more. All patrols were canceled and plans for attack were scrapped.

#### 6 January 1945

At 0230A Corps ordered one RCT moved at 1200 with the rest of Division to follow on the 7th. As yet there was no indication of destination or employment but 357th Infantry was alerted to move while the Division Commander went to Army Headquarters to receive his orders.

It developed the mission of the 90th was to cut off an enemy penetration Southeast of BASTOGNE and entrap and destroy the enemy forces which were being contained by 26th, 35th Infantry and 6th Armored Divisions. The units of III Corps had forced back the enemy and had fought for several weeks. Now they were thinly spread and lacking in force to make the necessary drive. By regroupment and introduction of another division it was felt the job could be quickly accomplished and the threatening salient cut off at its base.

By 1230 plans were finally agreed upon: the 90th would assemble in rear of the 35th and 26th Divisions and attack through the 26th on 9 January.

Meanwhile 357th Infantry was ordered to move without yet knowing their destination. But they were directed to pick up III Corps guides at SAUEL in LUXEMBOURG and the CT cleared the Division area at 1630. 712th Tank, 773rd TD and 345th FA Battalions made night moves, halting generally in vicinity of SAUEL and beyond. III Corps had anticipated the 90th would attack through the 35th from the Southwest. The 90th Division Commander, however, asked for and received permission to directly assault the salient from the Southeast. This change threw away the Corp plans for assembling the troops but readjustments were quickly made by unit commanders while the convoy was in route to the area. CT 357 halted vicinity of BIGONVILLE – RAMBROUCH – HUSTERT – NOERDANGE.

The weather was most unfavorable for the 50 mile journey: bitter cold, snow, and little shelter available. War had steam-rolled three times over this area as the Americans first attacked, the

Germans plunged westward and the Americans counterattacked. Consequently, nearly every building was gutted or leveled.

43rd Cavalry Squadron relieved 359th by 2000 and 358th made preparations for relief by the 94th Infantry Division, establishing guides for the incoming troops.

#### 7 January 1945

##### 357th Infantry:

Battalions retained their positions. CP moved from NOERDANGE to USELDANGE to OSPERN and opened a Forward CP at HOSTERT.

##### 358th Infantry:

Although relief was not entirely complete by noon, first elements of the regiment began motor movement at 1230. By midafternoon the entire regiment was on the road and closed vicinity NAGEMOSPERN late this night.

##### 359th Infantry:

Preceded by 344th and 915th FA Battalions, the regiment initiated move at 0800 and closed vicinity ESCHDORF – WARL at 1530.

Division Headquarters established an operations forward at ARSDORF, but the bulk of the CP assembled vicinity RAMBROUCH.

#### 8 January 1945:

35th and 26th Infantry Divisions completed their planned readjustments. 26th Division held the front through which the 90th would attack, with TASK FORCE SCOTT (101st Infantry Regiment reinforced) holding the sector immediately adjacent to the 90th proposed left.

Beyond them was TASK FORCE FICKETT (6th Cavalry Group reinforced) and then 35th Division (-2 Battalions, 320th Infantry on loan to 6th Armored Division as reserve) holding the line to South of BASTOGNE were 6th Armored Division held the American reentrant East and Northeast of the town. The III Corps plan prescribed a simultaneous attack by all units with 90th Division making the main effort.

Division CP opened at BONNAL in the former CP of 26th Division. At 1000 TK and TD Battalion Commanders were oriented and one company assigned to each of the assaulting regiments. The remainder were staggered forward to vicinity BOULAIDE. All FA Battalions displaced to position areas North of the SURE River except 345th FA Battalion which was located vicinity BONNAL.

At 1300 verbal orders were given unit commanders, who had already begun route reconnaissance forward to the line of departure. Written orders followed later in the day and called for the attack at 091000A by 357th on the left and 359th Infantry on right with main effort on the right. Division's plan involved 357th attacking two Battalions abreast to peel off and contain to the West while 359th penetrated enemy lines and cut the enemy supply routes through DONCOLS, 358th Infantry, initially in reserve, would then attack through the funnel thus created to capture the Division objective – the high ground Northeast of BRAS.

##### 357th Infantry:

Starting early in the morning 357th staged to forward assembly areas, closing at 1850. 1st Battalion moved to vicinity WILTZERWEG, 2nd Battalion to BAVIGNE, and 3rd Battalion to LIEFRANGE. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached with mission of maintaining contact with TASK FORCE SCOTT after the attack jumped off.

359th Infantry:

Assembled (-2nd Battalion) in forward area of vicinity MECHER-DUNKRODT.

358th Infantry:

Remained in initial location.

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Preparations were now complete for the attack. Greatest precautions had been taken to insure surprise. The 94th Infantry Division took over and maintained the 90th's radio traffic in the old area. Unit markings on personnel and vehicles were covered during the move, a large part of which was made at night. In occupation of the new sector behind the 26th and 35th Infantry Divisions, the Division moved into concealed assembly areas without taking over any part of the front and planned to launch its attack through a portion of the front held by the 26th Division. Artillery placed battery by battery near the 26th Division batteries. In registering prior to the attack a 26 Division gun stopped firing as each gun of the 90th fired so as not to increase the density of fire.

Prisoners taken by the 26th Division were interrogated for late enemy information. 1/10,000 scale maps were prepared for platoon leaders and the wooded areas on a 1/25,000 scale map were corrected by photo interpretation, for the terrain, admirably suited for delaying action, was as much of an obstacle as the enemy.

Consisting of many steep and unrelated hill masses rising in some instances to 2000 feet and covered with large dense evergreen forests, the country was made more difficult by ice and deep snow. Movement was canalized largely to roads and observation and fields of fire were poor short of the East-West line through BASTOGNE.

The Division sector was further complicated by the presence on its own right flank of dominating ground Northeast of the WILTZ RIVER, where most of the enemy artillery was concentrated and from where he could place fire on the Division as it assaulted directly along the WILTZ-BASTOGNE ridge road. Of the principal roads, the enemy had fought hard to keep open this most direct route to Germany.

Confronting the Division was a well-equipped enemy with better than average training and a fairly high state of morale. Successive defense lines were dug-in foxholes along high ground and in the dense forests. Most of the troops were armed with automatic weapons. Mobile reserves including SS Panzer Units were available.

In some ways more formidable than the enemy was the weather. The temperature hung only a few degrees above zero and frostbite and trench-foot were paramount concerns of commanders. For several days it had snowed without letup and the white barrier piled in deep drifts, blocking roads and making rapid cross-country movement out of the question. Impossible, too, was concealment for the infantry with their dark clothes silhouetted against the clean white landscape. How to get armor forward on the icy routes and up the steep slopes posed another problem. And a last disconcerting item was the gray and forbidding sky, harboring more snow, which precluded the use of CUB observation planes, still grounded near THIONVILLE.

Now H-Hour approached and after a night of disturbed, half-frozen sleep, the Infantry stirred numb bodies into welcome action. No artillery preparation was fired as the Division struck.

9 January 1945

357th Infantry:

Attacked at 0950 with two Battalions abreast, Companies F, E and A in assault from left to right. Initial resistance was light as the surprised enemy was overrun by what PWs later stated was thought to be a strong patrol action. South of BERLE the enemy in Prepared positions stiffened his resistance. Following a 10 minute artillery preparation by 343rd, 344th and 345th FA Battalions, Company A assaulted across the open ground from the South while a task force composed of one platoon Company E, one platoon tanks and one platoon TDs flanked from the direction of BAVIGNE. Company B supported by fire. By dark BERLE and 80 PWs were captured including the Battalion CP of 929th Bicycle Battalion.

359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion marched to assembly area in early morning to follow 1st and 3rd Battalions. As expected, the German strength was on the right and he fiercely contested with artillery, tank, nebelwerfer and small arms fire the attack by 3rd Battalion at 0950. Nonetheless, one strong point was wiped out as Companies I and L drove a wedge 1 mile deep in the enemy line. Several pockets of resistance were left to be eliminated by reserve units. 1st and 2nd Battalions, moving in column behind 3rd Battalion, received heavy concentrations of 120 mm mortar and nebelwerfer fire. 3rd Battalion captured CR of the road between WINSELER and BERLE and maneuvered Company L to capture TRENTELHOF, an enemy strongpoint. Darkness came before this could be accomplished and the attack was put forward to daylight.

3rd Platoon, Company D, 712 Tank Battalion assigned to protect 2nd Battalion forward CP fired on two columns of German infantry as they approached the CP about 1730. An undetermined number were killed but 27 were captured.

During the night a Mark V tank fired a flair which had a short fuse. Outlined by its own flair the enemy tank was smashed by the platoon leader, 1st platoon, Company B, 712th Tank Battalion, who fired his 76 mm gun at 20 yard range. PWs from 3rd Company, Fusilier Battalion, later stated this action frustrated a Battalion counterattack supported by 2 Panther tanks and 2 assault guns. Their attack collapsed immediately after our Sherman destroyed their tank. Enemy Battalion withdrew to vicinity WILTZ.

358th Infantry:

Regiment staged forward to vicinity ARSDORF-RAMBROUCH and reconnoitered routes to the front.

10 January 1945

357th Infantry:

Renewing the attack at 0720A, the 1st Battalion (-Company A which remained at BERLE) pushed on through the deep snow and woods to the high ground overlooking DONCOLS. Movement was tortuously slow – a mile in an hour and a half.

During the attack the Air Corps in close coordination bombed and strafed enemy columns racing along the SONLEZ-DONCOLS Road. BRAS was bombed and PWs later reported a Battalion CP was hit as well as a cellar containing 25 enemy soldiers most of them were killed. The fighter-bombers then interdicted all German escape routes. 344th in 345th FA Battalions applied the finishing touch with concentrated fires on trapped columns.

Artillery also smashed a counterattack of 200-300 Germans as they came southeast down a draw on the Regimental left to attack 2nd Battalion. The Battalion continued along the draw and halted abreast of the 1st Battalion.

90th Reconnaissance Troop, screening the Division left, encountered enemy MG's vicinity road junction 1200 yards Southwest of BERLE. Two medium tanks were sent to reduce this resistance. One mired, was hit by enemy fire had to be destroyed and abandoned. 3rd Battalions shifted to regimental left to forestall further threats on the exposed flank as a result of slow progress by adjacent units who fought their way through thickly wooded and mined areas. Company A sent one platoon forward from BERLE to keep contact with 1st Battalion.

### 359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion had attacked TRENTELHOF at 0720A but made little headway against this enemy strongpoint, which included 4 enemy tanks and 2 SP guns. Artillery and high velocity fire increased as the Germans tried to stall the advance. One TD was knocked out after it fired 12 rounds into TRENTELHOF. At 0900 1st Battalion swung past the right of 3rd Battalion to maneuver around it and cut off TRENTELHOF. From the high ground northeast of the WILTZ River the Germans with good observation directed mortar and artillery fire, disrupting the Battalion and blunting its attack. Closer in, enemy infantry, dug-in in the woods, controlled the open ground with MG's and small arms.

An accompanying platoon of light tanks attempted to advance on the right flank of the 1st Battalion through dense woods, as the enemy was sensitive to all movement over open ground. Four of the tanks threw their tracks. Two were recovered under fire, but two had to be abandoned because of intense artillery and rocket barrages.

2nd Battalion cleared out a pocket of Germans behind the 3rd Battalion, capturing 40, including the Battalion Commander of the II Battalion, 36 Regiment, 9th Volksgrenadier Division. Although well-equipped and dug in, this enemy Battalion had suffered heavily with almost all officers killed or captured.

359's 2nd Battalion then cut between the stalled the Battalions at 1600 but was itself halted abreast of the 3rd Battalion.

In view of the deadlock a night attack was ordered and planned for 0100A.

### 358th Infantry:

Remained in Division Reserve at ARSDORF-RAMBROUCH area.

### 11 January 1945

### 359th Infantry:

The temperature dropped to 5 degrees above zero, but the surprise attack of 3rd and 2nd Battalions was delivered on schedule and overran three enemy defensive positions and five 75 mm guns. The impetus of the assault carried the Battalions through sleep-confused Germans to within 500 yards of their objective (the main crossroads just east of BOHOEY) before enemy tanks, halftracks and SP guns could

be brought to stem the advance. Artillery was promptly called for and Company K seized the crossroads and captured 75 PWs.

At daylight, the 3rd and 2nd Battalions consolidated their positions with 2nd Battalion refusing the right flank. Both Battalions then busied themselves with German vehicles lining the roads. Division and Corps artillery swung their fires, including concentrations of Pozit, on these columns with devastating results.

TDs of Company C, 773rd TD Battalion, moving up, surprised a company of enemy infantry and killed an estimated 100. In addition, they destroyed 1 Mark III, 2 Mark IV, 3 Mark V, 1 armored car, 1 half-track, 7 SP guns and 1 motorcycle.

In the afternoon Companies I and L seized Hill 510 to the Northeast driving off enemy resistance. Company K remained at the crossroad tied in with 357 on the left. 1st Battalion assembled vicinity TRENTELHOF. 380 PWs were taken in the night attack and subsequent blocking action during the day.

### 357th Infantry:

The attack of 1st Battalion toward DONCOLS found the enemy unwilling to give up the town since the advance threatened his withdrawal routes to the Northeast. Exerting more pressure, the Battalion entered the town shortly after noon under increasing artillery and small arms fire. Mop up continued until after dark. Over 300 PWs were captured.

2nd Battalion attacked SONLEZ surprising and capturing 65 PWs at a mill South of the town. This proved to be a Regimental CP and numerous documents of value were captured. Continuing on at 1430, Companies G and E met very stubborn resistance which continued until Company E outflanked the town from the Northeast after dark. SONLEZ was entered at 2200 and several hundred more PWs were gathered up as the battalion fought groups of bewildered enemy trying to escape through the town. Not until 1130 the next day was SONLEZ completely cleared. After agreement with Task Force Scott established a temporary boundary, 3rd Battalion attacked in 1330 toward the high ground on the regimental left to secure a passageway for commitment of the 358. Company K moved toward the North hill and Company L the South. Again the enemy fought dislodgment from prepared positions until at last pressured by Task Force Scott from the Southwest and 3rd Battalion from the Southeast the Germans gave ground, losing 53 prisoners to Company L and 150 to Company K.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was detached from 357 at 1545 and Troop assembled at BOULAIDE as Division Reserve.

### 358th Infantry:

Alerted for commitment on Division left, the Regiment shuttle-marched at 0730 to forward assembly area at BAVIGNE. Later the Battalions closed in assembly areas behind 357th Infantry.

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Captured documents revealed considerable confusion among enemy units. Interrogation of enemy officers elicited that the communications had been badly disrupted the day before and many units did not know what was happening. This accounted in part for some of the 1265 prisoners captured in this one day.

In addition, confirmation was gained that the Division's original attack on the 9th was in fact a surprise. Paragraph 2 of a directive issued by 13th Parachute Regiment on 10 January at 2015 hours reads as follows:

"It is imperative that steps be taken to ascertain whether or not the American 90th Infantry Division has been committed. Special attention must be given to the numbers 357, 358, 359, 343, 344, 345, 915 and 315. Prisoners identified with these numbers will immediately be taken to the Regimental Section "Ia" (G-3).

Without doubt the Division's hard-hitting, three-day drive from its unexpected inception had severely mauled the enemy defenses and hamstrung his efforts at withdrawal. The next several days would see complete collapse of the enemy salient.

The following units were considered totally wiped out: I and II Battalions, 36th Regiment. The Fusilier Battalion of the Fuehrer Grenadier Brigade. The Grenadier Battalion of the FGB. The Begleits (Escort) Company of the FGB. The 929th Bicycle Battalion attached to the FGB. The 13th Regiment of the 5th Parachute Division. The 5th Mortar Battalion of the 5th Parachute Division. It was believed that most of the units of the 5th Parachute Division could no longer operate as such, even if not completely destroyed.

#### 12 January 1945

##### 357th Infantry:

Prior to moving forward, the regiment mopped up within its area. Then 2nd Battalion continued its attack to the high ground Southeast of BRAS.

##### 358th Infantry:

0730 the regiment attacked in column of Battalions – 1st, 2nd and 3rd – up the draw on regimental left. Initial resistance was light and 1st Battalion quickly seized its objective containing to the West as the 35th Infantry Division drove in from that direction.

2nd Battalion entering SONLEZ, had a lively skirmish with enemy elements not yet mopped up. Continuing on, the Battalion entered BRAS from the South. A hot fight developed with enemy infantry and armor who maintained an aggressive defense. After several hours of sea-saw battling, our troops held the lower part of BRAS but could not gain the upper terrace.

##### 359th Infantry:

1st Battalion moved to BOULAIDE as Division Reserve. Other positions were unchanged. About 2000, 30 Germans, who were security guard for the crossroads at vP650545, penetrated from the Northeast to the intersection. 10 were killed, 10 captured and the others escaped, shooting at several jeeps belonging to the 357th Infantry on the road toward DONCOLS. This group also managed to lay mines at the intersection which was not discovered until morning when the 3rd Battalion Commander was injured as his jeep blew up.

##### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Traveling around Division left flank, the Troop made contact with elements 35th Infantry Division who were on the high ground Southwest of BRAS, the 6th Armored Division who were 12-14 hundred yards Northwest of BRAS, and the 358th Infantry, 1st Battalion.

#### 13 January 1945

### 358th Infantry:

At 0400, having brought up its own tanks and TDs, the 2nd Battalion attacked upper BRAS again, hitting the enemy on the flank as he faced West to counter 6th Armored Division's push vicinity of WARDIN. The Germans had reinforced the position with SS troops and halted the battalion's attack with tank fire. A coordinated attack with 3rd Battalion was planned for 0700. After the jumpoff, Companies F and G pushed through the town, leaving Company E to mop up and the Battalion slowly forced the Germans back across the road, up onto the high ground beyond and into the woods. Further advance was stopped by tank or SP fire from the North and mortar and artillery fire from the East.

3rd Battalion, attacking on the right, hit the retreating enemy again on the flank, disrupting his organization. The enemy reinforced the high ground at 1100 with another company of SS troops and SP guns and fought back furiously. Two US tanks were disabled by high velocity fire. AT guns and Artillery blazed away at the enemy in both Battalion areas and Company I finally captured the high ground (Hill 530) at 1500. In the severe fighting the Battalion suffered 30-40 casualties but had taken 70 prisoners. 122 PWs total were captured during the day.

### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion continued the attack on right of 358th Infantry echeloned to the right rear. 3rd Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry on Hill 510.

### 359th Infantry:

Prepared for relief by 357th Infantry and elements 26th Infantry Division as new Division boundaries were assigned. The 26th Division had been given the mission of organizing and holding its position on the high ground overlooking WILTZ. 2nd Battalion, therefore, was relieved by 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, at 1515 and the Battalion closed in BOULAIDE at 1815. 3rd Battalion, relieved by 357, moved to BAASCHLEIDEN, closing at 1715.

Division CP opened at battered HARLANGE, LUXEMBOURG, at 1400.

90th Reconnaissance Troop continued to maintain contact between 358th Infantry and 6th Armored Division.

14 January 1945

Division had joined hands with the 6th Armored Division and 35th Infantry Division attacking from the West. The salient was sheared off and Corps now called for resumption of attack to the Northeast. Redisposition of units was accomplished as Division sideslipped into its new sector with 6th Armored division on its left, 26th holding on the right and 35th Division in Corps reserve.

### 358th Infantry:

Patrols to the front kept enemy contact and brought back several prisoners. Contact patrols between 2nd and 3rd Battalion gathered up 14 more PWs. In the morning 2nd Battalion joined 3rd Battalion on Hill 530. Both 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked in the afternoon toward their new objective vicinity NEIDERWAMPACH. 2nd Battalion cleared to the railroad tracks but as it crossed received intense fire from tanks, SP guns, and infantry. One TD and one tank were knocked out and leaving one platoon of Company E across the tracks, the remainder of the Battalion disposed generally just South of the tracks. Captured 32 PWs in a building at vP626575. 3rd Battalion became heavily engaged and fought every

yard of the way through the thick woods. As the enemy was forced back, they shelled the Battalion areas unceasingly. By dark 3rd Battalion was echeloned to the right rear of 2nd Battalion and still fighting on into the night.

#### 357th Infantry:

Continued to send strong combat patrols forward in zone capturing PWs. In the afternoon 2nd Battalion attacked on right of 358th Infantry meeting only light resistance. Battalion halted with three Companies, E, G, F, online from left and right; tied in with 3rd Battalion who remained on Hill 510. Company B was attached to 2nd Battalion as reserve while 1st Battalion (-) remained in DONCOLS

#### 359th Infantry:

The regiment remained at BOULAIDE as Division Reserve, but received morning orders to be ready to assemble vicinity WARDIN prepared for employment on Division left flank.

#### 15 January 1945

#### 358th Infantry:

The attack to the Northeast was resumed at 0800. 2nd Battalion, with so much open ground on its left covered by assault gunfire, did not venture more than a platoon beyond the railroad tracks. Resistance in front of the 3rd Battalion proved unexpectedly strong, the enemy having reinforced during the night. Caught in a heavy crossfire of MGs, an enemy artillery TOT and intense small arms fire from enemy entrenched on the reverse slope, the battalion finally fell back slowly some 500 yards where it halted and resisted all further attempts to drive it back. One tank pushed to the railroad track only to be hit from the rear by an AT gun. A second tank forced his way across the railroad tracks where it met a similar fate from an 88 gun and other AT guns. The battalion's casualties were heavy (about 46 men killed and wounded including 6 officers). 1st Battalion had started in the trace of 2nd Battalion but enroute met small arms from the Northeast. Five men, including one Company Commander, were wounded as Company A cleared the pocket. Then came orders from Regiment directing the 2nd and 3rd Battalions to hold in place while 1st Battalion made a forced march around the Division left in the sector of the advancing 6th Armored Division to attack NEIDERWAMPACH from the vicinity of BENONCHAMPS. At 1700, 14 battalions of Field Artillery dropped a 2-round TOT on NEIDERWAMPACH. Too stunned to withdraw, 302 Germans after a brief fight quickly surrendered to the 1st Battalion as it closed in from the Northwest. Only four casualties resulted to the attacking Battalion during its brilliant maneuver which outflanked the enemy line. An enemy SP gun was knocked out by tankers from the 712th Tank Battalion as the town was entered.

#### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion moving forward to maintain contact with 358th Infantry, became heavily engaged with enemy's strongpoints in and around the railroad tunnels along the valley. The regimental mission was temporarily changed to a containing action. 1st Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion who assembled in rear of 2nd Battalion in the early morning. 1st Battalion then patrolled toward the river killing and capturing a number of enemy patrols and outposts. 3rd Battalion relieved 2nd Battalion after dark and the latter assembled at DONCOLS.

#### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion moved on motors to vicinity WARDIN in late afternoon. Rest of regiment remained at BOULAIDE prepared to stage forward in the morning.

16 January 1945

359th Infantry:

1st Battalion moved by motor from BOULAIDE to BENONCHAMPS, arriving at 1100. 3rd Battalion moved by motor from BOULAIDE at 0850 and closed in WARDIN at 1042. At 1000 2nd Battalion attacked with Company E on the left and Company G on the right, Company F in reserve, in coordination with 6th Armored Division to capture the high ground East of LONGVILLY. The infantry mopped up the town and proceeded to their objective against light opposition. Moving onto the forward slope Companies E and G received heavy small arms, MG and SP fire and pulled back to the reverse slope. Company F captured the BOURCY-LONGVILLY road junction and physical contact with 6th Armored Division. 1st Battalion followed along the high ground and tied in for the night between Company F and 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry. Companies E and F returned to LONGVILLY. 3rd Battalion marched to BENONCHAMPS, closing at 1500. Patrols of 2nd Battalion went east toward the high ground at (vP665698) and drew small arms fire from the woods at (vP6750) and high velocity fire from the Northeast.

358th Infantry:

During the night 3rd Battalion relieved 2nd Battalion of its portion of the front and at daylight pushed patrols forward. 2nd Battalion assembled vicinity BRAS.

1st Battalion mopped up at NEIDERWAMPACH and gathered up 60 more PWs. In early morning Company F moved around the Division left flank and occupied the nose at (vP638584). The rest of the Battalion marched later in the morning and the unit assembled at NEIDERWAMPACH.

At 1300, 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry, was attached and it took over the entire zone of this regiment.

At 1500 2nd Battalion attacked Southeast to secure the wooded area at (vP645578). 1st Battalion attacked east sending Company A to SHIMPACH and Companies B and C to capture OBERWAMPACH. Both 3rd Battalions, moving Northeast, swept out the woods South of the railroad tracks. Despite enemy artillery and mortar fire and small arms fire from the high ground Southeast of SHIMPACH and OBERWAMPACH, all units were on their objectives by dark and tied in together in a firm line facing East. Approximately 100 PWs were captured in these operations. At 2050 a halftrack with SS mortar men entered OBERWAMPACH and were captured. At 2355 two tanks attacked Company C and were repulsed. Heavy mortar fire hit 2nd Battalion at NEIDERWAMPACH throughout the hours of darkness.

357th Infantry:

During the night, elements 328th Infantry and Company A, 101st Combat Engineer (26th Division) relieved 1st Battalion, in conformance with newly established Division boundaries. 1st Battalion put Company A on line along the side of 3rd Battalion. 2nd Battalion motor-marched to BAASCHLEIDEN. At 1300, 3rd Battalion was attached to 358th Infantry and took over the regimental front. The 1st Battalion thus completely relieved, moved to BOULAIDE where the regiment went into Division Reserve.

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On every hand now were evidences of a German withdrawal. Scattered enemy units were thrown together in hastily formed groups to resist the cutting of eastbound exits. Forsaking the protective cover of night, the Germans crowded the roads in daylight with traffic of all kinds. The withdrawal was comparatively orderly, but the delaying forces turned on attacking troops with fury of cornered animals.

For artillery and Air Corps it was a fete. Visibility was unlimited as skies cleared of snow. P47s strafed enemy columns and directed artillery concentrations when their ammunition ran out. Troop and tank concentrations Northeast of ALLERBORN were trapped and pummeled. Enemy columns traveling North and East were victims of prolonged concentrations. All routes, assembly points and enemy towns were interdicted.

17 January 1945

359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion moved from BENONCHAMPS in the great morning hours prepared to attack through the 2nd Battalion and seize the nose and woods at (vP664598). Upon capture of this objective it was intended that 2nd Battalion would take over and 3rd Battalion would continue on to cut the road.

The 3rd Battalion closed at OBERWAMPACH at 0800 and sent patrols to the front. At the old mill (vP661598) one patrol caught 4 PWs and drew fire from the woods beyond. The attack was planned for late morning that was postponed as enemy activity sharply increased in the form of heavy vehicular movement and counterattacks in vicinity OBERWAMPACH.

358th Infantry:

At 0330 the Germans suddenly attacked OBERWAMPACH. Some 40 men of 1st SS Division one tank and three assault guns entered the town firing their weapons and yelling at the top of their voices. Unfortunately for them the first few buildings were unoccupied and noise served only to further alert the waiting infantryman of the 1st Battalion who called for prepared fires and quickly repulsed the attack. The enemy tanks and survivors withdrew. At daylight the Battalion counted 22 dead SS and found 3 wounded who were promptly captured.

Both 1st and 2nd Battalions sent reconnaissance patrols to the high ground Southeast of SHIMPACH and OBERWAMPACH and found the enemy entrenched along the forward slopes of the twin knobs.

3rd Battalion 358th with 3rd Battalion 357th combed out the wooded area South of the railroad track, harassed as they did so by enemy observing from the high ground across the river who directed mortar and artillery fire on them. The three tunnels which had been sore spots previously were now vacant and bare, save for debris and water.

At 0900 the enemy attacked again from the Northeast with tanks and infantry. A TOT of 14 battalions of artillery had been prepared for 359th's debouchment to the high ground. This fire was immediately called for and crushed the attack as it moved in. The tanks withdrew and the infantry fled to the woods.

Another attack followed at 1030 to receive similar treatment. At 1300 elements of the 2nd Panzer Division, formed into KG GUTMAN, attacked OBERWAMPACH from the North with the mission of seizing the village, holding it and establishing 3 75 mm AT guns and 5 120 mm mortars in the town. The force comprised about 150 infantry, 2 Panther tanks, 11 Mark IV tanks, 3 75 mm of assault guns SP and 4 armored scout cars. Their attack was preceded by a preparation of artillery and mortar fire.

No fire hindered their approach until the enemy was close to the village when they were met by point blank fire from tanks, TDs and riflemen. The lead vehicle – an armored scout car containing the infantry CO – was pierced at 10 yard range by one of our tanks. The leader took cover, leaving his command without direction as he was subsequently captured. Five enemy tanks were set afire. As the enemy turned to flee his routes of withdrawal were covered by our armor and further tanks were destroyed. Enemy personnel casualties were heavy.

At 1330 the final counterattack of the day was launched from the Southeast by approximately 80 men and 3 tanks, who pushed their way in around our TDs in the Southeast part of town until destroyed. One TD had to be abandoned but was destroyed by its Sergeant with a thermite grenade in the gun barrel. The enemy captured and occupied 4 houses on the outskirts of OBERWAMPACH, where they stayed overnight.

### 357 Infantry:

The regiment minus 3rd Battalion, which reverted to Division control, remained in Division Reserve in the BOULAIDE-BAASCHLEIDEN area. Training in firing 120 mm mortar was begun in view of the large number of mortars and great amount of ammunition captured in the operation. Some 40 mortars were taken intact.

### 18 January 1945

In the big picture, the bulge West of ROUFFALIZE had collapsed and elements of 11th Armored and 2nd Armored Divisions joined at the town. The 17th A/B moved from reserve to replace 11th Armored Division while the latter side-slipped South and relieved 101st A/B to advance beyond BOURCY. The relief was completed during the night.

### 358th Infantry:

The day was scarcely an hour old when the Germans swarmed like angry bees on OBERWAMPACH. They came from the Northeast, East and Southeast with tanks in support and harried the town with fire until finally repulsed about 0330. Two tanks which accompanied them were hit. One burned but the other limped off into the darkness. When light came the Germans held seven houses of the Southeast end of OBERWAMPACH.

Supporting tanks and TDs maneuvered to position for direct fire at the enemy held houses. Directed by a forward observer who crawled to where he was finally pinned by enemy fire, artillery crashed down on the stronghold. The Germans withdrew to a barn on the outskirts leaving a Tiger tank as lone Sentinel to guard their retreat. Two PWs were captured – huge men from the REMER Brigade.

In retaliation the enemy's shelling of OBERWAMPACH and surrounding area increased. About 1000 rounds were received. 3rd Battalion, relieved by 357th Infantry 3rd Battalion, assembled in the woods near the SCHIMPACH railroad station.

\* \* \* \* \*

The action at OBERWAMPACH of the past two days ably demonstrated the excellent results obtained from the fluid teamwork of Infantry, Artillery, Tanks and TDs. Together these four frustrated all 9 counterattacks with minimum losses – a total of 20 wounded and 3 killed. Tank and Artillery observers repeatedly crawled to exposed positions from which to direct fire. One Artillery observer from the 344th FA Battalion spent the night and next day with his radio 500 yards beyond the frontlines from where he directed concentrations on the Germans as they fled in disorder. As enemy tanks were pierced

by Tank and TD fire causing the crews to scramble out, the artillery lashed them with repeated concentrations and blocked the path of those who turned to escape. In 36 hours, 344th FA fired 6000 rounds.

German losses were enormous and mounted as heavy snowstorms blanketed enemy dead and wounded alike. Those casualties not immediately evacuated were frozen to death. No exact count was possible but an estimated several hundred Germans were buried from sight for long after the Division had left the area.

The enemy also lost 19 tanks: six by 712th tankers, eight by 773rd TD gunners, five by artillery fire.

#### 359th Infantry:

For this regiment it was a quiescent period broken only by light artillery shelling and patrols. Patrols from both 1st and 2nd Battalions encountered enemy fire 300-400 yards to the front but no other action was reported.

#### 357th Infantry:

The regiment remained in Division reserve at BOULAIDE-BASSCHLEIDEN except for 3rd Battalion which continued to sweep out its area, gathering up 16 tired and hungry NAZIS. The Battalion harassed the railroad station at (vP654563) with 81 mm mortar and 105 fire as well as 28 rounds TD fire but evoked no enemy reaction.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the Army front, XII Corps jumped off and made some progress. 80th Division cleared NOCHERT advancing beyond it about 2 km. 5th Division crossed the SURE River and installed several bridges. Within the III Corps neither the 6th Armored Division nor 26th Division made any forward movement. The 134th Infantry Regiment (35th Division) replaced the 320th Infantry Regiment (35th Division) attached to the 6th Armored Division, and the 35th Division assembled to move to XX Corps vicinity THIONVILLE minus its one Regiment.

#### 19 January 1945

There was no forward movement as 359th and 358th tested the enemy's presence with patrols. 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry relieved 2nd Battalion, who proceeded from NEIDERWAMPACH to Division Rehabilitation Center at HABAY-LA-NEUVE. 357th Infantry remained in Division Reserve.

#### 20 January 1945

#### 358th Infantry:

Companies A and L attacked to secure an outpost line on the high ground South and East of OBERWAMPACH. Company L took its objective without difficulty. Company A moving up the draw toward DERENBACH was surprised by fire from the woods on their left rear and pinned to the open snow. At the same time the Company received fire from the high ground along the DERENBACH Road. The Command Group and one platoon engaged the left flank force. The two forward platoons, decimated by heavy enemy fire, assaulted and captured several buildings along the road where they continued to fight, cut off and out of communication until 1800 when the survivors were overwhelmed.

In view of the unexpected enemy strength all units were withdrawn to original positions.

359th Infantry:

The 2nd Battalion attacked and captured ALLERBORN, taking 11 PWs. Companies E and G remained in the town.

357th Infantry:

Remained in Division Reserved.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Maintained contact between 359th Infantry and 6th Armored Division.

21 January 1945

III Corps resumed the attack to the Northeast.

358th Infantry:

1st and 3rd Battalions moved out at 0830, proceeding cautiously in view of yesterday's mishap. No opposition developed, however, and DERENBACH fell about 1200. 3rd Battalion garrisoned the town while 1st Battalion plodded through the snow to capture Hill 480 and BOEVANGE LES CLERVAUX just beyond at 1700.

359th Infantry:

Attacking in order, 2nd, 1st and 3rd Battalions at 0830, the Regiment found only deep snow and occasional stragglers to impede their advance. Hill 520, HAMIVILLE and WINCRANGE were all taken in the day's move. 6th Armored Division on the left, without adequate roads for their CCA, turned into the 359th's zone. Their vehicles located a minefield at WINCRANGE and at LULLANGE had a short skirmish with enemy entrenched beyond the town. 359th Infantry closed up and the two units settled together for the night. 2nd Battalion remained at WINCRANGE, 1st Battalion at LULLANGE and 3rd Battalion vicinity Road junction vE111648. Patrols to the front contacted enemy outposts.

357th Infantry:

Moved by motor to BASTOGNE. 3rd Battalion, relieved by passage of 328th Infantry, joined its unit at the same town.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Shifted to right flank to maintain contact between and 1st Battalion, 358 Peltier Infantry, and 359th Infantry.

22 January 1945

359th Infantry:

The Regiment swung fan-wise to clear and occupy STOCKEM, RUMLANGE, DONNANGE and DEIFELT. 1st and 3rd Battalions patrolled to the East, maintaining enemy contact.

358th Infantry:

Pinched out by action of 359th Infantry, the Regiment's 1st Battalion reverted to Division Reserve. 3rd Battalion motored to BASTOGNE. 1st Battalion, under Division control, held its positions until uncovered by advance of the 26th Infantry Division at 1130.

357th Infantry:

Moving by motor, 1st Battalions staged to vicinity HAMIVILLE where it detrucked, continuing to the Northeast on foot. By dark 1st Battalion was at ASSELBORN, Companies B and C continuing to SASSEL.

2nd Battalion motored to vicinity ASSELBORN, then marched Southeast to BOXHORN where G and F Companies remained. Company E secured and occupied the woods at vP767677, following a brisk fire fight with a small enemy group. Division CP crossed the border and occupied WARDIN, BELGIUM at 1100.

23 January 1945

359th Infantry:

Attacked at 0900 to seize the high ground in the BISCHENT WOODS and hold until relieved by 6th Cavalry Group who were moving up on the Division right to pinch out the 26th Infantry Division. Company K occupied the objective at 1500.

358th Infantry:

1st Battalion assembled in WINCRANGE and replaced 2nd Battalion in the Rest Camp at HABAY-LA-NEUVE.

2nd Battalion returned on trucks of 1st Battalion in afternoon and closed in DERENBACH at 1800.

357th Infantry:

3rd Battalion left BASTOGNE 0730 and closed 0930 in ASSELBORN. 1st and 2nd Battalions attacked at 1300, crossing the CLERF River. The enemy countered with small arms, machine guns and Nebelwerfer fire. Aided by TD fire the attackers drove the enemy from his trenches and gained the high ground on both sides of the draw (Hills 470, 490 and 500 on the left and 520 on the right). Continuing after dark, 1st Battalion attacked and captured BINSFELD and a 75 mm AT gun. 2nd Battalion spread its companies facing Southeast along Hill 520 and the Hill to the Southwest. 3rd Battalion moved forward to vicinity SASSEL and placed Company L on Hill 490 and 500 to hold that flank.

Supporting armor began its move across the river but the first 3 Medium tanks bogged down, blocking the road. One platoon, Company D, 712th Tank Battalion was attached in an effort to get some AT guns up to the 1st Battalion without success. 12 bazooka teams from AT company were rushed forward to 1st Battalion instead.

To keep pace with the fast-moving situation, Division CP moved to HAMIVILLE.

24 January 1945

357th Infantry:

About 0230A, 1st Battalion was counterattacked by enemy infantry and tanks from HOLLER. Hardly set in their defensive positions and without AT guns or armor support, the Battalion fought desperately to hold the town. By heroic effort of machine gunners who held their posts in face of point-blank tank fire to mow down accompanying infantry and a shield of fire laid down by 343rd FA Battalion, (who fired 900 rounds up to 0600) the attack was broken. 58 PWs were captured. The enemy tanks withdrew those few Germans not killed or captured fled.

Meanwhile supporting army with engineers, who removed 19 mines from the road, and a platoon of infantry from Company K all crossed at TROISVIERGES and worked down the road to BINSFELD where they remained after their arrival in 0600.

Both Division and Regimental boundaries changed during the night which shifted the axis of attack to the East.

The Regiment therefore sent patrols toward OBERSTENWALD following with 2nd Battalion on left and 3rd Battalion on right. Following reduction of an enemy's strong point at the CLERF River OBERSTENWALD was taken after dark and 3rd Battalion tied in echeloned to the right rear. Division ordered the halt as adjacent units failed to come up. About 2130 a party of 25-30 Germans came to reoccupy positions in OBERSTENWALD. They came in through 3rd Battalion who remained quiet until the Germans were in their area, then encompassed them. Two Germans were killed and 25 captured.

359th Infantry:

The change of boundaries necessitated reemployment of 359th Infantry in the attack. Accordingly, 1st and 2nd Battalions moved to forward assembly areas in early morning and attacked after midday. 3rd Battalion remained in place and supported by fire. 2nd Battalion crossed the CLERF after overcoming resistance along the railroad track. 1st Battalion, faced with entrenched enemy on the far shore, made little headway until late afternoon when the Battalion swung in trace of 2nd Battalion and crossed in their zone to outflank the position. The enemy withdrew. 3rd Battalion assembled for a night attack to seize HUPPERDANGE.

358th Infantry:

Remained in Division Reserve.

25 January 1945

357th Infantry:

Despite zero temperatures, the attack continued in the morning. Organic artillery battalions laid concentration after concentration along the "Sky Line Drive" (LUXEMBOURG-ST VITH ROAD) paralleling the OUR RIVER, smashing enemy vehicles and guns and cutting down the German soldiers as they sought to escape. 3rd Battalion cut the "Sky Line Drive" at 1210; then proceeded to capture HEINERSCHIED where the enemy fought tenaciously until 1645 when the town was cleared and all resistance ended.

2nd Battalion advanced easily to the high ground Southwest of LAUSDORN where 100 Germans and machine guns resisted. LAUSDORN itself was captured after dark after patrols reported the enemy had apparently withdrawn. Regiment then consolidated positions and sent patrols to the front.

359th Infantry:

At 0200, 3rd Battalion passed through 2nd Battalion and captured HUPPERDANGE and 7 PWs. 2nd Battalion closed in HUPPERDANGE at 1100. 1st Battalion cleared GRINDHAUSEN in late afternoon. Having their objective, Regiment consolidated and dispatched strong patrols to the front.

358th Infantry:

Remained in Division Reserve.

26 January 1945

After reshuffling of units moved the 90th Division from III Corps control at noon on the 26th. With some overlap the Division began an exchange of places with 6th Armored Division who moved to the right of our sector replacing us and elements 26th Infantry Division. This displacement was further complicated by passage southward through the Division sector of the 17th Airborne Division who replaced the remainder of the 26th Infantry Division. The 26th assembled and moved South out of III Corps.

Traffic continued to be the principal problem for the next several days as the limited road net was strained to bursting point with foot troops, motors and armor.

357th Infantry:

Patrolled toward OUR RIVER. 1st Battalion relieved 2nd Battalion who assembled at HOLLER. In the afternoon having found the area clear, 1st Battalion occupied LEILER with Company B at 2000. 3rd Battalion side-slipped north, returned to attack the next morning to seize the high ground 3 km East of WEISWAMPACH.

358th Infantry:

2nd Battalion and CP moved to TROISCIERGES during the morning with the Battalion continuing forward on foot to occupy WEISWAMPACH following its capture by 6th Armored Division. The relief was accomplished by 1500. At noon 3rd Battalion motor-marched from BASTOGNE to vicinity TROISVIERGES and assembled at WILWERDANGE where it established contact with 17th Airborne elements still in line. Patrols were sent to BEILER.

359th Infantry:

At 0900, 3rd Battalion marched on foot to HACHIVILLE. At 1400 the CP moved to TROINE. At 1500, 2nd Battalion marched to HOFFELT. 1st Battalion remained overnight at HUPPERDANGE. Regiment reverted Division Reserve upon release.

The Division CP opened at ASSELBORN at 0945.

Throughout the day Division artillery battalions, operating on call of air observers, beat a steady tattoo on enemy traffic across the OUR RIVER. Near DAHNEN (vP865653) traffic became hopelessly

snarled as all roads were interdicted. Vehicles, bumper to bumper, were pounded to rubble by the incessant fires of the Division and supporting artillery guns. For enemy 88's trained their sights on the Cub planes in desperate efforts to stop the carnage but were themselves flattened by Battalion concentrations.

27 January 1945

Amid snow flurries Division continued to attack to clear the west bank of the OUR RIVER in conjunction with 87th Infantry Division who had replaced 17th A/B Division on the 90th Division's left. The need for "Lebenstraum" became acute as the Division crowded its installations forward of the CP at ASSELBORN to make room for the 4th Infantry Division assembling in his rear.

357th Infantry:

3rd Battalion attacked to the northeast with Company L on the left and Company K on the right and secured the high ground overlooking the OUR RIVER at 1200. Enemy infantry and one tank counterattacked Company K from a Northeast but were driven off.

358th Infantry:

2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked toward the river initially without resistance. The advance was halted by determined delaying forces at the BELGIAN border beyond LEITHUM and southwest of LASCHEID. Company E cleared the strong point East of LEITHUM. Company I entered LASCHEID from the Northwest at 1900 where they were harassed by MG and 20 mm gunfire from two German tanks which withdrew after our own tanks closed into the town. Company L, unable to contact company I, continued to fight enemy dug in south of the town, ultimately driving them off and remained for the night on the high ground below LASCHEID. Company K closed 500 yards behind the assault companies and dug in for the night.

Regimental CP moved to WILWERDANGE while 1st Battalion closed all its elements into WEISWAMPACH after motor-marching from HABAY-LA-NUEVE.

359th Infantry:

Remained in Division Reserve. Forced out of its area by 4th Division's arrival, the Regiment less its 1st Battalion moved to TROISVIERGES. 1st Battalion, shifting first to CINQFONTAINES, later joined its unit at TROISVIERGES.

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Maintained contact between 87th Division and 358th Infantry.

\* \* \* \* \*

At 1645 Division received the VIII Corps order assigning the 90th the mission of crossing the OUR RIVER to protect the right flank of the Corps as it directed a penetration of the SIEGFRIED LINE. 4th Division was to knife between the 90th and the 87th Divisions, passing through elements of the latter as VIII Corps attacked at 0830 on 29 January. 95th Infantry Division and 11th Armored Division would remain initially in reserve.

Division Field Message #26 ordered continuation of the attack on 28 January to clear the West Bank of the OUR RIVER.

#### 28 January 1945

The Winter fury increased and heavy snows seriously hampered military operation. 315th Engineers worked 'round-the-clock with limited equipment to keep roads open.

A conference with regimental commanders in early morning fixed Division's plan for the new order. Briefly, it contemplated a wheeling movement by the three infantry regiments with 357th as the hub. 357th Infantry was to hold its right flank firm on the West Bank of the OUR RIVER, attack with its left Battalion and secure WELCHENHAUSEN and the high ground to the Southeast of the town. 358th Infantry, attacking in the center, would make the main crossing with two battalions and seize the high ground Southwest of HECKHUSCHEID.

359th Infantry, on the Division left, would cross through an initial narrow zone, capture STEFFESHAUSEN and AUDEL and then fan out to seize WINTERSPELT and the high ground South of EIGELSCHEID.

Division Field Order #51, embodying the above plan was issued at 1815.

#### 357th Infantry:

Company I replaced Company K in the line during the night. The Regiment cleared all but the river towns during the day and made extensive reconnaissance for crossing sites. After Dark the 3rd Battalion sent platoons to occupy the river towns in its zone. Company I dispatched one platoon to PETERSKIRCHE where it captured 7-8 PWs and remained overnight. Company L occupied four houses at the South end of OBERHAUSEN, approaching from the South and not meeting the enemy who were dug in on the high ground West of the town.

#### 358th Infantry:

Patrols encountered enemy in the vicinity of STOUBACH (vP865765) and at vP864743. Combat patrols were sent out in early morning to clean out the enemy to the front, followed by larger units later in the day to secure crossing sites. By dark Company I had captured WEWELER after a brief fight and Companies L and K were poised on the high ground to the South-East.

1st Battalion displaced forward to the wooded area 1200 yards Northeast of LEITHUM.

Companies F and G occupied STOUBACH by midnight. Company E remained at the crossroads 600 yards Northeast of LEITHUM. Enemy was heard digging in across the OUR RIVER.

#### 359th Infantry:

Remained in Division Reserve at TROISVIERGES.

#### 90th Reconnaissance Troop:

Assembled at MALSHEID since 358th Infantry now had direct contact with 87th Infantry Division at BURG-REULAND. Troop reconnoitered the 357th's positions South of LEILER prepared to take over on Division order.

#### 29 January 1945

Throughout the dark hours the assault Battalions floundered through deep snow to get troops and bridging materials to the river's edge in preparation for the morning's attack. The night was almost as bright as day but the Hills, sloping precipitously to the Valley, considerably slowed the advance. Such roads as once existed were blanketed with snow and were unusable. Engineers worked throughout the night to clear a road down to each Regiment's zone.

At 0600 the 2nd Battalion left its assembly area with Company E on the left and Company G on the right. As Company E approached the river, they met Germans entrenched on the West side. A brisk firefight ensued for several hours. The enemy dug in West of OBERHAUSEN fired on Company G as they came near the town. The company deployed and fought back, overcoming the opposition, and entered OBERHAUSEN where they cleaned out the north end of town. 70 prisoners were captured.

From across the river the Germans opened up with artillery, mortar, and small arms fire and stopped attempts to cross at this site. Swinging South of OBERHAUSEN, Companies G and F crossed the river into Germany without engineer equipment and moved toward the high ground Southeast of WELCHENHAUSEN. Company E forced the crossing 800 yards north of the town and closed in from that direction. Confronted with this encirclement, the Germans fought more furiously but finally surrendered in late afternoon. Eight PWs were taken during the operation. Company G had gained the high ground Southeast of WELCHENHAUSEN with Company F tied in on their right. Company E remained at WELCHENHAUSEN.

On the West Bank of the OUR, the Regiment's right boundary was changed and 90th Reconnaissance took over the area South from LEILER to the Division boundary. 1st Battalion, relieved thereby, left one platoon, Company B on the line while the Battalion (-) assembled at WEISWAMPACH as regimental reserve. Company K also remained in WEISWAMPACH. The rest of the 3rd Battalion was spread along the West Bank of the OUR.

#### 358th Infantry:

As light came, the Germans fired mortar, artillery, small arms and high velocity fire from across the river into WEWELER and STOUBACH. Because of bad communications, the smoke which 3rd Battalion had planned to cover their crossing was not fired and left the crossing site exposed to the murderous fire of the enemy. With communication restored, the smoke was fired at 1420 and Company I started across but was immediately engaged in a heavy firefight. On regimental order the crossing was halted and the Battalion waited further orders.

The situation confronting 2nd Battalion had not improved. The Germans continued to throw a hail of fire across at the assault companies, (F and G), which they answered with mortar, bazooka, small arms and artillery fire. Finally, Company E, in reserve, crossed the river below STOUBACH and outflanked STUBACH from the South capturing the town and 45 prisoners in midafternoon.

This attack broke the enemy resistance which slackened rapidly in this area. Following up its advantage the Battalion crossed F and G Companies while 1st Battalion crossed just above. Both battalions then struck out for the high ground overlooking the river.

Company I was left to contain at WEWELER while the rest of 3rd Battalion was brought South to cross in trace of the 2nd Battalion.

#### 359th Infantry:

Moved 3rd Battalion 0800 to vicinity BURG-RUELAND. Battalion contacted 12th Infantry Regiment of 4th Division and sent patrols to STEFFESHAUSEN and AUDEL. Both patrols made contact, receiving small arms and mortar fire.

In the afternoon, 1st Battalion moved to WILWERGANGE at 1430.

By day's end, having crossed the OUR RIVER, the 90th Division in part had once more battered and opening into the Reich – the first unit in the Corps to reenter Germany after Von Rundstedt's grab had been rebuffed. The next several days would see this opening wedge expanded and driven deeper until the entire division would stand on German soil. This was historic country at the juncture of LUXEMBOURG, BELGIUM and GERMANY. Twice the Germans had ridden roughshod through this passage to the West: in 1940 and more recently in the breakthrough. Now, his gamble ended in disheartening failure, Von Rundstedt had pulled his elite – but battered – divisions back to the security of the West Wall, leaving Volksgrenadier along the German border to breast the rising tide of Allied might and to cover the withdrawal of the major forces.

30 January 1945

357th Infantry:

315th Engineer Battalion worked all night to make a passable ford at WELCHENHAUSEN. They hauled rocks and removed mines from the approaches and the water itself despite artillery and mortar fire. Shortly after daylight three tanks crossed, which tore up the bottom so that further crossings of armor had to be postponed.

The Regiment itself consolidated positions. Company F closed up on left of Company G and one platoon Company E, reinforced later by the rest of the company, moved to Company F's left in order to contact 358th. Contact was not gained as enemy on both flanks and front continued to resist. Company K, attached to 2nd Battalion, shifted to WELCHENHAUSEN as Battalion reserve.

1st Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion along the river and 3rd Battalion (-) assembled at WEISWAMPACH. At 2000 one platoon of Company B raided OUREN where enemy had been reported but found the town vacated of all but civilians.

358th Infantry:

During the night engineer crews cleared roads of drifted snow, mines, and debris. A bridge was in at 0800 despite enemy fire and supporting armor crossed.

1st and 2nd Battalions continued their attack, securing STEIN-KOPF by dark. About 75 PWs were taken in the drive. Company C set up an ambush and captured 35 prisoners, killed 6 and wounded 4. At 1730, 80 enemy infantry counterattacked Company C in an effort to regain the high ground. Artillery dissolved the attack before it gained contact. Company I rejoined its Battalion which was poised in center of regimental zone in regimental reserve.

359th Infantry:

3rd Battalion planned to cross the OUR with Company L on left and Company K on right following a 10 minute artillery preparation. The preparation appeared to alert the enemy and at the river's edge the assault companies received mortar, small arms and machine gun fire. Company L searched for a new crossing site which they found several hundred yards away. Entering STEFFESHAUSEN, they engaged in a small arms and machine gun fight. Company I crossed immediately to assist. By 1200 the town was secured but mop out of the outskirts continued.

Company K, pinned down by fire from across the river, made their crossing by infiltration, reaching STEFFESHAUSEN at noon. 3rd Battalion crossed on the frozen river rather than footbridges as planned.

1st Battalion staged from WILWERDANGE to BURG-REULAND then crossed the ice to attack through 3rd Battalion and capture AUDEL. This mission was accomplished by 1800 despite difficult terrain and enemy resistance. Battalion contacted 358th on the right.

Engineers completed a Bailey bridge across river at 2110 for vehicles and armor.

Division CP opened at WILWERDANGE, LUXEMBOURG, at 1400.

### 31 January 1945

#### 357th Infantry:

Contact with 358th was made at 1900 after Company E pushed forward. One platoon Company K moved to OBERHAUSEN to prevent infiltration from the South.

#### 358th Infantry:

All three battalions continued the attack meeting considerable resistance as they crossed the German border. Artillery and armor support greatly aided the advance. Company A, driving on, captured the high ground South and East of HECKHALENFELD while B Company seized the town and 30 prisoners. 3rd Battalion seized the objective despite frequent machine gun fire from the flank. 2nd Battalion drove the enemy from the woods and tied in with 357th Infantry on the right. 1st Battalion linked with 359th Infantry on the left.

#### 359th Infantry:

Plowing on through deep snow, 1st Battalion seized the high ground West of WINTERSPELT then advanced in the afternoon to cut and block the road Southeast of WINTERSPELT.

2nd Battalion moved by motor to BURG-REULAND, marched to AUDEL and set off at 1000 to attack WALLMERATH. Stiff resistance was encountered by Company F and the enemy still held the North end of town at dark. Company G, followed by Company E, closed on WINTERSPELT which they took after passing through minefields and subduing several strong points.

1st Battalion at 1430 jumped off again to seize EIGELSCHEID. Company C entered the town against light resistance. Company B then moved in.

3rd Battalion closed its units into AUDEL and remained in regimental reserve.

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In summing up, January was marked by change from a relatively static position astride the German border in the SAAR to an unheralded drive through LUXEMBOURG where the 90th sheared off the enemy salient near BASTOGNE. Climaxing the month was the return to GERMANY through BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG as the Division spearheaded VIII Corps' crossing of the OUR RIVER.

It was the Division's first real test at prolonged winter warfare. Supply – always a problem – was made more difficult by the constant snowstorms and the limited road net of the narrow Division sector. Engineers labored unceasingly to keep roads open. Where available, M-29's were used with excellent success for evacuation and supply, but their number was few. Litters were attached to skis to expedite evacuation in forward areas and were used also to haul supplies forward, reducing the number of men needed for carrying parties. Skis were attached to Cub planes to permit artillery observation to continue despite snow-covered terrain. Tanks were whitewashed for camouflage and it worked well but near-

zero temperatures and drifting snow caused much mechanical trouble for both tanks and TDs. Withal, armor support as well as accurate artillery fire were again invaluable in crushing the enemy defense.

Again the infantry had done its part magnificently and born the brunt of the Division effort. Gradually "winterized" as, first, captured German underwear, and later, snow garments were issued, followed by shoepacs and a trigger modification on the M-1 rifle for firing with gloves on, they had carried out their assigned missions across the steep slopes, through waist-deep snow and icy water, through dark nights and biting cold days. Theirs the credit and theirs the victory. Not without its price, however, as the bitter cold, deep snow and stiff resistance exhausted troops and exacted casualties.

Reduction of the pocket and advance across the OUR netted 3349 PWs, raising the Division total over the 25,000 mark. A wealth of enemy material was captured or destroyed, including in part 33 tanks, 16 SP guns, 99 trucks, 16 staff cars, 31 halftracks, 9 full tracks, 12 88 mm guns, 40 120 mm mortars, 15 75 mm guns, 6 AT guns, 14 105 mm guns, and 4 nebelwerfers. Rapid movement and boundary changes precluded a complete and final survey.

But more important, the goal was at hand and the 90th Division once more held firm one sector of ground from which Von Rundstedt's troops had driven other Americans six weeks earlier.

VAN FLEET  
COMMANDING  
STILWELL  
G-3

## PART II

HEADQUARTERS XX CORPS  
APO 340 US ARMY

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Major General James A. Van Fleet, Commanding General, 90th Infantry Division, APO 90, US Army

THRU : Commanding General, Third United States Army, APO 403, US Army.

1. I desire to commend you and your command for the superior manner in which you and they have accomplished all your missions while a part of the XX Corps. The drive across France, the capture and development of your bridgehead over the Moselle River, the vital part that you and your division played in the capture of the heretofore impregnable city of Metz, and the crossing of the Saar River into the Siegfried Lines are but a few of the many and difficult missions which your command has undertaken and completed in a superior manner.

2. The aggressive and efficient manner in which you carried out your pointed tasks reflects great credit upon your division and upon you as its Commanding General. Your sound judgment, untiring efforts and the highly efficient manner in which you employed your division and attached troops contributed materially to the operational success of the XX Corps. Your immediate and accurate appraisal of every situation, and the complete cooperation tendered by you, together with the vigor with which your troops undertook these missions has been most noteworthy.

3. I extend my personal thanks and those of the XX Corps to you and to your officers and warrant officers and enlisted men for a splendid example of cheerfulness, indomitable spirit and courage under trying battle conditions.

WALTON H. WALKER  
Major General, United States Army  
Commanding

# 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION

## REPORT OF OPERATIONS

### FOR MONTH

### OF

### FEBRUARY 1945

### PART I

## SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

February began with the 90th Division attacking toward the SIEGFRIED West Wall, carrying out its assigned role of protecting the right of VIII Corps as it attacked to the Northeast.

Following a crossing of the ice-covered OUR River in bitter winter weather, the Division had driven four miles into Germany and now was preparing to completely secure and consolidate its final objective – the high ground Southwest of SCHNEE-EIFEL.

The three infantry regiments were positioned on an 18,000 yard front with the 357th anchored at LEILER and astride the OUR River to DER LOCH WALD where it connected with 358th Infantry. The latter continued the line to the Northeast and tied in with the 359th rear.

359th, making the final drive in the containing arc, held WALLMERATH, WEINTERSPELT and EIGELSCHEID. On the Division right, 90th Reconnaissance Troop reinforced, with Company D, 712th Tank Battalion, defended the 2000 additional yards South from LEILER to the 6th Armored Division at KALTBORN. The Division Command Post was still at WILWERDANGE, LUXEMBOURG.

On the Division's left, 4th Infantry Division's 12th Infantry Regiment had pulled abreast of the 359th near GROSSLANGENFELD. The remainder of the Division was advancing slowly to circle toward BRANDSCHEID in the heart of the SIEGFRIED LINE where the 4th had been before its relief some weeks before. Above the 4th was the 87th Infantry Division, making the main effort, which raced toward GERMANY on trucks as it found its blows striking thin air. This unit had not yet contacted the SIEGFRIED barrier.

#### 1 February 1945

Action during the morning was confined to patrols as the regiments felt out the enemy defense. Fighting again on home soil, the enemy used all their knowledge of the terrain and the support of the SIEGFRIED guns to delay and obstruct our advance.

In the afternoon the two left regiments thrust again. Using all three Battalions, 358th Infantry overrode the resolute enemy to capture HECKUSCHEID and the adjacent ground. B and C Companies captured the town and 70 prisoners by 2000. Company A remained at HECKHALENFELD and covered the lateral gap on the regimental left. All units received heavy mortar fire.

During the morning a 359th patrol scouted GROSSLANGENFELD to see if the Germans intended to fight for the town. They did, and fired machine guns at the investigators. Forewarned therefore, the 2nd Battalion launched an attack at 1500 in the afternoon across the rugged country and wrested the town from enemy hands. 3rd Battalion came up from AUDEL to relieve the 1st Battalion who moved to positions at WINTERSPELT, WALLMERATH and AUDEL.

357th Infantry continued to harass the enemy with combat patrols.

Rains and warmer weather of the past two days started the snow to melt. The ground softened and streams were overburdened with excess water. The bridge at OBERHAUSEN washed out and 315th Engineer Battalion installed an assault boat ferry in its stead over the OUR River, which spread from six to 100 feet in width.

Corps reported that units on the left were out of contact with the enemy. Accordingly, Division Field Message Number 28, issued in 2010, directed that on 2nd February the regimental zones be cleared of enemy Southeast to the previously established patrol line. Present positions were to be consolidated, and aggressive patrols were to maintain enemy contact. Any indications of enemy withdrawal were to be immediately reported.

On this day Division lost to a higher command Major General JAMES A. VAN FLEET, who had guided the 90th in its MOSELLE and SAAR River crossings, in its role in puncturing the BASTOGNE bulge and on across the OUR River into GERMANY. Major General LOWELL H. ROOKS assumed command.

Division CP remained at WILWERDANGE.

### 2 February 1945

Aside from vigorous patrolling and occasional clashes, the day was relatively inactive though still punctuated by enemy mortar and artillery fire.

Since all objectives had been attained, it was now desired to free some of the committed units from the line to gain reserves and allow the rotation and rest of the troops. Until such time as the area West of the OUR River could be sloughed off, it was decided to hold this 5000 yard front with a task force (Task Force DE PUY) consisting of 1st Battalion 357th Infantry, 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company D 712th Tank Battalion, and one Platoon Company A, 315th Medical Battalion. The area East of the OUR River was reallocated to the 358th Infantry and 359th Infantry. 357th Infantry (-) was to move into reserve in the area WEISWAMPACH-LEITHUM. Division Field Order Number 52 directed these changes and the organization of the ground.

### 3 February 1945

The road situation was fast becoming critical. Abnormally heavy traffic of military vehicles over the constricted road net, already softened by thaw, caused the road beds to cave and buckle like wet cardboard. Vehicles ground hub-deep, straining their motors to get through washed-out areas.

The OUR River ice had broken into floes which piled and jammed, threatening bridges until demolished by 315th Engineers.

During the night a patrol from 358th Infantry surprised and captured 16 enemy at BERG without firing a shot. A patrol from 359th Infantry went to a house at 934495, fought a sharp engagement, and returned with 11 prisoners. Patrolling continued throughout the day as 358th and 359th Infantry's assumed control of their new areas. In both regiments, 2nd and 3rd Battalions remained online.

Task Force DE PUY relieved 357th Infantry West of the River, completing the relief by 0800. 357th 2nd Battalion, relieved by 358th Infantry, moved to LEITHUM. 3rd Battalion assembled at WEISWAMPACH and the Regiment in Division Reserve submitted its plans for counterattack. 359th planned a demonstration to assist 4th Infantry Division's attack on BRANDSCHEID.

The turned earth from newly dug-in positions was hardly cold when Corps warned the Division to expect relief in part by 11th Armored Division, at present in Corps Reserve, and 6th Armored Division, so that the 90th could continue to attack to the Southeast in conjunction with the rest of the VIII Corps.

#### 4 February 1945

Corps Field Order Number 8, confirming the above, was received at 1250 and directed the 11th Armored Division to relieve elements of the 90th Division 052400. The entire Corps then would attack through the SIEGFRIED LINE at H-Hour D-Day. The 90th's mission was to go through elements of the 4th Infantry Division vicinity BRANDSCHEID to seize PRONSFELD while the 4th aimed for PRUM.

Several difficulties now loomed to make it appear that relief would be delayed. Incessant drizzles had reduced roads to an impasse. The main road through BURGREULAND was canalized into a narrow, muddy bottleneck that taxed engineers and military police alike to keep open to traffic. The heavy vehicles of the 11th Armored Division, crawling through STEFFENSHAUSEN, stalled on the slippery slopes just beyond and armor stretched bumper-to-bumper as far back as WILWERDANGE.

Further, West of the OUR, VIII Corps had parceled out part of its area to 6th Armored Division. The latter, still in III Corps, had as yet no orders for taking over the new sector.

Nonetheless, the reliefs were accomplished in good time. By sundown CCR, 11th Armored Division had relieved 3rd Battalion 359th and 358th Infantries. This latter regiment assembled its 1st Battalion at HECKHALENFELD, 2nd Battalion at STUPBACH and 3rd Battalion at WILWERDANGE.

At 1500, 6th Armored Division received its instructions and immediately relieved 90th Reconnaissance Troop and Company B, 357th Infantry, completing it by 1730. This left only Company C to be relieved by 41st Cavalry Squadron of the 11th Armored Division. One platoon was relieved after dark and the rest of the company the following morning. 90th Reconnaissance Troop assembled at HOLLER in Division Reserve.

Division Command Post moved by infiltration from WILWERDANGE, LUXEMBOURG to BURG-REULAND, BELGIUM, where it opened at 1530.

Division Field Order Number 53 was issued at 1600 and detailed the continuation of the attack. It confirmed the reliefs already in progress and ordered 359th Infantry to assist the attack of 4th Infantry Division against BRANDSCHEID and the high ground to the Southwest in coordination with the 11th Armored Division. Lastly, the Regiment was to protect the Division's right flank.

357th Infantry, earmarked for Division Reserve, was directed to assemble vicinity WINTERSPELT, prepared to pass through 359th Infantry and continue the attack.

358th Infantry was to relieve elements 4th Infantry Division after capture of BRANDSCHEID and continue attack to PRONSFELD.

At 1700 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry closed at HEMMERES.

#### 5 February 1945

The morning opened with 359th's demonstration against HABSCHEID and HOLLNICH to assist the 4th Infantry Division's attack at 0800. Using every means to predicate an attack, the Regiment before dawn moved vehicles and armor freely in the front-line area. Mortar fire was increased and patrolling stepped up.

At 0745 915th FA Battalion smothered the two towns with a four Battalion TOT (Time On Target). Then followed two Battalions of medium guns on each town every five minutes for a half-hour. Two Battalions of light artillery fired South and East of those towns. All roads in the area were interdicted at two-minute intervals. Smoke was limited and, since visibility was poor, none was fired.

Company B 712th Tank Battalion made a limited sortee against HABSCHEID and fired on pillboxes in the area.

To all of this the enemy was strangely silent.

The rest of the day was devoted to preparation for the attack as D-Day H-Hour was announced as 060400A February. The artillery battalions moved from the west bank of the OUR River to new

positions from which to support the attack. 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry staged forward to EIGELSCHEID. 358th Infantry assembled in late afternoon and evening in the vicinity of WINTERSCHEID.

As road tie-ups greatly delayed the movement of the 3rd Battalion from WILWERDANGE, the 358th was instructed to relieve 22nd Infantry, 3rd Battalion by 0700 in the morning, but not to attack until completely set. Attached tanks and tank destroyers had not arrived but the 22nd Infantry's tanks with their 3rd Battalion were to remain until they did.

By late afternoon 4th Infantry Division had secured stoutly defended BRANDSCHEID, taking 150 PWs. On 90th Division right 11th Armored Division finished its preparation for attack at the same time as the 90th.

### 6 February 1945

At 0400 the attack began. Three Battalions of the 359th Infantry moved off together, 2nd, 1st, 3rd, left to right. In the black night they moved undetected through the maze of dragon's teeth, barbed wire, mine fields and pillboxes. First enemy reaction came at 0600 as a machine gun opened fire at 3rd Battalion. By daylight, however, all assault Companies were in HABSCHEID.

A and L Companies, both in reserve, were stopped at a roadblock which the engineers prepared for demolition. Unwittingly, the Road ahead was left to be swept later. The explosion, about daylight, startled the enemy into wakefulness and bypassed pillboxes to the right rear, covering the block, stirred into action. Enemy machine guns and small arms raked the road, nullifying any further advanced by A or L or attempts by engineers to sweep the road. Enemy artillery, nebelwerfer, mortar and high velocity fire shook the town and splashed along the roads leading into town.

With all of its Battalions hemmed into HABSCHEID the Regiment had no recourse but to clear up within the area so that supporting tanks and tank destroyers could be brought forward to bolster the attack. Particularly troublesome where the boxes covering the roadblock and Companies A and L were assigned to reduce these.

Open terrain and grazing fire denied maneuver and it was not until a supporting 155 mm self-propelled gun jockeyed into position at 1530 and opened up direct fire that the Germans fled their cover and the bottleneck was broken. Other obstacles were removed and tanks and tank destroyers moved forward after dark to their Battalions. 3rd Battalion was directed to make a night attack. Contact by Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon with 11th Armored Division was arranged.

358th Infantry walked into a hornet's nest at BRANDSCHEID as 1st Battalion began to relieve 3rd Battalion 22nd Infantry at 0445. One company was relieved and the other two were in process when approximately 450 Germans, supported by three assault guns, counterattacked at 0600. Both units turned to and some hours of confused fighting followed. About midday the attack was quelled and 170 Germans were prisoners. Both B Company 358th and K Company 22nd Infantry had elements cut off. 2nd Battalion passed two companies through 1st Battalion to secure a line of departure. Then Company I relieved Company A 1st Battalion on left and maintained contact with 4th Infantry Division.

An indication of the enemy's desperate efforts to block penetrations of the SIEGFRIED LINE came from interrogation of the PWs taken in the counterattack. The attacking unit, known as Task Force GERLAND (after its Lieutenant Colonel Commander) consisted of two Kampfgruppe and was given the mission of retaking and holding BRANDSCHEID. One group of approximately 220 men from I and III Battalions, 14th Nebelwerfer Regiment. Neither officers nor men had been used as Infantry before. The second KG consisted of artillerymen and had a strength of 150-170 men. At the last moment 1st Company, 278th Engineer Battalion of 60 men were ordered to participate in the attack. All units suffered heavy casualties as well as prisoner losses.

357th Infantry moved 1st and 2nd Battalions by way of ST VITH to WINTERSPELT and WALLMERATH respectively, closing in late morning. 3rd Battalion jumped forward to

EIGELSCHEID. The Regiment made plans to move 1st the 3rd Battalions through 359th at HABSCHEID and 0130 the following morning to seize the two hills beyond the town. 2nd Battalion was allocated as Division Reserve.

On the right 11th Armored had reportedly reached their objective where they sustained a counterattack of company strength in early morning. On our left 4th Division had seized HONTHEIM, SELLERICH and HERSCHEID.

### 7 February 1945

Starting at 0130 as planned, 357th moved in column of companies through HABSCHEID with 3rd Battalion leading. This Battalion was to bypass the first hill (510) and seize the one beyond (511). 1st Battalion was to capture Hill 510.

Covering darkness made control difficult and the column moved slowly. Beyond the town 1st Battalion sent Company A to the East while B and C followed Company K to Southeast at rear of 3rd Battalion. The enemy on Hill 500 opened fire on this group and split Company K. One part of K and one platoon of C continued on. Company A tried to swing onto Hill 510 from the Northeast but made no headway against the enemy fire. Supporting tanks came up. The lead tank hit mines and was disabled.

In the morning the 3rd Battalion (-) with part of Company C was in the saddle between the two hills. Company B and balance of Companies C and K were just Southeast of HABSCHEID.

359's advance was temporarily stymied by elements of 357th still intermingled. 1st Battalion moved at 0645 almost immediately running into trouble from pillboxes to their front. 3rd Battalion got underway at 0830 moving South out of HABSCHEID. Advance was from pillbox to pillbox as the Germans countered with high velocity, nebelwerfer and machine gun fire. Again enlisting the aid of the 155 mm self-propelled gun, companies I and K worked over the area. Men from antitank Company occupied the boxes as captured to enable the assault elements to continue.

Overcoming the initial resistance, 1st Battalion 359th worked slowly along the draw Southwest out of HABSCHEID. Company C captured HOLLNICH at midday. Company A pushed on down the nose above HOLLNICH while Company B proceeded to the next nose where it made contact with 357th. 15 pillboxes were reduced. Company L moved out at 1150 along the road Southwest out of HABSCHEID with two tanks and two tank destroyers. Company I mopped up behind for a Battalion total of 40 pillboxes for the two days.

In midafternoon 2nd Battalion began to canvass the pillboxes northeast of HABSCHEID. By dark they were just out of HABSCHEIDER MILL and had taken out 30 boxes since the operation began. 85 PWs total were captured by the Regiment.

In 358, 1st Battalion began a methodical mop up of pillboxes on the ridge to the Southwest. Company C led off and used tanks and tank destroyers as a base of fire to knock out pillboxes one by one. The method was so successful that assault teams moved right on without much leapfrogging. High velocity and mortar fire came from the right flank. Artillery blinded with smoke Hill 519 where it was thought the enemy had observation. The fire lessened considerably. 10 pillboxes and over 80 prisoners were taken before the Battalion was ordered to halt for the night after an advance of 900 yards.

2nd Battalion jumped off also at 0530, encountering artillery, mortar and small arms fire. They advanced deliberately 800 yards but were harassed by mortar fire. Artillery smoked Hill 521 and fired 1350 rounds of ammunition to search out troublesome mortars.

3rd Battalion made its attack at 0630. Having no pillboxes, the Battalion advanced rapidly despite enemy minefields which took 16 casualties. They overran a mortar position, capturing 15 surprised Germans and three emplaced mortars. The Battalion was ordered to halt on Hill 521 after an advance of 2000 yards. Cooks, bakers, and antitank men formed a Task Force GRUBBS, which was sent to relieve the 3rd Battalion so it could attack Hill 519 in the morning.

90th Reconnaissance Troop, attached to the 358th Infantry, maintained contact with the 4th Infantry Division on left. 110 PWs total were captured by the 358th, while it suffered 50 battle casualties.

Meanwhile, with open ground all around, 3rd Battalion 357th was hard hit by enemy mortar, nebelwerfer and artillery fire which came from three sides. The Battalion dug in while awaiting further support.

At 1800 1st Battalion swept forward and gained contact with 3rd Battalion. Both Battalions consolidated for the night. Companies I and L faced South on Hill 511 while Company K occupied a pillbox and the area to the immediate North.

On the Division left 4th Armored beat off several counterattacks. 11th Armored Division on the right held its positions.

### 8 February 1945

At 0500 several hundred Germans with assault guns and tanks counterattacked Company K, 357th in attempt to regain Hill 511. The pillbox on the Hill changed hands three times in the severe fighting which continued throughout the day. Supporting tanks moved up to help repel the attack only to be knocked out by enemy high velocity and artillery fire as they moved down the forward slope. At length the attack was beaten off with 15 men captured by the Germans. 50 PWs were taken. Enemy artillery pounded the position relentlessly throughout the day. No further advance was attempted. Company F was moved from WINTERSPELT to occupy pillboxes. 1st Battalion was directed to seize the high ground North of MASTHORN.

Despite heavy mortar fire 1st Battalion 358th continued to reduce pillboxes Southwest of BRANDSCHEID. By dark 55 pill boxes were captured, 1800 yards gained and contact with 359 established vicinity of HABSCHEIDER MILL.

In the center, 2nd Battalion set its sights on Hill 519 but gained only 500 yards and some 25 PWs from 6 pillboxes.

In this area a squad of B Company 358th and one of K Company 22nd Infantry were recaptured. These were the men isolated during the attack early 6 February. They assisted by fire the attack of 1st Battalion on the 7th although unable to get out until overrun.

During the night 3rd Battalion 358th on the left sent a task force towards Hill 519 but it was driven back by small arms and intense mortar fire and returned at 230. This fire continued all day and nullified attempts of I and K Companies to advance on the Hill.

359's 1st Battalion turned West to attack the high ground, coordinating their move with 3rd Battalion which had Company L reducing the pillboxes in the area. By nightfall, both battalions had cleared almost to the Division rear boundary. 2nd Battalion captured HABSCHEIDER MILL at 1330 and continued to reduce boxes to the Division left boundary despite considerable fire from across the river. In all, 25 boxes and 93 PWs were taken by the Regiment.

Division Command Post moved to WINTERSPELT, GERMANY.

In the Division area enemy TOT's increased during the day and hit heavily traveled roads as well as targets of opportunity. Single guns fired throughout the area and high velocity fire picked up and was very accurate. Mortar fire was heavy but troops took cover in pillboxes and received few casualties.

4th Division continued its advance but fought off repeated counterattacks as they closed on PRUM. 11th Armored Division still made no move forward.

### 9 February 1945

358th captured Hill 519 by midmorning after 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked together at 0800. Leaving only a few men per box, the bulk of the enemy forces had withdrawn and the Regiment advanced 2000

yards, capturing 12 boxes and 18 PWs. Task Force GRUBBS was disbanded in 1510 after having reported contact with 4th Infantry Division and no enemy between the forces.

The enemy pocketed between 11th Armored Division and 359th showed no inclination to withdraw and in fact fought stubbornly to prevent the area from being taken. Contact between 11th Armored and 359th Infantry still was by rear roads. K Company, attacking toward WEITERORDER, encountered 50-60 Germans and considerable high velocity and mortar fire. By dark the Company was still 200 yards short of the settlement. Company L cleared all but one pillbox in its area. 2nd Battalion assembled and moved to BRANDSCHEID in Division Reserve, closing at 1515.

1st Battalion 357th moved at midnight, but the extreme darkness and thickly wooded draw made progress slow. Not until 1000 did Company B in the lead reach the specified line. Company C echeloned to the left rear and contacted 3rd Battalion. Company A closed on B Company's right and reached out to contact the left flank of 359th. This was accomplished by 1530. No further advance was made.

2nd Battalion 357th was released to the Regiment and moved to join Company F at HABSCHEID. 3rd Battalions stayed in place except from patrols from Company L who found pillboxes to their front to be occupied.

On the far left 4th Infantry Division was through the lines, found light opposition and seized a bridge over the PRUM at HERMESPAND. Next to the 90th however, they continued to gain ground slowly.

#### 10 February 1945

The main crust of the SIEGFRIED LINE was now broken and there remained only a thin – but tough – inner shell to be pierced before the breach was complete. To this end the Division pressed its attack. The enemy countered with increased shelling from mortars, artillery and tanks.

At this time Corps issued its Field Order Number 9 which directed that upon seizure of the PRUM River line and capture of PRUM, VIII Corps would defend upon line LOSHEIM-PRUM-NUENDORF-OUR River.

The 90th Division was ordered to relieve elements of 11th Armored Division within a new zone extending from WATZERATH to the OUR River after seizure of PRUM River line and capture of MASTHORN. For this purpose 41st Cavalry Squadron was to be attached at the time responsibility was transferred.

Accordingly, 2nd Battalion, 357 was halted shortly after it jumped off and Battalion assembled that HOLLNICH. The regimental commander decided to let both 1st and 3rd Battalions clear their zone first and then have 2nd Battalion relieve and defend the entire front.

358th launched an attack with three battalions abreast and gained some 800 yards on the left and center. 1st Battalion moved several hundred yards to its objective and halted as ordered. From their positions all battalions could see the PRUM River and the towns of WEINFELD and WATZERATH. At 1430A 100 enemy launched a counterattack North of PRONSFELD which artillery repulsed without loss of ground. Tank and destroyers and artillery destroyed three tanks and one self-propelled gun.

The mission of 359th was almost complete and the Regiment finished its task by clearing out three pillboxes on the right flank and patrolling to the front.

#### 11 February 1945

Limited objective attacks marked the day's effort. 357th moved shortly after midnight to secure a line just North of MASTHORN. K Company was on its objective by 0015. Company I by 0500 had secured the forward edge of the wooded area on the West side of the ridge. Company L made no headway against the pillboxes to its front which proved to be heavily guarded.

These boxes on the reverse slope covered the wide draw running down to PRONSFELD and in conjunction with positions on the reverse slope of the bald hill across the draw in the area of 358th first Battalion, they controlled this avenue of approach. Both areas were mutually supporting, covered by artillery and mortar fire and being on naked ground on a slope facing toward the enemy were virtually unapproachable during daylight. Once again it was questionable if the positions would be tenable because of the fire that could be laid upon it from the South.

358th was having its troubles too. Company I made three attempts during the night to enter WATZERATH but were stopped each time by cleverly concealed machine-gun fire.

At daylight a coordinated attack by all three battalions of 358th was launched. It moved easily on the left but on the right the enemy in front of 1st Battalion, 358th fought tenaciously to hold the high ground and ridge North of PRONSFELD. The Battalion forced the attack, however, and flanked an extended communication trench, rolling it up from the Northeast. Attempts to gain the bald knob beyond drew such heavy fire from the right flank and across the river that this objective was temporarily abandoned as not being worth the cost to take and hold. By slowing the attack on the ridge just captured, the enemy had apparently accomplished his objective: to cover the withdrawal of troops to the far side of the PRUM, from the WATZERATH-WEINSFELD area by way of PITTENBACH. Air OPs could see heavy vehicular movement in enemy rear areas, generally eastward, toward the PRONSFELD-LUNEBACH Road.

Company I slowed initially by delaying forces at WATZERATH, gained entrance to the town at 1015 and cleared it by 1100. At this point they gained a small bridgehead over the PRUM River which here was a rather insignificant stream a bear 20 feet wide. Part of the town overlapped the river and the Company executing its mission cleared the East bank as well. This fact was not evident until night at which time the Company was ordered back to comply with instructions for higher headquarters.

Company G, 358th bore down from a high ground Northwest of WEINSFELD to capture the town and 10 PWs at 0910. Companies E and F followed into the town.

At noon a planning conference of the regimental commanders was held to establish the defense of the Division area within its readjusted boundaries. The mainline of resistance was set along the present frontline to take advantage of the high ground. Corps had modified its plan so that 41st Cavalry Squadron remained under control of its own Group and the Division defense area was consequently reduced. Division Field Order number 54 at 1615 recorded the plan but action was begun immediately following the conference.

357th Infantry with 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached was directed to relieve elements of 11th Armored Division and 359th Infantry prior 120800A and 130800A respectively and then to defend the Division rear area.

358th Infantry was to relieve elements 357th within sector prior 130800A and to take over defense of Division left area. 2nd Battalion was to remain in place until relieved by 4th Infantry Division.

359th Infantry was ordered to assemble as Division Reserve.

To accomplish the above, 1st Battalion 358 relieved 3rd Battalion after dark and the latter moved to vicinity BRANDSCHEID preparatory to relieving 357th. 4th Infantry Division took over from 2nd Battalion 358, completing relief at 1845 and the Battalion moved at 2100 to HABSCHEID in regimental reserve, closing at 2400.

2nd Battalion 357 began relief of the Armored Infantry on the right shortly after dusk and completed the changeover at 0100 in the morning.

3rd Battalion 357 made another attempt to clear its area before its release the following night. At 2030 Company L sent two platoons to clear out and the pillboxes which were causing so much trouble.

12 February 1945

At first this attack went well. One pillbox was captured and occupied. From a PW later came the rest of the story. The Germans counterattacked, isolating the box with machine-gun fire and preventing outside protection from being effected. A demand for surrender was refused. The enemy then blew the box with demolitions, wounding seven men and an officer. Further resistance was ineffectual and the occupants capitulated. 29 men were taken prisoner. As if to prevent any further forays, the Germans heavily shelled 3rd Battalion area with high velocity fire during the afternoon. Then the sector fell strangely silent.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was placed on the right flank of the 2nd Battalion 357 to maintain contact with 11th Armored Division. 1st Battalion, 357 completely relieved 359 and 1830 and 1st Battalion 359 assembled at HOLLNICH while 3rd Battalion 359 moved to HECKHALENFELD. 3rd Battalion 358 began relief of 3rd Battalion 357 after dark, completing at 2355 without incident.

On Division left, 4th Infantry Division had overrun resistance to capture PRUM and held the near bank of the river within their sector. Some enemy remained yet to be cleared.

### 13-14-15 February 1945

Consolidation, rehabilitation and rotation of troops characterized these three days of relative quiet. The break was opportune for a wave of diarrhea from undetermined sources spread through the command to augment the already sizable figure of men ill with colds received from continued exposure to wet weather. All possible countermeasures were instituted and after several days the attacks ceased as suddenly as they came.

Minor relocations were made within units and police of the area instituted. This activity ceased after five men were killed and three wounded when a policing party of 358th 2nd Battalion hit a German minefield in the rear area.

Road conditions continued critical and Corps pressed all non-firing artillerymen, Tank destroyer and tank man into road maintenance. Partly for this reason and partly for experiment, the 4th Infantry Division on our left was supplied by parachute as wave after wave of C-47s hummed over 90th Division to drop their load in the area outlined by Pathfinder personnel and red smoke.

With a change of weather to clear skies and unlimited ceiling, our own air became active again and fighter-bombers began to work over the area in front of the Division with good results.

As the period closed preparations were underway to resume the attack on 18 February in accordance with Field Order Number 11 from VIII Corps. Some 30 miles to the South, XII Corps had also breached the SIEGFRIED LINE and the attack was planned to affect the junction are these two forces at MAUEL (L040647) and to clear the enemy from West of the PRUM River. For the Division this meant initially an attack toward the South down the flank of the West Wall, then a change of direction to the East.

359th Infantry had been directed to relieve 358th Infantry but this Corps order brought cancellation as Division planned to use the 358th in the attack and then pinch them out. 359th, therefore, was ordered to relieve the 357th after dark the night of 16 February.

### 16 February 1945

357th patrols reported some of the pillboxes to their front were now empty but the enemy apparently was only repositioning for there were no indications of a withdrawal along the immediate front.

Division Field Order Number 55 outlined the plan of attack for the 18:

“358th with 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached, relieve elements of 357th within zone and capture MASTHORN and high ground North of PRONSFELD.

359th on Division right, relieve elements of 357th within zone and capture road net at NDR and OBR UTTFELD the turn East to seize the high ground overlooking LUNEBACH.

357th assembly in Division Reserve after relief vicinity WINTERSCHEID, HECKUSCHEID, and HECKHALENFELD, prepared to pass through 359 and capture LICHTENBORN and KOPSCHEID.”

The scheduled reliefs were accomplished without incident except for 2nd Battalion 357th which received casualties from shelling during its shift from the line. 3rd Battalion 359 relieved 2nd Battalion 357 while a 2nd Battalion 359 relieved C Company 357.

358th used 90th Reconnaissance Troop to relieve Company B, 357 and reformed Task Force GRUBBS to free its own Company C.

### 17 February 1945

Preparations for the attack were concluded on this quiet day which saw little enemy activity. Our 8" guns harassed the bridge at PRONSFELD. After dark Company L, 359 occupied three pillboxes vacated by the enemy and then captured the six former occupants when they came back later in the evening.

### 18 February 1945

Launched as planned, without preparatory fires 359th's attack literally caught the Germans napping. Included in the 400 prisoners taken during the day were the regimental commander and staff and two battalion commanders and their staffs of 331st in 339th Regiments who were all taken in their pillboxes sound asleep. Two companies were taken prisoner almost intact and the rest were almost wholly destroyed. Numerous maps and documents of value were captured. Headed for KESFELD, Company I 359 bypassed pillboxes and raced into the town and 0530. After a short firefight, the town was clear. 2nd Battalion 359th moved initially without resistance and F Company occupied the high ground 1000 yards Southeast of WETTERORDER at 0705. Startled Germans, awakening to find themselves overrun, turned their weapons on reserve elements who began a methodical mop up that lasted most of the day. In all 48 pillboxes were taken by the two Battalions. 1st Battalion in column, A, C, B, passed through Company E at 1310 to attack OBR and NDR UTTFELD. Although they met no resistance be halted on order East of the main road 1000 yards East of KESFELD.

358th's 1st Battalion secured the hill North of PRONSFELD without trouble and lost only one man as casualty. 4 pillboxes and 33 PW's were captured in the area. A patrol to PRONSFELD drew heavy small arms and mortar fire. One platoon Company C and 2 tanks sortied toward PITTENBACH to clear the buildings on the near side of the river across from the town. A strong enemy force intervened and harried the task force until it was relieved by 12th Infantry, 4th Division, who now took over from 1st Battalion and Task Force GRUBBS as of 2000. 1st Battalion moved to HABSCHEID and Task Force GRUBBS to NDR HABSCHEID.

2nd Battalion 358 found the going rougher. Companies F and G had scarcely reached the top of pillboxes to their immediate front when they were blanketed by enemy artillery and machine-gun fire. The attack was stymied until daylight. Then by fire and maneuver all the boxes were reduced and 75 PWs taken from them. At 1300 2nd Battalion continued attack but gained only about 1000 yards.

3rd Battalion attacked through 90th Reconnaissance Troop of 1400 to capture MASTHORN. They encountered roadblocks, mines and booby traps as well as artillery and mortar fire which retarded progress. By night they were still North of MASTHORN.

357 continued in Division Reserve. 2nd Battalion moved from EIGELSCHEID to HECKHUSCHEID while 3rd Battalion staged forward from WINTERSCHEID to EIGELSCHEID.

Attacking one and a half hours after 90th Division, 11th Armored Division moved rapidly and captured LUTZHAMPEN and LIEDENBORN.

### 19 February 1945

Resistance slackened perceptibly as the attack resumed in early morning hours. Within an hour 3rd Battalion 358 had seized MASTHORN and a second hour placed 2nd Battalion 358 atop Hill 477 West of PRONSFELD. Then furious at being forced back, the Germans laid concentration after concentration on both positions. But battlewise, neither unit suffered a casualty.

Using 1st Battalion in attack and 2nd Battalion to mop up to Division right boundary 359 hopped off against light resistance. At 1050 Company A was in OBR UTTFELD while Company C had NDR UTTFELD. Both Companies began cleaning out pillboxes in the vicinity. Intense high velocity, 20 mm and artillery fire formed an effective barrier to progress to the woods East of the two towns. One patrol from 1st Battalion ran the gauntlet of fire only to be pinned down by cross-firing machine guns until dark when the patrol made its way back. L and K Companies moved in on 1st Battalion's left prepared to continue to the East. 2nd Battalion reverted to regimental reserve.

357th was now committed to pass through 359's right flank and wheel East to the River. Accordingly, 2nd Battalion moved off at 1350 from NDR UTTFELD with Company F out front with their objective the Hill just North of HOUF.

The Germans had the advantage of position here, looking down a long open slope from LICHTENBORN and the enemy made the most of it. From this dominant seat he could unroll a carpet of artillery fire in the path of the approaching troops. Supplementing this fire were two 40 mm AA guns in pillboxes that covered the town and road into town. F Company exploited the limited maneuver by attempting to outflank the objective. Progress was slow and was finally halted while E and G Companies were infiltrated forward to give additional support. Darkness fell as the movement was in progress and ended further advance. Company D 712th Tank Battalion and 90th Reconnaissance Troop were combined as Task Force GASSMAN and attached to 357 to cover regimental right flank. Given the mission of seizing BINSCHIED, the Task Force approached the town from two directions. As this proved to be too big a bite to swallow without infantry help, the Task Force was ordered back to a point 1000 yards East of LEIDENBORN on the regimental right boundary. 1st Battalion 357 moved to HECKHUSCHEID.

Division plan called for 358 to drive past 357 as it turned and continue South then swing East to make the actual contact at MAUEL. 2nd Battalion 358 therefore relieved 3rd Battalion 358 at MASTHORN after dark and occupied the entire zone. Next day 2nd Battalion was to be attached to 359. 3rd Battalion 358 assembled at HABSCHIED while 1st Battalion proceeded to HECKHALENFELD to await forthcoming action.

Once again the Germans strove desperately to hold their ground. But their positions were as shifting sand as the Division ground relentlessly forward. The enemy threw in everything he had to gain time. Delay. Delay. He fought from strong points and log bunkers until blown out by tank fire at point-blank range. He brought his own tanks and self-propelled guns to counter fire. But while he slowed, he could not stop the advance. He backed off fighting.

359 broke through the crust of resistance at the near edge of the woods East of OBR and NDR UTTFELD, then moved easily through the thick trees to consolidate on the eastern edge in late afternoon prepared to attack to the PRUM River in the morning.

357 gained HOUF and the hill to the North after hard fighting by 2nd Battalion. To avoid a suicidal frontal attack over the open ground to LICHTENBORN, 3rd Battalion assembled north of the railroad tracks Northwest of STALBACH. At midnight the Battalion would attack the high ground of

both LICHTENBORN with assault Companies bypassing STALBACH, leaving it to the reserve Company. Attempts by Task Force GASSMAN and Company A to take BINSCHIED were repulsed.

358 rested easily in Division Reserve as it was yet to early for their commitment. 2nd Battalion remained attached to avoid burdening 359 before it took its final objectives.

Fighter bombers attacked a convoy moving into WAXWEILER at 1215A in support of the Division and reported destruction of 38 motor trucks, 5 horse-drawn vehicles and 1 tank damaged. 4 guns were strafed and silenced.

### 21 February 1945

Resistance in front of 3rd Battalion 357 was light initially as it moved out in attack at midnight. One platoon Company K pulled away from the others and climbed to vicinity of objective capturing 16 PWs. Then contact with it was lost. Firing from pillboxes along the edge of the woods near LICHTENBORN, the Germans held off K and L Companies for most of the day while Company I cleared STALBACH. With the 3rd Battalion reserve tied up, C and B Companies were brought up on 3rd Battalion's left and the additional pressure aided by air support slackened the resistance in front of 3rd Battalion. Fighter-bombers knocked out an enemy gun and strafed enemy troops at LICHTENBORN.

Both Battalions pushed forward while 2nd Battalion continued attacking South and Southeast. By dark, the high ground was gained and 1st and 3rd Battalions joined on it. The missing platoon was contacted none the worse for its 15 hours of isolation. Meanwhile Task Force GASSMAN and Company A attacked and captured BINSCHIED at 1700, taking 50 PWs.

The Task Force then passed control of 358 as it went through the town while Company A reverted to control of 1st Battalion.

359's attack at 0700 turned into a series of short jabs as movement over the open ground toward EUSCHIED and STRICKSCHEID drew machine gun, mortar and high velocity fire. Company A worked its way just short of EUSCHIED but could advance no further. Company I moved slowly down the road toward STRICKSCHEID after taking a pillbox at HOFSWALD. At 1000 1st Battalion was directed to relieve pressure on Company A by attacking high ground 1000 yards South of EUSCHIED. B Company moved toward this objective. Company L also ordered forward, moved on left of Company A. Under cover of smoke and using artillery to flush the Germans from hiding, Company I entered and cleared STRICKSCHEID in early afternoon. They threw back a small counterattack at 1410 with artillery fire then captured the high ground northeast of town at 2100. Company B now was getting fire from Hill 502 (ENKELS BOIS). Company C therefore attacked the Hill, captured it, then moved on to seize EUSCHIED at 2050. Company B continued to its objective while Company A cleared the area up to EUSCHIED.

2nd Battalion 358 had been attached at noon. 359 now was notified to relieve it and release it to 358. Company K and Antitank Company were dispatched to accomplish this.

The time was ripe to use 358 and Division at 1300 ordered the regiment to clear out by dark the draw between HICKESHAUSEN and HALENBACH. 3rd Battalion was alerted at 1310, moved 6 miles by motor, organized and launched its attack. This decisive action came as a surprise to the Germans who could offer only light resistance. By 2000 Company I had captured HICKESHAUSEN and Company L secured HALENBACH. The cost: 4 casualties. These gains added impetus to the crumbling German defense.

Division ordered Task Force SPIESS to be formed by daylight and attached to 358. This unit was composed of Headquarters 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion (-); 1 Platoon Company C, 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company D 712th Tank Battalion, 1 Platoon Company B 315th Engineer Battalion, Company C 358th Infantry and Antitank Company 358 Infantry. The unit would form at HOUF for employment on the right flank.

## 22 February 1945

Disintegration of the German defenses was evident as 358 Task Force SPIESS ran rampant over 5000 yards of enemy territory, capturing four towns, 300 PWs, 4 self-propelled guns, one tank and many horse-drawn artillery pieces.

1st Battalion 358th Infantry made a night motor march from HECKHALENFELD to vicinity of BINSCHIED from where they launched an attack to capture HOLZCHEN and high ground 1000 yards East of town, bypassing ARZFELD enroute. They hit resistance a mile beyond HALENBACH. Company A eliminated this, capturing 2 officers and 40 men. The attack then moved rapidly to HOLZCHEN which was taken about 2030 and final objective was seized at 2200. One squad of Company A caught some 100 PWs, mostly artillerymen, on the high ground East of HOLZCHEN as they tried frantically to hitch their horses and escape. PWs stated our troops had overrun all their positions.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry set out to capture ARZFELD which they did in late morning after applying artillery to some tanks which delayed the advance. Here they overran a mortar platoon. Having used plenty of firepower, the unit halted to replenish ammunition. Resupplied 1700 they jumped off again for WINDHAUSEN taking that town in 2030.

Task Force SPIESS swept along the right flank of the regiment capturing the high ground from Southwest of HECKESHAUSEN to Southeast of NEURATH. They seized a mortar platoon and 4 self-propelled guns intact. As Task Force SPIESS was unable to occupy such an extended area (some 5000 yards), 2nd Battalion 358 was brought to take over the high ground closest in.

At 0700 1st Battalion 357th Infantry attacked LICHTENBORN. 5 enemy tanks opposed this advance. One tank was knocked out and the other four withdrew. Companies B and C then moved into the town occupying it by 0900.

From the ridge line South of the town several self-propelled guns opened up and the 3rd Battalion was ordered to capture this point. Their advance met Infantry and tanks but by midafternoon they had pushed to the "Y" fork South of LICHTENBORN. Here they turned East and attacked in conjunction with 1st Battalion. Enemy "Tiger Royal" tanks stopped both Battalions until darkness. At 2000 the offensive was renewed just as enemy Infantry counterattacked 1st Battalion. Artillery fire dissipated the attack. Both Battalions continued meeting resistance.

359th cleared their area without much opposition and consolidated their positions. 2nd Battalion relieved 1st Battalion which assemble that KESFELD. Patrols to LUNEBACH found the bridge blown and dug-in positions empty. No enemy activity was heard.

90th Division Artillery with perfect visibility for air OP's, fired 43 air-observed missions. As a result during the day 7 enemy tanks were knocked out and 4 others probably knocked out. 3 self-propelled or assault guns were destroyed as well as 6 antitank guns, two 88's and 15 vehicles.

11th Armored Division captured ESCHFELD and REIFF and mopped up its area maintaining contact with our right flank units. 6th Armored Division and 6th Cavalry Group which had attacked across the OUR River two days before were driving fast to the East.

## 23 February 1945

The Germans made a determined stand with tanks and Infantry at KOPSCHEID as 1st Battalion 357th approached the town and exhaustive fighting continued throughout the night. At daylight the Battalion gained a foothold in the town and finally cleared it by 0940. One of our tanks was knocked out in this fight. Company A then went on to capture KINZENBURG.

3rd Battalion 357th meanwhile was concerned with 4 enemy tanks rattling around in their rear. All available weapons were used on them without result. Finally K and I Companies bypassed the tanks leaving them for Company L. Before L Company could close with them the tanks withdrew.

K and L moved on to the ridge line West of MANDERSCHEID at daylight intending to attack the town later in the day. At 1100 they were ordered to stand fast while a run was made to seize the bridge as WAXWEILER.

2nd Battalion 357th drew this assignment and reached the town just after dark. Some fighting took place to clear the West Bank. Company F deployed along the West Bank to gain the bridge. The Germans blew it at 2345. Without a bridge, a crossing was not desired and the Battalion withdrew to an assembly area South of LICHTENBORN. The area was turned over to 358th Infantry.

In the interim Company I was ordered into MANDERSCHEID and the unit occupied the town at 1730. B Company thereupon relieved Company I and 1st Battalion took the entire front of the regimental zone.

358th and Task Force SPIESS augmented by B Company 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion swooped through enemy rear areas not giving the Germans time to dig-in. This incessant pressure added 4000 more yards of ground again, 4 enemy tanks and 5 self-propelled guns knocked out or captured as well as 200 prisoners taken.

Like 357th, 1st Battalion 358 was harassed by two stray enemy tanks in the hours after midnight. The tanks finally withdrew to the East. 1st Battalion moved out at 0730, knocked out one tank and 2 self-propelled guns, captured 80 PWs and rode on to their objective (LAUPERATH and Vic) on Tank destroyers without further resistance. At this point they received orders to capture the bridge at WAXWEILER and moved off at 1730. 357th beat them to the town, however, and the Battalion held up organizing the high ground west of the River. Company E was attached to outpost the area vacated by 2nd Battalion 357th.

3rd Battalion captured KRAUTSCHEID in late morning and were held there with orders to capture BELLSCHEID in late afternoon. These orders were canceled and the Battalion held its position, having already a fair catch: 2 tanks; 100 PWs, 4 motorcycles, 1 150 mm gun with prime mover, 1 staff car, 2 self-propelled guns and several horses with saddles.

2nd Battalion 358th moved in regimental reserve to HOLZCHEN in midafternoon.

Task Force SPIESS cleared HEILBACH, UPPERSHAUSEN and BERKOTH capturing a reported 89 PWs. The enemy shelled BERKOTH heavily, then slacked off during the night.

359th Infantry held its positions patrolling toward LUNEBACH.

The Air Force flew 13 missions in front of the 90th in the general vicinity NEUERBURG-PHILIPPSWEILER-WAXWEILER and a 5 mile radius East of the PRUM. They estimated the following destroyed or damaged: 75 tanks, 90 motor trucks, 90 armored vehicles, 1 supply dump and several mobile guns. Troop concentrations also were hit.

## 24 February 1945

357, 359 and 1st and 2nd Battalions 358 remained in their areas while 3rd Battalion 358th made the final offensive on the Division right. Moving out at 0800, the battalion seized BELLSCHEID, RINGHUSCHEID, OBERPIERSCHEID and NDR PIERSCHEID in just one and three quarters hours. The Battalion took two casualties and captured 25 PWs. Task Force SPIESS seized the high ground a few hundred yards West of PHILIPPSWEILER. Permission to enter the town was refused by Corps since it was out of our area.

Fighter-bombers flew 7 missions around PHILIPPSWEILER, OBERWEILER, OBERLAUCH, PLUTSCHEID, DACKSCHEID and LASCHEID and hit tanks, vehicles, CPs and troop concentrations.

1st Battalion 359th reverted to its regiment as Division received word it would assemble in Corps Reserve after relief by 6th Armored Division in 6th Cavalry Group. These units had made contact with each other and with the 80th Division moving up from the South. The 30 mile pincer was fast closing. Aside from 87th Division which was to attack on 27 February on the Corps North flank, VIII Corps was temporarily taking a defensive position along the PRUM.

The German's uncanny ability to recover crippled tanks again manifested itself. The day before, 8" guns had knocked the turret off a "Tiger Royal". Now only the turret and useless gun remained, torn from the hull. Examination of the tracks showed the headless vehicle had moved off apparently under its own power.

The reliefs by 6th Armored Division and 6th Cavalry Group were accomplished without event and the units assembled in their new areas.

25-28 February 1945

It would have been difficult to get less suitable space for a unit supposed to get a rest. The area assigned was already crowded with Corps troops, who could not be moved since they were supporting the front, and by the rear elements of the units on line. The ground had been thoroughly fought over in villages laid waste by artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, mortars and air power. Those pillboxes not burst open by tank and tank destroyer fire were split asunder by explosives. Dead animals were everywhere. In the warming days, their fetid stench was increasingly nauseating. The men of the Division collected and buried the dead animals and improvised shelters. Pyramidal tents were requisitioned and used.

The units settled down to brief training schedules and recreation and rehabilitation of personnel. Thus a month of hard slugging ended quietly as 90th Division slipped from Corps to SHAEF Reserve.

VIII Corps however, jumped off in attack to capture the high ground West of the KYLL River to effect a juncture with XII Corps vicinity DENSBORN. (L-1870).

\* \* \* \* \*

In the summing up, February was a month of conquest – conquest of dirty weather, of concrete and barbed wire, of stubborn enemy groups committed to a "do-or-die" effort to hold the West Wall.

This much touted barrier itself proved no match for the skill and courage and the mode of attack shown by our troops. Everywhere it crumbled – crushed and ground to bits by the inexorable force of the American onslaught. Notwithstanding its thinly-manned but stubborn defense, the West Wall's speedy reduction is a tribute to the drive and fighting qualities of the American soldier and the men of the 90th and attached units. Over 500 pillboxes and log bunkers had to be captured and destroyed. 3195 prisoners were taken, 25 tanks and 13 self-propelled guns were captured or knocked out, besides a cornucopia of other enemy materiel.

The Reich was entered; the West Wall broken. Now the Division looked East – to the blue RHINE, the next most formidable barrier.

ROOKS  
COMMANDING  
BOOTH  
G-3

## BREACHING THE SIEGFRIED LINE

What were the factors in the 90th's successful reduction of the Siegfried Line? At first it looked like an insurmountable problem. The ground was hub-deep with mud, streams were thaw-flooded and the incessant rains made air cover something to wish for. After initial contact it was found that pillboxes were far more numerous than shown on defense over-prints. Some were adeptly camouflaged. The enemy usually fought stubbornly until completely surrounded. Lastly, in spite of ammunition shortages, the enemy supported his positions with some artillery, considerable deadly nebelwerfer and mortar fire, high velocity fire from gasless tanks dug in as artillery, as well as some roving tanks and self-propelled guns.

But in actual fact, the West Wall, though formidable, was far from impregnable as had been supposed. In the States the Division had trained on attacking the perfect defensive position. But the real thing was far from perfect as the Division had experienced at DILLINGEN and TETTINGEN. It could be cracked.

Here, the dragon's teeth were largely ineffective. Mines and Barbed wire, though plentiful, were still not as profuse as anticipated. The pillboxes themselves – contrary to those at DILLINGEN – served more as troop shelters and the fighting was done mainly from around and outside of them. While this gave the enemy better fields of fire – since many of the boxes were on reverse slopes – they similarly made him more vulnerable to artillery and mortar fire. Further, in each area was a key box whose reduction left the others easy prey. Quick to learn this, our units directed their efforts to establishing the key and reducing it first, thus unlocking the defense of that area. In general this was done, though not as easily as the writing of it.

Other factors contributing to the Division's success include:

Timing, since the Division attacked as part of a large-scale assault when the enemy was most harried. The Russian drive from the East was gaining sledgehammer momentum. The Germans were not yet recovered from the Ardennes Disaster.

The enemy troops were insufficient in number, lacking in Weapons (most pillboxes had only machine guns and an occasional bazooka) and were low in morale. They were motley groups thrown together, hodgepodge, from every kind of units – infantry, engineers, artillery, Air Force, service troops, etc. Some Were First-Rate Soldiers who fought hard and well. But too many were a raggle-taggle of scraps. Some had no infantry training at all. Many did not even know the units to which they were assigned. As a result, the Germans' favored defense – the counterattack – was almost nullified. The enemy soldier's morale suffered when they learned from our propaganda, our news leaflets, and our overwhelming their positions that they had been sold down the river by their top commanders. When they realized they were just bodies with trigger fingers placed in the path of a Juggernaut, many became disillusioned and gave up. Our troops took more prisoners each day than the enemy could replace in a week.

The successful application of fundamental training doctrines as originally learned in the States by key personnel still with the Division and developed by experience with the Mansion Forts and previous Siegfried Line encounters was another item. Positions were outflanked whenever possible.

The aggressiveness and skill of the units making the attacks counted a lot. Veteran soldiers and officers among the PWs remarked repeatedly and favorably upon the control, discipline and skillful approach of our troops in the attack.

Thoroughness of execution helped. Bitter experience at DILLINGEN had taught the dangers of enemy infiltration and the inadvisability of skipping pillboxes. Consequently, each one was mopped up and either occupied or demolished after capture. For this purpose, since assault troops were at a

premium, special unit troops – Antitank Company, Cannon Company, etc. – were pressed into service. While this mop up slowed the advance, it saved redoing an area.

Development of a relatively simple technique aided the advance. All units eventually boiled down their attack on pillboxes to a simple formula: button up the box with tank, Tank destroyer or machine-gun fire, and assault with a small force of 8-10 infantrymen and 2 engineers with the demolitions to knock out the box. On the more obdurate strongholds, direct fire of the 155 self-propelled gun softened the resistance.

## INTRODUCTION

March began quietly. The 90th Division still sat in SHAEF Reserve just inside the German border vicinity WINTERSPELT after having punched through the SEIGFRIED LINE. The rehabilitation of the troops who had fought so hard was underway. The Division CP remained at WINTERSPELT.

On the VIII Corps front, the units were continuing to attack toward the KYLL River. After the collapse of the West Wall it was expected that the next German major defense line would be along this river.

6th Armored Division and 6th Cavalry Group were across the PRUM River. Though they were meeting delaying forces there was nothing to indicate immediate employment of the 90th Division. Certainly, there was no harbinger of the almost incredible mileage that was to be covered by the 90th within the days ahead.

The operations for the month fall naturally into four phases:

Phase I -- through the Hills of EIFEL.

Phase II -- from the MOSELLE to the RHINE.

Phase III -- from the RHINE to the MAIN.

Phase IV -- through the Hills of HESSEN.

## **PHASE I**

### THROUGH THE HILLS OF EIFEL

#### 1-2 March 1945

Reorganization continued and the major Division activity was experimentation with the use of searchlights for artificial ground illumination on nights without a moon. This continued work began on the last night of February. For the next several days Infantry and Engineers busied themselves with the lights and found them practicable.

As of 021200A, Major General LOWELL W. ROOKS relinquished command of the Division to Brigadier General HERBERT L. EARNEST. General ROOKS went to assignment with SHAEF G-3.

In early morning of 2 March, VIII Corps gave warning that 90th Division would probably revert to its control and move through the 6th Armored Division. Corps Operations Memo Number 27 confirmed this and gave the day of attack as 4 March and the mission to seize a crossing over the KYLL River at MURLENBACH and clear enemy in zone.

Plans were made, a Field Order roughed out and discussed with unit commanders at a meeting at 2000. 357th and 359th Infantries were alerted to make the relief and commanders initiated reconnaissance. Corps set the Division main supply route on the HABSCHEID-PRONSFELD axis. Two bridges were needed at the latter town to make the road usable. 315th Engineers were alerted and began immediate work.

#### 3 March 1945

They rushed to completion a 60 foot Bailey bridge by 0150 and a 90 foot Bailey by 0640 to open the road.

Division Field Order Number 57 was issued at 0750 and directed movement to new assembly areas 3 March, relief of 6th Armored Division night of 3-4 March and attack East at H-Hour 4 March to secure bridgehead across the KYLL River, prepared to continue East on order.

Plans for the relief were necessarily flexible as the 6th Armored Division was still moving and the exact point at which the relief would be accomplished could not be determined beforehand. Definitely established was that the frontline held by the armor would be the line of departure for the attack.

90th Division artillery moved in late morning to new positions while the two Infantry Regiments – 357th and 359th – proceeded to their assembly areas East of the PRUM River in the afternoon. Numerous enemy mines of all types – particularly plastic – were encountered in the new areas. Several vehicles were damaged and some troops became casualties.

The Division plan was to use 357 on the left, 359 on the right and 358 (initially in its present location) in reserve. A TASK FORCE KEDROVSKY composed of Headquarters and Company D 712th Tank Battalion, Reconnaissance Company 773rd TD Battalion and 90th Reconnaissance Troop was organized and attached to 359th Infantry.

Since the relief would be made at night it was expected that commanders would ask for time for daylight reconnaissance the following morning before moving out in attack. Instead they desired at an early hour in order to gain the high ground beyond the NIMS River before daylight. On this high ground the Germans had several high velocity guns which controlled avenues of approach. It was hoped these positions could be gained before the gun crews could see for effective fire. Accordingly, H-Hour was set for 040600A.

Division Command Post moved to PRONSFELD in the afternoon, opening at 1600.

Relief of CCB 6th Armored Division by 357 began after dark and was completed by midnight. 3rd Battalion occupied the left of the zone while the 1st Battalion took the right side. The regimental plan gave the 3rd Battalion the mission of securing GIESDORF and blocking to the North while the 1st Battalion moved from SCHONECKEN through NIEDER and OBER HERSDORF to the Northeast. 2nd Battalion would follow the 1st ready to secure key points along the regimental right flank.

Meanwhile, CCA 6th Armored Division had broken loose, crossed troops over the NIMS River on the right and were on the high ground on the far side. 359th Infantry therefore decided not to relieve but to pass through this section of the front beginning at 0600. As a result they assembled in forward areas on the near side of the NIMS. 3rd Battalion settled at WETTELDORF and 2nd Battalion at HEISDORF.

359th's plan was to send TASK FORCE KEDROVSKY along two routes forward to secure crossings over the KYLL River at MURLENBACH and DENSBORN since the sudden spurt of 6th Armored Division indicated a possible enemy withdrawal. Two infantry Battalions with their attachments would follow to sweep the area. 3rd Battalion would move on the left to secure MURLENBACH while 2nd Battalion on the right would secure DENSBORN. 1st Battalion was to wait in reserve at DACKSCHEID with one company prepared to move on trucks in event the situation broke rapidly.

During the night, 315th Engineers put in a footbridge and Treadway bridge near SCHMERSSTHAL for use by 2nd Battalion 359 and artillery units. 6th Armored Division had already captured several bridges as SCHONECKEN which the 357 could use.

#### 4 March 1945

100600 the attack jumped off without artillery preparation and at this time responsibility for the zone passed to 90th Division. Light resistance faced the units with the hilly, densely-wooded country more of an obstacle than the Germans.

359th Infantry – TASK FORCE KEDROVSKY was augmented by 2nd Platoon, Company C 773rd TD Battalion, 2 Rifle Platoons and 2 mine-sweeping units from Antitank Company. This Force was then subdivided into two smaller forces:

TASK FORCE KELLY contained the Reconnaissance Company 773rd TD Battalion, 3rd Platoon Company B 712th Tank Battalion, and 1 Section 2nd Platoon Company C 773rd TD Battalion.

TASK FORCE DYE had the 90th Reconnaissance Troop, 1 Section 3rd Platoon Company C 773rd TD Battalion, Assault Gun Platoon 712th Tank Battalion and 2nd Platoon Company D 712th Tank Battalion.

TASK FORCE DYE on the South got off to a late start at 0630 but moved without trouble to SEIWERATH. They left this town with Company L. 700 yards beyond the town, German infantry supported by one tank were still erecting a roadblock. The tank crew, however, were caught dismounted. 50 Caliber machine gun fire from the Task Force dispersed the enemy personnel and flushed 25 PWs from the surrounding woods. A tank destroyer and assault gun demolished the roadblock.

The Task Force continued to DURBACH, then left the infantry company and turned south to NEUSTRASSBURG. Here the enemy opened up with small arms and a flat trajectory weapon, possibly a tank. TD guns and tanks responded in kind, driving off the enemy weapon. An artillery and mortar barrage immediately hit the Task Force, who directed counterbattery fire which silenced the enemy guns. The town was then captured as well as 15 PWs. Beyond the town was a 200 yard roadblock of felled trees interspersed with rounds of live ammunition. No bypass was available and the Task Force returned to NEUSTRASSBURG and outposted it, contacting 6th Cavalry Group who were moving on the 90th's right flank.

As TASK FORCE KELLY on the North approached JAKOBKNOPP at 0650 they received enemy fire from a self-propelled gun on the ridge to the Southwest and the small arms fire to their front. They assaulted the settlement and took 19 prisoners.

2 miles beyond the town in early afternoon the Task Force met a roadblock commanded by a 150 mm gun emplaced in the center. TDs' accurate fire smashed the gun and destroyed the block. The tanks swung around the block only to receive machine gun fire. Firing their guns in rebuttal, they captured the two Germans manning the gun.

The Force continued to a bend in the road and found themselves in the line of fire of another enemy self-propelled gun in position. Two shots by the TDs brought three rounds in prompt answer. Attempts to outflank this gun failed because of heavy woods and continued fire from the gun, which covered all approaches. Retracing their route and detouring around SEIWERATH to try a new approach from the East, the Task Force made contact with Company K 359 but was again stopped. This time it was two Mark IV tanks hiding in the woods to protect the same crossroads which the Force failed to reach from the North. No suitable firing positions could be found to engage the enemy tanks, so artillery was placed on them. They withdrew during the night.

Meanwhile the infantry plodded on through the thick forests and up steep slopes, finding little to face them. The ground favored a strong delaying action, but there was little aside from numerous roadblocks. The enemy, pressured all along the Third Army front, was apparently bending all his efforts to get East of the KYLL River.

359 Infantry moved out with 2nd Battalion on right and 3rd Battalion on left. K Company reached SEIWERATH at 0700 and was passed through by Company L who moved on with TASK FORCE DYE. At 0830 I passed through Company L and continued two miles east and slightly south of SEIWERATH at which point patrols hit an enemy strong point. K Company, which had been ordered to pass through I Company on TDs came forward after three roadblocks had been removed from behind I Company, reduced the strong point and continued on to capture the crossroad beyond. Two enemy tanks opened fire. TASK FORCE KELLY closed behind Company K and Company L came up on the right.

2nd Battalion after toiling across the wooded ridges South of SEIWERATH was directed to turn down the road in the path of TASK FORCE DYE and seize the crossroad about one and a quarter miles Northeast of NEUSTRASSBURG. About 500 yards west of the crossroad, B Company engaged in a firefight which they cleaned up at 1900. By 1930 both E and G Companies were on the crossroad and the Battalion halted for the night.

Company A was kept motorized staged forward to SEIWERATH in late morning. In midafternoon, 1st Battalion was ordered to pass through 3rd Battalion and turn south to contact 2nd Battalion at the crossroad Northeast of NEUSTRASSBURG, prepared to continue East to seize DENSBORN. Company C moved on tanks, Company A stayed on trucks and Company B trailed on foot. The Battalion met scattered resistance and roadblocks which got so numerous that they dismounted and continued on foot. Made contact with 2nd Battalion at crossroad at 2020.

Engineers began work on the roadblock in front of TASK FORCE DYE who was to be attached to 1st Battalion in the morning. TASK FORCE KELLY was to be attached to 3rd Battalion.

357th Infantry – The regiment moved virtually unopposed. 1st Battalion gathered up 33 PWs and some 120 mm mortars at NIEDER HERSDORF and continued on with Company B to OBER HERSDORF where a short fight was encountered. As the Battalion pressed on through the wooded area Northeast of OBER HERSDORF many small fights occurred with enemy forced into the sector by advance of 11th Armored Division on left.

3rd Battalion captured the high ground East of GIESDORF in early morning, assembled and moved to NIEDER HERSDORF in regimental reserve. Company I was sent to clear LOCH in the afternoon and contact 4th Division at WALLERSHEIM.

2nd Battalion moved at 0730 generally along the road to the South with advance impeded by roadblocks, but by nightfall captured KOPP. 1st Battalion closed and both Battalions prepared to advance during the night to seize positions overlooking the KYLL River.

358th Infantry – moved by shuttle march from West of PRUM River to new assembly area East of the river in vicinity of ORLENBACH-WINRINGEN-MATZERATH. Remained in Division Reserve.

Division Command Post left PRONSFELD and opened at SCHONECKEN at 1600.

## 5 March 1945

VIII Corps issued FO #14 which extended the attack to the Northeast and gave as long range objectives the West bank of the RHINE between ANDERMACH and SINZIG.

90th Division was directed to cross the KYLL River and follow 11th Armored Division on the right of the Corps, protecting that flank.

New boundaries were established, giving the 90th more ground on the left and including GEROLSTEIN. This shift caused a change of effort of the Division from the MURLENBACH area to the BIRRESBORN-LISSINGEN area.

Accordingly, the 359th was directed to halt on the West bank of the KYLL River. TF KEDROVSKY was detached and given to 357 with the mission of relieving elements of the 11th Armored Division and 4th Infantry Division in the newly acquired territory on the left. 357 was told to force a crossing while 358 was alerted to move forward to an assembly area vicinity KOPP or vicinity WALLERSHEIM. Defendant upon the situation, the regiment was to be prepared to attack through the 357 or on the Division left to seize GEROLSTEIN.

357 Infantry – During the night both 1st and 2nd Battalions moved out to occupy the high ground overlooking the river. In early morning Companies G and F descended to BIRRESBORN and cleared the town shortly after dawn. Company A took MINERALBRUNNER. Both Battalions then prepared to cross later in the day. From the far bank the enemy sniped with small arms and shot artillery and nevelwerfer fire into BIRRESBORN and MINERALBRUNNER as well as the high ground above.

The crossing looked like a difficult job. All bridges were blown and directly across the river the ground rose sharply for several hundred feet of thickly forested slope. Some enemy Earth entrenchments could be seen and it was obvious there were many more that could not be observed. The Germans also had the observation and good fields of fire. But the Division had two things in its favor: first, the enemy in his panic-stricken flight was badly disorganized and might be unable to defend as well as it should. As it turned out, this assumption proved correct. Second, heavy rains had made some prepared positions untenable, flooding them with water.

357's first intention was to cross the 2nd Battalion at 1600. But as the enemy fire developed throughout the day and smoke cover appeared insufficient this plan was abandoned and crossing after dark was planned. However, our own artillery softened the enemy positions with particularly effective fires throughout the latter part of the day. Two fords were selected, one North of BIRRESBORN and one North of MINERALBRUNNER. These were for both foot troops and armor.

Two platoons of Company A pursuing the enemy from MINERALBRUNNER, probed into LISSINGEN at 1600 and found only one enemy. The units squatted in the Southwest part of town until relieved after dark by elements of TF KEDROVSKY.

This unit was attached to 357 at 051000A March. The platoon of TDs from C Company 773rd was replaced by a platoon from A Company which was attached to 357. The TASK FORCE assembled at WALLERSHEIM. Then the TD Reconnaissance Company and 3rd Platoon Company D 712th Tank Battalion moved forward to relieve 11th Armored Reconnaissance Troop at 1500 and occupy HINTERHAUSEN. Later they moved into LISSINGEN and cleared the rest of the town about midnight, capturing 25 PWs.

As the arc of the proposed bridgehead covered some five miles, the 357th planned to employ all three Battalions on line. 1st would take the left and use the north ford. 2nd Battalion would secure the ground on the right and 3rd Battalion would attack the center, crossing after 2nd Battalion. In the actual crossing this order was reversed as 2nd Battalion waited for a footbridge which they finally decided to do without. At 2300 3rd Battalions started Company L to ford the River. 1st Battalion started crossing at MINERALBRUNNER.

359th Infantry – At 0600, Company K sent a platoon to the main crossroad about 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> miles west of MURLENBACH which had been such a sensitive spot the previous night. The enemy of were gone but a large roadblock effectively prevented any armor or wheeled vehicle from getting by. The entire Company and engineers went to work to remove the block. At 0730 Companies I and L moved through to reach MURLENBACH without resistance. There they received fire from across the river.

1st Battalion attacked 0700 and likewise found the enemy gone. The Battalion moved to the west bank across from DENSBORN where they received high velocity and small arms fire from across the way. Road craters prevented supporting armor from getting down to the unit.

915th FA Battalion picked up the supporting job and secured hits on the enemy armor at DENSBORN, knocking out one tank. Other elements Division Artillery silenced German nebelwerfers located Southeast of MURLENBACH and Northwest of SALM.

359 now was given verbal orders to defend the sector with one Battalion, assembling the others in the rear prepared to cross through the 357. 1st Battalion was designated and it relieved 3rd Battalion with Company C and Antitank Company beginning at 1900 and completing a 2305. Contact was maintained with 80th Infantry Division on the 90th's right in vicinity of ALTENHOF.

2nd Battalion assembled vicinity NEUSTRASSBURG while the 3rd Battalion assembled about three miles West of MURLENBACH in vicinity of DURBACH. 1st Battalion prepared to send patrols across the river.

358th Infantry – Alerted to shuttle forward in afternoon, the regiment actually began to move about 1430. 161st Chemical Company (Smoke Generator) was attached to the Division and 25 trucks of this unit were allocated to 358. They were considerably late in arriving, however, having had to drop

their load at PRONSFELD and midnight found the regiment still on the road enroute to NEIDER and OBER HERSDORF and WALLERSHEIM.

On the Division left flank, 11th Armored Division met stiffened resistance and 4th Infantry Division gathered its forces to secured a bridgehead for the armor. On 90th Division right, 6th Cavalry Group was pinched out by the juncture of 90th and 80th Divisions at the KYLL and the Group assembled to move up on the Corps left.

### 6 March 1945

357th Infantry – 3rd Battalion continued to cross against small arms fire. About 0200 2nd Battalion likewise began to ford. At MINERALBRUNNER: 1st Battalion crossed B, C and A in that order. They, too, received a flurry of small arms fire but pushed on through intending to clean out at daylight, Company C turned north. Company A went east while Company B cut between. Both flank Companies were soon engaged in firefights. 315th Engineers began to construct a footbridge at BIRRESBORN, which Company I used in crossing, and tanks and TDs forded across to support the attack.

Daylight found the units still receiving scattered small arms fire as they struggled up the steep hillsides. Company A had disengaged and turned to follow Company B. The rear of A Company's column was ambushed and captured in the pitch black by enemy who came from the south. As light filtered down the thickly wooded draws, other bypassed enemy opened up on B and A Companies. Company K was ordered back to assist the tanks and TDs were sent up. After several hours hard fighting, the enemy pocket was overcome. 40 prisoners were taken and the Americans captured earlier were rescued. Company A then seized NEIDEREICH.

3rd Battalion continued East and captured MICHELBACH and BUSCHEICH. 2nd Battalion swung up to the Southeast. TF KEDROVSKY was detached at 0820 and put under control of 358.

During the day several hundred prisoners were totaled up as the regiment secured the high ground dominating the crossing area. By midafternoon the objectives were taken and the regiment was halted to let 359 go through.

Supporting engineers immediately began construction of an infantry support bridge and Bailey bridge at BIRRESBORN.

After the 359 passed through, the regiment assembled within its area minus blocking elements from 2nd Battalion who covered the approaches from the south. 1st Battalion assembled in MINERALBRUNNER, 2nd Battalion (-) in BIRRESBORN and 3rd Battalion in MICHELBACH and BUSCHEICH. Dry clothes and socks were issued to the water-soaked infantrymen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Examination of the defenses along the river showed that had the Germans manned them fully and chosen to resist in force the fighting would have been most bloody. Positions were cunningly camouflaged and one had to approach to within several yards before seeing some of them. Outposts on the flat ground adjacent to the river were connected to the battle positions several hundred yards back on the higher ground by covered and carefully sodded communication trenches so that only the exit holes were visible and those only after careful survey. Foxholes, too, were well dug with all spoil removed, leaving only a hole level with the ground. But the rain had rendered many of them unusable. Several AT guns subsequently captured were adroitly concealed. The work was strongly reminiscent of the carefully prepared positions met in NORMANDY.

358th Infantry – The zone held by TASK FORCE KEDROVSKY now became the zone of the 358th and the regiment was ordered to capture GEROLSTEIN. Using organic motors the regiment shuttled 1st and 3rd Battalions to LISSINGEN. Progress was slow as the roads were heavily cratered

and all available engineers were put to work filling these. Bridging and engineer help were requested from 11th Armored Division.

GEROLSTEIN, once a prominent marshaling yard and American PW camp, was surrounded by numerous entrenchments and fortifications, which were reportedly manned. But the chief obstacles encountered were an AT ditch, road craters and high velocity fire from six tanks, one of which was concealed in a cave.

At 1340 two platoons of 90th Reconnaissance Troop and one platoon 773rd TDs, all dismounted, crossed the river. Artillery and one platoon Company D, 712th Tank Battalion, supported the action by fire. By 1500 they had seized the town despite scattered small arms fire. Four PWs were taken and the TASK FORCE returned to LISSINGEN after 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry passed through at 1530 to complete the round up for a total of 17 prisoners in all. By 1700 GEROLSTEIN was clear. The enemy tanks withdrew to PELM and 3rd Battalion prepared to attack that town.

2nd Battalion advanced to the high ground north of GEROLSTEIN and 1st Battalion entered GEES from the west as 359th Infantry entered from the south.

359th Infantry – The regiment (-1st Battalion) was directed to move initially to vicinity of BIRRESBORN and then to pass through 357th Infantry and continue the attack. In the event 358th Infantry encountered heavy resistance at GEROLSTEIN, the 359th Infantry was to be prepared to take this objective and PELM. Both 3rd and 2nd Battalions began to move in morning using organic transportation.

3rd Battalion crossed first on the footbridge and infantry support bridge at BIRRESBORN and attacked northeast through 357th's right to capture GEES. Battalion entered the town in late afternoon making contact there with 358th, 1st Battalion.

2nd Battalion, 359th Infantry followed the 3rd Battalion across then turned North through 357th's left to capture the high ground above GEROLSTEIN. 40 disorganized Germans were encountered in the woods there. 15 were captured and the rest killed or dispersed. Combat patrols left to contact 358th at GEROLSTEIN.

1st Battalion captured PWs who told of Germans withdrawing from DENSBORN. A and B Companies were therefore dispatched to capture the town and the high ground beyond. C Company crossed to take the rest of MURLENBACH. All crossings were made on debris of partially blown bridges. 34 stragglers were picked up in both towns. Both battalions then sent patrols east and captured 3-120 mm mortars, an antitank gun and crew of six men and an artillery Major. Units then consolidated their gains.

Division CP moved from SCHONECKEN and opened at 1800 at KOPP.

Engineers continued to work throughout the night on bridges. The two searchlights from 226th AAA Battalion (S/L) were set up at KOPP and illuminated the construction work at BIRRESBORN until that bridge was completed at 2300. Then the lights were beamed over LISSINGEN where a bridge was started for 358th Infantry. A light mist was following which changed later to heavy snow.

The infantry as well as the Engineers were enthusiastic over the illumination afforded by the searchlights which had helped speed the bridges to completion. Infantry patrols, working the area towards PELM, had high praise for the lights.

### 7 March 1945

11th Armored Division was previously ordered to pass through either 4th and/or 90th Infantry Division and range out ahead. CCA was designated cross in the 90th's zone as soon as the bridge at LISSINGEN was completed.

358th Infantry – As fast as possible the area was prepared for passage of the 11th Armored Division. AT ditches were filled in at GEROLSTEIN and later at PELM and debris was swept aside from the road through the former town.

Following an artillery TOT on PELM, Company L entered the town at 0700 to find the enemy gone. 3rd Battalion then moved on to the high ground east of the town to hold the shoulders of the exit for debouchment of the armor.

At 1040 the LISSINGEN bridge was finished and at 1045 the 11th Armored began to roll across, pushing on through the 8 km bridgehead established by the 90th.

Instructed to advance to DRIES and OBER EHE, 3rd Battalion on left and 1st Battalion on right moved out to Northeast.

Company K captured the high ground South of ROCKESKYLL and got involved with enemy in the town, so captured it too, although it was out of the Division boundary. Arrangements were made with 4th Infantry Division to remain in the town overnight.

Company L moved to HOHENFELS and later to BETTLEDORF which they captured after eliminating some resistance.

Company I seized ESSINGEN where they caught 8 prisoners – a demolition crew with truck and explosives.

1st Battalion captured BERLINGEN; then moved Company A HOHENFELS to replace Company L.

2nd Battalion began to assemble in GEROLSTEIN with Company G left on the high ground North of the town to assist by fire the 4th Infantry Division who were meeting strong resistance all along the line.

By this time the road was a continuous conveyor belt of armor and with CCR and CCB 11th Armored, ordered to follow CCA, because of resistance in 4th Infantry Division's zone, the 358th abandoned all further efforts to move forward.

TASK FORCE KEDROVSKY remained in LISSINGEN less the 90th Reconnaissance Troop which was detached and attached to 359th Infantry at 070700A.

359th Infantry – The 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached for the purpose of combing out the large SALMWALD area as directed by Corps. 2nd section, 3rd Platoon, 773rd TD Battalion was attached by the regiment to the Troop and the unit moved from BIRRESBORN at 0900 with the mission as stated plus that of making contact with 1st Battalion at MURLENBACH and DENSBOORN. The Troop moved toward SALM then turned West and searched the woods back to the KYLL. Two stragglers were picked up but no opposition was encountered. 5 tanks and numerous field pieces were found abandoned. Having made contact with 1st Battalion at 1500 the Troop headed for its assembly point at NEROTH.

Objectives for the 359th were KIRCHWEILER, HINTERWEILER and NEROTH. 2nd and 3rd Battalions moved out at 0700. 3rd moved by way of GEE with K followed by I approaching from the West while L entered the town from the South. No resistance was met and KIRCHWEILER was secured a 1330.

2nd Battalion moved from BUSCHEICH on tanks, TDs and vehicles until they encountered a roadblock that defied immediate removal. The troops dismounted and covered the remaining 2000 yards on foot. No resistance was offered. One enemy tank in the town withdrew.

New orders awaited both battalions: 3rd was to continue to DOCKWEILER. 2nd was to capture and block at WALDKONIGEN. 3rd Battalion accomplished its mission but returned to HINTERWEILER as DOCKWEILER was full of 11th Armored troops.

2nd Battalion reached the edge of WALDKONIGEN without being seen since the terrain afforded well covered routes of approach. They saw many soldiers in the town and others leaving the edge. The Battalion opened fire on the town and directed artillery on the retreating columns.

The enemy force numbered about 200 and were part of a strong rear guard led to block further advance to the North. Cornered, the Germans turned and fought a savage house-to-house battle. The fight began at 1830 and lasted well into the night. An enemy tank East of the town opened fire and was itself fired upon by the TDs following the troops. The tank was destroyed. At 2200 the Battalion had the town but spent most of the night cleaning it out. 90 prisoners were taken.

After contact by 90th Reconnaissance was made, 1st Battalion was relieved of its mission and assembled at BIRRESBORN.

357th Infantry – The regiment remained in Division Reserve. Its blocking force was relieved after 90th Reconnaissance cleaned SALM WALD. Corps allocated two truck companies to the Division and these were assigned to 357th to prepare them to move as a motorized RCT, through either 358th or 359th Infantry.

At 1000 Division CP opened at KIRCHWEILER. At 1850 Division issued Field Message #40 which detached the 90th Reconnaissance Troop from 359th as of 072000. Troop reverted to Division control with mission of reconnoitering routes forward on 8 March.

Though 358th and 359th were instructed to hold present positions until the armor had cleared and then be prepared to move Northeast. One motorized Battalion was to be maintained by each regiment to assist 11th Armored if necessary.

357th was to remain in Division Reserve, motorized as stated.

On the right of the 90th elements of 5th Infantry Division were at SALM as they cleaned up behind the meteoric advance of the 4th Armored Division.

### 8 March 1945

Aside from 90th Reconnaissance and elements of the 359th Infantry, Division units remained generally fixed during the day, limiting activity to patrolling, road reconnaissance and movement of the 1st Battalion 359th to DOCKWEILER in early morning.

2nd Battalion 359th Infantry sent E Company South to STEINBORN to see if it was clear. No enemy was found and Company returned to WALDKONIGEN. AT and Cannon Company occupied STEINBORN.

The Reconnaissance Troop reconnoitered as far as KELBERG and HEIROTH, clearing out OBER EHE, BRUCK, BEINHAUSEN, NEICHEN and KRADENBACH on the way. 30 PWs were captured, 40 enemy infantrymen and a tracked vehicle were seen in HEIROTH and the troops directed a barrage of 345th FA Battalion on the town.

Priority of work went on road repair. These narrow thoroughfares were in bad shape from German crater holes and eight continuous days of drizzling rain. The S/L section continued as in days past to supply illumination for Engineers working on the roads at night.

11th Armored Division continued to roll, however, and were reported beyond MAYEN at midnight and still moving. As this indicated rapid follow-up, the Division formed the regiments in normal combat teams and prepared to go on radio for communication.

### 9 March 1945

The day was marked by complete disintegration of the German defenses within the Corps Zone. 11th Armored's rush to the RHINE netted them about 6000 prisoners, including some displaced persons. They left behind confused and bewildered groups of enemy who offered little or no resistance. In some villages which the 90th Reconnaissance group entered, the German townspeople waved white flags and offered to surrender the German soldiers, if their town was not fired upon. In others German soldiers were chased from the village to fight in the woods. Nearly every town was a babble of polyglot

nationalities – Russians, French, Belgians, Poles, Czechs, Yugoslavs, Italians and others impressed as laborers or captured as German PWs, and Civil Affairs resources were strained to the limit to provide food and water for these wanderers.

Organized as combat teams, the 90th Division advanced by foot and motor with CT 358 on left and CT 359 on right to march objectives just West and Northwest of KELBERG, which was the forward limit prescribed by Corps. CT 357 moved motorized at 0630 directly to KELBERG following guides furnished by 359th Infantry from NEROTH.

Enroute, the 357th was ordered to continue to MAYEN, in accordance with latter instructions from Corps, and to protect the route thereto with troops at key points.

3rd and 1st Battalions proceeded to MAYEN while 2nd Battalion detrucked at BOOS to set up roadblocks and outposts. 178 prisoners were gathered up in the day's operation.

On the Division left flank, 90th Reconnaissance Troop augmented with 1 Platoon light tanks from 712th tank Battalion, swept through a large area from HEIROTH to JAMMELSHOFEN and contacted first TASK FORCE RHINO (4th Division TF) on the left and later 6th Cavalry Group after they relieved 4th Infantry Division, which assembled and awaited orders. 90th Reconnaissance Troop gathered some 234 prisoners.

Pressed by more PWs than they could handle, 11th Armored Division turned to the 90th for aid in evacuation. The Reconnaissance Company of 773rd TD Battalion was dispatched to assist the round-up. With darkness approaching and 2000 prisoners and displaced persons on hand, the unit herded the group into a bowl-shape valley around the rim of which they placed jeeps with headlights on, flooding the group, Canon Company of 359th Infantry was sent to help guard until evacuation could begin. Throughout the night Germans in groups of two or three appeared like moths out of the dark and headed for the light to turn themselves in.

At 1400 Division CP moved to KELBERG, closing at 1630.

At 2130 Division issued FM #42. It directed CT 357 to assemble the battalion deployed between KELBERG and MAYEN, to mop up Zone with not more than one battalion and to maintain present roadblocks.

CT 358 (less TASK FORCE KEDROVSKY), CT 359, and 90th Reconnaissance Troop were all given areas to clean up behind the restraining line which was the main road running Northwest from MAYEN. Assembled in these areas after the mop up, they would be ready to relieve the 11th Armored Division as soon as it cleared out its Zone.

### 10 March 1945

Mopping up operations were completed by late afternoon. No organized resistance was encountered, but several hundred prisoners were picked up, many in civilian clothes.

Corps boundaries were changed and Division right boundary was set almost due East from MAYEN. This placed part of the 4th Armored within the new Division sector and they were to be relieved as well as elements of 11th Armored Division. All units were notified to be ready to move on one hour's notice any time after 0800. A meeting of commanders of 358 and 359, who were to be on line, and all of Division Artillery was set for 0730 at MAYEN to discuss plans and make reconnaissance of new areas.

343rd FA Battalion in registering its guns fired the first shot of the Division East of the RHINE River.

### 11 March 1945

With all the machinery set in motion, a "stop order" came from VIII Corps. Previous instructions were rescinded and the 90th Division was transferred at once to XII Corps. Although artillery and some infantry had already moved, the relief was halted and commanders met at Division CP at 2000 to discuss the new plan. XII Corps Operations Directive #86 told the 90th Division to relieve the 4th Armored in its missions. Under the new boundary this sector was just South of where the Division was. Further, the 90th was to protect Corps North flying and be prepared to attack South across the MOSELLE River with 5th Infantry Division to seize a bridgehead on Corps order.

This altered the position but not the role of the regiments. The plan was to use 357th Infantry on the left of the new sector instead of the right and 359th on the right instead of the left. 358th Infantry would remain in reserve.

## PHASE II

### FROM THE MOSELLE TO THE RHINE

12-23 MARCH

#### 12 March 1945

New march tables were set up and units began their move to new assembly areas in the early morning. FO #16 was received from XII Corps. The Corps mission was to cross the MOSELLE River vicinity TREIS and HATZENPORT to secure a bridgehead, prepared the continue attack to Southeast and seize a bridgehead across NAHE River vicinity BAD KREUZNACH. The mission of the 90th Division was to cross the MOSELLE within zone and be prepared for advance to Southeast to seize a bridgehead across the NAHE River between BAD KREUZNACH and BINGEN. Lastly it was to protect the left flank of Corps.

Preparatory plans were drawn up and Division CP opened as POLCH at 1200A.

359th Infantry – Moved to new area beginning at 0900. 1st Battalion set up in MUNSTERMAIFELD. 2nd Battalion in METTERNICH. 3rd Battalion at WIERSCHEM. Regimental CP opened that MUNSTERMAIFELD. Regiment directed 2nd Battalion to make the necessary relief, hold the line with two companies, keeping one in reserve, and patrol the North bank of the River. 1st and 3rd Battalions were to send combat patrols across the River.

2nd Battalion placed Company E in HATZENPORT and Company G in LASSBERG. The enemy harassed this town with sporadic rounds of 75 mm gunfire. Regiment closed at 1645 and made plans to conduct training in assault boat handling on 13 March.

The swift MOSELLE current overturned the light rubber boats used by the patrols to cross after dark and the patrols were forced back. They then patrolled the near bank of the river and observed lights and movement on the far side. Contact was established with the 5th Infantry Division at MOSELKERN.

357th Infantry – Starting at 1100, 357th Infantry moved 2nd Battalion (-) to MORZ and 1st and 3rd Battalions to KALT. Regimental CP opened at KUTTIG. Here too, 2nd Battalion was designated to occupy the line and Company E went to LOF while Company F set up a platoon at KATTENES. Although LOF had been cleared by the Cavalry with 4th Armored Division, enemy had infiltrated back and Company E had to fight his way into the town.

Full possession was not gained until 0500 the next morning.

358th Infantry – Remained in present location with plans to move on 13th.

For the 1st day since the start of the month, no rain fell and the weather held promise of clearing.

13 March 1945

Plans were completed for the crossing and FO #58 issued at 1100. Division objectives were the high ground and road net vicinity HALSENBACH, EMMELSHAUSEN, BICKENBACH and BRAUNSHORN. For the crossing 315th Engineer Battalion would support the 359th Infantry while 166th Engineer Battalion would support the 357th Infantry. Three bridges were indicated by Corps in the bridgehead. One at HATZENPORT, one at MOSSLKERN on the Division right boundary and one in the 5th Division area. 1135th Engineers were to construct the M-2 treadway at HATZENPORT. Five traffic control posts were established by the 90th to insure flow of vehicles over the narrow roads after the bridge was built.

Searchlights were placed in position to be used on call for the regimental commanders. H-hour was 140200A.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to take over the front from KATTENES to Division left boundary, screening the latter from the MOSELLE River to DRECKENACH. After 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry began to assemble prior to crossing, the troop was to include KATTENES as well.

4th Armored Division asked for and received permission to assemble CCA in an unused area on the Division left flank within our zone.

358th Infantry moved at 0900 to its assembly area putting 1st Battalion at KOLLIG, 2nd Battalion at GERING and 3rd Battalion at EINIG. Regimental CP was located at MERTLOCH.

359th Infantry changed their right crossing site from LASSBERG to MOSELKERN in order to get their boats closer to the water and avoid an 800 yard hand carry necessary at LASSBERG. The far bank was very steep and every effort was made to spare the assault troops unnecessary drain on endurance, which was to be severely tested.

14 March 1945

By 0130 all troops were ready to go except Company K 359 which was delayed. And 0200 the attack began, achieving a measure of surprise according to PWs reports even though a crossing was expected. Sporadic small arms and machine gun fire sprayed the crossing areas, but enemy resistance did not build up until along toward daylight. Thirty minutes after the crossings began, Division Artillery interdicted roads and routes of approach to intercept any reinforcement of the river line.

357th Infantry – 1st Battalion crossed just South of LOF and in less than an hour were all on the far bank. C Company turned South to clear out BRODENBACH and were heavily engaged with 200 enemy troops in the town. At daylight Company A moved around Company C's left flank to assist. The town was not cleared until noon. B Company meanwhile was working up to the high ground Southwest of BRODENBACH and gained the hilltop shortly after daylight. Following capture of BRODENBACH, 1st Battalion advanced to seize HERSCHWIESEN and OPPENHAUSEN where they remained for the night.

3rd Battalion crossed just South of KATTENES and met sporadic small arms fire. Company K leading, turned North to ALKEN while Companies I and L continued East to capture the high ground, which was to be an assembly area for 2nd Battalion. Troops of 6th SS Mountain Division Reconnaissance Battalion put up a strong resistance and ALKEN did not fall until midafternoon. 31 PWs were captured, some in American fatigues and combat boots which were captured in the ARDENNES Bulge. Companies I and L gained their objective by 0500.

With the immediate hill masses secured, 2nd Battalion crossed 0600 and pushed through the 3rd Battalion to capture UDENHAUSEN after dark, Company F taking the town. Company E's efforts to grasp PFAFFENHECK were repulsed by enemy infantry and heavy flak gunfire. With both flanks

exposed by a 500 yard advance, the Battalion had been ordered to go no further until tanks and TDs could be crossed.

359th Infantry – 1st Battalion crossed at HATZENPORT. Brushing aside some light resistance the troops climbed to the high ground and advanced over the rough terrain some 4 km. Enroute, Company B met dug-in enemy infantry in a draw about 2000 yards inland. A Company began to outflank the position around B Company's right but artillery smashed the resistance and both Companies continued forward. 56 PWs were taken and 3 80 mm mortars captured. Reaching MORSHAUSEN at 1600, they entered the town, found Germans in it and pulled back from town to fire artillery on it. A and B went to the woods West of the town, while C came back to the North. At 1840, A and B Companies assaulted the town again and gained one third of it.

The enemy troops in the town included some who had been forced out of BRODENBACH in the early morning by 357th Infantry and some previously encountered by Company B. All were from 1211 Regiment of 159 Volksgrenadier Division. Added to these were 57 laborers from a construction Battalion drafted as infantry by an officer of the 1211. Two enemy tanks and an armored car entered the town from the South in time to support the defense.

Since the bridge was not in, our own tanks and TDs were unavailable and the Battalion shot up its bazooka rounds in trying to hold off the enemy armor. After the bridge was in a section of tanks and one of TDs were rushed up to 1st Battalion. The enemy tanks withdrew.

In the 3rd Battalion, Company I crossed that MOSELKERN first and moved Northeast up the river road then East onto the high ground in the HOLENHAU woods without meeting resistance. Company L reached the outskirts of BURGEN at 0500 where they stopped by fire from a Battalion of enemy infantry (200-250 men) in and around the town. By 0700 Company L had gained only a third of the town. Company E then moved on the town from the North and this added pressure broke the resistance. The town was cleared at 0830 and Company L had 35 prisoners.

Company K crossed the river at 0635 and joined Company I on the high ground. The Battalion continued forward at 1300 toward MACKEN without meeting further resistance. Patrols to MACKEN drew fire. Artillery was laid on the town and Companies L and K occupied the town in part.

2nd Battalion began to cross at HATZENPORT at 0600 in assault boats as footbridges were not in. Directed to assemble in Regimental Reserve at BURGEN, the Battalion moved in after Company L cleared the town. They were completely closed by 1000.

358th Infantry – Regiment staged forward to vicinity METTERNICH. Closed at 1100A. At about 1730 began to cross MOSELLE River in assault boats and infantry support raft at HATZENPORT. Assembled in Division Reserve at BRODENBACH and guarded bridge upon completion. Crossing was completed in about two hours.

Enemy shelling harassed the bridge site, but did little damage as the early morning fog and later a smokescreen concealed the site from enemy observation. But the swift current of the MOSELLE gave the engineers some trouble. The cable broke on the footbridge above HATZENPORT as it neared completion and swept downstream, where it smashed into the floating treadway under construction below the town. The bridge was knocked out of line and was delayed several hours. The cable also broke on the footbridge in 357 area and finally both projects were ordered abandoned with attention directed to rafts and ferry. Two light ferries were installed by noon but worked only intermittently because of motor trouble. A Heavy raft (M-2 floating treadway) was assembled around 1400, however, and vehicles were moved across in good order.

The heavy pontoon bridge at MOSELKERN was finished at 1055 and the HATZENPORT bridge a few minutes later and traffic immediately flowed over both bridges.

The assembly area used by 358th vicinity KOLLIG was set aside for 2nd Cavalry Group (-2nd Cavalry Squadron), which began assembly in the afternoon. On the Division right flank, 5th Division

crossed and gained initial objectives with little resistance encountered. On Division left flank 87th Infantry Division occupied the West Bank of the MOSELLE.

15 March 1945

The attack was resumed at 0700. It was characterized by stiffened resistance and counterattacks on the Division left (North) flank, while on the right enemy forces fell away in the face of our advance.

2nd Cavalry Group (-2nd Squadron) crossed the HATZENPORT bridge at 0900 to assume protection of Corps left flank and begin relief of 357th Infantry who were blocking in that direction.

4th Armored Division was alerted to pass through with the CC's abreast in zone of 90th in 5th Infantry Divisions and CCA began to cross the HATZENPORT bridge at 1200.

357th Infantry – At 0600 Company B was counterattacked by estimated 150 enemy and 2 tanks from the draw to the Northeast of HERSCHWIESEN. Artillery repulsed the attack. Company B mopped up area until relieved by Company A 358th Infantry. A and C Companies continued to advance with Company A capturing WINDHAUSEN and Company C driving for BUCHHOLZ which it captured in late afternoon after bitter fighting. The area was defended by infantry supported by flak guns.

On the left flank of the regiment the enemy infiltrated and counterattacked and was most aggressive. 50 SS troops from 11 SS Regiment (6th SS Mountain Division) slipped in around Company L at NORTERSHAUSEN but were repulsed. 42nd Cavalry in process of relieving 357th Infantry 3rd Battalion joined the encounter with its light tanks and the two units worked throughout the day to clear the area so the relief could be completed. In late afternoon 2nd Battalion 358th was attached to help hold this flank as resistance continued.

2nd Battalion 357th Infantry continued to find trouble as PFAFFENHECK as 100 SS troopers and a tank fought furiously to hold the road to BOPPARD. One platoon Company E forced an entrance in the early morning and then was cut off before reinforcements could reach it. No gains were made during the period. With 357th Infantry committed to fend off the resistance along the left flank, Division now ordered the 358th forward to expand the bridgehead to the East.

358th Infantry – At 0700 the regiment staged 1st and 2nd Battalions forward to HERSCHWIESEN and OPPENHAUSEN respectively. 2nd Battalion remained at BRODENBACH in Division Reserve until attached to 357th Infantry at 1740 to help clear up the left flank.

Company A relieved Company B 357th Infantry and Company A proceeded down the draw Northeast of HERSCHWIESEN finding a sizable force of enemy still holding out there.

3rd Battalion advanced to Southeast to capture DIELER, NEY, HALSENBACH and KRATZENBURG before stopping for the night. At HALSENBACH they captured a flak Battalion Headquarters and 30 prisoners.

359th Infantry – MORSHAUSEN was cleared in early morning and 1st Battalion remained assembled there while 2nd Battalion (-) rolled through on trucks. Company G followed on foot. In short order 2nd Battalion took BEULICH, then continued to capture OBER GONDERSHAUSEN at 1245 and NIEDER GONDERSHAUSEN a short time later. Company F turned Northeast to MERMUTH. 1st and 3rd Battalions began a mop-up of adjacent woods and the entire regiment prepared to move with the 4th Armored Division as a motorized CT following final clearing up of zone to Division objective in the morning. 106 PWs were captured throughout the day.

Division CP displaced from POLCH to MUNSTERMAIFELD, opening in the new location at 1010.

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Ahead of the 90th Division, 4th Armored Division cut a swath through the enemy rear areas. CCA captured LIESENFELD while CCB which had passed through 5th Division zone, captured SIMMERN. Their swift and unexpected movement flushed out many enemy vehicles which began to scurry east to the RHINE.

The day was clear and sunny and Division Air OP's adjusted the fire of organic and Corps units on these enemy columns. The fire of 8" howitzers and Long Toms were laid on one column passing through KARBACH. The resulting concentrations tossed horses on housetops, smashed vehicles to rubble and caused heavy casualties to the fleeing Germans.

Air OP's picked up a long enemy column, moving East out of GONDERSHAUSEN and fighter-bombers worked over this remunerative target.

Reluctant to pass up any opportunities to liquidate enemy columns, one Cub plane stayed in the air until after dark searching out targets and had to land by the light of burning powder bags when it finally turned home.

### 16 March 1945

To expedite clearance of the Division zone the area to the RHINE was subdivided into sections to be mopped up by the regiments and TASK FORCE SPIESS which was formed on the morning of the 16th.

357th Infantry – 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry and 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry on the right jumped off at 0600 to clear to the Division North boundary. 3rd Battalion found the enemy withdrawn from his reverse slope positions East of ALKEN to new positions along the road East from OBERFELL. Heavy fighting resumed but by early afternoon 3rd Battalion had killed, captured or dispersed the enemy. 2nd Cavalry completed relief of 3rd Battalion. The Battalion moved by motor to HERSCHWIESEN at 1845.

2nd Battalion 358th Infantry moved for the high ground Northwest of PFAFFENHECK just as five SS companies struck Southeast in a counterattack aimed at 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry. The two forces were locked in combat throughout the day. The enemy casualties were reportedly heavy.

2nd Battalion 357th Infantry renewed its attack that PFAFFENHECK with Companies G and E (-). The battle mounted in fury as the enemy refused to give ground and turned flak and SP guns on the unit. Three US tanks and one TD were set afire by enemy action.

The 1st Battalion attacking from the crossroad Northeast of BUCHHOLZ encountered much of the same and fought an 800 yard slugging match against SS troops in a position covered with flak guns and 88's. One US tank was knocked out. 48-20 mm, 4-40 mm and 8-88 mm guns were captured or destroyed by tank and infantry action in the encounters by 1st and 2nd Battalions.

The fighting slowed at dark and during the night the enemy withdrew.

358th Infantry – Company L cleared EHR in early morning. 3rd Battalion then turned Northeast to tie in with 357th Infantry. Company I encountered a nest of SS troops, who dug-in, refused to give way. Company K was brought up on the left to aid in reducing the strong point which was wiped out. 70 Germans were killed, 9 captured and several 88's taken intact.

Friendly planes strafed 3rd Battalion at HALSENBACH in early morning causing some casualties.

Company A finished mopping up the draw Northeast of HERSCHWIESEN to the road. 1st Battalion then assembled at DIELER and NEY and moved by motor to vicinity LANSCHIED, LEININGEN and NORATH.

359th Infantry – Only stragglers were encountered as the regiment mopped up its area in early morning. At 1050 the regiment was organized as a combat team and attached to 4th Armored Division. Moved at

1545 to SIMMERN, closing at 1900. 1st Battalion was directed to relieve CCR on outpost at SIMMERN at 170600.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – This force consisted of 773rd TD Battalion Headquarters, Reconnaissance Company 773rd TD Battalion, Company C 773rd TD Battalion, Company D 712th Tank Battalion, and 90th Reconnaissance Troop. The various elements crossed at HATZENPORT in the early morning and assembled in vicinity EHR. Its mission was to clear out enemy in the area along the RHINE from BOPPARD (exclusive) to ST GOAR. The Task Force was broken down into three sub-units: TASK FORCE DYE on the North, TASK FORCE KELLY on the South and a reserve at the CP. Speed was their keynote.

TASK FORCE KELLY drove rapidly to the RHINE after jumping off at 1240 and reached the river within two hours. In rapid succession the unit cleared RHEINBAY, HIRZENACH, KARBACH, HOLZFELD, WERLAU and HUNCENROTH. 55 prisoners were captured, 15 enemy were killed, 12 German vehicles and 2-20 mm AA guns destroyed.

TASK FORCE DYE on the North was embroiled in heavy fighting with the SS troops blocking the road to BOPPARD. Part of the unit moved around to capture WEILER after a defended roadblock was met at L884764, 1 mile Northeast of EHR. Another platoon of TD's was brought up from the reserve at EHR. One TD hit a mine just short of the block. A second TD maneuvered to blow out the road block. As it did so it received a direct hit through the sight from an enemy 75 mm AT gun. After the block was reduced one section of TD's helped 358th 3rd Battalion in its attack. The section was released from this attachment at 2100 and returned to EHR.

Division Artillery – Continued to hit enemy groups attempting to evacuate East of the RHINE. Air OP's adjusted fire on traffic plying back and forth across the river. Three steamers and five barges with enemy equipment were smashed. Enemy antiaircraft fire near BUCHHOLZ downed one liaison plane killing both occupants, while a second Cub crashed, the pilot escaping serious injury.

Division CP moved to BEULICH and opened at 1700.

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On the Division North flank the 87th Infantry Division crossed the MOSELLE starting at 0300 and advanced to the Southeast in a drive to cut off and reduce COBLENZ.

4th Armored Division continued its rapid pace and encircled BAD KREUZNACH.

The Germans, now thoroughly disorganized, were no longer trying to hold defensive positions on terrain features but rather were trying to resist locally from town to town. They threw what roadblocks they could in our path to delay but many times the onrushing troops aided by good roads were past the blocks before they could be completed.

### 17 March 1945

357th Infantry – After midnight 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry was relieved by 42nd Cavalry Squadron and detached from the regiment. Battalion reverted to Division Reserve and assembled at NORTERSHAUSEN.

1st Battalion 357th Infantry and 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry attacked to the East to capture BOPPARD. Only roadblocks and scattered enemy small arms hindered the advance. BOPPARD was entered and cleared against light resistance in late morning. 42nd Cavalry Squadron moved up and relieved 1st and 2nd Battalions late in the day and these units assembled at HERSCHWIESEN and

OPPENHAUSEN respectively. Company G remained at UDENHAUSEN to reinforce the cavalry screen.

3rd Battalion moved to BUCHHOLZ and became Division Reserve in late morning.

358th Infantry – 1st Battalion attacked East and cleared ST GOARER STADT-WALD without much resistance. Reassembled at BADENHARD after relief by 2nd Cavalry Squadron. 3rd Battalion motor-marched to DAXWEILER and SEIBERSBACH while 2nd Battalion convoyed to RHEINBOLLEN.

359th Infantry – Remained attached to 4th Armored Division. 1st Battalion relieved armored outposts at SIMMERN at 0630 then turned over the mission to Cannon Company as the Battalion was ordered to block at NICKWEILER, NANNHAUSEN, and OHLWEILER. In the afternoon the CT was directed to follow CCR to assembly area vicinity ROXHEIM. 1st Battalion moved to ROXHEIM, 2nd Battalion to HARGESHEIM and 3rd Battalion to GUTENBERG.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – Completed mop-up of area by clearing to BOPPARD with elements 3rd Battalion 358th and by attacking BAD SALZIG. There was little opposition and four severely wounded men from 357th Infantry captured at PFAFFENHECK were recovered by troops taking BAD SALZIG. Their mission completed about 0930, the Task Force remained in position along the West bank of the RHINE and fired across at enemy movement on the East bank. The city commandant of ST GOAR surrendered that town to the Task Force.

At 2000 2nd Cavalry Group relieved the unit in all its positions and the Task Force moved to vicinity LIEBSHAUSEN.

2nd Cavalry Group – Relieved the 90th Infantry Division in the area from Division left boundary to OBERWESEL and maintained contact with 87th Infantry Division on North. 2nd Cavalry Squadron joined the Group early in the day and cleared HOCH-WALD on right of 1st Battalion 358th Infantry and then relieved them. The Group was attached to 90th Division at 1840 as a TWX from Corps directed the Division to hold the West Bank of the RHINE from BOPPARD to BINGEN.

### 18 March 1945

The area not yet cleared was divided between TASK FORCE SPIESS and 358th Infantry with the former covering the zone from OBERWESEL to NIEDER HEIMBACH. The latter took from this town to BINGERBRUCK. 357th Infantry became Division Reserve, while 2nd Cavalry Group held its present area.

358th Infantry – 1st Battalion moved by motor to vicinity STROMBERG. Regiment attacked in early morning with 2nd Battalion on left, 3rd Battalion in center, and 1st Battalion on right and cleared to RHINE and NAHE Rivers. There was little opposition. 1st Battalion captured 25 PWs at ROTH. All Battalions were on the river by dark. Company I in BINGERBRUCK received sniper fire from across the NAHE River in BINGEN.

357th Infantry – Regiment assembled as Division Reserve with 3rd Battalion at EMMELSHAUSEN and a 1st Battalion at WIEBELSHEIN established roadblocks along Division West flank. 2nd Battalion remained at OPPENHAUSEN and Company G at UDENHAUSEN.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – Mopped up to the river between OBERWESEL and NIEDER HEIMBACH without opposition. 20 PWs were gathered up in the morning's work. While first plans were to relieve

the Task Force with 358th it was subsequently decided to let it remain on line to help 358th hold its assigned 19-mile front.

2nd Cavalry Group – Continued to hold positions.

359th Infantry – Regiment closed in assembly areas in early hours of morning. CT was directed to clear up any remaining resistance in BAD KREUZNACH in the morning and seize a bridgehead across NAHE River. At 2400 regiment was released to 90th Division control. Mission remained unchanged.

Division CP moved to KISSELBACH and opened at 1100.

As Division was ordered to hold another combat team in reserve to follow 4th Armored Division, 358th Infantry had been ordered to make plans to hold the Division sector with 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached and 2nd Cavalry Group on the left. Accordingly, plans were made to relieve Task Force SPIESS with 2nd Battalion after 3rd Battalion had taken over 2nd Battalion's area. 90th Reconnaissance Troop and AT Company were to relieve 1st Battalion for regimental reserve. Later when it was decided to attach Task Force SPIESS to 358th Infantry, these plans were altered to have 2nd Battalion takeover from 3rd, and 1st Battalion to occupy the area assigned 90th Reconnaissance Troop. 3rd Battalion was to assemble at STROMBERG in Reserve.

These plans were hardly formulated when Corps gave the 90th a new mission, to capture MAINZ, which changed the whole picture. Now 358th Infantry was to be relieved as soon as possible by 2nd Cavalry Group with Task Force SPIESS attached. The Cavalry would be freed by arrival of a new Division in VIII Corps to take over part of the Division's last sector. CT 359 was to be released back to the Division. Accordingly, the Division plan called for attack with 358th on the left and 359th on the right, 357th in reserve. Division was to assemble West of NAHE River while both assault regiments would secure a bridgehead over NAHE River early 19 March, prepared to continue East on order.

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In the "Big Picture" KOBLENZ was captured by 87th Division and 4th Armored Division was directed to head for WORMS.

19 March 1945

358th Infantry – 1st Battalion crossed NAHE River at BRETZENHEIM (1142) on trucks, tanks and TD's. Initially little resistance was encountered and Battalion pushed out to DROMERSHEIM and ASPISHEIM by dark.

3rd Battalion was relieved by 2nd Cavalry Group and elements Company K crossed NAHE River to block the regimental left flank. Battalion (-) assembled at HEDDESHEIM.

2nd Battalion was relieved by 2nd Cavalry Group and assigned the right half of the regimental bridgehead. Battalion moved to vicinity WELGESHEIM where they outposted the town and area to the East.

359th Infantry – Regiment cleared BAD KREUZNACH at 0830, taking 80 PWs, and continued across River to form the right half of the bridgehead. By dark, 1st Battalion extended from HACKENHEIM to VOLXHEIM and patrolled to SPRENDLINGEN. 2nd Battalion was located at SPRENDLINGEN and outpost 208395. 3rd Battalion occupied ST JOHANN, WOLFSHEIM, and VENDERSHEIM.

357th Infantry – Regiment assembled in vicinity of SCHWEPPENHAUSEN, initiating their move at 1300.

2nd Cavalry Group – Relieved 358th Infantry and TASK FORCE SPIESS and held the area from OBERWESEL to BINGERBRUCK. 42nd Cavalry Squadron was relieved by CT 385 of 76th Infantry Division and the squadron prepared to attack BINGEN.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – Attached to 2nd Cavalry until relieved. Company C 773rd TD Battalion was detached and returned to 359th Infantry. Company A 773rd TD Battalion was picked up from 357th Infantry as Task Force was given mission of reconnoitering to Division front starting in morning. Upon relief, Task Force crossed the BRETZENHEIM bridge and assembled vicinity WOLFSHEIM and VENDERSHEIM.

Gains for the day were very satisfactory. The Division now held a bridgehead 6 miles deep across the NAHE River and was redispersed to press the offensive. Enemy aircraft looked over the area several times during the day but made no attacks.

Division CP moved to WINDESHEIM where it opened at 1530.

FO #59 was published at KISSELBACH and issued at WINDESHEIM following a conference with commanders at 1700. It directed the attack to continue to MAINZ.

20 March 1945

TASK FORCE SPIESS – The Task Force again was divided into three sub-units:

TF KELLY (to operate on the North)

- 1st and 3rd Reconnaissance Platoons 773rd TD Battalion
- 3rd Platoon Company D 712th Tank Battalion
- 1st Platoon Company A 773rd TD Battalion (2 TD's)

TF WAGNON (to operate in the center)

- 2nd Platoon Reconnaissance Company 773rd TD Battalion
- 1st Platoon Company D 712th Tank Battalion
- 2nd Platoon Company A 773rd TD Battalion (2 TD's)
- Assault Gun Platoon 712th Tank Battalion

TF DYE (to operate on the South)

- 90th Reconnaissance Troop
- 2nd Platoon Company D 712th Tank Battalion
- 3rd Platoon Company A 773rd TD Battalion (4 TD's)

Starting at 0600 at first light, the three columns sped toward the River encountering roadblocks and three minefields. By noon, however, they were 10 miles out. Sixteen towns had been cleared and leading elements were only three miles from MAINZ.

TF KELLY on the North moved through NDR HILBERSHEIM, ENGELSTADT, BUBENHEIM, SCHWABEHEIM to ELSHEIM where a roadblock temporarily halted the advance. Detouring around the block they took ESSENHEIM and 17 PWs and were stopped by a mile-long stretch of mined road. A few enemy dug in near the crossroad were fired upon and 13 captured. The road was cleared of mines and the TF continued to within 3 miles of MAINZ where they drew heavy fire. Moving back to the

crossroads Southeast of OBER OLMER WALD they set up to defend this position until the infantry caught up and relieved them.

Short of NIEDER OLM along a railroad track, TF WAGNON – the center force, met enemy dug in, supported by heavy mortars, AT guns and numerous flak guns. The town rested in a valley and the enemy positions were on reverse slopes of the surrounding hills and around the town itself. As the Task Force approached from the Southwest they fired at trucks vanishing over the hill they moved up TDs and assault guns to shoot into the town. Other enemy vehicles, apparently urged out by the fire, were cut down as they tried to leave NIEDER OLM. Fighter-bombers struck the town at the same time. Their bombs and strafing set many of the vehicles on fire. Two tanks, the platoon of Reconnaissance and 1 TD started to flank the town from the North but found the enemy dug-in. Twelve machine gun nests were knocked out and 5 PWs captured. White flags appeared in part of the town, and the attackers thought it had given up. Led by two TD's the Task Force moved up to the crest of the hill. Just as they were silhouetted, the Germans opened up with 20 mm guns and concealed 88 guns which tore through two M10's before the force could effect a withdrawal. Artillery was immediately called for and laid a TOT on the enemy positions. Infantry took over the task of clearing the town. Over 500 PWs were taken by TASK FORCE WAGNON during their day's work which included clearing PARTNEHIM, JUGENHEIM, OBER SAULHEIM and NIEDER SAULHEIM.

TF DYE on the South moved through WORSTADT to SCHORNSHEIM to UDENHEIM. Just beyond the town enemy artillery began to fall. The forward observer with TF DYE quickly placed counter-battery fire and silenced the enemy guns. At KONGERNHEIM another roadblock intruded. Three Panzerfausts whizzed by the tanks. The TD's cleared the block with fire. Five prisoners were captured. The unit then moved to SELEEN and MOMMENHEIM where they stayed the night.

TF SPIESS had done its spade work well. For the Infantry the 10-mile thrust was cheering news. It eased their job, localized the enemy resistance and made known where to put pressure.

As the Infantry units caught up, the TF was directed to block the Southeast flank which was the area of greatest threat since the gap between the 90th and 4th Armored Divisions was steadily being enlarged as the latter moved Southeast toward WORMS while the Division turned Northeast to MAINZ. Accordingly, elements of the TF were redispensed in late day. TF KELLY assembled at SCHORNSHEIM. TF WAGNON moved troops to SELEEN and MOMMENHEIM.

358th Infantry – Regiment jumped off at 0700 and moved rapidly forward. Light resistance from scattered small arms and automatic weapons continued until late afternoon when 3rd Battalion encountered SP or AA guns and heavy mortar fire from vicinity of BRETSENHEIM (M3653). 3rd Battalion stopped astride the road to MAINZ with Company K on the left and Company I on the right at the Northeast edge of OBER OLMER WALD. Company L held the crossroads just in rear.

1st Battalion captured NIEDER and OBER INGELHEIM by dark and A Company continued to capture WACKERNHEIM. For this purpose TF GRUBBS (AT Company, cooks, etc.) relieved Company A at GAU ALGESHEIM.

2nd Battalion occupied the airfield five miles Southwest of MAINZ at (M2952).

359th Infantry – Regiment moved out at 0700 with 3rd Battalion on left, 2nd Battalion on right and 1st Battalion in reserve. 2nd Battalion continued through SORGENLOCH and ZORNHEIM to EBERSHEIM where it halted for the night.

At midday, 3rd Battalion was approaching NIEDER OLM following TF WAGNON. Company I was leading, followed by Company K. L Company was in reserve at NIEDER SAULHEIM. As they moved to assist the Task Force, Company I entered a heavy firefight just forward of the high ground North of the RR underpass. A clump of flak guns (eight in all) and three 88's covered the underpass and adjacent grounds from positions about one-half mile to the North where the highway crossed the stream. Attempts of the Company to work forward met increased fire from these weapons as well as small arms

fire. By mid-afternoon, as result of artillery fire, three of the ack-ack guns and two AT guns were knocked out. Further advance was still not possible. Company K, therefore flanked the position by going to the right and coming in on the town from the East. This maneuver broke the resistance and the German soldiers turned and ran to the Northeast. Every available weapon was swung onto the fleeing enemy and Company I advanced rapidly into town, to mop up with Company K. Following capture of the town, the Battalion was ordered to occupy KLEIN WINTERNHEIM and to contact 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry on the left. This was done.

At 1000 1st Battalion staged forward to NIEDER SAULHEIM where it remained overnight.

357th Infantry – Entrucked at SCHMEPPENHAUSEN and crossed the NAHE River in early morning to an assembly area at PLANIG, BOSENHEIM and PFAFFEN-SCHWABENHEIM. In late morning, regiment again moved forward to vicinity of PARTENHEIM, WOLFSHEIM and VENDERSHEIM.

2nd Cavalry Group – 42nd Cavalry Squadron crossed NAHE at 1200 and attacked BINGEN. They made short shrift of BUDESHEIN, where they captured 200 PWs, and of OCKENHEIN, KEMPTEN and GAULSHEIM. By night they were in BINGEN. Final mop-up was left to morning. Over 500 PWs were taken. 2nd Squadron remained on the West bank of the NAHE River in process of being relieved by elements of 76th Infantry Division.

Division CP moved to SPRENDLINGEN to keep pace with the rapid advance. Opened at 1340.

Enemy air came to life and the Luftwaffe flew 44 sorties during the day with jet propelled planes, FW 190s and ME 109s. The East-West road at SPRENDLINGEN was strafed and bombed six times and bridges at BRETZENHEIM and BAD KREUZNACH were enemy targets. A few butterfly bombs were dropped at GENSINGEN. But friendly antiaircraft guns kept the planes at maximum range of 40 mm guns and little damage resulted from the attacks. Three enemy planes were shot down.

### 21 March 1945

The night was fraught with activity. In the 358th's area, enemy patrols left their hiding place in OBER OLMER WALD and prowled around Company L before launching a small counterattack at 0130. And as HAHNHEIM an encircled enemy garrison of 200 men, well-equipped, stubbornly refused all demands for surrender and were virtually eliminated en toto without a single American casualty.

In the 358th action, the enemy patrol first appeared at 2300 but was driven off. It returned at 0030 and was again discovered. Then at 0130 a group of 50 Germans infiltrated the area held by the tanks and TD's near the CR at (M326503). They were supported by a tank or SP gun which blew in the wall of a house at the CRs. The attack was repulsed but not before the raiders set afire an ammunition Jeep bearing 4.2 mortar shells. And another audacious enemy shoved a hand grenade down the gun barrel of a 75 mm gun, blowing one tanker's arm almost off and destroying the tank.

At HAHNHEIM, the previous day's action had flowed around it without anyone being aware the town was a German strong point. Two jeeps of 359th Infantry going toward their unit approached the town and were pinned down and occupants captured. An M10 taking the wrong road from ZORNHEIM was knocked out by an 88 gun, three of the crew killed and the fourth man captured after his ammunition ran out.

TASK FORCE SPIESS demanded the surrender of the enemy unit. The Germans elected to fight it out. This was a costly decision.

2nd Battalion of 357th was ordered to help take the town and moved to KONGERNHEIM late on the night of the 20th. The road from there to SELZEN was under heavy 20 mm fire from HAHNHEIM. Before 2nd Battalion could get to the town, the Germans had established a roadblock Northwest of SELZEN and infiltrated into SELZEN to attack the CP of TASK FORCE DYE. This action was

apparently designed to cover their withdrawal from HAHNHEIM. The CP fought off the attack and called for artillery. The Division guns and Corps 8" howitzers smothered the town with TOT's and interditory fires beginning at midnight. These terrific fires did the work. When F Company 357th entered the town in pre-dawn hours, the survivors gladly surrendered. Ten enemy were dead in the town, 17 were wounded. 100 prisoners (including five officers) were captured. In the woods North of town where they had tried to get out another 60 enemy were unable to surrender. They were dead. Captured in position were 8-88 mm guns, 20-20 mm guns and 30 vehicles. Best of all, the 11 Americans who were taken PWs were recaptured. No casualties were suffered by our troops.

358th Infantry – At 0530, 2nd Battalion jumped off to capture FINTHEN and DRAIS which were speedily accomplished. The Battalion then pushed on to capture and clear MOMBACH at 2330 taking numerous prisoners, despite heavy enemy fire.

3rd Battalion attacked at 0555 and moved rapidly without initial resistance until they reached BRETZENHEIM at 0700 where a house-to-house battle began which lasted all day. Finally, only a few snipers remained to be rounded up.

1st Battalion, relieved by the arrival of 2nd Cavalry Squadron, turned East to follow 2nd Battalion, and was committed on the right at MAMBACH.

359th Infantry – At 0400, 3rd Battalion attacked to capture MARIENBORN which fell after it was squeezed from the Southwest and Southeast. High velocity fire into the town slowed the capture. From MARIENBORN K and L Companies advanced to BRETZENHEIM arriving there at 1435. They spent the rest of the day cleaning out the town with 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry.

1st Battalion motored to EBERSHEIM at 0400; then advanced on foot to capture HECHTSHEIM which fell in midmorning. North and Northeast of HECHTSHEIM, however, the enemy held firm and with small arms and SP gun fire resisted efforts to dislodge them. 2nd Battalion joined the 1st at HECHTSHEIM in late morning. The two Battalions together broke the resistance and took 300 PWs. 2nd Battalion then moved North along the main road while the 1st Battalion turned up toward WEISENAU. Company A occupied the high ground Northeast of HECHTSHEIM while Company C moved through to seize the town. Considerable small arms and SP fire somewhat disrupted the attack and the entire Battalion settled down for the night on the high ground.

2nd Battalion continued toward MAINZ but were receiving fire from the barracks just South of MAINZ. Friendly air was called for and fighter-bombers hit the target. 80 prisoners were captured when the barracks were finally overrun in late afternoon. 2nd Battalion buttoned up for the night in this vicinity.

357th Infantry – 1st and 3rd Battalions moved to UDENHEIM and ZORNHEIM with 1st Battalion prepared to move on to EBERSHEIM for employment on Division right flank.

2nd Battalion cleaned up at HAHNHEIM.

1st Battalion reached EBERSHEIM at 1415 and moved out on foot to clear GAU BISHOSHEIM in the woods to the Northeast. Company A moved to BODENHEIM after arrival at 1600 while B and C Companies beat out the woods to LAUBENHEIM. On Hill 197 West of LAUBENHEIM, Company C ran into a fight with entrenched enemy and captured an 80 mm and a 20 mm gun.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – In the early morning TASK FORCE KELLY shot down a German plane at SCHORNSHEIM.

The entire TASK FORCE SPIESS was set to clearing East to the RHINE and North to MAINZ on the Division right flank. DEXHEIM was lightly held but heavily mined. 2 PWs were taken. TASK FORCE DYE moved up toward LOR[?]EILER where they knocked out two enemy trucks, captured 4 more and 12 prisoners. The unit then captured NACKENHEIM and 15 prisoners. In mid-evening 10

Germans in a boat tried to cross the RHINE at NACKENHEIM. Artillery was fired on it and the boat sank.

2nd Cavalry Group – 2nd Cavalry Squadron crossed NAHE River and relieved elements 358th Infantry. The 42nd Squadron fanned out to the East on left flank of 358th Infantry.

Division CP opened at NIEDER SAULHEIM at 1100.

A conference with commanders was held in early evening to establish plans for taking MAINZ. It was decided to use 358th Infantry and 359th Infantry, letting 1st Battalion 357th Infantry take WEISENAU. The 358th and 359th (-1st Battalion) would attack at 0600 following a 15-minute artillery preparation. 1st Battalions 359th and 357th Infantry would attack at 0530 without preparation. One Company 357th Infantry was to reinforce Company A at BODELHEIM that night. One Battalion would move to BODENHEIM in morning, relieving Company A, while another Battalion was to proceed to NIEDER OLM and remain motorized. 2nd Cavalry Group was to relieve 358th Infantry to include MOMBACH. These orders were issued verbally.

Enemy air was again active over the area. 10 sorties were flown. 3 enemy planes were downed.

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On the Army front things were happening. XX Corps was coming up rapidly from the South. 4th Armored Division had WORMS. 5th Division was alerted to cross the RHINE vicinity OPPENHEIM and was regrouping troops in the area.

### 22 March 1945

The attack on MAINZ began as scheduled. Six infantry Battalions converged on the city from every side in a perfectly coordinated assault.

For the Germans it was a sorry day. Proud MAINZ was falling and falling fast in spite of repeated assertions that the city would be defended to the last man and the last round of ammunition.

For the Americans, after the all-out, house-two-house defense of the suburbs, the ease with which MAINZ itself was taken was an anti-climax.

Neither threats nor pleadings could evoke the will to resist in more than a handful of the miscellany who were the city's defenders. After the previous day's desperate battles failed to stop the encroaching Americans, a feeling of hopelessness pervaded the city.

Its heart was gone with its buildings. Allied bombers in off-repeated raids had done their work well. Now the civilians huddled for the last time in their underground shelters. Braver ones on the streets stared apathetically as their soldiers surrendered by the hundreds.

There was fighting – on the outer edges and in the green parks. But the Citadel, moss-covered underground fortress defiantly barring the South entrance to the City was taken without fanfare, and when the railroad tracks which bound the City's girth were crossed, resistance became sporadic and uncoordinated, confined to small groups of die-hards. Finally it stopped altogether. The City's radio station was taken intact. Colonel Weiss, the City Commandant, surrendered. Greatest delay was getting the prisoners out and to the rear. By nightfall MAINZ was captured.

358th Infantry Regiment attacked with three Battalions – 2nd on left, 1st in center and 3rd on right. By 0930 2nd Battalion had cleared its area and prepared for relief by 2nd Cavalry Group. 1st and 3rd Battalions were along the railroad tracks receiving some long-range artillery, mortar and small arms fire. L Company lost a TD from 88 gunfire. The remaining TD promptly knocked out the gun and half-track carrying a 40 mm AA gun in addition. Resistance became scattered and regiment cleared to the RHINE without difficulty, gathering up 1121 prisoners.

Following relief by 2nd Cavalry Group in late afternoon, 2nd Battalion assembled in reserve in MAINZ. 1st and 3rd Battalions remained online, each with two Companies forward and one back. A and I Companies took the reserve positions.

359th Infantry – All three Battalions attacked in order, 3rd, 2nd, 1st from left to right with the 1st Battalion moving 30 minutes before the others at 0530 without artillery preparation. 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked at 0600 following the 15-minute artillery concentration established in the plan.

By late morning the City itself was penetrated and the left Battalion moved against scattered small arms and some SP gunfire. 1st Battalion met considerable opposition from the dug-in Infantry in the park, but after clearing that moved against light resistance. 2nd Battalion captured the Citadel. Artillery from across the RHINE continued to harass the advance.

Some mines and booby traps were encountered mostly near the waterfront. In some instances civilians led soldiers through mined areas. By mid-afternoon 315th Engineers had six platoons at work clearing debris and obstacles from the main roads in the City.

By 1800 all of the 359th was at the water's edge and Battalions redispersed to hold for the night. Companies K, F and A assembled in rear of their Battalions in reserve. The regiment had captured over 2000 prisoners.

357th Infantry – At 0030 Company K reinforced Company A at BODENHEIM and the rest of 3rd Battalion joined it in the morning. Later in the day I Company moved to LAUBENHEIM to protect the MSR.

A and C Companies attacked and captured WEISENAU by 0930. 2 tanks were knocked out by enemy bazooka fire. 150 PWs were captured. One platoon Company C went along the RHINE West bank to contact 359th at MAINZ. Encountered a brief firefight at the railroad bridge but successfully made contact.

2nd Battalion moved to SCHWABENHEIM.

25 men were requisitioned from AT Company to help guard the 4000 prisoners gathered by the Division in the past day.

TASK FORCE SPIESS held positions until relieved by 5th Division Reconnaissance Troop at 2100. Because the relieving force was so small, the Task Force remained in position for the night, although dissolved upon completion of the relief.

2nd Cavalry Group – Relieved 2nd Battalion 358th and made plans to mop up INGELHEIMER AUE. Prepared to simulate crossing of the RHINE Northwest of MAINZ.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the day Division received three directives from Corps covering future operations.

First 0900 was a plan for crossing the RHINE River which directed units to prepare plans on two conditions:

a. If resistance is weak

(1) 5th Infantry Division secure bridgehead.

(2) 4th Armored Division or 11th Armored pass through bridgehead.

(3) 89th Infantry Division followed by 90th Infantry Division cross through 5th Infantry Division bridgehead.

b. If resistance is strong

- (1) 5th Infantry Division secure bridgehead.
- (2) 89th Infantry Division cross River to expand bridgehead.
- (3) 90th Infantry Division crosses River to expand bridgehead.
- (4) 4th Armored Division or 11th Armored Division exploit any weakness found.

The second document at 0900 was Corps Operational Directive Number 92:

1. XII Corps regroups prepared to attack across RHINE River.
2. 5th Infantry Division moves to new zone and relieves elements 90th Infantry Division and 4th Armored Division prepared to cross RHINE River.
3. 90th Infantry Division: Attached -- 2nd Cavalry Group
  - (1) Complete clearing of sector.
  - (2) Simulate preparation for river crossing Northwest of MAINZ on Corps order.
  - (3) Protect left flank of Corps.
  - (4) Maintain contact with VIII Corps.

Third was Corps Field Order Number 17 at 1830 which gave the mission of the Corps:

XII Corps attacks across RHINE River, D-Day, H-Hour to seize bridgehead vicinity OPPENHEIM (M-4439), advance rapidly to Northeast, seize bridgehead over MAIN River vicinity HANAU (M-8470) and continue advance North in direction GIESSEN (G-6620).

Mission of the 90th:

- a. Protect left flank of Corps along RHINE River.
- b. Maintain contact with VIII Corps.
- c. Be prepared to move through 5th Infantry Division bridgehead following 89th Infantry Division to expand bridgehead or exploit the Northeast on right of 89th Infantry Division.

In view of the above it was decided to redispense the Division with 358th covering all of MAINZ, 357th to occupy from MAINZ South to 5th Division boundary and 359th to assemble in Division Reserve. 2nd Cavalry Group was to protect the North flank, maintain contact with VIII Corps and execute the required simulation for crossing Northwest of MAINZ. 161st Chemical Group (SG) was placed in direct support for this purpose.

Redispositions were to begin in early morning.

5th Division's target date was set at 222200A.

### **PHASE III**

#### **FROM THE RHINE TO THE MAIN**

**23 MARCH 1945**

During the night 2nd Cavalry moved vehicles freely and at 0600 fired artillery and began to smoke two sites at 0600 in simulated crossing. Smoke was continued until 1000.

The planned redispense began in early morning. 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry, moved to relieve 359th in its half of the city. 3rd Battalion, 358th, started to assemble at BRETZENHEIM in regimental

reserve. 357th's 3rd Battalion prepared to take over from 1st Battalion at dusk, while 2nd Battalion began to move to new assembly area. 359th had some units on trucks ready to move by shuttling.

Then at 0925 orders were changed abruptly. Corps telephoned: "Assemble two regiments in reserve at once prepared to cross RHINE tonight."

5th Division had already crossed the long anticipated barrier with ease, starting at 2200 on 22nd March. Hardly a shot was fired in the initial phase and by 0700 leading elements were out some 3000 yards. The enemy was beginning to react vigorously with considerable artillery fire and a counter-attack. A bridge was under construction to be followed by two more.

Rapid adjustments were made to conform to the new orders. It was decided to free 357th as well as 359th and 90th Reconnaissance Troop was directed to take over immediately from this unit. G-4 gathered trucks from everywhere to motorize two Battalions of 357th Infantry. New assembly areas were given to the 357th and 359th and units were started moving toward them.

Further changes flooded in. The 80th Infantry Division was to relieve the 90th. Now it would not arrive. 26th Infantry division, itself not yet relieved to the South, was to relieve the 90th. 357th Infantry was organized as a combat team and attached to 5th Division until the balance of the 90th could cross the RHINE. The CT was ordered to cross and cover the 5th Division's right flank as soon as possible. 357th Infantry assembled vicinity DEXHEIM and foot elements crossed by a bridge at 1730 except 3rd Battalion which missed its scheduled time and crossed on boats, completing at 1900. Six enemy aircraft attacked during the crossing, but no damage resulted. One plane was shot down. Vehicles started at 1800 and were all across by midnight. 2nd Battalion moved to ERFELDEN to relieve 2nd Battalion, 10th Infantry, 5th Division. 3rd Battalion moved to LEEHEIM and 1st Battalion just South of LEEHEIM. As 3rd moved into town, enemy artillery caused 19 casualties in Company L.

The German Air Force continued its activity throughout the night and bombed and strafed roads from LEEHEIM to the bridge. The combined artillery and air blows damaged some 20-odd vehicles of units other than the 90th.

Division Field Message Number 53 at 1330 fixed the flurry of orders on paper:

The 90th Division would cross the RHINE and attack Northeast. CT 357 attached to 5th Division until arrival of rest of Division. 359th and 358th Infantries, upon relief, were to assemble prepared to cross following 357th. All other units to assemble after relief and await orders to cross. At 1800 2nd Cavalry Group was detached and attached 26th Infantry Division with the same mission of protecting Corps left and maintaining contact with VIII Corps.

The late arrival of the relieving force of the 26th precluded relief being completed before dark. The regiment was therefore directed to move to its new area in the morning.

Division CP moved to KONGERHEIM where it opened at 1930.

#### 24 March 1945

357th Infantry – Before completing the relief of 2nd Battalion, 10th Infantry, 5th Division at ERFELDEN, 2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry was counterattacked shortly before midnight, 23 March, by the 1121 Regiment, 553 Division. The enemy force, some 350 in number, struck directly at the Battalion CP and aid station, which were exposed by not all of the Battalion being in position. After a long stiff fight the enemy attack was overcome and 250 Germans were taken prisoner. The Battalion lost 20 men captured, mostly medical personnel. Following the collapse of resistance at ERFELDEN, 2nd Battalion sent Company F to sweep out the island formed by the horseshoe course of the ALT RHINE from the main RHINE. 230 PWs were gathered up here without a fight as they were badly disorganized.

3rd Battalion attacked East from LEEHEIM. In the woods beyond Company L met strong resistance from 120 policemen rushed from FRANKFURT during the night, and lost 13 men killed. The

enemy force was supported by 3 towed 88 mm guns, which were captured intact. 80 prisoners were taken. Company I meanwhile was mounted on tanks and sent North of the woods to swing down on WOLFSKEHLEN. Another fight resulted but the town was cleared at 1300.

1st Battalion attacked on right of 3rd Battalion and captured GODDELAU with B Company mounted on tanks. At 1430 3rd Battalion crossed a waste-deep creek bordered by marshland while 1st Battalion moved up from the South in late afternoon. Approach of the 1st Battalion with three Companies abreast drove the enemy back through the town into Company K which was coming from the Northwest. In the fight which followed Company K was pushed back to the edge of town. They immediately reorganized and assaulted the town again from the West to strike the enemy in the flank. Meanwhile 1st Battalion penetrated the town and cleared it by 2300. 150 PWs were taken. Both Battalions halted there for the night. 2nd Battalion remained at ERFELDEN. Approximately 550 prisoners total were captured during the day.

Regiment reverted to Division control at 1200A.

359th Infantry – Starting about midnight the regiment crossed its transportation via 5th Division bridge and assembled in vicinity LEEHEIM. Foot troops crossed in order, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Battalions at 0600, clearing the bridge by 0730. Continued East to relieve 10th Infantry elements at DORNHEIM, which was accomplished without incident after 1st Battalion cleared a pocket of resistance Southeast of DORNHEIM. 1st Battalion then continued Northeast toward BUTTELBOREN, which they took without resistance. 2nd Battalion followed the 1st initially then continued East toward BUTTELBOREN WALD. They met no resistance until they reached WEILER HOF, a farmhouse, which they cleaned out. The dense woods beyond afforded some trouble and the Battalion halted for the night just short of the road 3 km Southeast of BUTTELBOREN.

3rd Battalion moved from LEEHEIM to DORNHEIM in regimental reserve.

358th Infantry – Relieved by 328th Infantry in MAINZ during the night 23-24 March. Moved by motor to assembly area vicinity SELZEN and MOMMENHEIM. Closed at noon. At 1400 the regiment moved their organic transportation over the bridge following with foot troops. 1st Battalion closed at WOLFSKEHLEN and patrolled to GODDELAU. 2nd and 3rd Battalions assembled vicinity LEEHEIM.

Division Artillery fires destroyed four 88 millimeter guns, nine 20 mm AA guns and two vehicles.

Two of Division Artillery Cub planes were damaged by enemy fire. One had its wing ripped off by an 80 mm shell. The other had a wing shot full of 20 mm gun holes. Both planes reached their home fields safely.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Luftwaffe continued its attempts to knock out the bridges and to prevent expansion of the bridgehead. During the day the enemy flew eighteen sorties in small groups or single planes and continued bombing throughout the night. Four planes were destroyed.

4th Armored Division was ordered across the RHINE at 1200A and began to uncoil another of its superb drives – this time for the MAIN River – through the portion of the bridgehead held by the 90th Division.

### 25 March 1945

No enemy frontline existed. Rapid advances against lightened resistance keynoted the day. Forward elements covered 10 miles in the day's move. Division CP itself, crossing the RHINE River on the third

anniversary of its activation, traveled 35 km as it displaced first to DORNHEIM at 1100 and then to GRAFENHAUSEN at 1800.

359th Infantry – 2nd Battalion cut the road to its front at 0600. 1st the 3rd Battalions continued the attack at 0600 and by noon had captured BRAUNSHARDT, WORFELDEN, SCHEPPENHAUSEN and GRAFENHAUSEN. 1st Battalion then continued to the Autobahn where it stayed overnight, while 3rd Battalion advanced Northeast to LANGEN. Here they were fired on. All three companies moved into the town and cleared the West end by shortly after midnight. 30 prisoners were captured.

2nd Battalion moved to ERZHAUSEN.

The 915th Field Artillery Battalion supporting 359th found itself in a firefight as it occupied positions in an area near the woods Northeast of KLEIN GERAU. As one battery moved into position, German AA guns opened up from the woods. The gun crew leveled their howitzers in direct fire and killed five Germans. Four more surrendered. One 915th soldier was wounded in the action.

358th Infantry – Passing through 357th, the regiment attacked at 0600 and captured all initial objectives without resistance. 3rd Battalion occupied WEITERSTADT while 2nd Battalion cut the Autobahn to the Southeast. 1st Battalion was motorized and started forward.

2nd and 3rd Battalions continued meeting scattered resistance. 3rd Battalion entered LANGEN at 1930 and cleared the East end of town. There they stayed the night. 2nd Battalion moved to EGELSBACH and blocked roads to the East. 1st Battalion refused the right flank East of LANGEN.

357th Infantry – 1st Battalion moved to the Autobahn West of DARMSTADT and remained at that crossroad.

2nd and 3rd Battalions moved motorized to new positions on Division right flank, blocking to East from WIXHAUSEN to Northwest of DARMSTADT.

Twenty men, including Medics and Chaplain, who were captured at ERFELDEN were recaptured and freed by 4th Armored Division at BABENHAUSEN.

Task Force SPIESS – Reformed in early morning the Task Force had its mission changed from reconnaissance of the front and blocking to the right flank. Its job now was to clear DARMSTADT which was thought to be reasonably free of enemy despite its huge size.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was detached before the Task Force got underway. One platoon of light tanks was also ordered away to 359th, but were already committed when the order arrived and could not be released.

The Task Force entered DARMSTADT from the West, and Southwest as elements 4th Armored Division entered from the East. Very little resistance was encountered. One roadblock West of the city was defended and there was a short skirmish there. On the Northeast side the 2nd Platoon, 773rd TD Reconnaissance Company, was patrolling the woods. One jeep was knocked out by enemy Panzerfaust and machine gun fire. Three soldiers were injured and one was captured to be retaken by friendly troops a few days later. 130 prisoners were taken and DARMSTADT which was completely cleared by 1600.

Elements 4th Armored Division withdrew to accompany their force after making contact with Task Force SPIESS. The latter was ordered to remain until relieved by elements 26th Division, which was accomplished by 2000. The force remained in the city overnight.

90th Reconnaissance Troop – Detached from Task Force SPIESS in midmorning, the Troop reconnoitered the Division front. Captured WIXHAUSEN and maintained contact with 6th Armored Division.

\* \* \* \* \*

The overall situation looked favorable. 4th Armored Division had reached the MAIN River. CCB seized a railroad bridge and crossed infantry to hold it. CCA was all along the river below HANAU. 5th Infantry Division had cleared to the MAIN River on the North. 6 Armored Division which had crossed in early morning and passed through 5th Division was gaining momentum slowly. On the 90th's immediate right, 26th Infantry Division was coming up fast.

Both friendly and enemy air were again active during the day. The German Air Force bombed throughout the Division area and lighted the bridge sites across the RHINE After Dark with parachute flares.

#### 26 March 1945

Despite areas of resistance at crossroads and villages the Division mopped up rapidly between 6th Armored and 4th Armored Divisions and on the left reached the MAIN. 900 prisoners were captured.

359th Infantry – 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked at 0800. 2nd Battalion entered SPRENDLINGEN at 0845 and continued to the woods Northeast of the town where resistance picked up as all types of fire were received. Artillery destroyed a SP gun. This opposition was cracked at 1300 and the Battalion moved rapidly to HEUSENSTAMM, BIEBER and then to MUHLHEIM.

3rd Battalion tangled with enemy infantry dug in around BUCHSCHLAG. Over one hundred prisoners were taken after heavy fighting. One tank supported the enemy infantry but later withdrew. Company L was left to block the left flank.

1st Battalion started at 0920 to comb out the woods to the vicinity of LANGEN. Here they entrucked and moved without opposition to South of OFFENBACH. Receiving orders to go to BURGEL and RUMPENHEIM the Battalion dispatched Company A to the latter while B and C Companies occupied BURGEL. By 2300 the 359th was on the banks of the MAIN River.

Captured enemy matériel included a chemical plant at NEU-ISENBURG, and eighteen carloads of war matériel at BUCHSCHLAG.

358th Infantry – 3rd and 1st Battalions attacked at 0800. 3rd Battalion was motorized and moved to the crossroad a half-mile North of DREIECHENHAIN where they detrucked to engage some resistance. Clearing this at 1015 they proceeded on, meeting resistance again at HEUSENSTAMM where they captured 200 prisoners. 1st Battalion cleared GOTZENHAIN, but met stiffer resistance at DIETZENBACH where they knocked out to AT guns and captured 60 prisoners.

The regiment stopped for the night at HAUSEN, OBERHAUSEN and HEUSENSTAMM.

357th Infantry – Followed by bounds in Zone of 358th and continued to block to the East on the Division right flank.

90th Reconnaissance Troop – Reconnoitered Division front and patrolled South bank of MAIN River until relieved in the morning by 358th and 359th Infantry.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – Continued along the Division right flank, clearing OFFENTHAL and small unorganized groups of enemy resistance.

Division CP moved to SPRENDLINGEN, opening at 1900.

#### 27 March 1945

All organized resistance on the near bank of the MAIN River was ended as Division mopped up to the river. Some 400 additional prisoners were rounded up. Reconnaissance for crossing and ferry sites was conducted in the area from OFFENBACH to HANAU exclusive.

Division published Field Order Number 60 and 1900. The plan was for 90th to force a crossing West of HANAU in vicinity DOERNIGHEIM commencing at 280300A to secure a bridgehead for 6th Armored and 4th Armored Divisions to go through. The Division would then follow the 4th Armored Division.

Formation for the assault crossing was for the 357th on left, 358th on right and 359th in Division Reserve.

In preparation for crossing the 357th moved to an assembly area at BIEBER.

Division CP moved to HEUSENSTAMM, where it opened at 1430.

## **PHASE IV**

### **THROUGH THE HILLS OF HESSEN**

28 – 31 MARCH

28 March 1945

Zero hour for the crossing was 0300. There was little hope for surprise. The night was bright with moonlight. Our troops had been on the bank for the previous day and night. Indeed during the day when Germans were observed digging in along the far bank, mortars were fired at them. Shortly thereafter six of them entered a boat and rowed across to surrender to 359th's outpost.

It was not all to be so easy, however. As later interrogation showed, the defenders here were a Battalion of fanatical Hitler Youth graduates led by veteran officers and NCOs who served as instructors in the OCS school. But they were stretched in a rather thin line from FECHENHEIM to DOERNIGHEIM. 2nd Company, 9th OCS was in and around DOERNIGHEIM with a platoon and detached under Battalion control. 3rd Company was farther East. 1st Company was in Battalion Reserve in the woods East of HOCHSTADT. 4th Company was attached in part to the rifle Companies and the rest were under Battalion control. Strength of the companies was 120-140 men.

Promptly at 0300 the leading assault boat slid into the water and struck out for the far shore. 358th Infantry, crossing on the right in vicinity of HANAU and DOERNIGHEIM, struck at thin air as 2nd Company, 9th OCS had withdrawn two platoons before relieving troops arrived. The sector was wide open, and the assault Battalions landed without enemy action.

On the Division left, 357th Infantry had scarcely landed its first wave when burp guns and small arms broke the silence. The firing rose in crescendo as assault elements pushed inland. 3rd Battalion on the regiment left was soon in a hot fight with OCS students who centered their line at BISCHOF SHEIM. 357th directed artillery fire on the town and 3rd Battalion closed as fires were lifted. The town was captured in 1000. 1st Battalion pushed on to capture HOCHSTADT, WACHENBUCHEN and later the high ground (Hill 188) 2000 yards North of WACHENBUCHEN. 2nd Battalion crossed and seized Hill 205, the main crossroad 2500 yards Northwest of HOCHSTADT.

358th in quick succession cleared DOERNIGHEIM, WILHELMSBAD, KURZIGHEIMERHOF, BRUCKOBEL and MITTELBUCHEN.

Work was begun on foot bridges, ferry and bridges for vehicles.

359th crossed in early morning and assembled vicinity HOCHSTADT minus 3rd Battalion which relieved 3rd Battalion 357th at BISCHOF SHEIM. The latter moved to WACHENBUCHEN.

The footbridge and ferry were completed in mid-morning and light vehicles began to cross. From the West the Germans directed artillery fire in search for the bridging area.

By noon all objectives were attained in the 90th Division held a 5-6 mile bridgehead for the debouchment of two armored Divisions. The 4th Armored Division came from HANAU while the 6th Armored Division crossed the bridge which was completed at 1248.

At 1920 the bridge priority of 6th Armored Division ceased and Division completed crossing the bulk of its equipment. By midnight all of the Infantry Regiments, the Headquarters, and all supporting artillery, tanks, and TDs were across. Only part of 315th Engineers in Division Headquarters itself remained to cross.

It was a profitable day: a 400 yard water barrier lay behind the Division. It had established a firm bridgehead and covered the debouchment of two armored Divisions in the space of 9 hours. 2 OCS Companies had been badly bloodied. Some 400 Germans were captured. Sending the Division PWs over the 40,000 mark.

### 29 March 1945

357th Infantry – Continued advance against negligible resistance. By late afternoon 1st Battalion was at KAICHEN, 2nd Battalion at GROSS KARBEN and 3rd Battalion 359 was attached for operational control at 1000A while it searched out the wooded area North of FECHENHEIM.

358th Infantry – Starting after noon, 1st Battalion moved to HEIDENBERGEN, 2nd Battalion to ROSSDORF and 3rd Battalion to KILIANSTADTEN. I and R Platoon reconnoitered to South edge of PREUSSEN Woods and captured 30 PWs.

359th Infantry – At 1000A 359th Infantry (-3rd Battalion) was attached to 4th Armored Division and organized as a CT. It moved motorized in the afternoon at 1300A with 2nd Battalion furnishing the advance guard. At STOCKHEIM the advance guard encountered opposition and remainder of Battalion detrucked and worked into the town. After clearing STOCKHEIM at 1800, 2nd Battalion moved on to SELTERS where they again met resistance. One platoon Company E and two tanks went East to BLEICHENBACH, found nothing and unaware of the situation, returned and entered SELTERS from the North. German troops surrounded them and knocked out two tanks with bazooka fire. Company G and rest of E were still fighting to get into town to contact the platoon of E. Company G made a penetration was itself cut off from contact with the Battalion except by radio. Extreme darkness made further operations so uncertain that action was suspended until morning when it was planned to relieve the beleaguered units with Company F who was at EFFOLDERBACH and 1st Battalion who had gone to STOCKHEIM and BLEICHENBACH.

3rd Battalion, after accomplishing its mission for 357th Infantry, and contacting elements 5th Infantry Division at FECHENHEIM reverted to Division control as Division Reserve at 1430. Battalion remained in the area blocking Division left flank.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – Reformed again, the Task Force was composed of Headquarters 773rd TD Battalion, Reconnaissance Company 773rd TD Battalion, Company D 712th Tank Battalion and 1 Platoon Company C 773rd TD Battalion. At 0600 the Task Force struck out on its mission of reconnoitering and blocking the Division right flank as the Division zone flared out from the bridgehead. Within 2½ hours, the Task Force had covered 10 km reaching LANGEN-BERGHEIM. At that point they halted, since units on the right were meeting stiff resistance. The Division sector was changed to North, and then Northeast so the Task Force changed direction to Northwest and cleared and occupied the area HEIDENBERGEN, ALTENSTADT and NIEDER FLORSTADT. 110 prisoners were taken throughout the day.

90th Reconnaissance Troop – Reconnoitered Division front. Late in the day reverted to XII Corps control to guard PWs from the spearheading armored units.

Division CP opened in its new location at WACHENBUCHEN at 1430A.

### 30 March 1945

Using trucks borrowed from the Artillery and 537th AAA (AW) Battalion as well as their own organic and attached vehicles (Tanks and TDs), the regiment moved motorized at 0700.

357th Infantry – By 1220, 357th Infantry had rolled 30 miles. It stopped for the night with 1st Battalion at BREUNGESHAIN, 2nd Battalion at ESCHENROD and 3rd Battalion at RUDINGSHAIN.

358th Infantry – The regiment was instructed to proceed with all possible speed to help 359th Infantry at SELTERS if necessary as the extent of the resistance was not known at the time. 1st Battalion moved out but on arrival found SELTERS cleared by 359th Infantry. Preceded by PAST FORCE SPIESS the regiment moved on. At USENBORN an estimated 120 Germans halted the TASK FORCE, who then circled around the opposition to WENINGS. 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry engaged the enemy force and drove it back toward GEINHAAR, which the Battalion then cleared. 2nd Battalion went on to WENINGS and established roadblocks to the Southeast from OBER SEEMEN to GEINHAAR.

3rd Battalion, moving on the outside to cover the flank, encountered enemy infantry, 2 tanks and an assault gun at BINDSACHSEN. Artillery fire drove off the enemy force who withdrew East, pursued by our shelling. 3rd Battalion then assembled at GEDERN, outposting that area.

1st Battalion, moving up an inside route, reached the day's objectives without meeting organized resistance. Company A stopped at KAULSTOSS, Company B at SICHENHAUSEN with a platoon at HIRCHENHAIN, and Company C at BURKHARDS.

359th Infantry – Company F left EFFOLDERBACH at 0615 to attack SELTERS from the Southwest. 1st Battalion in order A, B and C Companies approached from the Southeast by way of BLEICHENBACH.

By 0730 Company F had contacted and passed through Company G and the platoon of E and mopped up the town. 60 prisoners from XV Replacement and Training Battalion were captured.

After clearing SELTERS the regiment moved out with 1st Battalion on left, and 2nd Battalion on right on foot until LISSBERG when troops were motorized and moved to QUECK (1st Battalion) and SANDLOFS (2nd Battalion). 3rd Battalion remained in Division Reserve and moved after Division CP. Established roadblocks vicinity Division CP, putting Company L at MERKENFRITZ, Company I at HIRZENHAIN and Company K Northwest of STEINBERG.

TASK FORCE SPIESS – Given the mission of reconnoitering Division front through the area bypassed by 4th Armored Division which had sped up on the left and cut back some distance above. TASK FORCE SPIESS hit the road at 0600, and cleared town after town as it moved forward. 96 PWs were captured and a number of enemy killed and wounded as firefights were had at BOBENHAUSEN, BERGHEIM, HIRZENHAIN and USENBORN. At USENBORN one M10 was knocked out by an enemy AT gun while another enemy AT gun was in turn destroyed by the 2nd Platoon 773rd Reconnaissance Company.

Division CP traveled 21 miles to open at STEINBERG at 1600.

31 March 1945

Only spotty small arms fire was encountered as 90th Division raced 25 more miles on the trail of 4th Armored Division. Prisoners still collected by the hundreds as towns were cleared by passage of troops through them. By night forward elements were on a general line.

Division CP displaced twice, first to HERBSTEIN (18 miles), then to BERNSHAUSEN (14 miles). TASK FORCE SPIESS was dissolved in late afternoon as roads forward were now jammed with armored elements, eliminating the need for the Force.

The 359th Infantry remained attached to the 4th Armored Division and 90th Reconnaissance Troop was still guarding prisoners under Corps control.

The onrushing troops swept past incalculable enemy matériel whose mounting proportions were later on to present problems for guard details. 25 locomotives, 500 assorted flat and boxcars, 50 airplane engines (ME 109s and FW 190s), estimated 2500 HMGs, estimated 3000 rifles, estimated 3000 bayonets and 25 quadruple 20 mm AA guns were some of the equipment captured in the final day's efforts.

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The 90th Division which had entered March so quietly now roared out like the proverbial lion. March was a month of swift movement, rapid changes. A month so fluid that orders were out of date before issue. Map sheets were scarcely pasted together before they were old as yesterday's newspaper. Almost the entire month was one of pursuit as the 90th sped 250 miles into Germany.

Four principal rivers were crossed: the KYLL, MOSELLE (for the second time), the RHINE – once dreaded barrier; yet easiest crossed of all – and the MAIN. From the hills of EIFEL to the hills of HESSEN the Division had moved at will against an enemy in chaotic rout.

For the Wehrmacht it was an ignominious month. The German's hastily deployed forces were overwhelmed, their strong points destroyed. In desperation, the enemy leveled flak guns in profligate numbers for direct ground fire. Gone were the cities and the industries they once protected. Now their chief use was to delay and harass. But nothing it seemed could stop the thundering forces which broke like a tidal wave over the West Wall and engulfed the heart of German industry. At last even the German civilians were turning against their own soldiers, driving them from their towns and hanging out the white flags of surrender. Prisoners came by the hundreds and 13,365 were gathered up to raise the Division totaled to 41,859. Seven tanks and twelve SP guns boosted the Division record of enemy armor destroyed or captured to 473 tanks and 181 SP guns. Innumerable flak guns were overrun and destroyed and 11 German airplanes were definitely downed by Division units with 10 other probably destroyed.

Two principal cities – MAINZ and DARMSTADT were captured as well as countless smaller towns and villages. Now the Division was poised to continue its history-making mission – the slicing of Germany in two parts across its middle.

EARNEST  
COMMANDING  
BOOTH  
G-3

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G-4 After Action Report

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of April found the 90th Infantry Division mopping up behind the spearheading 4th Armored Division in the breakthrough up the HESSE Corridor. RCT 359 (minus its 3rd Battalion) was still attached to the latter. Both Divisions had driven a lancet deep toward the heart of Germany and supply lines stretched far behind them. Both flanks were exposed as the Germans reacted against units trying to exploit the drive and engage them in stiff fighting, slowing their progress.

XII Corps was ordered to seize the communication centers vicinity ARNSTADT while XX Corps on the left would seize those at ERFURT and WEIMAR.

On the 31st of March, then, XII Corps assigned 4th Armored Division the mission of capturing OHRDRUF and GOTHA with 90th Division following.

11th Armored Division on the right was to seize ARNSTADT and KRANICHFELD with 26th Infantry Division following. 71st Infantry Division remained in Corps Reserve.

The 4th Armored Division with forward elements approaching EISENACH was beginning to swing East and the Division (-RCT 359) was prepared to mop up behind them. Forward elements of 357th and 358th Infantries were generally 6 miles short of HERSFELD. The Division CP was at BERNSHAUSEN. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry in Division Reserve was positioned at BAD SALZSCHLIRF with Company L at BERNSHAUSEN. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was guarding prisoners for Corps.

### 1 April 1945

As the Division was already on the heels of the armor, the planned movement forward was halted to give rear elements of the 4th Armored Division a chance to clear. Further, 11th Armored Division, ordered to bypass FULDA, swung into the 90th Division zone before turning East at HUNFELD and was given road priority.

The regiments were therefore directed to push forward reconnaissance with inner zones. 2nd Battalion of 358th Infantry was ordered forward to cover the Division right flank at BOLKS, ROTHENKIRCHEN, and EINSRERFELD, while Company G 357th Infantry plus TDs moved to block the left flank at BEIERSCHAUSEN, ASBACH and the intersection of the Autobahn Southwest of HERSFELD. Both units were in place by 2200.

CT 359 moved out at 0500 to follow 4th Armored Division. The forward elements traveled some 33 miles before halting behind CCA who were stopped by a blown bridge over the WERRA River near HORSCHERL.

As the rear of the lead march serial (1st Battalion) passed SALLMANNSHAUSEN, fire from the town across the river was received. Some of the unit detrucked and returned the fire with small arms, 50 caliber machine guns and antitank guns. The town was set afire, and the column moved on.

1st Battalion was attached to CCA and assembled at WILLERSHAUSEN, 2nd Battalion assembled at WOMMEN while the regimental CP and attached units halted at MARKERSHAUSEN.

Division Artillery air patrols were active. Two ME 109s jumped one liaison plane East of HERSFELD but the plane escaped serious damage. Another Cub was hit by enemy antiaircraft units but made its way home.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was released from Corps prisoner guard detail and rejoined the Division.

Now came disquieting information that sizable enemy forces had cut across the axis of communication to the rear, blocked the MSR North of HOCHSTADT and were harassing and ambushing supply vehicles.

A convoy of four Division Quartermaster trucks was ambushed near STOCKHEIM as they took a secondary route. Two men were killed. One was wounded and captured and later abandoned. The

fourth soldier was captured and held for four days until troops of the 71st Infantry Division recaptured him.

Seven trucks from 712th Tank Battalion Service Company left NIEDERAULA to pick up gasoline from the gas dumb. About 1900 they were ambushed near WALLERNHAUSEN. One truck turned around and escaped. In the fight which followed, one soldier was killed, two were wounded and captured (but later abandoned and recovered) and three others were taken prisoner and recaptured the next day. The rest of the 14 men escaped and returned to the unit. Two of the vehicles were recovered the following day.

In the early evening XII Corps requested a Battalion to guard approaches to the Corps Forward CP at LAUTERBACH. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry was assigned to this mission and moved out as the period closed.

## 2 April 1945

Starting at 0700, the Division pushed on 14 miles before Orders from Corps halted the advance and changed direct to due East.

Orders and an overlay reached the troops shortly after noon and directed mop-up to the WERRA River preparatory to crossing it and continuing east. Once more the 90th was to be on its own with nothing in front.

357th Infantry – Patrols from the 1st Battalion began immediately to work towards the river which they reached without resistance. A bridge, badly damaged, but passable for foot troops, was found at DANKMARSHAUSEN. Immediate crossing was recommended and approved. Troops of Company C led the way over the rickety structure until the entire battalion was across.

Civilian reports that DIPPACH held only three enemy troops proved thoroughly unreliable as a blast of small arms fire poured out of the town. Artillery was laid on the town and it was taken by assault of Company B and C with 2nd Platoon, Company C, 712th Tank Battalion. This platoon forded the swift-flowing WERRA River at 1730 and moved in sections of two tanks each with infantry fanned out on either side. Marching fire of all arms was used as the attackers crossed the flat approach to DIPPACH. Roadblocks at the railroad underpasses at the edge of town were reduced by direct fire and by running over them. The town was entered in 1830 and cleared shortly thereafter. The close infantry-tank coordination was illustrated by the infantrymen who substituted for the assistant gunner and one tank and gave excellent performance. Following capture of DIPPACH, LEIMBACH was occupied by Company A. The Germans now aimed high velocity fire from the vicinity of BERKA and the East.

3rd Battalion moved up on the left and began crossing the WERRA River while 2nd Battalion and Task Force MAGER blocked to the North.

358th Infantry – 2nd Battalion continued to secure the right flank while 1st and 3rd Battalions turned East toward the WERRA. At 1645 a Company K patrol captured 44 PWs at BENGENDORF after a skirmish. The battalion then continued against scattered resistance to the River.

1st Battalion seized a railroad bridge across the river late in the day. Only foot troops could cross.

174 PWs were captured by the regiment during the day.

359th Infantry – Enemy fire delayed construction of a bridge as PFERSDORF and 1st Battalion crossed in assault boats, accomplishing this in late morning. The Germans opened up with self-propelled gun fire from the high ground to the Northeast. Artillery silenced these guns.

After a bridge was completed at PFERSDORF and the armor had crossed, 1st Battalion moved to KRAUTHAUSEN and then to MADELUNGEN. Here one tank was lost, but the town was captured at 2350.

In late afternoon, 2nd Battalion crossed near SALMANNHAUSEN. Companies F and G found the town clear and moved on to the high ground to the Southeast.

90th Reconnaissance Troop – Reconnoitered on the right flank of the Division, meeting small arms fire as they reached UNTERBREIZBACH. Most of it came from the high ridge West of VACHA.

The situation in the far rear areas remained fluid, and 71st Infantry Division was put to clearing up the sector. Another Division Quartermaster convoy of 4 trucks was ambushed by Panzerfaust and small arms fire in vicinity of STOCKHEIM, Germany. The lead truck plunged ahead and escaped. The other three halted and all the occupants but one were surrounded and captured. They were turned over to the Burgomeister of STOCKHEIM who released them. The one soldier who escaped was picked up three days later by the 71st Division as they combed the woods. Four of the trucks involved in the two ambushes were subsequently recovered.

3rd Battalion 359th Infantry reached its area at 0400 and remained under Corps control. Battalion CP and Company I were at BLITZENROD. Company K was at HARTMANSHAIN and Company L Southwest of HARTMANSHAIN, blocking roads at the junction. 3rd Platoon, Company B, 712th Tank Battalion was attached and joined the Battalion in early morning. Together with infantry riding the tanks they combed out an area about 28 km, moving through HERBSTEIN. This mission netted 72 prisoners.

At 1800 they returned to BLITZENROD and set up a defensive position. Other than this the Battalion had no enemy contact.

As a result of enemy harassment of supply routes, elements of the light tank company, 712th Tank Battalion, elements of 773rd TD Battalion, and elements of 537th AAA Battalion were called upon at intervals to escort convoys to the rear for the next several weeks.

Enemy air was very active over Division units. 73 sorties were flown. 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry, was strafed by 6 planes as they moved up on the Division left near HERSFELD. No damage resulted. A Division Artillery Headquarters vehicle was damaged by an ME 109 later in the day at the same spot. 40 enemy planes strafed and bombed 915th FA Battalion causing nine casualties. 7 enemy planes were destroyed and two probably destroyed by supporting antiaircraft.

Division CP FRIEDEWALD at 1740B.

### 3 April 1945

Corps orders were to attack East across the WERRA River and secure the line BERKA-VACHA. Further attack was on order.

357th Infantry – 3rd Battalion completed its crossing of the WERRA after midnight and moved to DIPPACH without incident. Before 0730 L and K Companies attacked BERKA. The victory was easy. The town was taken by 0755.

1st Battalion moved East to the ridgeline. Their patrols filtered further as the advance waited additional orders. These came at 1115. The objective now was the railroad track about 15 km east of the WERRA. The Division Commander shortened this objective as it was beyond effective artillery support. A bridge over which to displace artillery was still not in. Engineers began construction at WIDDERSHAUSEN.

The action of both 358 and 357 had ruptured the enemy's attempts to form an MLR. 90th Division now straddled the WERRA River over which no American soldier was to have passed. 2nd Battalion continued its blocking mission on the 358th's right flank without being engaged.

All was not milk and honey, however, as the regimental CP found itself caught in a web of encounters. First, in midafternoon a group of about 35 bypassed enemy attacked the CP at

HEIMBOLDSHAUSEN from the high ground above the railroad station and yards. They were quickly rounded up by a hurriedly gathered force of tankers, truck drivers, MPs and CP personnel. Later in the day at 1830 one enemy plane roared over the area. AA engaged, and hit it. The plane began a crash dive along the railroad and apparently jettisoned its bomb before plunging to the ground in flames. The bomb hit a boxcar of black powder. The resultant blast dug a 50 foot crater, leveled five houses blew the roofs off some 20 or 30 others and broke most of the windows in the town. Several men were pinned under the debris as buildings collapsed upon them. Three died – 1 officer and one enlisted man from 712 Tank Battalion, and one attached medic. 29 other tankers, another medic, one TD man and 49 soldiers from 358th Infantry were additional casualties. 56 of these were evacuated but the bulk were returned to duty. The regimental CP moved to ROHRIGSHOF.

359th Infantry – Remained attached to 4th Armored Division. As word came that the CT would be returned to Division control upon relief by elements of a 89th Infantry Division, the regiment planned to remain in place. However at 0900, Companies C and B moved out to STREGDA where they captured 145 prisoners. 3rd Battalion continued to block the road net in vicinity of Corps CP.

Attached 537th AAA batteries were busy as the GAF flew 12 sorties. Four enemy planes were downed. AA gun positions in vicinity of Division CP at ERIEBEWALD were strafed and AP bombs were dropped. One officer and four EM were wounded. One 40 mm gun was damaged by enemy fire.

1055 PWs were processed during the period. 4-120 mm mortars and 3-20 mm multiple mount AA guns were captured or destroyed.

#### 4 April 1945

357th Infantry – 3rd Battalion blocked in place on the North flank, while 2nd Battalion was committed on the left of 1st Battalion. Both units moved against dissolving opposition until 2nd Battalion struck the outer ring of the EISENACH defense at MARKSUHL. Here, despite heavy artillery fire including 8" guns, the enemy force held out until the entire battalion was committed to capture the town at 2320. Company G then continued to move towards BURKHARDTRODA.

Near MOHRA fighting flared up briefly and then died again as 1st Battalion knocked out two self-propelled guns with artillery and took the town.

On the left, the 89th Division, moving up to relieve 359th Infantry, made unnecessary the block by 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry moved to ETTENHAUSEN in late afternoon.

358th Infantry – Moving also at 0700 with 1st Battalion on left and 3rd Battalion on right, 358th Infantry continued its attack against scattered pockets of resistance. Among other towns, 3rd Battalion captured MERKERS in which was discovered the salt mine housing the great gold hoard and art treasure of the Reich.

Not until several days later was the enormous wealth that had been captured fully known. Subsequent investigation revealed that the subterranean chambers contained 100 tons of gold bullion (believe to be all Germany's Gold), 5 billion German marks, \$2 million in American currency, 4,000,000 Norwegian pounds, 100 million paper French francs, 110,000 English pounds, and a miscellany of Spanish, Italian, Turkish and Portuguese currencies.

Among the art works were 1000 cases of paintings and statues, totaling some 2000 paintings, including works by Raphael, Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Durer and Renoir. 1500 priceless tapestries and thousands of engravings as well as 120 cases with original GOETHE collection from WIEMAR rounded out the valuables.

Great quantities of Luftwaffe uniforms, including electrically heated equipment, were also stored here.

359th Infantry – 2nd Battalion sent Company B Southwest to contact 357th 3rd Battalion. This was accomplished in early morning. The regiment then began assembly vicinity HONEBACH upon relief by 89th Division. 1st Battalion moved to GROSSENSEE. 2nd Battalion assembled that BERKA. 3rd Battalion, relieved by Corps, closed in at KLEINENSEE.

Division CP opened at KIESELBACH at 1639.

#### 5 April 1945

357th Infantry – G Company occupied BURKHARTROD at 0600 without opposition. 2nd Battalion then remained in blocking position on the North flank. At 0700 the regiment pushed out with 3rd Battalion moving on left of 1st. All organized resistance was gone. Reports indicated the enemy had fled North and Northeast. The advance moved rapidly. So fast, in fact, that 3rd Battalion was at ETTERWINDEN and 1st Battalion 2500 yards Northeast of WALDFISCH before they could be halted by Division order at 0845.

358th Infantry – Attacking 0700, 3rd Battalion captured BAD LIEBENSTEIN and the high ground beyond. 2nd Battalion passed through 1st Battalion at WITZELRODA to take SCHWEINA and the ridge to the East. Here Division halted the regiment.

B Company captured ABTERODA without trouble at 0930. C Company on the right took GASTERODA at 1030 but hit a snag in capturing VITZERODA. Accompanied by four tanks, the company moved through the woods Southeast of GASTERODA toward Hill 340. This bald ridge west of the town was stoutly defended by 100 SS Troops. They opened up on the attackers as they stormed out of the woods and climbed the open slope. Machine gun and small arms bullets and Panzerfausts hit into the assaulting force. Mortar fires burst around them. Panzerfausts smashed into three of the tanks, disabling two. The crews escaped. The infantrymen were less fortunate. A number were casualties. Fighting continued until evening when resistance slackened. Artillery and flanking tank fires turned the trick. The company remained in contact throughout the night. In the morning they occupied the position.

On the left, 3rd Battalion moved virtually without opposition. 20 mm and AA fire were encountered as Company I moved into HAUSPREITENBACH. L Company occupied GOSPENRODA while K Company took HRSCHLITT.

2nd Battalion, which had been held to West of the River on Division order, was released and moved from HONENBACH across the battered bridge at DANKMARSAKUSEN into DIPPACH. All elements were assembled by 1800.

The bridge at WIDDERSHAUSEN was completed in 1535 and command transportation and artillery were shoved across.

358th Infantry – Because of the enemy defense at the railroad bridge, 1st Battalion crossed B and C Companies at 0600 behind 357th in their area. B Company then swung south and cleared HERINGEN, LENGERS, HARNRODE and PHILLIPSTHAL in turn. Company C turned East at HERINGEN and attacked OBERZELLA. Efforts to take the town were unsuccessful until a coordinated attack was launched with A Company at 1900. This company had crossed on the railroad bridge at 1300. They started to follow C Company, but ran into enemy in the woods and had to fight their way clear. After the fall of OBERZELLA, Company A continued on to the high ground beyond.

VACHA which a captured order showed was a critical point in the German defense, offered more trouble. 3rd Battalion crossed the ULSTER River and eliminated UNTERBREIZBACH with artillery after the civilians there, impressed by the SS, tried to stave off the attack with small arms. The Battalion reached VACHA about noon. The town and high ground adjacent to it were defended by an estimated

500 troops, – Wehrmacht, Volkssturm and SS – employing small arms, automatic weapons and anti-aircraft guns. Fires hot and heavy were exchanged throughout the day as the assault elements fought their way into the town under a shower of enemy mortar and 20 mm fire. This came from the high ground on the left. By 1800, however, the backbone of resistance was broken. The town was cleared by dark. Over 200 prisoners were captured. Company K remained in VACHA. Company I pushed on to DORNDORF. Company L moved abreast just South of the town.

90th Reconnaissance Troop – The troop had been operating on the front and flank of 358th Infantry, clearing towns and maintaining contact with the 26th Infantry Division on the 90th's right. The troop captured 119 prisoners and recovered at STEINBACH 15 American soldiers who had been captured in the fighting at VACHA.

Although the Division now was halted out of enemy contact, the troops learned of an Allied Prison Camp in the vicinity of FRIEDRICHRODA. A recon car and 1/4 ton truck with a 712th light tank moved out ahead of the line to investigate. They found the camp, freed 200 British and Canadian PWs and took 30 German prisoners before returning.

359th Infantry – The regiment had been directed to stage forward to vicinity VACHA in early morning. This area was advanced to LEIMBACH-LANGENFELD-KAISERODA-HERMANNSDODA. Enroute in early morning, 2nd Battalion was tagged as reserve for 357th Infantry and shifted its course to ETTENHAUSEN where it closed at 1300. Cannon Company under Division Control was sent to SCHLITZ to guard trains of enemy materiel in that area. 3rd Battalion was directed to guard trains from KAISERODA to BAD SALZUNGEN. At 1840 Division notified the regiment that it would be attached to 26th Infantry Division in the morning to relieve elements of the 11th Armored Division at ZELLA MEHLIS.

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The Big Picture was rapidly changing. The boundary between the XII and VIII Corps, which was now on the left, was set as the WERRA River. All movements now were aimed to secure by dark, 8 April, a new line from which a coordinated thrust to the Southeast could be launched. For the Division this indicated an attack through the heavily wooded and hilly THURINGER WALD. This was the heart of NAZI Germany, being one of the first areas of Northern Germany to become fully dominated by the Party. Corps ordered the 90th Division at 1800 to screen until relieved by elements VIII Corps and then to assemble South of the WERRA River. One RCT (359) was to move by motor to the 26th Division on 6 April to relieve 11th armored division in ZELLA MEHLIS-OBERHOF area and patrol to the Northeast and East. Following further readjustments, it was anticipated the Division would get a new zone on the Corps left in the area held by 359th Infantry.

#### 6 April 1945

358th Infantry – 358 assembled in vicinity of BAD SALZUNGEN following relief of 2nd and 3rd Battalions by elements of the 87th Infantry Division.

357th Infantry – The regiment, uncovered on the North by advance of the 89th Division and passed through by the 97th Infantry Division, assembled South of the WERRA in mid-afternoon. 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry was alerted to move to SCHMALKALDEN to secure the town and set up a roadblock in preparation for the Division advance through that area. At nightfall the regiment was directed to take over the guard of the MERKERS salt mine using elements of the 712th Tank Battalion as necessary. 1st Battalion with the light tanks of 712th was assigned this mission.

359th Infantry – 359 began its motor movement to join the 26th Infantry Division shortly after noon. 915th FA Battalion and 345th FA Battalion accompanied the CT. 2nd and 3rd Battalions closed at OBERHOF late in the day. 1st Battalion reached ZELLA MEHLIS at 1730 and established guards on arms and munitions factories there.

Division CP opened that BAD SALZUNGEN at noon.

#### 7 April 1945

The day was relatively quiet for the bulk of the Division. 1st Battalion 357 reverted to Division Control as the MERKERS mine was discovered to be an extensive labyrinth, covering many miles with numerous entrances. 2nd Battalion 357 completed its move to SCHMALKALDEN by 1700 without incident. 343rd and 344th FA Battalions displaced to vicinity LAUTER and HEIDERSBACH respectively in order to support the impending advance of the Division as well as releasing trucks to transport the infantry of the following day.

359th Infantry remained attached to the 26th Division and had several small encounters with defended roadblocks as patrols moved out to the East. Approximately 50 Germans attacked OBERHOF shortly before midnight. This force was eliminated as 20 were killed and 30 captured. No further threats developed.

The Division plan was to assemble in vicinity ZELLA MEHLIS on the 8th, pass the 358th Infantry through the right of 359 and continue the attack with these two regiments, with 359 remaining on the left flank. The regiment would revert to Division control at this time. 357 (-) was to assemble vicinity ZELLA MEHLIS as Division Reserved.

#### 8 April 1945

The move to the new area began in early morning, for the most part over the bridge built at BARCHFELD by 1135th Engineer Group, and was completed without trouble in early afternoon.

Division CP opened that ZELLA MEHLIS at 1000B.

The new zone of the Division looked tough. It was mountain country, heavily forested, with evergreen trees towering a hundred feet in the air. In some places snow lay in patches like waste paper thrown about. The mountain roads, carved out by the steep slopes or chopped through the thick woods, offered little opportunity for bypass and were conducive to roadblocks. It was ideal terrain for delaying action, and the Germans made the most of it. But it was through terrain such as this that the 90th Division gained the accolade of the Germans as the "Forest and Mountain Division".

359th Infantry – Following an artillery preparation at 0640, 359th Infantry launched a new attack with 3rd the 1st Battalions. The latter sought to occupy the high ground East of GOLDLAUTER, which it did without serious opposition. But 3rd Battalion, on the left, met trouble. Right from the start they had to fight their way forward. By using marching fire they were able to advance to the crossroads 2400 yards South of GEHLBERG. Here a definite strong point stalled the advance. The Germans directed mortar fire from GEHLBERG and small arms, machine gun and bazooka fire from the crossroads. Withdrawing slightly, the battalion smashed the strong point with artillery. A TOT also was laid on GEHLBERG. Following reduction of the crossroads, the 3rd Battalion proceeded slowly in face of small arms fire from defended roadblocks. By nightfall Companies L and I were on the high ground

1500 yards west of the road running North from STUTZERBACH. K Company remained at the crossroads South of GEHLBERG.

2nd Battalion was instructed to block roads South and Southeast from OBERHOF and used their attached tanks to overcome resistance in the area.

At 1530 the 90th Division assumed responsibility for the sector and RCT 359 reverted to Division Control.

After relief at 1720, 1st Battalion moved to an area near the tunnel 4000 yards Northeast of ZELLA MEHLIS.

AT Company 359 continued to guard small arms and office machine factories in ZELLA MEHLIS.

358th Infantry – 358th Infantry closed in their assembly area near GOLDLAUTER in mid-afternoon and began immediate passage through the 1st Battalion 359. This movement hit a snag as enemy were encountered at the crossroads approximately 3000 yards East of GOLDLAUTER. The fight, involving principally C Company 358, lasted several hours. But finally driving off the resistance, the 1st Battalion continued swinging northeast to its own zone on the regimental left. They captured STUTZERBACH where they remained for the night. Enemy resistance appeared on routes leading North and Northeast. Routes leading east were lightly held and defended.

2nd Battalion had a skirmish with enemy infiltrators but advanced along the regimental right to the railroad tracks Northeast of SCHMIEDEFELD. Only slight resistance from small arms and automatic weapons was encountered.

3rd Battalion assembled that HEIDERSBACH and then sent K and L Companies forward to STUTZERBACH to tie in with 1st Battalion and block the regimental North flank.

AT Company guarded 6000 DPs in 11 concentration camps in and around ZELLA MEHLIS.

357th Infantry – As the regiment prepared to follow the Division, they were halted by verbal orders of the Corps Commander. The immense wealth of the MERKERS mine had now been appraised and the entire regiment less the 2nd Battalion was assigned to guard the numerous tunnels which honeycombed the area. They passed to Corps control at 1200B. Accordingly, A Company plus HMG and a section of light tanks (712th Tank Battalion) occupied the factory area at MERKERS. B Company with MGs and light tanks was at DIETLAS. C Company was at DORNDORF. 3rd Battalion placed Company I at LEIMBACH, Company K at ALLENFORF and Company L at KIASERODA. AT Company covered the factory area and shaft just South of STADTLENGSFELD. Cannon Company took over the guard on trainloads of enemy equipment between BAD SALZUNGEN and VACHA.

2nd Battalion of 357 moved to ZELLA MEHLIS, to outpost that town, and to become Division Reserve. They closed just before dark.

90th Reconnaissance Troop with two platoons Company D, 712th Tank Battalion remained behind to guard bridges at TIEFENORT and BARCHFELD.

### 9 April 1945

As the situation now stood, the 90th occupied the desired line on its right flank abreast of the 26th Division on the South. But on the left, the 87th Division, with instructions to hold their advance, left that flank open. Accordingly, 359 was directed to push out to the required line abreast of the 358th Infantry but to refuse back on the left until such time as the adjacent Division came forward.

As the chief thorn in the 90th Division side was GEHLBERG, the 2nd Battalion 359 was directed to take it out. They moved to the crossroads South of GEHLBERG and attacked North in column of companies, G, E, F, at 0830. Company E secured the high ground Southwest of GEHLBERG while Company G maneuvered for the high ground east of the town. As they approached their objectives, the

enemy engaged them with small arms and machine guns. Company G cleaned this up and moved on into town about noon without further resistance. F Company followed into town. 1st Battalion was alerted to stage forward to GEHLBERG so the 2nd Battalion could continue to seize MANEBACH and block to the North. 3rd Battalion, meanwhile, had resumed their advance which again met scattered resistance. They plugged on, however, and L Company crossed the MANEBACH road to occupy Hill 861. K Company turned up the main road but was stopped 1500 yards South of MANEBACH. Company I blocked the roads 1800 yards West of and paralleling the MANEBACH road.

Companies E and G motor-marched to the road junction South of MANEBACH detrucked and moved through Company K to capture the town at 1925. Some small arms fire was received.

1st Battalion closed into GEHLBERG at 2030.

358th Infantry – Consolidated its positions in preparation for attack for the next day.

357th Infantry – Remained on mine guard less the 2nd Battalion which stayed at ZELLA MEHLIS as Division Reserves.

The Air Force bombed ILMENAU and destroyed many heavy-duty German vehicles. A suspected ammunition depot in the woods East of GEHREN also was bombed and tremendous explosions resulted.

#### 10-14 April 1945

Now the Division was set for the general advance which was finally scheduled for 10 April. On the left the 87th Division, though not abreast, had been given the "go" signal. On the right the 26th Division waited for jump off with the 90th.

The story of the next five days is pretty much of a pattern. There was fighting, in some instances, hard fighting as at ILMENAU and OEHRENSTOCK. But for the most part, it was scattered and locally determined. Some SS, some Hitler Youth, some Volksturm were encountered and ground under. Countless roadblocks, many undefended, were met and destroyed. But the big fighting was over, for now the towns were giving up again without resistance. As our troops advanced, Mayor after Mayor came out to surrender his town. By the close of day on the 11th no organized enemy line existed in the Division sector. The infantrymen mounted trucks, tanks and TDs to search out the vanishing enemy. 358th Infantry rode rough-shod through GROSS BREITENBACH, GRAFENTHAL and LOBENSTEIN and reached the SELBITZ River on the 13th. 359th Infantry swept through GEHREN, LANGE-IESEN and KONIGSEE to the SAALE River on the 14th. All towns in both regimental sectors were entered and cleared.

90th Reconnaissance Troop, relieved of its bridge guard at 0600 on 10 April, rejoined the Division. In the afternoon of 11 April the troop was given the mission of reconnoitering the Division front and moved off through KONIGSEE where they captured 7 prisoners. The troop continued to scour the area in front of the Division and late on the 13th seized a bridge intact 4 km south of BLANKENSTEIN. After dark on the 13th they were driven off once, retook the bridge and held off an enemy column. Company E 358th Infantry and 2 platoons 773rd TD Battalion relieved them in early morning of the 14th.

All other bridges investigated along the SELBITZ and SAALE Rivers were out. On the 14th, 358th crossed the river Southeast of LICHTENBERG. 2nd Battalion moved first. G Company captured BLANKENBERG, a jeep bridge across the SAALE and 65 prisoners. 3rd Battalion followed 2nd and pushed East blocking to the South at the same time. By dark the Regiment held a bridgehead 30 km square.

Following their relief, the 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed to the North and East cut the of BERLIN-MUNICH Autobahn at 1600 after an encounter with 50 infantrymen at BERG.

During this period the Division CP kept pace with the infantry by displacing five times. The CP moved from ZELLA MEHLIS to STUTZEBACH on the 10th. It opened at noon on the 12th at GROSS BRIETENBACH. At 0900 on the 13th set up at OBER-WEISSBACH. Here the operational maps were scarcely unwrapped when the CP moved again on that day to PROBSTZELLA where it opened at 1700. Next day, the 14th, it shifted once more, setting up at LOBENSTEIN at 1630.

By reaching the SAALE River the Division had broken clear of the THURINGER WALD. Now the only large town remaining between the Division and the Czech border 30 km west, was HOF. It became the Division's next objective. Corps established a restraining line just beyond the town.

357th Infantry – This regiment meanwhile was the hubbub of activity as plans were laid for removal of the gold and art treasures of which it was at. Many notables had visited the mine, including Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton and Lear.

At 0900 on the 14th loading of the gold on 10-ton trucks began. The labor continued as the period closed. Jeeps were disassembled lowered into the mine and reassembled to assist in the work. Two crews of 50 men each alternated.

Back in the Division, 1135th Engineers were working too. Their interest was a bridge at BLANKENSTEIN. It was completed in early evening, but work on the approaches delayed its use until midnight. It was intended that 358th Infantry use it first until 0645 when 359th Infantry would take over.

#### 15 April 1945

358th Infantry – From midnight until 0645 vehicles and supporting weapons for 358 rumbled across the bridge at BLANKENSTEIN. The taking of HOF was assigned to the 358th's 3rd Battalion. After a stubborn fight at KODITZ, the Battalion reached the outskirts of HOF. The attack began shortly after noon and raged until after dark when the town was rather well occupied but not wholly cleared. The Germans put up a stout fight and aggressively used small arms, machine guns and Panzerfausts, but to no avail. They were steadily compressed into a smaller and smaller area in Northeast HOF. K Company seized a bridge intact and pushed across the SALLE River. More than 1000 prisoners were taken as the Regiment chocked up 1192 PWs for the day. They also seized an airfield at 0935995 with 18 enemy training planes and 2 JU-80's in excellent condition as well as a parachute factory with an estimated 2000 parachutes at HOF.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was already in HOF on the left is 3rd Battalion came up. Seeing white flags flying, the troops had entered the town without resistance. Then the shooting began – small arms and Panzerfausts. Fighting was heavy. One light tank was immobilized by Panzerfaust. The infantry took over assisted by some of the light tanks. After dark Company L relieved the troop in its portion of HOF. The troop reverted to Division Reserve.

2nd Battalion captured HIRSCHBERG with Company E and swept their zone North to their boundary and West to the river. It held this area while 359 pass elements through, then resumed advance to East of HIRSCHBERG.

1st Battalion crossed the SELBITZ River bridge and continued to protect the Division right flank. After moving to vicinity of KODITZ the Battalion was given the mission of tying together the 3rd and 2nd Battalions.

359th Infantry – Leaving the 2nd Battalion to screen the regimental sector, 359 moved 1st Battalion, 915th FA Battalion and 3rd Battalion in that order across the BLANKENSTEIN bridge starting at 0725. Both Battalions swung North and proceeded to comb out their areas. They were then directed the go East to the main road through ZOLLGRUM, TANNA and GEFELL. This was accomplished before

dark. 2nd Battalion was released from its screening mission and assembled in the vicinity of FROSSEN. Company E moved to BLINTENDORF for use by 3rd Battalion has reserved if needed.

357th Infantry – All night the movement of the gold continued until 0600 when the last of the bullion was safely stowed on the trucks. Then began removal of the art treasures.

At 1015 the attached tanks and TDs were ordered to report to Division 100 miles distant at LOBENSTEIN.

At noon Corps advised regiment that it was released to Division minus the 1st Battalion. Movement would begin on the 16th. 1st Battalion would remain until all of the art treasures were packed and removed from the area. Departure time for the regiment was set at 0900 on 16 April.

#### 16 April 1945

Corps had established the HOF-PLAUEN road as a restraining line. For better positions the units needed to secure the high ground just beyond and this became the objective.

359th Infantry – on the Division left, the adjacent unit was still having trouble coming forward. 359 found it necessary to remain echeloned back to maintain contact. 2nd and 3rd Battalions pushed out while Company G on 2nd Battalion's left kept pace with the 87th Division. Company F on the right stayed abreast of the 3rd Battalion.

1st Battalion moved in zone of the 2nd and blocked roads to the North until uncovered by the 87th. By end of the afternoon, both 2nd and 3rd Battalions were holding the high ground beyond the restraining line. 1st Battalion assembled in regimental reserve at 1730 as the 87th Division had come abreast of the 2nd Battalion. Company A went to MISSLAREUTH, Company B to ROTHEN-ACKER and Company C to REUTH.

358th Infantry – 3rd Battalion mopped up HOF in early morning. Then moved out to take LEIMNITZ and the high ground to the East. 2nd Battalion moved up on the left. 1st Battalion entered HOF to make a thorough police of the city.

357th Infantry – Leaving the 1st Battalion still on guard under Corps control at MERKERS, the 3rd Battalion and balance of the regiment motor-marched to LOBENSTEIN, then crossed the SAALE River at BLANKENBERG and moved into GORITZ. 3rd Battalion continued to UTTERSREUTH. 2nd Battalion remained at BLANKENBERG prepared to move forward the next day.

Divisions, CP moved to HIRSCHBERG where it opened at 1430.

In line with Corps Directive Number 107, Division FM Number 77 outlined the following plan:

Division would consolidate and defend in depth the present position.

Units would send strong reconnaissance patrols to the front.

Division would be prepared for further movement South or Southeast.

357th Infantry was directed to relieve 2nd and 3rd Battalions 359th Infantry at 1200 on the 17th. 359th Infantry 1st Battalion would remain in place as 357th's reserve.

#### 17 April 1945

The day was relatively quiet as units organized their positions. Patrols to the East made enemy contact and had several firefights. G Company 359th Infantry brought back 75 PWs from LAUTERBACH.

358th Infantry gathered up 774 PWs. Their I and R Platoon captured a bridge intact at VIEDERNBERG. Relief of the 359th Infantry by 357th Infantry went smoothly and was complete by 1915. 359th Infantry assembled in the vicinity of BLINTENDORF.

Division now had new instructions. As the Army boundary was shifted to the South, the 328th Infantry (26th Division) on our immediate right was to be relieved by us and we in turn would be relieved on the North by 2nd Cavalry Group.

To accomplish this it was decided to relieve 357th Infantry with 359th's 1st Battalion. 357th Infantry would then relieve the 328th Infantry and 2nd Cavalry Group would relieve 1st Battalion 359th Infantry. 90th Reconnaissance Troop would establish a screen approximately 3 km in front of the Division left flank.

1st Battalion 357th Infantry was relieved by Corps and reverted to Division control but remained at MERKERS until next day.

### 18 April 1945

On this day the 90th Division became the first Allied troops to enter CZECHOSLOVAKIA and the first to cut Germany in two.

358th Infantry – In preparation for advance on the 19th, the I and R Platoon struck out at 0600 to gain contact with the enemy and clear any enemy from the zone. Following them on 0800 were one Company from the 3rd Battalion and one from the 2nd Battalion both reinforced with armor. At 180955 a 3rd Battalion patrol crossed the border into CZECHOSLOVAKIA near PREX against small arms resistance and captured some prisoners. 2nd Battalion patrol crossed the border at 181115B April 45.

On division left the 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed East at 0700 and stayed abreast of the 358th Infantry patrols. They engaged in a firefight in vicinity of POSSECK and captured some 80 prisoners.

In the afternoon 359th Infantry regrouped in preparation for the attack with 3rd hand 1st Battalions facing Southeast towards REHAU. 2nd Battalion assembled in the vicinity of REGNITZLOSAU.

357th Infantry – By 0900 relief of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions by 1st Battalion 359th Infantry was complete and the regiment started for their new assembly areas near MARTINSREUTH preparatory to relieving the 328th Infantry. They closed at 1130 and began the relief which was delayed only by 3rd Battalion 328th Infantry being engaged at FORBAU. By late afternoon all elements were relieved.

At 1930 the 1st Battalion returned from MERKERS and closed at KONRADSREUTH.

359th Infantry – Continued rehabilitation of troops and maintenance of vehicles except for the 1st Battalion which went on line to cover the Division left flank, relieving 357th Infantry. 2nd Cavalry completed relief of 1st Battalion and 90th Reconnaissance Troop as of 1630. 1st Battalion moved to GEFELL.

The problem of guarding enemy installations was becoming a large-sized headache. Since the 11th April, 773rd TD Headquarters with various attached troops had been performing this duty as an Interior Defense Command. Now it was decided to maintain a less fluctuating organization. Cannon Company 357 and 359 and AT Company 358 were turned over to the TD Commander for exclusive use as security guards which relieved the regiments of this responsibility in areas they left behind.

Now everything was in readiness for the new advance to the Southeast on the 19th. Division's plan was to use 358 on the left closest to the Czech border and 357 on the right. 359 would be initially in reserve and would be staged forward. The 26th Division would be on the 90th's right. 2nd Cavalry Group was originally on the Division's left.

But since the redirection of advance paralleled the Czech Border the Cavalry actually was on the left rear of the Division and the Division flank for the most part was open. Here trouble could be expected, and a maneuver was planned to meet it. As the assault units pushed forward, the reserve unit would establish blocks to the North and East until relieved by 2nd Cavalry. This allowed rapid movement of the forward elements and at the same time gave the necessary protection. The week's fighting followed this scheme rather closely. In general, opposition was light but the vicinity of the Czech Border was noticeably sensitive and reacted violently to investigation. Progress in this zone was considerably slower, and the Division much of the time was echeloned well back on the left. In some places the enemy fought furiously, employing mortars, machine guns, small arms and Panzerfausts. A few enemy tanks and SP guns prowled around until knocked out by Division Artillery or air support. The terrain again was rugged and roadblocks numerous, especially through the thick woods. 315th Engineers did yeoman service in clearing these and lost several men from heavily booby-trapped and defended blocks. During the month of April the Engineer Battalion cleared a total of 131 roadblocks.

The enemy's defenses, though aggressive when contacted, was not fixed. The Germans made only one counter-attack during the entire period. Their tactics appeared to be only to harass and delay, as if to stave off the inevitable end. Blown bridges became more frequent.

Movement of the Division was controlled by Corps phase lines but averaged in general 15-25 km a day. On the 20th, Corps ordered advance limited to not more than 3 miles a day. This brake was lifted late on the 21st, however, and the Division units drove on as fast as terrain and tired troops would allow. By the 26th they had covered over 120 km.

#### 19 April 1945

358th Infantry – 1st Battalion captured REHAU at 0930 and went through hoping to reach SELB. This was not to be, however, as enemy tanks and TDs appeared short of SCHONWALD. Organic artillery fired on them and other vehicles and marked this target for fighter-bombers. Three of the enemy tanks were destroyed by this action. B Company then moved on to clear REICHENBACH. C Company took SCHONWALD at 1800. The Battalion halted for the night about a half-mile from SELB near VIELITZ. Division Artillery pounded SELB to soften it up. 3rd Battalion advanced through heavy woods to an area 2000 yards South of OBER WEISSENBACH where it halted for the night. 2nd Battalion covered the regiment's East flank and closed for the night in vicinity of REICHENBACH.

357th Infantry – The regiment found only scattered resistance and 3rd Battalion moved quite rapidly despite booby-trapped roadblocks. By continuing after dark the Battalion reached WUNSIEDEL which it entered without opposition.

On the regimental left, 2nd Battalion had rougher going. Heavy woods, roadblocks and the need for maintaining contact with 358 slowed the advance considerably. Near HEBANZ, supporting tanks with F Company engaged enemy halftracks which withdrew before they could be destroyed. The Company took the town without resistance. Company G was stymied by a defended roadblock 1500 yards out of HEIDELHEIM. Faced with approaching darkness, the Company elected to contain the block and eliminate it in the morning hours. Company E moved to GROSS WENDERN.

As the 3rd Battalion pulled away from the 2nd a considerable gap was created. Company B moved into HABNITH to keep this closed. As 3rd Battalion closed at WUNSIEDEL, 1st Battalion minus B Company displaced from KIRCHENLAMITZ to OBER ROSLAU for the night.

Plans for the next day called for 3rd Battalion to cross over into the left zone and take MARKTREDWITZ. 1st Battalion would continue in the right zone. 2nd Battalion, would cover the regimental left until 358 could come abreast.

359th Infantry – Regiment moved by shuttle marching and closed for the night at REHAU minus the 2nd Battalion which was assigned the mission of blocking to the East vicinity GRUNHAID and maintaining contact with 2nd Cavalry Group.

Division CP opened at KIRCHENLAMITZ at 1430B.

#### 20 April 1945

90th Reconnaissance Troop was pulled from Division Reserve and given the mission of reconnoitering on left of 358th Infantry. Other than this there was no change in the Division lineup as the attack was resumed in early morning.

358th Infantry – 1st Battalion jumped off at 0630 to capture SELB. They gained entry following a smashing TOT by three Division Artillery Battalions – the 915th, 344th and 345th. By 1015 1st Battalion was through the town and to ARZBURG which A and C Companies captured in a coordinated attack while B Company took ROTHENBACH. 80 PWs were captured at ARZBURG out of the estimated 200 defenders. Division Artillery caused many enemy casualties.

3rd Battalion began its attack 0730. It plowed under some stubborn resistance to gain a position Southwest of ARZBURG by 1800.

2nd Battalion motored to DIETERSGRUEN and set up roadblocks to the east.

357th Infantry – 1st Battalion moved uninterruptedly in column of companies in order A, B, C. By 1400 it reached POPPENREUTH and two hours later was on its objective at the HOHENHARD. In from was a vast wooded area. B Company dispatched to search this out. Before dark it had reached FRIEDENFELS. Since the 26th Infantry Division on the right had elements west off ERBENDORF, Division gave Regiment permission to reinforce Company B. Company A with tanks and TDs moved forward, closing before 2100. Company C remained at HOHENHARD. Several high-ranking German officers were captured during the move forward.

3d Battalion found its entry into MARKTREDWITZ barred by a blown bridge southeast of WUNSIEDEL. This was repaired and 3rd Battalion pushed on against light resistance. K Company occupied the north part of MARKTREDWITZ while Companies I and L swept the town gathering 40 PWs. MARKTREDWITZ was cleared by 1300. The Battalion then continued on its phase line objective, arriving in late afternoon. Plans to halt here were laid aside one and 13 American troops were picked up who new reported others at FUCHSMUHL. These troops who had been prisoners of the German army for many months, were emaciated and worn as a result of mistreatment by their SS guards. Company I with tanks and TDs formed a task force which descended on FUCHSMUHL where 65 other Americans were found in a hospital. All of these men were rushed back in ambulances to the collecting company at MARKTREDWITZ as their condition was serious.

L Co. was given the job of the seizing some bridges along the main road. In executing this they freed 17 more American PW's. Late at night, 90th Reconnaissance Troop relieved Company L of this guard Mission.

K Company remained about 4 kilometers north of FUCHSMUHL in the woods. 2nd Battalion blocking to the east, halted for the night in vicinity of MARKTREDWITZ.

359th Infantry – Continued its blocking mission, moving by shuttle march, 3rd Battalion moved in just south of SELB and controlled the area between SELB and SILBERBACH.

Division CP moved to WUNSIEDER where it opened at 1600B.

## 21 April 1945

358th Infantry – 3rd battalion relieved 90th Reconnaissance Troop of its bridge guards so the troupe could attack MITTERTEICH. They were delayed by several roadblocks. These cleared, their mission was changed to holding the road into the town. Enemy were sent on the outskirts of MITTERTEICH and artillery was fired upon them. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry cleared the town shortly after noon.

Both 3rd and 1st Battalions continued a rapid advance against sporadic resistance. 90th Reconnaissance Troop captured TIRSCHENREUTH and 1000 Hungarians including 2 Generals, in late afternoon. The town had 800 German wounded in hospitals. 1st Battalion moved in to occupy the town for the night. 3rd Battalion cleared through FALKENBERG (P2249) before it halted.

2nd Battalion continued to protect the East flank with roadblocks. E and F Companies settled for the night at MITTERTEICH while G Company set roadblocks in the vicinity.

357th Infantry – 1st and 3rd Battalions continued to the Southeast at 0730. The only hostile action encountered was Panzerfaust fire about 2000 yards South of FRIEDENFELS. This struck a TD on which some B Company men were riding, injuring eight.

By late afternoon, 3rd Battalion was at WINDISCHESHENBACH, 1st Battalion vicinity of WILDENREUTH and 2nd Battalion in vicinity of REUTH.

359th Infantry – 3rd Battalion moved to relieve 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry and block the area from ARZBERG to SCHIRNDING which had not been cleared. They met resistance just beyond OSOHWITZ but overcame this and entered SCHIRNDING at 1600 where they received small arms fire. In addition, the Germans laid down heavy mortar and machine-gun fire on the troops in the town from the high ground around it. The Battalion answered with AT guns using both HE and WP and finally stopped the enemy fire. SCHIRNDING was cleared by 2200.

1st Battalion moved to KONNERSREUTH after its clearance by 358th and launched an attack on WALDSASSEN. They took this town at 1500 without resistance.

2nd Battalion was relieved at SILBERBACH by the Cavalry and moved to KONNERSREUTH. Company F continued on to SCHOTTENHOF to block roads to the North and East.

Fighter bombers working in front of the Division attacked and destroyed 3 enemy vehicles.

## 22 April 1945

358th Infantry – 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to block roads along the regimental East flank, starting at TIRSCHENREUTH.

1st Battalion moved South out of TIRSCHENREUTH, captured LIEBENSTEIN and continued on to take PLOSSBURG. Here 3rd Battalion relieved it and A and B Companies assembled for the night in SCHONKIRCH. C Company remained at LIEBENSTEIN.

3rd Battalion after relieving 1st Battalion, continued on to close for the day with Company I between PLOSSBERG, ELLENBACH and PUCKERSREUTH and Company K in reserve at WILDENAU. Still blocking, 2nd Battalions staged at TIRSCHENREUTH in the afternoon. In late afternoon the 90th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to FLOSS and cleared the town by 2300 without resistance. Picked up 3 prisoners there.

357th Infantry – Both 1st and 3rd Battalions resumed the advance in column of companies and moved without interruption. 1st Battalion halted about 3 km Northeast of WEIDEN with 3rd generally West of FLOSS.

Company K observed American vehicles in FLOSS and sent a patrol to investigate. Being fired upon, the patrol captured several PWs who said 70 enemy troops with American jeeps and 2½ ton trucks

were at GRAFENREUTH. A larger patrol was sent to this area and found the vehicles abandoned in the woods Northwest of the town.

The day closed with Company A at THIESSEIL, B at BECHTSREITH and C at MAZTLESRIETH. The latter sent a patrol of tanks and infantry into UNTER MUGLHOF and MUTTER HOLL to investigate a reported large number of enemy. They were there – 250 of them in the village square waiting patiently in formation to surrender. Their rifles were neatly stacked.

Other Germans were less anxious to give up and a contact patrol of 4 men from Company A to 3rd Battalion was ambushed. Three of the men were captured, the 4th seriously wounded and left for dead. The regimental I and R platoon, sent to investigate, hit the same ambush, but drove off the enemy and recovered the wounded man.

359th Infantry – During the morning the Battalions patrolled the woods in their areas. Regiment formed a Task Force Russell whose main elements was AT Company who relieved F Company at SCHOTTENHOF at 1420. 2nd Battalion remained at KONNERSREUTH as regimental reserve. 2nd Cavalry Group relieved the 3rd Battalion at SCHIRNDING. The latter assembled at MITTERTEICH at 1755.

Division CP opened as WIESAU at 0830.

### 23 April 1945

358th Infantry – The regiment moved now in column of Battalions with 3rd Battalion leading. 1st and 2nd followed in order, blocking to the East. Only sporadic resistance was encountered. The infamous concentration camp at FLOSSENBURG was captured. 1160 of the 16,000 original inmates remained and were liberated. An ME-109 factory was captured here.

3rd Battalion halted for the day with leading elements at WALDTHURN. Company I outposted from NEUENHAMMER to OBER BERNRIETH.

1st Battalion blocked roads in vicinity of FLOSSENBURG while 2nd Battalion set up for the night in the vicinity of WILDENAU.

357th Infantry – The rate of advance now was dictated by the speed with which other troops could take over along the Czech border as the 90th moved Southeast. This was a slow process due to the shortage of troops and it being necessary to rein in the Division right flank although resistance there was practically nil.

At 1100 Division gave Regiment the green light and advance was resumed at 1300. By midafternoon 1st Battalion's C Company had secured MICHLDORF and 100 PWs. Company A was in KAIMLING.

By late afternoon Company I had reached WALDAN its objective. K Company halted in TRESENFELD and L Company in ALBERSREITH. Hearing of enemy in VOHENSTRAUSS, Company I sent a patrol to investigate. The patrol hit enemy in force and withdrew. Artillery was laid upon the town in preparation for attack the next day. The regimental plan for the following morning proposed to pass 2nd Battalion through the 3rd to continue the attack.

359th Infantry – 2nd Cavalry Group took over as far as TIRSCHENREUTH. Thus relieved, 359th Infantry placed 1st Battalion to block from TIRSCHENREUTH to ODSCHONLIND. 3rd Battalion shifted to PLOSSBERG.

2nd Battalion in regimental reserve assemble that LENGENFELD.

Division CP opened at Neustadt at 1015B.

Corps Operational Directive Number 110 ordered the advance to continue Southeast to join the Russians at the German-Austrian border.

The 90th Division was specifically directed to continue the advance and block passes along the Czechoslovakian border to prevent the debouchment of enemy forces from Czechoslovakia. Particular emphasis was to be placed on the passes at HOLL, FURTH and MESTYS. Corps also notified Division that 5000 Germans with white flags would pass through the 90th's area from NYRSKO to CHAM to surrender to the 26th Infantry Division in the morning.

#### 24 April 1945

357th Infantry – Using G Company to spearhead the attack, 2nd Battalion moved against VOHENSTRAUSS at 0730. The enemy resisted with small arms but the town was overrun by 0845. The Battalion determined to seize the bridge as BURGTRESWITZ before the enemy could blow it. A platoon of 712th tanks followed by a platoon of 773rd TDs with infantry mounted set out with all possible speed and without the usual advance patrols. The road was rough and narrow through hilly country having many natural defenses. The column was fired on several times but kept moving, returning the enemy fire with the armor's 30 caliber machine guns. About 2000 yards short of the objective, the lead tank rounded a sharp curve and faced five Panzerfaustmen at point-blank range. The Germans let go their missiles and one shot hit just below the periscope and killed the assistant gunner. The driver and gunner were wounded. Nonetheless the driver backed the tank 75 yards to the rear out of the way. The armor swung their guns into action and firing from the woods soon ceased. One TD was hit in the battle without damage. The crew of the damaged tank was evacuated and the column moved boldly on its way. As a result of this decisive action the bridge was seized intact and undefended. Apparently the enemy had relied on the ambush to stop the attack. When the infantry later searched out the woods, 25 dead SS troops were found at the point of the attack. There was no other serious opposition although the infantry picked up 100 prisoners as it moved forward. At PULLENRIED 250 Germans surrendered to 2nd Battalion without a fight.

1st and 3rd Battalions moved without resistance, the 3rd blocking in rear of the 2nd.

For the night halt, 2nd Battalion's forward elements tied in with 1st Battalion's leading company at TEUNZ.

358th Infantry – Enemy efforts to hold the VOHENSTRAUSS-WAIDHAUS Road resulted in sharp engagements by 3rd Battalion South of PLEYSTAIN, at LOHMA and 2nd Battalion at WAIDHAUS. Some casualties resulted to the regiment, but the defenders were eliminated. 3rd Battalion moved to ESLARN. In the vicinity of PLAYSTEIN, 2 American prisoners from 357th Infantry, captured two nights before, were released. The third soldier had been wounded and evacuated.

After relief by 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry, 1st Battalion 358th Infantry motored 15 miles to PERENTSCH. Company A established roadblocks here while B Company outposted ESLARN. Company C closed into ESLARN and 0100 on the 25th. Division now told the Regiment to hold its positions until relieved by 2nd Cavalry Group and then to block successively behind 359th Infantry who would attack through them.

359th Infantry – The Regiment continued its successive reliefs of 358th Infantry and blocks to the East. 3rd Battalion took over the sector from ODSCHONLIND to FLOSSENBURG. 2nd Battalion relieved 358th Infantry elements between FLOSSENBURG and NEUENHAMMER. 1st Battalion remained at TIRSCHENREUTH until relieved by elements of 2nd Cavalry at 1400. The Battalion was then trucked to PLEYSTAIN from where it marched to an assembly area at BURKHARDSREITH. 3rd Battalion was relieved and moved to ESLARN, arriving shortly after midnight. The plan now was for 359 to pass

through 358 in the morning and continue the attack to the Southeast towards SCHONSEE and STADLERN. 3rd Battalion would be on the right, 1st Battalion on the left, 2nd Battalion would remain in reserve at FLOSSENBURG prepared to move motorized to ESLARN at 0600. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to secure bridges at SCHONAU, SCHONSEE and TIEFENBACH.

Division CP moved to LEUCHTENERG where it became operational at 1600B.

#### 25 April 1945

359th Infantry – 90th Reconnaissance Troop fanned out in front of the attacking 3rd Battalion. By 1000, despite several brushes with enemy, the troop was at SCHONSEE. The bridge was intact and they captured 120 prisoners. By this time I Company had reached OBR LANGAU without resistance and K Company was at GINEINSREITH. K Company was motorized and pushed on to WEIDING, relieving the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and then on to SCHONSEE. K Company followed by I Company left WEIDING at 1400 and reached SCHONAU at 1550. The Battalion pushed on to TIEFENBACH where 2nd Battalion moved through to continue the attack and 1720. They met roadblocks, short of TREFFELSTEIN but went on around them. G Company pushed on to SCHAFEREI while E Company advanced to BIBERBACH. F Company remained at TREFFELSTEIN. 1st Battalion, met organized resistance in its advance and had no trouble reaching STADLERN. Upon being relieved there by 358th Infantry, the Battalion moved to SCHONAU for the night.

357th Infantry – 1st Battalion climbed on tanks and TDs and moved off rapidly. At WINLARN at 1000, Company C freed 3000 British prisoners of war. A and B Companies hit GRASSERSDORF at 1015 and moved on to the phase line where they were joined shortly by Company C.

At noon Division ordered the 1st Battalion to go to CHAM and block the road net there to prevent any attempt by the enemy to move South into the "Redoubt Area". 11th Armored Division, racing toward Austria in front of the 26th Infantry Division, had cleared CHAM, but had moved on. 1st Battalion closed into CHAM by 1700.

In view of the above, 3rd Battalion was dispatched to continue the attack. By midafternoon the Battalion had reached SCHWARZACH River just East of ROTZ where it stayed the night.

The I and R Platoon was sent to SCHONTHAL to seize the bridge there and was joined later in the day by E Company. Company F stopped at KRITZENAST on the SCHWARZACH River while G Company moved from BIBERBACH to HILTERSREID.

358th Infantry – At 1100 Company C made a foray across the Czech border to capture EISENDORF, EISENDORFSKA HUT and FRANCINA HUT. No opposition was met as 150 Labor Service Troops surrendered en masse at EISENDORFSKA HUT.

The 42nd Cavalry Squadron relieved the 1st Battalion in 1900 and then moved to ESLARN. After being passed through by 359th Infantry, 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry set up blocks at FREIDRICHSHANG and STADLERN.

2nd Battalions staged to vicinity of SCHONSEE.

Division CP opened that OBERVIECHTACH at 1515.

For several days the Division had averaged over 1000 prisoners daily. Today brought in another 1200 making almost 20,000 for the month and raising the Division total over 60,000.

#### 26 April 1945

359th Infantry – During the early morning hours a strong German patrol attacked the troops outposting vicinity SCHAFFERIE. Elements of Company G, 359th Infantry, 2nd Platoon of 90th Reconnaissance Troop and 2nd Platoon, Company D, 712th Tank Battalion were involved. Two of the light tanks were knocked out by Panzerfaust before the Division Artillery dispersed the attack.

Before moving off in the morning it was necessary to comb out the woods near SPIELBERG which delayed 2nd Battalion somewhat. F and G Companies moved out to AST at 0840 and drove on, meeting the usual roadblocks and small delaying forces before reaching RANKHAM where they halted for the night.

3rd Battalion was ordered to clear out the woods enough to protect their left flank and then to capture WALDMUNCHEN. The Germans had a different thought on the matter and opened up with machine guns and Panzerfausts when the Battalion arrived at 1300. Despite artillery and constant pressure, the Germans gave ground slowly. They made each block a strong point. Five hours were required before the town was taken. And even after 3rd Battalion was relieved in WALDMUNCHEN by the 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry, the new unit picked up half a hundred prisoners from the town. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry assembled in HERZOGAU.

90th Reconnaissance Troop moved initially with and behind the infantry. As they worked South of WALDMUNCHEN roadblocks got more numerous. Finally the troops skimmed down the regimental right boundary, captured DEGELBERG (65 PWS), RANKHAM (29 PWs and 97 Hitler Youth). The troop with 2 platoons of light tanks then headed for FURTH. Again the Germans tried to make a stand. Air and artillery pounded the town and the Reconnaissance reinforced entered the town, clearing it in late afternoon. 70 prisoners were taken. 345th FA Battalion supported this action.

1st Battalion 359th Infantry was motorized and moved to FURTH to reinforce the position. Patrols from the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and tanks toward Czechoslovakia hit continuous resistance and returned. Between 1930B and 2000B, P-47s hit KLENEC. Several large fires were started in the town and 6-8 motor trucks destroyed.

357th Infantry – As the mission of the regiment was to block roads as quickly as possible South and East of CHAM, elements were motorized. 2nd Battalion moved down through GEIGANT and WEIDING and ended up well spread out. E Company on the North was at ARNSCHWANG with a platoon at TRETTEG. Company F was situated at BIMBACH while Company G held the reserve position at LIEBENSTEIN.

Companies I and L, also motorized, sped through CHAM and cleared East of the REGEN River. L moved on the left, I on the right and the two companies cleared to KOTZING and BLAIBACH respectively. K Company mopped up behind and took the reserve position.

1st Battalion remained for the night at CHAM.

358th Infantry – 3rd Battalion flattened the town of SCHWARZACH-SVARCAVA after it refused to surrender. The Battalion then pushed on to establish blocks as DOL HUT. 1st Battalion moved to vicinity HILTERSRIED. 2nd Battalion relieved 359th Infantry at WALDMUNCHEN and outposted that area.

Division CP opened that CHAM at 1515B. 1800 more prisoners were processed through the Division cage.

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In the large-scale, the Allied Armies continued to corral the Wehrmacht into isolated areas that were being pressured into extinction. On the ELBE River American forces had contacted the Russians. Near at hand was the cheering news that the 11th Armored Division had reached the Austrian border.

Juncture with the Russians there was merely a matter of days. The 90th's task now was largely defensive as Corps imposed a restraining line for further advance. All three regiments were wheeling clockwise to the Czech border and the immediate job was clearance of enemy to the border and the containing of those within Czechoslovakia. What enemy were in Czechoslovakia was not certain and 90th Reconnaissance Troop was given the mission of finding out.

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27 April 1945

The 90th Reconnaissance Troop, probing North and Northeast of FURTH encountered small arms, automatic weapons and high velocity fire. The troop returned to FURTH and took a new route to VSERUBY. Here they again received heavy fire and returned. They then attempted to reenter Czechoslovakia to go to MAXOV but found enemy infantry in force and returned to FURTH. Obviously the enemy was along the border in some strength, confirming PW and air OP reports of an enemy buildup in the FURTH area.

359th Infantry – The regiment mopped up within its zone and made local attacks to clear to the border North and Northeast of FURTH. Enemy small arms, automatic weapons and the Panzerfaust fire were received. Light shelling began, particularly around FURTH. Air and ground reports of enemy armor increased and gave Division Artillery many targets of opportunity. Enemy tanks and infantry were located at VSERUBY. 8" Howitzers of 738th FA Battalion fired on them, destroying three tanks and inflicting casualties on the enemy foot troops. The same Battalion smashed an enemy battery at SV KATERINA obtaining a direct hit on one piece. Bright sunshine enabled CUB Pilots to direct Division Artillery fires on numerous enemy vehicles and other activity across the Czech border. Fighter-bombers again worked Northeast of FURTH and destroyed some 20 enemy vehicles.

Following the mop-up the regiment established an MLR with 1st and 2nd Battalions about 1000 yards Southwest of FURTH. 1st Battalion outposted an OPLR which ran generally above the line SAUBERG to the high ground 3000 yards Northeast of FURTH. 3rd Battalion established an RRL through GLEISSENBERG, RANKHAM, ARNSCHWANG, RIMBACH and MOHENWARTH, setting up strong points at each of the towns.

This was in accord with Division FM #88 issued at 271100B April which assigned the Division a temporary defensive mission and outlined the MLR and OPLR. 358th and 359th Infantry were both directed to establish two Battalions online and hold one in reserve. 357th Infantry minus one Battalion was earmarked for Division Reserve with expected employment in the zone of 359th Infantry. The one Battalion (reinforced) would block and hold the Division right flank. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was to maintain an active counter-reconnaissance screen, generally in front of 359th Infantry.

358th Infantry – 1st Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion in place on the regimental left in vicinity of STADLERN and PAADORF. 3rd Battalion assembled after relief at 1800 in the general area around a HILTERSRIED. 2nd Battalion remained in place improving positions.

357th Infantry – The plan for the day called for 1st Battalion with 343rd FA Battalion in support to clear the valley Southeast from KOTZING to OBER and UNTER RIED. 3rd Battalion would clear the area to the Southwest and return to KOTZING. 2nd Battalion would improve its blocks to the East.

The operations of the two mop-up Battalions resulted in some 1300 prisoners. As a result of Division FM #88, the 1st Battalion readjusted its positions by putting A Company at STEINBUHL, B Company at ARNBRUCK and C Company at MOOSAU. AT Company was attached and assembled at PIRKA.

As reports of armor to the Northeast increased, Division alerted 3rd Battalion at 1700 on 1/2 hour call.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some 2000 prisoners were gathered up in the course of the day. The process of screening all civilian males was continued and accounted for many. But most were deserters, walking hospital cases, rear echelon and service troops who purposely lingered behind to be picked up. At straggler points the Germans formed numerous Kampfgruppen to stem our advance. These disintegrated upon contact.

PW identifications and statements, confirmed by air and ground observation posts, indicated that the entire 11th Panzer Division was moving into our Division zone from the EGER area. Third US Army reported the strength of this unit as 1500 men and 10 tanks on 22 April with a possible increase of 500 stragglers and 10 more tanks. This was a woeful underestimate as later events showed. It was quite clear now that a front line in Germany no longer existed but that one was being established generally parallel to the Czech border in that country. The Division's job was to contain these forces while the Russians advanced from the East. Under no circumstances, were these troops to be allowed to escape into the Redoubt Area in the German-Austrian Alps.

Enemy activity at around DOMAZLICE increased.

The rapidly changing situation appeared to cause some indecision in higher-level planning. Consequently, the Division was confronted with several alternatives on future employment as a result of directives and changes from Corps this day. One plan envisaged the 90th being relieved by the 97th Division for reemployment far to the south. This was abandoned and the Division was directed to stay where it was until relieved. Who the relieving force would be was still indefinite. One thing was certain: that First Army was side-slipping down from the North and some readjustment would have to be made. The day closed with information that some unit – tentatively the 5th Infantry Division would come in on the right of the 90th.

Just before midnight, 345th FA Battalion near GRUB was embroiled in a firefight with an estimated 200 Germans who attempted to infiltrate their positions. The artillery cut their fuse and leveled their guns in direct fire into the woods harboring the enemy. They killed several and caused the surrender of 150 of the invaders.

## 28 April 1945

359th Infantry – The regiment continued to send strong combat patrols through the area. Several brisk battles were fought with enemy infantry and Hitler Youth. 1st Battalion captured FITCHTENBACH after a fight which netted 50 prisoners. A Company's patrol North of the town met 40 additional infantry in the woods most of whom were killed or captured before the patrol returned to FITCHTENBACH.

A 2nd Battalion patrol to RITTSTEIG brought back 40 PWs. Attempts to capture 150 Hitler Youth were frustrated by 60 SS troops located East and South of RITTSTEIG who drove back the patrol.

The regimental plan for the next day was for 1st Battalion to readjust its MLR to a Northwest-Southeast line through FURTH. The OPLR held by one company would run from FICHTENBACH, over the high ground 3000 yards Northeast of FURTH and down to ESCHLKAM. 2nd Battalion would remain where it was. 3rd Battalion would furnish one company to the 90th Reconnaissance Troop who was attached with a platoon of light tanks. This was to make a Task Force known as TASK FORCE DYE whose mission was to move motorized to NYRSKO clearing the woods and NYRSKO and then returning. The Task Force was to consist of two platoons and 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company I,

one platoon Company C, 773rd TD Battalion, one platoon Company C, 315th Engineer Battalion and one platoon Company D, 712th Tank Battalion.

357th Infantry – The regiment (-) remained in Division Reserve. 1st Battalion patrolled to the East. G Company investigated HAIBUHL, ENGELSHUTT and LAM. Numerous prisoners were gathered throughout the regimental area as towns were fine-combed by screening forces.

358th Infantry – Activity was limited to combat patrols. A reinforced platoon from Company C, following a route from PAADORF, FRANZBRUNNHUTTE and NEID, ran into enemy in the woods near FRANZBRUNNHUTTE. After suffering several casualties, the platoon returned. In the afternoon Company A, reinforced, captured 82 PWs with moderate resistance as they closed on RYBNIK.

In Operations Directive #112, Corps ordered 97th Infantry Division to relieve 2nd Cavalry Group on our left. The Cavalry, at first scheduled for employment on the Corps right flank, was now to come in on 90th Division's right in place of the 5th Infantry Division who were to assemble. Mission of the 2nd Cavalry after relief was to secure the pass North of REGEN. 90th Division was given the new left boundary which involved relief of elements of 358th Infantry by 97th Division. Time of the various reliefs was undetermined.

29 April 1945

359th Infantry – At 0430 the Germans shelled FICHTENBACH with Nebelwerfer and artillery. Then followed some 90 infantrymen in an increasingly rare counter-attack with small arms and Panzerfaust supported by one tank. 1st Battalion readily repulsed the effort and FICHTENBACH remained in Company A's hands.

At 0730 TASK FORCE DYE left NEUKIRCHEN and moved toward NYRSKO. The Task Force moved practically without opposition, gathering up 149 PWs on the expedition. NYRSKO was entered at 1515 without resistance, following which the Task Force returned. 1st and 2nd Battalions continued to patrol, with the former meeting a defended roadblock protected by infantry, mortars, and artillery North of FOLMAVA. Company F negotiated the surrender of a German Commander, 150 troops and about 20 vehicles in vicinity of SRUBY.

Division ordered the regiment to clear out the woods and DOMAZLICE road as far as PARAZOV and BABYLON by attacking astride the FICHTENBACH-DOMAZLICE road in conjunction with an attack by 358th Infantry on the left. Reserve Battalion was released to make this attack. Purpose of the operation was to pinch out the large wooded area in front of the OPLR and give better defensive positions.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was detached and given a separate mission of blocking the Division's right flank along the VSERUBY-KDYNE road and then probing towards DOMAZLICE.

358th Infantry – Patrols encountered enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire in vicinity of ARNSTEIN. Other patrols met scattered resistance.

Regiment was notified that 97th would not relieve their left flank before the day after tomorrow. Division ordered an attack on 30 April astride the HOLL-KLENEC road to secure the Northeast edge of the woods.

Reserve Battalion was released for the attack. Regiment was to refuse back the left flank to the Division boundary.

The regiment planned to employ its 2nd Battalion on the right and 3rd Battalion on the left for the attack. 1st Battalion would remain in reserve vicinity AST.

357th Infantry – Major activity was patrolling by G Company further to the Southeast as far as SOMMERAU which resulted in approximately 100 prisoners. 1st Battalion continued to scour its area.

For its part in the next day's operation, the regiment was directed to move its 3rd Battalion to ARNSCHWANG ready to support 359th Infantry if needed. Battalion's move would be made in the morning with reconnaissance undertaken immediately.

One enemy FW-190 was shot down near CHAM in early morning by 537th AAA Battalion as the pilot attempted to strafe near KATZBACH.

### 30 April 1945

The limited objective attack by 358th and 359th Infantry met moderate to heavy opposition and the month ended with the objective unsecured.

The rough terrain, heavily masked with Woods, caused great trouble and the enemy used small arms, automatic weapons, mortar, tank artillery and high velocity fire to hold back Division units.

358th Infantry – On the left, 358th Infantry, attacking at 0800, found rough going due to both enemy and the wooded, steep terrain. Two of the 3rd Battalion's tanks were knocked out by enemy fire. In turn K Company knocked out one enemy tank with bazooka and captured the crew. Two enemy tanks and seven machine guns stalled the attack in vicinity of CAPARTICE which the Battalion finally took before halting for the night after a 6000 yard advance.

P-47s hit TRHANOV and destroyed 6-8 enemy motor trucks.

2nd Battalion faced four enemy tanks with infantry, but pushed through the woods to Southeast of CAPARTICE, not getting quite clear by dark. Then the Battalion went out of contact. As the period closed efforts were being made to reach it by radio, Regimental Staff Officers and patrols.

The regiment received definite word that the 97th Infantry Division would take over from their 1st Battalion in the morning. The 97th Division would attack through rather than relieve and 358th Infantry asked for permission to use 1st Battalion on the woods just below the Division left boundary. This was granted. Division and regiment in turn were advised that 2nd Infantry Division would probably relieve 358th Infantry within two days when First-Third Army Boundary would probably be about where 358th-359th Infantry boundary now lay.

359th Infantry – Initially, 3rd Battalion met no resistance as K and I Companies moved out from FITCHTENBACH at 0940. Company L in reserve went to FOLMAVA. The two assault companies groped through the dense woods and finally machine gun and artillery fire near NEM KUBICH. From there on they remained engaged as enemy tanks and armored cars joined the fray. 915th FA Battalion knocked out two enemy tanks in vicinity of C KUBICE as the main road intersection just North of C KUBICE proved to be a strong point of MGs and armor. K Company maneuvered around the intersection and broke the resistance. K and I then moved forward toward BABYLON where they met a strong force of infantry supported by armor. As darkness was now shutting in, K and I withdrew to the Y fork in the main road North of KUBICE. Leaving one platoon here with K, Company I returned to FOLMAVA as reserve for next day. They brought back a half hundred prisoners. Also captured was a hospital train with 250 men of whom 200 were litter cases. Company L had meanwhile staged forward to vicinity of C KUBICE and NEM KUBICE, where it remained overnight prepared to take up the assault in the morning with K Company.

1st and 2nd Battalions patrolled to their front with C Company occupying OCHSENWEID and KLOPFELSBURG.

357th Infantry – F Company relieved G Company and 2nd Battalion continued to patrol the valley. Enemy infiltrations persisted, and a patrol was ambushed by enemy with Panzerfausts in an area already

cleared. Five casualties resulted. 1st Battalion also maintained its patrols, while 3rd Battalion waited at ARNSCHWANG.

90th Reconnaissance Troop\_– As the troop approached VSERUBY, it drew heavy fire from AT guns and machine guns. Artillery was laid on the town, starting fires. But renewed efforts to enter were again repulsed and the troops withdrew making a new approach towards MAXOV. They met enemy again at MYSLIV, killed several and captured twelve. At MAXOV the enemy fire intensified and the troop withdrew to GROSS.

\* \* \* \* \*

April was over and nearly finished so it seemed was the war in Germany. The disillusionment and decay of the NAZI State was spreading like an abscess. The German people – and many soldiers – no longer willed to fight. Large towns hung out their white flags as American Troops approached and groups of soldiers readily surrendered. Now indeed was Germany's cup full and running over – but it was the hemlock of national suicide rather than the wine of victory. Their fighting now was without sound military purpose. It was like the frantic convulsions of a madman being forced into a straight-jacket. Now indeed was Germany close to confinement and laced up as the Russian Armies, having made contact at the ELBE, swept inexorably nearer to the Western forces all along the front.

The 90th Division could view with pride its part in the ultimate defeat. During April a 300 mile sweep through the dense and mountainous Thuringer Wald and down the Czech border had accounted for many German dead, some 25,000 prisoners and destruction of 13 tanks, two SP guns, 12 airplanes and numerous other vehicles. The 90th was the first American Division to enter Czechoslovakia, thus cutting the German State in two. Its discovery of the Nazi gold reserves in the salt mine in MERKERS resulted in uncovering and capture of more than half of the reserve wealth of the German nation.

EARNEST  
COMMANDING  
BOOTH  
G-3

## INTRODUCTION

As the month opened, the Division was holding a 50 km front along the Czech border from SCHONBACK on the right to just East of SCHONAU on the left. The 90th's role was temporarily defensive to hold the German forces in Czechoslovakia and prevent their debouchment into the Redoubt Area. Enemy forces confronting the 90th Division included the 11th Panzer Division and miscellaneous units including Hitler Youth and SS Troops.

On the left of the 90th Division was the US 97th Infantry Division. This unit was side-slipping South and preparing to take over part of the 358th Infantry area. On the 90th's right, 2nd Cavalry Group was assembling to capture the REGEN PASS.

April had closed with the 358th and 359th Infantry making a limited objective attack to pinch out a large wooded section on the left of the Division sector. This attack was not quite concluded. Fighting was not easy in the densely wooded hills which marked the Czech border. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry was halted at CAPARTICE. 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry on the right was somewhere South of there and out of contact. Both Battalions were trying to gain the edge of the woods near KLENEC and CHODOV. 1st Battalion on the regimental left was refusing the flank while awaiting relief by the 97th Infantry Division.

359th Infantry's 3rd Battalion was halted just North of C KUBICE prepared to resume its attack to capture BABYLON and PAREZOV. The other two Battalions were holding a Northwest-Southeast line just beyond FURTH with 1st Battalion on the left and 2nd Battalion on the right.

357th Infantry had its 3rd Battalion in mobile Division Reserve at ARNSCHWANG prepared for immediate employment. 1st Battalion was holding the regimental (and Division) right flank. 2nd Battalion had Company F employed between the 1st Battalion and 359th Infantry. The rest of 2nd Battalion was located vicinity of HOHENWARTH.

### 1 May 1945

358th Infantry – Shortly after midnight radio contact was reestablished with 2nd Battalion and their position definitely established. E and G Companies were at the edge of the woods with Company G on the right. F Company was at PEC SMOLNA.

At 0800 both 2nd and 3rd Battalions resumed the attack. Opposition was light as 3rd Battalion took KLENEC while 2nd Battalion cleared CHODOV in mid-morning. With the objective taken, 3rd Battalion relieved 2nd Battalion. The latter returned to vicinity of AST. K Company remained at KLENEC, I Company occupied CHODOV with a platoon at PEC SMOLNA. L Company went to SOFIENHUTTE.

Meanwhile 1st Battalion was being relieved by passage of the elements of the 97th Infantry Division. Following this the Battalion set out to clear the regimental left flank. By 1700 B Company had captured VALTIROV and Company A occupied N POSTREKOV.

359th Infantry – 3rd Battalion continued its attack at 0800 with strong combat patrols. K Company reached PAREZOV at 1020. 1st Battalion designated Company C to clear the woods East of OCHSENWEID. 2nd Battalion improved their positions and patrolled to the East.

90th Reconnaissance Troop – Maintained active patrols along the Division front.

Division FM #90 established a revised defensive zone in view of the pending relief of 358th Infantry by elements of 2nd Infantry Division, 1st Army who were to move in on the left. A new OPLR and MLR were established in 359th and 357th infantries were directed clear to and hold the new line. The intra-regimental boundary required the relief of elements of 2nd battalion 359th Infantry by 357th

Infantry. 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry in Division Reserve was to be released to the regiment as soon as 358th Infantry could be assembled in Division Reserve following its release. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to maintain contact with the enemy from MAXOV to HYRSOV with no advance North of 97 grid line.

357th Infantry – As 2nd Cavalry Squadron moved up to the Division right flank, 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry moved down the valley to the vicinity of LOHBERG to tie in. This same action freed the 1st Battalion which assembled at KOTZING after the Cavalry was disposed. Before being relieved, 1st Battalion captured a German General reported by civilians to be in the area. As 3rd Battalion was still in Division Reserve, it was decided to use AT Company and part of 1st Battalion temporarily to relieve those elements of 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry in the new zone of 357th Infantry as outlined in Division FM #90.

### 2 May 1945

359th Infantry – 1st Battalion moved through the 3rd to continue the attack to the East. 3rd Battalion combed the woods to the North after which they reverted to Division Reserve in vicinity of FURTH. 2nd Battalion on right started early and encountered heavy mortar and artillery fire as they neared VSERUBY. The Battalion Artillery Liaison Officer and his party were captured on Hill 505 when they moved out ahead of the infantry.

1st Battalion's progress was very slow. The woods were thick with foliage and Hitler Youth slithered like chameleons across their front, firing, disappearing, then firing again elsewhere. Finally F Company was sent to help out.

The 2nd Division unit after relieving 358th Infantry had not come abreast on the left. 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry was therefore left in place to cover the North flank.

By nightfall the regiment was on the new line in the center but both flanks tapered back. Plans were made to complete the operation in the morning. Late that night Division phoned that 2nd Infantry Division would commence to relieve the regiment on the morrow.

357th Infantry – AT Company had relieved the South part of E Company. B Company now completed relief of the North part. Division ordered another Company sent to RITTSTSIG and Company A was assigned this mission.

3rd Battalion was released to regiment at 1730 and they immediately began to relieve 1st Battalion, finishing by 2045. 1st Battalion was assembled in vicinity of ARRACH by 2245.

358th Infantry – During the day the regiment was relieved by the 38th Infantry, 2nd Infantry Division and assembled as Division Reserve 3 miles Northeast of CHAM.

### 3 May 1945

359th Infantry – 1st Battalion pushed out to its objective at 1015. Then all offensive action ceased. The mayor of VSERUBY surrendered his town as German troops had left the previous night. 38th Infantry, 2nd Division relieved 1st and 3rd Battalions while 9th Infantry, 2nd Division prepared to relieve 2nd Battalion the following morning. E and F Companies were assembled with G holding the line until the relief could be accomplished. The regiment minus 2nd Battalion assembled in vicinity KOTZING.

357th Infantry – Using 3rd Battalion on the right and 2nd Battalion on the left, the regiment marched across the Czech border without resistance and established on the OPLR. Division notified them to

expect relief next day by elements of the 2nd Division and to assemble vicinity of VIETACH. At 1830, 30 enemy attacked elements of Company I at TRENLOVSKY and knocked out one TD with a Panzerfaust. 6 enemy were killed and 2 captured. One TD man was injured. No other casualties were suffered.

358th Infantry – Remained in Division Reserve. 1st Battalion changed areas in mid-afternoon to vicinity KOLLNBURG closing at 1900.

#### 4 May 1945

Corps had ordered the entire Division to assemble in reserve in a large goose-egg around VIETACH. Several happenings intervened to change these plans. For one, the 11th Panzer Division surrendered en masse. For another, late at night, Division was ordered to use one RCT to seize and clear REGEN PASS on 5 May for a combat command of the 4th Armored Division which was to spearhead an attack to the East towards PRAGUE.

2nd Cavalry Group was having considerable trouble moving through the thick woods. OCS students were putting up fanatical resistance. During the day one platoon of cavalry was cut off and wiped out. This incident was to have its repercussions for the 90th.

359th Infantry – Shortly after daylight, the G-4 of 11th Panzer Division entered the lines of Company G 359th Infantry under a white flag with a view to unconditional surrender. He was blindfolded and taken to the Division CP at CHAM where the surrender was arranged.

The enemy unit would come in by two routes – one through VSERUBY and the other through RITTSTEIG – beginning at 1700. Preceding the troops at 1600 would be the CG and his staff who were to quarter and administer their own troops into assembly areas vicinity KOTZING.

The rest of 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry was sent back to their old location to receive the surrender. 3rd Battalion was directed to take charge of the group coming through RITTSTEIG. Both Battalions established small arms collecting points at the place of entry into our lines and posted guards on the routes to the bivouacking areas. Company D 712th Tank Battalion was attached to 2nd Battalion for perimeter guard at their assembly area. 90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to 3rd Battalion for perimeter guard. 204th Engineers established a water point at each bivouac area. CUB planes were used to sight the approach of the surrendering units. Enemy wounded were evacuated through medical channels and sent to German hospitals.

At 1600 General von Weitersheim, CG of the 11th Panzer Division, came in and was met by General Ernest, CG of the 90th Division, at VSERUBY. The terms of unconditional surrender were confirmed. The columns started coming in at 1700 and continued throughout the night.

357th Infantry – The regiment assembled in its portion of the Division assembly area and awaited orders. These came at 2105B when Division notified regiment of the mission received from Corps: beginning at daylight one RCT to clear the way for 4th Armored through the pass at MESTYS-ZELEZNA-RUDA.

2nd Cavalry Squadron would screen on the left flank.

The regiment made its plans: 1st Battalion would lead off and would clear from MESTYS to the road junction approximately 7 km North of the town. They would then block this area. 3rd Battalion would follow and would sweep a zone to the East and Southeast above the Southeast road which the armor would use. 2nd Battalion on the tail would clear the road itself and the immediate vicinity.

358th Infantry – The regiment continued in Division Reserve. The balance of the unit closed in the Division assembly area during the day.

#### 5 May 1945

Early morning brought Corps Operational Directive #115. The full mission assigned the 90th Infantry Division was:

- a. Initiate advance to North on PRAGUE through REGEN PASS daylight 5 May with one combat team.
- b. Clear out to DOBRA VODA and cover the debouchment of elements of 4th Armored Division.
- c. Remainder of Division to follow closely Armored elements, clearing enemy along Route.
- d. Protect Corps left flank North of Cavalry screen.
- e. Reconnaissance elements only cross line "D" except on Corps order. (Phase Line D was set as the road from PILSEN, LNARE and PISEK.)

357th Infantry – As the situation in the new area was none too clear, and was marked the previous day by heavy fighting by the Cavalry, a reconnaissance party including the regimental CO, S3, and Battalion commanders at 0500 preceded the motor column to determine the final entrucking point.

1st Battalion moved at 0630. 3rd Battalion at 0730 and 2nd Battalion in 0815. The column went through ZWIESEL then North through EISENSTEIN and MESTYS-CELEZNA-RUDA.

1st Battalion detrucked a half-mile from the road junction Northwest of MESTYS and advanced on foot some 3000 yards on the other side. By mid-morning they had established their blocks. Company C on the right was anchored as ST BRUNST and cut the main road. B Company held the center while A Company occupied the left flank echeloned slightly behind Company B.

3rd Battalion detrucked at the junction, marched to ST BRUNST and attacked down the ridge to the Southeast. Companies I and K advanced abreast with I on the left. The reserve Company followed Company I on the open flank. At ZHURI came catastrophe. As has been pointed out, the situation was fluid, and seeing M8s and jeeps in the town, the company approached boldly. But instead of friendly Cavalry, fanatical German OCS held possession of the vehicles which had been captured from the platoon of Cavalry ambushed the day before. As one platoon of Company I moved into the open the two scout cars opened fire as other enemy blazed away with small arms. Ten Americans were killed and ten wounded. Embettered by this heavy loss so late in the war, the company closed on the town without benefit of artillery fire and wiped out the opposition in close-hand fighting. 24 enemy were left dead and 76 captured. In addition to the two M8s, four 1/4 ton trucks were recaptured. The Battalion moved on. Entrenched enemy at ST HUTE were disposed of by artillery. There was no further opposition as the companies closed on their objective with Company L at DOLEJSI and K and I extended to the West.

While 3rd Battalion was engaged on the left, Company G, mounted on tanks, led 2nd Battalion down the main road proper. They hit one group of 50 entrenched enemy whom they dispersed. From there on only straggler fire was encountered as the Battalion rounded the bend at DOBRA VODA, where they dropped off Company E. Companies F and G occupied positions near HARTMANICE.

At 1400 2nd Cavalry relieved 1st Battalion of its blocking mission. A Company moved to ZHURI, B Company to ST HUTE while C remained at ST BRUNST. The day's operations ended at 2100.

Plans for morning contemplated 1st and 2nd Battalions taking up the attack, which would pinch out the 3rd. This Battalion after clearing the nearby woods would assemble in reserve.

358th Infantry – After talking to Corps in late morning, the Division Commander ordered 358th Infantry to move at once to an assembly area vicinity of GLASERWALD prepared to go through 357th Infantry

or attack to the North. Corps sent a truck Company to transport the regiment which closed in its area at a 2230.

359th Infantry – Through the night the procession of 11 Panzer Division continued. By agreement with 2nd Infantry Division, lights were allowed to expedite movement. The German vehicles were in a sorry state. Many were in trouble or without gas and had to be towed in. By 0300, however, the German foot troops were plodding down the rain-soaked roads to the assembly area along with horse-drawn vehicles.

At daylight the left column was practically closed, but in 3rd Battalion's areas troops and vehicles straggled in all day with the last element arriving about 1730.

The entire regiment was assigned the mission of handling the surrendered unit. Vehicles were categorized and pooled. Ration dumps were established from the supplies carried by the Panzer Division. Interior German guards were arranged, and a perimeter of American guards established. A count was taken of personnel and equipment.

The final count showed:

a. Enemy Matériel Captured

- 700 trucks
- 300 sedans
- 120 Volkswagen
- 155 motorcycles
- 85 armored halftracks
- 25 halftrack prime movers
- 15 SP guns (all types)
- 6 Mark IV Tanks
- 5 TDs (Mark IV chassis and Mark V guns)
- 1 Mark V Tank
- 24 81 mm mortars
- 6 120 mm mortars
- 4 150 mm Infantry Howitzers
- 2 150 mm Howitzers
- 5 105 mm Howitzers
- 2 75 mm AT guns
- 14 20 mm AA guns (single mount)
- 2 20 mm AA guns (multiple mount)

b. Personnel

- 110 PGR: 43 Os, 345 NCOs, 969 EM
- 119 PGR: 33 Os, 250 NCOs, 644 EM
- 15 PZR: 39 Os, 506 NCOs, 955 EM
- Rcn Bn: 18 Os, 154 NCOs, 426 EM
- Sig Bn: 10 Os, 62 NCOs, 210 EM
- Engr Bn: 14 Os, 48 NCOs, 245 EM
- Field Res Bn: 25 Os, 168 NCOs, 463 EM
- Supply Trains: 18 Os, 115 NCOs, 602 EM
- Medical Bn: 25 Os, 65 NCOs, 320 EM
- GRAND TOTAL: 9,050

Although obviously short on armor and artillery, the strength of the unit came as a surprise. Previous estimates had set the figure at 1500-3500 total.

These figures raised the Division total of prisoners captured to over 80,000, tanks captured or destroyed to 501 and SP guns captured or destroyed to 195.

At 2230 Division notified 359th Infantry to be prepared to move to the vicinity of a NYRSKO sometime the next day.

Division CP opened at ZWIESEL at 1550B.

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In the adjacent units, 2nd Cavalry Squadron had swept up to KLATOVY where they captured 1500 PWs. 42nd Cavalry Squadron was still committed South of the 90th cleaning an extensive wooded area.

On the left 2nd Infantry Division had reached DESENICE.

On the right 5th Infantry Division were having trouble in their wooded sector and had not, come abreast of the 90th.

#### 6 May 1945

Corps ordered 4th Armored Division to start rolling at 0600B. CCB was to pass through the 90th while CCA would debouch through the 5th Infantry Division. The objective was PRAGUE.

The day's objective for the division was a general line marked roughly by a road from STRAZOV, PICH and KASPERSKE HORY.

357th Infantry – 1st and 3rd Battalions moved abreast at 0730. Opposition was light and both Battalions were on the phase line by 1130. At PICH 1st Battalion freed 400 British PWs. Further movement was held up until the 4th Armored had passed through as they had road priority and supporting artillery could not displace. By mid-afternoon, however, the road was clear. The artillery readjusted and the advance continued without opposition. Forward elements halted at MOKROSUKY Company B; LESISCN Company C; ZIKOV Company E; and OLSOVKA Company G., 3rd Battalion assembled at TESOVI. Some 900 prisoners were gathered up. A few snipers were active in the area as Division MP was killed near DOBRA VODA.

358th Infantry – 2nd Battalion drove East and captured bridges across the OTAVA River at REJASTEJM. 3rd Battalion circled on their right, and headed Southeast, East and Northeast to capture KASPERSKE HORY. They met some opposition at several small towns enroute. Over 1100 prisoners were taken – mostly voluntary surrenders.

359th Infantry – The regiment moved at 1500 by way of HAIBUHL, RITTSTEIG, NYRSKO and STRAZOV. 1st Battalion remained here while 2nd and 3rd Battalions assembled vicinity of VITEN. Plans were laid for attack to the North and Northeast using 1st and 2nd Battalions with 3rd in reserve.

#### 7 May 1945

Though not unexpected, the end came abruptly. Scarcely had the three regiments moved out in attack when Corps called to stop all forward movement. Later in the morning by TWX came the memorable message announcing the cessation of hostilities:

"A representative of the German High Command signed the unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Forces and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command at 0141B Central European Time 7 May 1945 under which all forces will cease active operations at 0001B 9 May 1945.

All offensive operations by Allied Forces will cease. Troops will remain in present positions... Due to difficulties of communication there may be some delay in similar orders reaching enemy troops so full defense if precautions will be taken... No release will be made to the press pending announcement by the three governments."

EISENHOWER  
S/0923

Following receipt of the above, a general defensive position was outlined and troops readjusted to comply. Division CP crossed the Bohemian border to open at SUSICE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA at 1610B. Units sent patrols two miles to their front. By nightfall Division was redispersed with all three regiments on line generally along the road Southeast out of KLATOVY to STRIBRNE HORY then bending from HRADESICE to RABI to Hills 739, 738 and 844. Several 357th Infantry men previously captured at BEAU COUDRAY in July were recaptured. 2nd Cavalry Group recovered the Artillery Battalion Liaison Officer recently lost by 359th Infantry.

The last shot of the war in the Division was fired this day by a BAR man in K Company, 358th Infantry. Between 1100 and 1130 he fired 40 rounds at enemy infantry in the woods at Q2779.

#### 8 May 1945

This was a day of waiting, of accumulating PWs, and of preparations for the postwar phase of occupational duty.

#### 9-17 May 1945

Although operations officially ceased at 0001B, units of the 90th Division remained on line for several days as rather an anti-climax. On the 10th, 358th Infantry with 344th and 345th FA Battalions were moved forward to the restraining line between NEPONUK and LANRE when it appeared that German and White Russian troops, compressed between the American and Russian forces, might try to force an exit into the American zone. By agreement of higher headquarters the trapped German soldiers were Russian prisoners. The other two regiments were placed on 1 hour alert to assist if needed, but remained in place. The sizable German units approaching were kept under control and no fighting ensued although small units and individuals attempting to infiltrate caused some harassment.

Patrols from 357th Infantry and 359th Infantry ranging far out in front of the lines with orders to contact the Russians made contact in the afternoon of the 10th with elements in contact with the 4th Armored Division.

On the 14th 358th Infantry was relieved by 2nd Cavalry Group. Corps ordered Division to move to occupational area vicinity WEIDEN, GERMANY. V Corps would take over the present area. The Division Artillery began immediate move to its new area occupying the Kreis of BURGLENGENFELD and NEUNBURG. On the 15th, 357th Infantry, 358th Infantry and Division CP moved to their occupational areas. The 357th Infantry with 773rd TD Battalion attached set up in the Kreis KEMNATH, TIRSCHENREUTH and NEUSTADT. 358th Infantry with 537th AAA Battalion

attached, occupied Kreis NABBURG, OBERVIETACH, VOHENSTRAUSS and WALDMUNCHEN. Division CP opened as WEIDEN, which was exclusive to 357th Infantry, at 1415B.

On the 16th, 359th Infantry with 712th Tank Battalion motored to their occupational areas: Kreis AMBERG, SULZBACH-ROSENBERG and ESCHENBACH.

On the 17th May last elements of the Division were relieved by the V Corps as 90th Reconnaissance Troop which was blocking the Czech-German border on the Czech side was relieved, together with security elements of 357th and 359th Infantries. They closed in their new areas the following day.

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Now it was over. And the record of the 90th Infantry Division was a kaleidoscope of brilliant achievements: the Division had fought through every kind of weather – choking dust, chilling rain, knee-deep mud, pounding hail, waist-deep snow; over every kind of terrain – hedgerow, plains, forests, rivers and hills.

It battered its way free from the bloody hedgerows of Normandy and fought in hot pursuit over the plains of Northern France. It sprang a trap which shattered the German VII Army at CHAMBOIS in the FALAISE GAP. Then it raced on to the MOSELLE River; probed the METZ Forts; left them and plunged across the rain-swollen MOSELLE; overran the MAGINOT Forts including mighty KOENIGSMACHER; joined hands with the 5th Infantry Division to encircle METZ; then charged North and assaulted the flooded SAAR River at DILLINGEN. Pulled out of there to help counter Von Rundstedt's stab at the ARDENNES, the Division launched a surprise attack Southeast of BASTOGNE which sheared off an enemy salient, then flogged the retreating enemy forces relentlessly as they tore for cover behind the SEIGFRIED West Wall. The Division took no rest and gave none as it cracked through the West Wall before halting for a short breather. Hardly stopped, it jumped back to action to run rampant to the RHINE. There Division turned Southeast and assaulted across the MOSELLE a second time to plummet on and capture MAINZ. It crossed the RHINE – behind the 5th Infantry Division on a bridge – forced a crossing of the MAIN in assault boats – and surged on through disintegrating resistance until it cut Germany in two by being the first American Division to enter Czechoslovakia, then swept down the Czech border, captured the German 11th Panzer Division, until the War's end found the 90th across the Sudetenland inside BOHEMIA itself. In 11 months the Division had made an assault landing, fought five major campaigns. It had 318 days in action broken by three, brief so-called "rest" periods which were devoted to training. Together with its normal attachments – 712th Tank battalion, 537th AAA Battalion and first the 607th TD Battalion and later the 773rd TD Battalion – it had met Germany's best and Germany's worse. The record showed the result: 83,437 prisoners captured; 501 tanks, 195 SP guns and 134 airplanes captured or destroyed.

Victory was costly. The record showed, too, the price paid: 3624 EM and 247 O dead and 16,663 EM and 831 O casualties. But these sacrifices were not in vain. For on V-E Day 1945 the 90th Infantry Division like the Allied Forces could say: "Mission Accomplished".

EARNEST  
COMMANDING  
BOOTH  
G-3