

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 1 July 44

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

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

(b) 358th Infantry, on the left, to force the corridor between the FORET and PRAIRIE, block to the East, South of the PRAIRIE, and finally [Page 1] assist the 359th Infantry on order.

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

### 357th Infantry:

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

#### 358th Infantry:

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

#### 359th Infantry:

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

#### 2 July 44

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

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

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

Division CP opened at CHÂTEAU FRANQUETOT at 1700.

#### 3 July 44

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

#### 359th Infantry:

1st Battalion, right assault Battalion of the Division, met heavy resistance at the LD from the German garrison vicinity of PRETOT. Enraged [Page 2] by an incident which cost the life of a Battalion staff officer, the unit bored into a vicious close quarter fight in the orchards Southwest of PRETOT. That fight ended only with the annihilation of the defending German battalion and left the 1st Battalion disorganized and heavily drained of strength. Having broken the Boche resistance by mid-afternoon, the battalion was able to push through the woods in its zone to reach the high ground north of STE SUZANNE where it halted, incapable of further offensive action.

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

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

#### 358th Infantry:

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

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

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

#### 357th Infantry:

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

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

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

By the day's end, the Division could count an average advance of 1200 yards at a cost of over 600

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

#### 4 JULY 44

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

#### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion drove forward from STE SUZANNE towards its objective on the East nose of the FORET and reached the ST JORES-LA HAYE DU PUIITS Road. Counterattacked there both frontally and on the right flank by a combined infantry-tank force, it fell back on STE SUZANNE to defend from its night perimeter positions. The Boche furiously attempted to retake the area but was consistently repulsed, the last assault coming late in the afternoon. Thereafter, pressure relaxed sufficiently to allow the Battalion to resume the advance and by dark it controlled the road, connecting up with the 1st Battalion, 357th Infantry, by patrols. [Page 4]

3rd Battalion, passed through the left of the 1st Battalion and made limited progress until stopped by a formidable German position in a wooded ravine, perpendicular to its advance, the fight raged all day without gain.

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

#### 358th Infantry:

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

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

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

357th Infantry:

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

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Casualties for the day were considerably higher than on the 3rd; every inch of ground had been gained at a terrific cost. The rapid capture of the FORET DE MONT CASTRE loomed increasingly important -- without it we had no observation; with it the Boche had too much. [Page 5]

5 JULY 44

The attack to assigned objectives was continued at 0845.

357th Infantry:

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

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

Company A received increasingly stronger enemy reaction and was unable to force its way into BEAU COUDRAY. B Company, counterattacked on its right flank when approximately abreast of A Company and faced to meet this threat. C Company was committed on the right of B Company

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

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

2nd Battalion 357th Infantry, in Regimental Reserve, moved to the area vacated by the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry. [Page 6]

358th Infantry:

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

359th Infantry initiated its attack with the 2nd Battalion on the left and 3rd Battalion on the right to seize and hold the high ground in the FORET.

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

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

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

90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the 359th Infantry at 1200 to maintain contact between the right of 359th Infantry and left of the 82nd Airborne Division.

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At the end of the day's fighting the Division had advanced its lines approximately 2000 yards.

While the fighting had been severe and the casualties heavy the Division had secured a foothold on the FORET DE MONT CASTRE -- a foothold which we were never to relinquish and which provided the initial key to the success of the Division's operations.

#### 6 JULY 44

##### 357th Infantry:

Attacking at 0800, C Company, on the right flank of the 1st Battalion, made limited progress and forced its way across the East-West Road through BEAU COUDRAY; the other Companies were stopped without gain. [Page 7]

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

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

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

##### 359th Infantry:

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

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

The existence of a sizable German force between the 1st and 3rd Battalions made the establishment and maintenance of firm contact between these 2 units an impossible task for the moment. Both Battalions were [Page 8] low on ammunition, without AT protection and were under heavy enemy fire. Re-supply and evacuation were serious problems because of the absence of roads and the presence of small German groups in the rear of the 2 Battalions. During the night, partial re-supply was effected by using attached tanks as cargo carriers.

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

90th Reconnaissance Troop continued to screen the right rear of the Regiment, blocking approaches up the valley North of the FORET from the West.

358th Infantry (less 1st Battalion):

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

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

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



the 357th Infantry to the BAUPTE Causeway.

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

#### 7 JULY 44

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

#### 357th Infantry:

B Company, in 1st Battalion reserve, supported by tanks attacked Southeast at 0900 to seize BEAU COUDRAY and reestablish contact with leading companies of the 3rd Battalion. Its advance was stopped by heavy resistance on the outskirts of town. At 1450, a violent counterattack hit B Company on the right flank and although repulsed by our tanks caused heavy casualties including all officers and noncommissioned officers. The remnants withdrew into the A Company perimeter. Meanwhile the remainder of the 1st Battalion, the fused C-K Company force, held in place throughout the day, sustaining a [Page 10] total of 15 separate counterattacks. At 1635, a carrying party from the isolated companies broke through the German lines and reached the 3rd Battalion area in greatly decimated strength. It reported that the companies were under continuously heavy pressure and were very low on ammunition. Later in the day a runner from L company slipped through the lines reporting that I Company CP had been overrun by tanks and the entire CP group killed or captured. Regiment directed that E Company, under the control of the 3rd Battalion and supported by tanks, attack at once to relieve the situation of I and L Companies. Heavy fire delayed organization of the attack and it was subsequently postponed until dawn.

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

#### 358th Infantry:

3rd Battalion continued the attack to the West at 0900. After breaking resistance immediately in

front of it, it made excellent progress. By noon it was on the East edge of LITHAIRE and had taken a total of 50 prisoners. At 1345 it passed to the control of 359th Infantry for the completion of mop-up operations West to the Division boundary.

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

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

B Company, 315th Engineer Battalion, relieved the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry on the latter's position, at 1500. At 2200, remainder of the Engineer Battalion was attached to the Regiment and its C Company moved into position to reinforce B Company. The remaining Company assembled in the valley directly in rear of the leading two. [Page 11]

### 359th Infantry

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

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

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

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The 8th Infantry Division in Corps Reserve, was originally under orders to relieve the 90th Division elements in the FORET on 8 July, and continue the attack to the South. The 90th Division, with its zone delimited to the area now held by the 357th Infantry, would continue the attack South until pinched out by the juncture of the 8th and 83rd Infantry Divisions on the right and left respectively. However, during the day, captured documents, substantiated by air reconnaissance reports and our own observations, developed evidence of the presence of the Das Reich Division in the Corps zone. Captured officers reported that it would attack on 8 July on a Northeast axis to recapture the FORET DE MONT CASTRE. The direction of its attack would strike the 8th Division squarely in the flank. Based on this information the Corps order was revised, shifting the zone of action of the 8th Division westward and changing its attack direction to the Southeast line in order that it might in turn strike the probable attack of the German Division in the flank. During the afternoon and night, arrangements for the passage of elements of the 8th Division through the 359th Infantry zone were completed. It was strongly recommended that the 121st Infantry on the left of the 8th Division veer to the left of its zone and approach its line of departure (our present front lines) over ground which had been cleared by our units thereby bypassing the scattered resistance still remaining West of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry. Numerous guides were posted and officer liaison established to facilitate execution of this plan. The decision not to follow the suggestion was to result in a 48 hour delay in the Corps offensive. [Page 12]

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

#### 8 JULY 44

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

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

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

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

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

### 357th Infantry:

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

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

For the remainder of the day emphasis was placed on the regrouping and position improvement of the remaining effective companies of the combined force (A, B, C and K). Boche pressure slackened; it was later determined that the paratrooper force, having accomplished its mission of restoring the line, had been replaced by a less elite combat group. [Page 13]

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

### 358th Infantry:

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

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

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

### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion 358th Infantry in the center of the Regimental line was attacked at 0330 by an

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

To the right rear of the Regiment, the 8th Division was advancing slowly, having initiated their attack at 0600. They approached our positions through a zone which took them in front of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry rather than through the cleared area in its (3rd Battalion's) rear. 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, when its front had been covered by their advance, was released from 359th Infantry control and rejoined its Regiment. [Page 14]

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

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

#### 9 JULY 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

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

##### 358th Infantry:

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

COUDRAY.

3rd Battalion completed relief of Engineer Battalion at dawn and the latter reverted to Division control. A gap existed between the right of the 3rd Battalion and the left of the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry and into that gap the Boche probed vigorously. At 1700 a vicious German attack struck the right front and flank of the 3rd Battalion. Although it was repulsed, some infiltration continued around the right. To fill that gap, B Company 315th Engineer Battalion was reattached to the Regiment and moved to positions on the right flank of the 3rd Battalion. Subsequently the remainder of the Engineer Battalion was attached and C Company moved into the line to reinforce B Company. [Page 15]

359th Infantry:

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

10 JULY 44

357th Infantry:

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

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

At 1400 an advance was initiated with 2 company groups to secure the East and West road through BEAU COUDRAY. A Company on the extreme left received heavy machine gun fire from its left front the moment it moved forward. Neither artillery nor mortar concentrations had

any effect in reducing the volume of enemy fire delivered from what subsequently was found to be cut-and-covered emplacements and the company's advance was completely blocked. B Company, adjacent to and on the right of A Company, had been reinforced by 5 medium tanks and was set up as the main effort. However, the extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire absorbed by this company broke its spirit and the prevalence of stragglers denied it any successful offensive action. C Company, now reconstituted, attempted to attack Southeast to [Page 16] fill the existing gap between B Company and K Company on the right but was unable to make any progress. K Company on the extreme right reached the road and attempted to turn East on the road to roll up resistance in front of the other companies, but withering fire hitting both exposed flanks made this an impossibility and it withdrew to its original position. Shortly before dark all 4 companies consolidated on their original positions and the regimental front became stabilized.

### 358th Infantry:

During the early part of the day, the three battalions in line (in order from right to left, 3rd, 2nd 359th Infantry, 1st) on Division order maintained their positions on the eastern portion of the FORET prepared to initiate the attack pivoting on the 1st Battalion. The resumption of the attack (in a southeasterly direction) had been planned as a coordinated effort by the 359th and 358th infantries. However, the slow advance on the 8th Infantry Division and the improbability of its passing through the 359th Infantry at any reasonable hour caused the Division Commander to order the 358th Infantry to attack at 1500, with the 359th Infantry following as soon as practicable after it could sideslip into position (the sideslip itself hinging upon its relief by the 8th Infantry Division).

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

The terrain onto which the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry attacked was rocky and densely wooded and control immediately became a major problem. The only route through the attack area was a firebreak on which Company I, the left assault Company, guided. Despite heavy resistance the assault companies initially made good progress but halted on their first phase line to reestablish the lateral contact, which had been lost almost at the jump-off. After reestablishing contact and determining their position by colored smoke shells fired by supporting artillery, the battalion commander ordered a resumption of the advance. Almost immediately all assault platoons met fierce resistance from the fanatically determined paratroopers defending that area. The Boche engaged our infantry with hand grenades and close range machine gun fire from trees, spider trap holes and carefully camouflaged dug-in positions in the tangled undergrowth, inflicting heavy casualties. The assault units extricated themselves only by the gallant action of those men not pinned to the ground, who charged the Germans with bayonet, grenades and hip-fired machine guns. The command group itself was attacked by a bypassed German squad; the latter was dispatched by the timely intervention of a reserve platoon of L Company which turned back upon hearing the sound of the firefight. [Page 17]

After beating the immediate resistance, the Battalion halted for reorganization prior to resumption of the advance. A considerable gap had developed between the leading assault companies as a

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

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

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

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

#### 359th Infantry:

All battalions held in place until 1600 at which time the 121st Infantry on the left of the 8th Infantry Division passed through their lines and continued the attack. As soon as covered, the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry and 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry moved rearward and swung obliquely left into their new zone of action. Both battalions encountered terrain difficulties and resistance comparable to that experienced by the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry, but by dark had secured the southernmost hill mass of the FORET and had reached the far edge of the woods. Lack of routes and bypassed groups of Boche made communications and supply an extremely difficult and hazardous problem. [Page 18]

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

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

11 JULY 44



### 358th Infantry:

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

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

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

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

### 357th Infantry:

While the remainder of the regiment held its now stabilized position North of BEAU COUDRAY, 2nd Battalion moved to an assembly area just Northeast of the "NOSE". The Division plan visualized the commitment of this Battalion on the left of the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry after the latter had reached the eastern extremity of the narrow corridor through which it was attacking and had turned to the Southeast. As stated above, the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry did not possess sufficient power to break out and it was consequently decided to commit the 2nd Battalion [Page 19] 357th Infantry in column of companies through its left to give added drive to the bogged down attack.

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

### 359th Infantry:

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

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

#### 12 JULY 44

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

#### 357th Infantry:

The 2nd Battalion attacked at 0800 and meeting practically no resistance, advanced rapidly to LE PLESSIS. After mopping up the Boche stragglers in that area it was redirected south along the west edge of the swamp in conformity with Division orders. The movement of the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry obliquely across its front in the vicinity of LA COUTRIE stopped [Page 20] further progress. Although every effort was made to shift the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry to the right into its proper zone of action, this was not accomplished until well after dark and the 2nd Battalion could but remain where it first halted. Under cover of darkness it moved forward and out-posted the left of the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry while that latter unit side-slipped to the right.

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

#### 358th Infantry:

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

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

By 1400 the 1st Battalion had reached the stream line just North of GORGES with its left at the swamp and is right opposite the town. Patrols which attempted to cross the stream drew heavy fire from the buildings lining the far bank and the Battalion was engaged in a hot firefight. All

efforts to force the stream line were repulsed and the Battalion secured for the night on the positions it had won by mid-afternoon. Under cover of darkness, it side-slipped to the right to conform to the new Regimental Zone and to permit the employment of the 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry.

3rd Battalion on the regimental right, advanced abreast of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry from LASTELLE through LA SALMONNERIE with the objective of seizing the main crossroad at ST GERMAIN. This Battalion had been so greatly decimated in the preceding few days that its rifle elements consisted of but 4 officers and 122 enlisted men were organized into a single battle group. It reached the crossroads without difficulty but was ambushed by flanking machine gun and tank fire as it moved to the ground beyond. In the ensuing fight it sustained approximately 40 additional casualties including 4 officers. By late evening the remnants had routed the Boche and, reinforced by 2 Antitank Platoons, had organized the crossroads for defense. Contact could not be established with the 1st Battalion on the left. [Page 21]

#### 359th Infantry:

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

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

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

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

90th Reconnaissance Troop, returning to action after a brief rest, moved to LASTELLE and with dismounted patrols, maintained contact with the 8th Infantry Division.

315th Engineer Battalion, which had for the past 5 days operated almost exclusively as a combat unit, was relieved at daylight from its position atop the FORET and returned to much neglected

Engineer work.

\* \* \* \* \*

The entire Corps front on this day advanced a comparable distance. The 8th Infantry Division on our immediate right moved rapidly until encountering the reverse slope position of Hill 92. The 79th Infantry Division on the Corps right remained abreast of the 8th Infantry Division. On our left the 4th Infantry Division maneuvering deliberately through difficult swampy terrain made excellent progress. [Page 22]

### 13 JULY 44

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

#### 357th Infantry:

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

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

#### 358th Infantry:

The 1st Battalion on the regimental left, attacked at 0645. During the preceding night the enemy returned in force to the North bank of the stream and from hastily prepared positions stoutly resisted the advance of the Battalion. It required a half-day to eliminate these surprise positions.

At 1900 leading elements of the Battalion forced the stream and entered GORGES. By 2100 the town had been locked up, Battalion perimeter established and contact firm with 2nd Battalion 357th Infantry on the left. 3rd Battalion held in place throughout the day reorganizing. 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry by Division order was scheduled to revert [Page 23] to regimental control at such time as it should be passed through by the advance of the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry.

#### 359th Infantry:

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

#### 14 JULY 44

#### 357th Infantry:

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

#### 358th Infantry:

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

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

#### 359th Infantry:

1st Battalion advancing without resistance moved rapidly within its zone and by mid-afternoon had secured CRs North of SEVES. The Boche outposts North of the RIVER were quickly overrun and one platoon was pushed toward SEVES to secure the stream-crossings. It proved inadequate for the job and since a general engagement was not indicated at this time the attack was abandoned. [Page 24]

2nd Battalion, passing to the right of the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, advanced on the right rear of the 1st Battalion, seized LA COMMUNE and continued to the RIVER to establish contact with

the 1st Battalion on its left, and shortly before dark with the 121st Infantry on its right.

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

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

15 JULY 44

357th Infantry:

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

358th Infantry:

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

359th Infantry:

Firmed its position on the Division right and instituted an effective harassing fire plan directed at the Boche confronting them. [Page 25]

90th Reconnaissance Troop:

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

Given thus a breathing spell, the Division entered upon an extensive program of reorganization,

rehabilitation and training. Particular attention was given to the integration of replacements and the bathing, reequipping and re-clothing of combat units.

#### 16 - 18 JULY 44

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

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

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

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

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

#### 19 JULY 44

The attack of the 358th Infantry was postponed 24 hours by Corps direction to permit the acquisition of artillery ammunitions necessary for the support of the operations. [Page 26]

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

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

#### 20 - 21 JULY 44

[VIII] Corps and Division awaited the jump-off of the VII Corps, which had been daily postponed because of unfavorable weather. During the lull thus afforded Division continued to fully utilize

the available time to bring the units to fullest possible combat efficiency.

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

#### 22 JULY 44

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

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

The entire attack plan had been premised upon the rapid movement of the leading waves across the barren approaches to the "ISLAND" and the quick overrunning of its first line of defense. Because of tardiness in reaching the Line of Departure and more especially because of the heavy barrage sustained at the jump-off time, the assault as conceived was never launched. Once aware of the point of our attack, the enemy shifted more troops to the South bank of the stream to oppose us and began mortaring and machine-gunning the deployed troops. The assault companies, abhorrent as the phrase may be, were "pinned to the ground" and notwithstanding the heroic actions of their leaders, remained immobile throughout the forenoon. [Page 27]

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

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

Battalion altered forward motion after cutting main lateral road on the "ISLAND" awaiting armored and antitank support. Elements of A and D Companies crossed at 1800. Behind them, enemy mortar, artillery and enfilade machine gun fire blocked all efforts of the engineers to provide a vehicular crossing. The existing road to the ISLAND was denied by the Boche infantry, supported by self-propelled guns, who held the far approach.

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



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

357th and 359th Infantries holding in place, supported the attack by fire and drew in turn considerable enemy reaction. Added to all other difficulties, a dense fog overhung the Division area rendering the much depended upon liaison planes useless.

#### 23 JULY 44

During the early morning hours the SEVES River overflowed its banks and became un-fordable in most spots. This situation together with the fire, which continued to fall on both banks accentuated the difficulties attendant upon re-supply of ammunition to the 1st Battalion and G Company. At first light there was still no tank crossing and only a handful of ammunition had reached the assault troops. No additional troops of the 2nd Battalion had joined G Company. [Page 28]

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

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

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

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

(2) During both days of the attack weather conditions deprived us of air support and, of more immediate concern, prevented the use of artillery liaison planes to find and adjust on counter-battery targets.

(3) The success of the attack was contingent upon the element of surprise to the extent of rushing the open ground North of the "ISLAND" before the Boche could react to the sudden pressure. However, the infantry was not at the line of departure at the prescribed hour and preparation fires were not followed up. The enemy emerging from cover after the completion of the preparation and not finding himself attacked at close quarters was alerted to and ready for the attack when finally launched. [Page 29]

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

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

#### 24 JULY 44

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

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

#### 25 JULY 44

##### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion moved by marching at 1300 via GONFREVILLE-BLEHOW-SAINTENY to

forward assembly Northeast of RAIDS. 1st and 3rd Battalions moved at 1700 and 1800 respectively after their release by elements of 358th Infantry. By 2145, the regiment was completely closed in its new area Southwest of SAINTENY. Relief and movement were made without enemy interference. [Page 30]

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

358th Infantry:

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

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

359th Infantry:

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

26 JULY 44

The entire VIII Corps flamed into action at 0530.

357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion attacking on a narrow front, which permitted the employment of only 1 Company encountered heavy resistance almost at the line of departure. The entrenched enemy although buffeted by heavy mortar and artillery concentrations could not be unloosened. On the left the 329th Infantry was stopped for no gain. By noon it had become obvious that the stalemate would not be immediately broken and plans were initiated, in conjunction with 329th Infantry, for that latter unit to side-slip to the left, punching at a new point and giving the 357th Infantry some maneuver room on the left of the 2nd Battalion; both Regimental attacks to be renewed at 1900. [Page 31]

329th Infantry experienced great difficulty repositioning its troops and late in the afternoon

decided to postpone the effort until the following morning. 357th Infantry followed suit and spent the remaining hours of daylight in preparation for a dawn attack.

359th Infantry attacked in column of battalions at 0530 with the 2nd Battalion leading. As was the case in the 358th Infantry attack a few days previously, the Regiment was faced with the SEVES River as an immediate obstacle.

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

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

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

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

358th Infantry, from its position North of the "ISLAND" fired throughout the day in support of the 359th Infantry.

90th Reconnaissance Troop moved from its position on the Division left flank to maintain contact with the 121st Infantry on the Division right. [Page 32]

\* \* \* \* \*

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

27 JULY 44

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

357th Infantry:

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

At noon Division ordered Regiments to turn South, cross the TAUTE River and seize the high ground south of ST SEBASTIAN DE RAIDS. 3rd Battalion moved abreast of the 2nd Battalion and swung left, crossing the TAUTE River at LA POSSAIRIE. Reconnaissance for a suitable site consumed a considerable amount of time and it was well towards evening before the 3rd Battalion completed crossing. Battalion ran into a delaying position just a North of the PERIERS-ST LO Highway, which it overwhelmed at dark. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had crossed South of the River; the 1st Battalion was scheduled for crossing at daylight.

359th Infantry:

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

Renewing the advance at 1600, 3rd Battalion bypassed PERIERS and moved astride the PERIERS-COUTANCES Road. 1 km South of PERIERS it passed through the 90th Reconnaissance Troop and took up the fight against a strong [Page 33] Boche blocking detachment on that road. The presence of Boche tanks on the one side and the inability to move antitank or tank destroyer weapons to position to oppose them on the other resulted in a stalemate until dark.

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

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

358th Infantry:

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

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

90th Reconnaissance Troop was alerted at 1000 and given a mission to proceed South through PERIERS to contact the enemy. Delayed by bridge construction and mines on the main road to PERIERS the Troop did not initiate its movement until 1330. Moving for the most part dismounted, it reached PERIERS at 1530, passed through town and continued South in the direction of ST SAUVEUR LENDELIN. 1 km South of PERIERS it encountered enemy infantry and tanks. The limited road net did not permit the Troop to bypass this resistance and it made no additional progress during the day. 1 Platoon was eventually diverted East of PERIERS and contacted 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry.

\* \* \* \* \*

The entire VIII Corps had surged forward and the proportions of the breakthrough were now plain to all. It was consequently directed that the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions pass through the 90th and 79th Infantry Divisions respectively and drive towards COUTANCES and points to the South. During the night the Division staff completed necessary arrangements for the passage of the armor while the engineers worked with feverish speed to de-mine the CARENTAN-PERIERS Road and provide a passable route through the demolished town itself. [Page 34]

#### 28th JULY 44

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

29 - 31 JULY 44

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

The first phase of the battle for FRANCE had ended. During it the 90th Infantry Division played a vitally important part. It had met the best [Page 35] the German could offer by way of resistance and although bloodied, had bested him. It had developed battle experience and equally important, battle confidence. And the brief respite afforded in the last few days of July had permitted revitalization of both individuals and units. Thus on the eve of August the 90th Division was spiritually and physically ready for the stellar role that was about to be given.

McLAIN  
COMMANDING  
STILWELL  
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[Page 36]