

## PART I

### THE MOSELLE CROSSING, 9-19 NOVEMBER 44.

#### INTRODUCTION

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

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

But while the lines remained relatively static from mid-September to the first week in November, there was anything but idleness in the Corps. By limited objective attacks and continued patrolling the contours of the defensive area were fixed and plotted. Troops were thoroughly trained in assault tactics. The infantry, by judicious rotation policy, were rested frequently, permitting the building of a reserve of physical strength for the trying days to come. Supplies of equipment and ammunition were accumulated in considerable quantity. And finally two fresh divisions arrived and were placed in the line for the desirable seasoning prior to commitment in an offense of action. [Page 1]

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

1. 5th infantry Division, attacking on the Corps right had in conjunction with XII Corps, to thrust northeast from its bridgehead, forming the southern arc of the pincers.

2. 95th Infantry Division, secretly relieving the 90th, to contain the enemy's salient west of the MOSELLE and on order, when the pincers began to close, to attack to reduce the salient and capture the city.

3. 90th Infantry Division, the Corps main effort, to drive a bridgehead across the MOSELLE northeast of THIONVILLE, roll up the MAGINOT LINE, and eventually teaming with the 10th Armored Division close the pincers east of METZ.

4. 10th Armored Division, crossing behind the 90th, to attack parallel to and on the left of the 90th, simultaneously pushing columns east to the SAAR RIVER.

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

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

### THE PLAN

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

Analysis of the terrain north of the river had a definite influence on the development of the plan and the execution of preliminaries thereto. If secrecy was to be preserved the 90th Division would have to stage into the FORET DE CATTENOM at night and at the latest possible time. Coincident with the foregoing, a thickening of the cavalry along the river was indicated to make completely effective the counter reconnaissance screen which previously had

been unable to entirely thwart German patrol penetrations. Of even greater importance however, was the obvious requirement for a limited attack by other forces to drive the German from his West Bank positions in the BASSE KONTZ-LE STROMBERG area prior to the initiation of the crossing thereby protecting the assault troops from the flank observation which threatened the success of the assault. The completely open nature of the terrain from the south edge of the assembly area to the river made mandatory a night crossing prosecuted with the maximum speed and the utmost of silence to permit the establishment of the initial bridgehead prior to dawn.

Across the river the enemy-held terrain was most formidable. For the depth of 1 to 2 km the ground possessed characteristics similar to the flats adjacent to the near bank and then sloped abruptly to the ridges running perpendicular to the river line. In the right of the Division sector, on a hill apart, stood the GROUP FORTIFIE DE KOENIGSMACKER, a METZ type fortress which commanded the entire crossing area. True, it could be bypassed by leading elements, but upon its speedy neutralization and reduction depended the success of the maneuver. And shades of FORT DRIANT, this was a task of tremendous proportions! Squarely down the middle of the [Page 3] Division zone ran a heavily wooded, rugged ridge which contained the main fortifications of the MAGINOT LINE. While constructed primarily to resist attack from the east, study of the fortifications immediately disclosed that in conformity with universal defense doctrine the defensive areas had been designed for all-around and mutual support, and consequently, if properly manned would present a serious obstacle, regardless of the direction of the assault. The initial problem was the METRICH GROUP, the northern-most of the strong points which commanded the river line as superbly as did the KOENIGSMACHER fortifications. Further to the east the heights were even more commanding, although not known to possess man-made fortification. Still eastward, outside the Division zone of action, lay the highest ground of all. Four axial roads lay within the Division zone traversing the valleys between the parallel ridges and, providing at first glance, adequate communications; but study soon indicated that their usefulness was seriously limited by their geographical location since they would be commanded for considerable distances in rear of frontlines by enemy held side slope positions.

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

The Division plan of attack was simple and sound in conception and thoroughly prepared. To develop the maximum strength at the earliest practicable moment, the assault was to be made with two regiments, each with two battalions abreast. Three general crossing areas where possible, astride the towns of RETTEL, GAVISSE-MALLING and CATTENOM respectively. The RETTEL area was discarded because of its proximity to the dominating ground along the German border east of the attack zone, ground to which no troops could be diverted. Consequently, the left regiment was [Page 4] earmarked to cross in the GAVISSE-MALLING area and drive rapidly east and southeast to secure the high ground parallel to and east of the RETTEL-KERLING Road. The right regiment, crossing in the vicinity of CATTENOM, was to capture KOENIGSMACHER FORTRESS with minimum force, simultaneously pushing the assault to secure lodgement on the high ground on the right of the Division sector. Since the town of KOENIGSMACHER, along the river, was squarely in the middle of the Division zone, its inclusion within the objective of either assault regiment would necessitate a divergent effort by the regiment which would only serve to detract from the strength of the respective main efforts. As a result KOENIGSMACHER and the ground immediately adjacent thereto were boxed off as a "No Maneuver" area and turned over to the Division Artillery to neutralize until such time as the third regiment could mop up. The third regiment initially held in reserve, was to cross behind either of the assault regiments at the earliest possible moment and swing into action down the MAGINOT LINE Ridge to complete and solidify the bridgehead. A Corps engineer battalion was to support each of the assault regiments and subsequently provide the necessary bridging while the Divisional engineer battalion was kept intact for assault operations with the infantry in general engineer work on the far shore. 90th Reconnaissance Troop, reinforced was to mop up on the right of the Division zone and eventually link up with a secondary crossing of the 95th Division in the UCKANGE area. The Divisional Artillery, greatly reinforced, had a number of tremendous tasks. In consonant with the desire to maintain secrecy to the last possible moment, no preparation was contemplated, although the battalions were prepared to deliver planned fires on call prior to H-hour and to counterbattery effective counter-preparation fires. At H-hour a heavy program of destruction fires was to be laid on the KOENIGSMACHER and METRICH fortifications and on the close-in towns of BASSE HAM, HAUTE HAM, KOENIGSMACKER, METRICH, MALLING and HUNTING.

This then, in broad outline, was the plan for the establishment of the bridgehead, time tabled as a two day operation. It incorporated the recommendations of the unit commanders and Division Staff and in final form, therefore, gave voice to the best considered thoughts of the Division in matters both tactical and technical after consideration of all possible angles. Communicated via conference to commanders and staff down to and including battalions on the 3rd of November, it became the point of departure for the preparation and implementation of unit plans. [Page 5]

### THE PREPARATION

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

Reconnaissance of the area of future operations was energetically pushed within the limitations made necessary by security considerations. Artillery positions, engineer equipment

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

The supporting arms and services were equally busy. The Corps Engineer plan was modified where necessary and integrated with that of the 90th Division. Steps were taken to stage forward additional equipment reserves, DUKWS and accessory supplies to meet unforeseen contingencies. The problems of signal communications were given careful consideration. In addition to a double tactical net, an engineer and a traffic control net were organized and linked laterally. The laying of wire to and within the forward assembly area was carried out under cover of darkness for several nights prior to the target day. Weighted cable was prepared beforehand to permit bridging of the River gap away from the projected bridges. Realizing the unusual demands which would be placed on radio until such time as adequate bridging could be provided, stocks of batteries were accumulated. At the Divisional level supply agencies were prepared for the movement of necessaries considerably further forward than normal to allow unit echelons to concentrate their efforts forward of regimental dumps. [Page 6]

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

Movement to forward assembly areas was complicated by the great number of units involved, both Division and Corps, (all of whom had to move at night), coupled with the inadequate and tortuous road net. The march table, after close coordination with Corps, was based on the movement of the Division on the nights of D-3-2 and D-2-1. As it developed, the successive postponement of D-Day permitted scheduling of the move over a 3 night period. The artillery displacing on the nights of 5-6 and 6-7 November was completely positioned by daylight 7 November. This move, accomplished without benefit of moon and under incessant

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

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

Prior to midnight, supporting machine guns and mortars and tanks in place for direct fire were positioned to support the crossing from the near bank. Advanced regimental CPs were established on the towns of GAVISSE and CATTENOM. Under the cover of accelerated night harassing fires of the Cavalry, trucks of the supporting engineers moved forward to the boat unloading points. Preparations had been completed. [Page 8]

### THE ASSAULT

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

the rapidly rising stream which had already begun to inundate its banks. The right battalion of each regiment, 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry and 1st Battalion 358th Infantry were somewhat delayed because of their longer and more arduous routes of approach. Meanwhile the reserve battalions scheduled to cross by footbridge had assembled in the town of GAVISSE in the case of the 359th Infantry and CATTENOM in the case of the 358th Infantry.

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

By Dawn the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry's loading elements bypassing MALLING had cut the main lateral road in two places and were on the outskirts of HUNTING; the reserve company was mopping up MALLING. 2nd Battalion on the right was approaching the towns of PETITE HETTANGE and METRICH. 3rd Battalion had initiated crossing in the wake of the 2nd Battalion. In the zone of the 358th Infantry the 3rd Battalion's leading elements passing to the east of FORT KOENIGSMACHER had secured a footing on the ridge just short of their initial objective, while the remainder of the Battalion [Page 9] mopped up the pillboxes adjacent to the riverbank. 1st Battalion had driven C Company halfway through BASSE HAM, while A Company had daringly scaled the heights of FORT KOENIGSMACHER and was involved in a bitter fight on the summit. The 2nd Battalion had begun to cross. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry was moving to CATTENOM with the remainder of the regiment in the vicinity of SENTCICH still prepared to cross in either zone.

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

As the morning wore on the MOSELLE RIVER became the most formidable foe. From its normal width of 350 feet it had been expanded to 400 then 600 then 800 yards -- 2400 feet of swirling treacherous water. And still the rain fell! More and more boats were lost, some by shellfire, but the majority swept downstream and smashed against obstacles or stranded on the muddy fringes of the stream. A support raft was constructed at the GAVISSE site which promptly capsized with its first payload. At the CATTENOM site shell fire destroyed the first five truckloads of bridge equipment and temporarily forced abandonment of operations. Six

battalions of infantry were making excellent progress, but faced the German and his entrenchments and fortifications and armor with naught but their small arms and flesh and their indomitable spirit. Our own tanks and anti-tanks and tank destroyers were desperately needed to support the infantry and bridging was therefor ordered resumed despite all odds.

In the 359th Infantry zone the assault Battalion continued to make excellent progress. The 1st Battalion skillfully handled, had pushed due east and north from HUNTING pushing the enemy before them until they were stopped just short of the high ground which was the regimental objective. One platoon only of A Company had been left to reduce the German pocket at MALLING, while the remainder of that company was dispatched north from HUNTING to block the approach into the Division zone via the road from RETTEL. The 2nd Battalion, after capturing PETITE HETTANGE and METRICH continued to the southeast until halted some 1500 meters from OUDRENNE by extensive minefields. 3rd Battalion (- I Company dispatched to hold METRICH and protect the right flank) moved into the center of the regimental zone seizing KERLING and the high ground to the north thereof where contact was made with the 1st Battalion. The 359th Infantry therefore at the close of the day could plot its disposition, count its hundred plus prisoners and congratulate itself on a job well done. [Page 10]

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

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

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

At midnight, 20 hours after initiation of the assault, Division could look with justifiable pride at the day's accomplishment. It had achieved complete tactical surprise and by dawn had breached the enemy's first line of defense. It had crossed eight infantry battalions despite a

torrential river and the resistance offered by a stubborn foe. Without benefit of armored support it had penetrated to the depth of 3 km, overrunning seven towns and capturing 200 prisoners. It had made the first penetration into a Metz type fort, a fort defended by an entire German Battalion. It had secured the planned initial bridgehead.[Page 11]

### CONSOLIDATION OF THE BRIDGEHEAD

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

At 0630 the 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry moved from its assembly area west of the town of KOENIGSMACHER to seize the METRICH group of fortifications, the initial regimental objective. In the misty morning twilight that Battalion advanced through rear element of the 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry down the road to ELZANGE until abreast of the wooded nose containing the forts. At that point the leading company (I) made a right angle turn and assaulted up the steep slopes. Advancing rapidly, two platoons, in line of skirmishers and employing marching fires, routed the German defenders from their hilltop entrenchments, killing 60 and capturing or dispersing the remainder. By 0800 the Battalion had overrun the west half of the METRICH GROUP. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had initiated an assault on the eastern METRICH forts from the direction of METRICH. F Company moved across the open ground without opposition halfway to the objective. A few hundred yards further however, it was caught by tremendous heavy cross machinegun fire from the concrete fortifications which no amount of artillery fire was able to neutralize. With this thrust effectively stopped the Battalion Commander gradually withdrew F Company to its starting point and pushed E and G Companies south from KOENIGSMACHER down to join 3rd Battalion on the right portion of the objective. 3rd Battalion moved to the left (east), mopped up the remaining forts of the group and both battalions squared away for the continuation of the attack.

On the right of the Division zone the advance of the 358th Infantry was bitterly contested. 3rd Battalion on the regimental left, after repelling counterattacks on both flanks, advanced 500 yards against stubborn resistance and consolidated its positions [Page 12] on the initial objective. 2nd Battalion, attempting to swing onto the right flank of the 3rd Battalion was badly cut by flanking fire from the emplacements on the south side of FORT KOENIGSMACHER. After relief of its blocking mission on the right flank by elements of the Regimental Security and I and R platoons, C Company joined the remainder of its Battalion on the northern portion of FORT

KOENIGSMACHER. Continued prosecution of the assault on the forts required explosives in quantity and since supplied by boat across the river was impracticable due to the current and the accuracy of the enemy's fire on the crossing sites, other means had to be provided. Disregarding the enemy's flak a convoy of five liaison planes, heavily laden with C2 winged their way across the river and dropped the explosive into the hands of the 1st Battalion. Thus reinforced, the Battalion continued the attack, blowing open and securing a lodgement in two tunnel entrances. There they maintained themselves throughout the day, undaunted by the murderous hail of mortar and artillery fire which German defenders, completely underground, were able to call down on their own positions.

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

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

At dark the long supply trek started. Small boat traffic presented even greater navigational hazards than during the preceding night. Starting from the streets of CATTENOM and GAVISSE boat crews groped their way across the water covered fields. Time and again boats smashed into submerged fence posts and sank. Fence wires and tangled hedges fouled propellers rendering motorboats helpless.[Page 13]

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

In 0200 hrs on the morning of the 11th the MALLING bridge was completed, but the odds were still against the 90th, for the water on the causeway approach was now at a death of 58

inches and the bridge was consequently unusable by any vehicles, wheeled or tracked, in the Division.

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

At midmorning all three battalions of the 359th Infantry lunged ahead. 1st Battalion on the extreme left, which had maintained itself against heavy enemy pressure for the preceding two days, attacked with companies abreast. A Company drove north and after a six hour stiff fight seized and blocked the main crossroads one kilometer southeast of RETTEL, firming the left flank of the Division. B and C Companies secured the commanding ground north and south of KOENGISBERG FARM. K and I Companies attacked southeast towards KERLING against heavy fire. Determined to avenge its loss of the previous day the battalions succeeded in reaching the road junction west of town with I Company and Hill 287 to the north with K. L Company was moved to the left and abreast of K Company, gaining contact with the 1st Battalion. 2nd Battalion advanced E and F Companies southeast along the two roads leading to OUDRENNE [Page 14] through dense minefields while holding G Company as a block in depth along the KERLING-PETITE HETTANGE road. The regiment now controlled its portion of the bridgehead objective with the exception of the towns of KERLING and OUDRENNE.

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

blasted passageways. Late in the afternoon the 3rd Battalion spurred by the success in its rear assaulted and took Hill 252 killing or capturing its considerable garrison. 2nd Battalion to its right rear positioned itself for the assault on VALMESTROFF the following morning.

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

At 1800 the river reached its crest and with maddening slowness began to subside at the rate of 3/4 of an inch an hour. It [Page 15] would be dawn before the MALLING bridge could be put into operation and another night must therefore elapse without suitable support for the infantry. Again the arduous task of resupply by assault and motorboat proceeded under the trying conditions which had characterized the past two nights. Across the river carrying parties, particularly in the 357th and 358th zones, struggled forward over five to six kilometers of steep slippery ground, through dense woods and through the enemy fire. Some few vehicles had been crossed during the day by light ferries but basically resupply was a foot problem. Surgical teams operating across the river, working calmly and rapidly, prepared the wounded for the rough boat crossing to the waiting ambulances. With priority going to ammunition, food and medical supplies, no individual roles could be transported nor did the men demand that -- they understood the difficulties and patiently waited for the morrow's attack signal.

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

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

In 0300 hours a German attack in regimental strength with artillery and tank support was launched against the entire line of the 359th Infantry. Against the 1st Battalion what was obviously the holding attack made but little progress, but the main effort directed along the KERLING-PETITE HETTANGE road was pushed with strength and skill. The weight of the assault, striking the right flank of I Company, drove that unit northwest away from the road and lunged ahead to encircle G Company and continued toward PETITE HETTANGE where the I and R Within, Security Platoon, cooks and headquarters personnel were hastily mobilized to block the road junction southwest of town. G Company, completely encircled, formed a tight perimeter defense and with a skillfully adjusted close box barrage covering it on four sides, held

off that portion of the enemy force earmarked to mop up. The fire of all twenty artillery battalions available to the Division were brought into play; a deep draw in front of the 1st Battalion, the town of KERLING, the KERLING-PETITE HETTANGE [Page 16] road and all other approaches were rapidly and heavily hit and hit again. While the 1st the 3rd Battalions stabilized their positions the remainder of the 2nd Battalion on the regimental right, assembled for a counterattack on the flank of the enemy penetration. Just east of the crossroads of PETITE HETTANGE a furious fight was raging with small arms fire reaching the regimental CP. The mixed force at the crossroads held their ground and slowed the German assault. The German SP guns were destroyed but the remainder were circling their position.

Back at the river the receding waters permitted the movement of the tank destroyers, and a company started for the bridge. The first two, earmarked for the three 57th Infantry crossed safely and, diverted into the 359th Infantry, rolled towards PETITE HETTANGE. In the half-light of the early morning they were initially mistaken for German armor and only the prompt action of an unidentified sergeant prevented a bazooka team from destroying them. Before these TDs had rolled to a stop they had destroyed two self-propelled guns and immobilized a third. Thus reinforced, 359th Infantry fought with even greater fury, stopping the Germans and forcing them back. As the Germans retreated toward KERLING the counterattack of the 2nd Battalions struck them squarely on the flank, cutting them to pieces and turning the initially orderly withdrawal to a precipitous route. G Company and I Company further harassed their flanks. Simultaneously the artillery continued its murderous pounding. When the smoke had completely cleared 200 Germans lay dead around the crossroads and in the fields east of PETITE HETTANGE and more bodies littered the attack area and, as it was subsequently discovered, KERLING. 150 Germans were taken prisoner and four tanks in five SP guns destroyed. 359th Infantry was ordered to attack to reestablish all positions. In his night attack, launched by the 35th Regiment of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, the German had penetrated nearly to the bridge site, threatening to cut the bridgehead in two. But the cool courage and fighting spirit of the infantry, the tremendous and accurate artillery support, and the timely arrival of tank destroyers, had stopped and smashed the effort.

After the second Tank destroyer and cleared, a particularly heavy artillery concentration had damaged the treadway bridge puncturing half of the pontoons. With air compressors placed to maintain buoyancy of the punctured floats and in view of the critical need for armor, it was decided to resume operation. Unfortunately, with the third Tank destroyer in midstream the combination of swift current and the additional damage caused by the shrapnel of a near miss, the bridge broke in two and swept 800 yards downstream. Salvage operations immediately got underway and the construction of a tank raft was started. At the same time bridge construction became feasible at the CATTENOM site and work was ordered initiated. The first DUKWS were at this [Page 17] time enroute from Army depots.

In the 357th Infantry zone. 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked at daylight after beating off local, but aggressively executed counterattacks. 1st Battalion, which had been released from its Division reserve status and which had crossed with great difficulty the preceding day, mopped up the bypassed pillboxes and forts in the KOENIGSMACHER Woods and the BILLING GROUP. 3rd Battalion overran BREISTROFF LA PETITE and forged ahead until stopped by a fortified belt halfway up the slope south of that town. With the leading elements pinned by

heavy fire, an heroic machine gunner made his way through the barbed wire and before being killed enfiladed and crippled the enemy first line of defense, permitting the company to continue the advance. 2nd Battalion on the right, able to bypass this resistance, secured the west half of the high ground dominating the town of INGLANGE from the east. At the close of the day 3rd Battalion deeply refusing its left flank because of the situation in the 359th zone, advanced its right company abreast of the 2nd Battalion.

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

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

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

Throughout the early morning hours of 13 November, ferrying operations at the MALLING site and bridge construction at the [page 18] CATTENOM site continued apace with the small boat traffic. By dawn the CATTENOM bridge, constructed from both sides of the river, was two thirds complete. To insure freedom from observed enemy artillery fire elaborate screening measures were prescribed and implemented; in addition to 2 sections of a smoke generator company, which blocked the site proper, 2 battalions of artillery smoked the high ground to the Southwest while a 4.2 chemical mortar company completed the coverage to the southeast. So effectively were these missions accomplished at no time during the day did a break in the smoke occur. At 1000, with the bridge nearly completed, a DUKW clamoring up the far bank was blown skyhigh by a box mine, disclosing an unexpected hazard. The receding waters of the river uncovered a dense minefield squarely astride the bridge site which extended for some distance under the bridge. After first clearing the exposed mines, it became necessary to remove 50 feet of the completed bridge, grope for and detonate those mines still underwater, a task which consumed 5 valuable hours.

The presence of mines in profusion elsewhere in the Division zone was creating a serious problem. Extensive fields were discovered across the entire Division front 2 complete kilometers from the river's edge. One belt, a kilometer in depth lay across the 358th Infantry zone beyond FORT KOENIGSMACHER blocking the road south from both BASSE-HAM and KOENIGSMACHER. Mine sweeping details working on the road from METRIC to

LOUDRENNE uncovered an elaborately placed and camouflaged field containing 12,000 mines in a distance of 15 km along that route. Still another field lay southeast of the METRIC group of fortifications and had already taken a sizable toll in the 357th Infantry.

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

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

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry continued its advance along the ridge. By dark it had captured Hill 262 and with a strong combat patrol [page 19] had developed the enemy resistance in INGLANGE. 2nd Battalion on its right, assaulting and carrying the strong position which had occasioned so much trouble the preceding day, advanced to the high ground midway between VALMESTROFF and DISTROFF. The 1st Battalion refreshed by a day of rest attacked to the southwest and secured the high ground in the strangely named wooded area, LE QUART EN RESERVE. I and R Platoon cleaned out the town of HAUTE HAM.

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

During the night, orders were received that the 10th Armored Division would cross at the THIONVILLE bridge upon its completion, pass through the Division rear and assemble in the left of the 90th Division zone preparatory to the initiation of its attack. Simultaneously one squadron of the 3rd Cavalry Group would cross behind the Division on the CATTENOM bridge to take over its assigned mission. Work continued apace on the new bridge at the MALLING sight, an M2 span suitable for the modify tank treads, which would eventually serve the 10th Armored Division. [Page 20]

## BREAKOUT

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

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

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

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

90th Reconnaissance Troop, with attached light tank company, bridged the gap between the 95th Division bridgehead at THIONVILLE and that of the 90th, firmly linking the two and providing [Page 21] a protracted route for the passage of the 10th Armored Division. Other elements of that force, probing southwest, captured KUNTZIG and linked up with the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry.

By 1500 all but a few miscellaneous vehicles had crossed the river. In 23 hours the 90th Division, complete with attachments and four reinforcing battalions of artillery, had crossed on a single span. At 1530, 3rd Cavalry Squadron initiated movement. Coincidental with the cavalry crossing, the first combat command of the 10th Armored Division passed through THIONVILLE on to the east bank of the MOSELLE and rolled to its assembly area in the vicinity of

KERLING. The merging of cavalry and armored column was skillfully handled by the 90th Division Military Police -- at no time did traffic congestion develop or even tend to arise. During the early evening hours the MALLING bridge site was open for traffic and the remainder of our supporting tanks crossed at that locality.

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

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

Exactly at dawn 15 November the most violent counterblow of the campaign struck the 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry, positioned in and around DISTROFF. Preceded by a fierce artillery preparation two battalions of the 25th Panzer Division drove abreast into the town from the south, while a third in tanks and halftracks, enveloped from the east. The left (west) battalion never reached the town in strength thanks to the annihilating effect of the Division Artillery. But the other two, overrunning outposts, drove a wedge into the town splitting the defending garrison. The regimental reserve was alerted and placed in motion while the 3rd Battalion postponed its attack against INGLANGE to await further developments. In the town the 2nd Battalion, disdainful of odds, fought back with deliberate fury. The tanks, tank destroyers and infantry, stood their ground and, recoiling from the initial blow, exacted a heavy price. A reserve platoon of TDs attempting to roll south across the summit of the barren hilltop north of town came under direct fire from enemy self-propelled guns and suffered one casualty. Masking their movement with smoke the platoon [Page 22] continued to move forward and entered the fray. After four hours of savage fighting the attackers, recognizing the town to be impregnable and accepting failure, gradually withdrew. Behind them they left over 150 dead and wounded, 40 prisoners and the chartered hulks of four tanks, four assault tanks, and 16 halftracks. The artillery which had rendered magnificent support throughout the engagement, covering all routes of approach for a considerable distance, maintaining heavy fire on the withdrawing Germans, completely disorganizing them. When it had become apparent the 2nd Battalion could handle the situation, the 1st Battalion was diverted to the southeast and assembled in the vicinity of the 3rd Battalion preparatory to taking over the left regimental zone of the action the following day.

2nd 3rd Battalions 357th Infantry continued their attack at 0645. In a short-lived but brisk fight the Battalion ploughed through the German defenses and reached the forward slopes overlooking the valley road which ran east to BUDLING. It was at this point that these units, particularly the 3rd Battalion on the left, came under the most excruciating and sustained artillery fire yet experienced in combat. Artillery officers attempting to pinpoint the caliber and source, counted one round per second over considerable periods of time! It was finally determined that the fire was coming from the belt-fed casemated and turreted cannon of the HACKENBERG

fortifications to the left front. Tank destroyers jockeyed into position were ineffective against the concrete and steel emplacements. 8" and 240 mm Howitzers were adjusted from air OPs but failed to diminish the fire. With the fort guns commanding the entire open valley in front of the next objective and because of heavy casualties among the attacking troops further advance was considered in practicable until the guns could be neutralized. Position reconnaissance was immediately initiated for the self-propelled 155 mm rifles available to the Division. In the meantime the 1st Battalion was staged forward to take over the right half of the regimental zone. 2nd Battalion was scheduled to side-slip to the left relieving the 3rd Battalion while that latter unit veered to the southeast to mop up the HACKENBERG fortifications, after the assault had progressed to the initial objective 16 November.

10th Armored Division passed through the 3rd Battalion 359th Infantry in the middle of the morning and that Battalion assembled at KERLING. 2nd Battalion remained in position awaiting such advance of the 10th Armored Division as would cover it. A G Company patrol dispatched to LEMESTROFF (now in zone of the 10th Armored Division) found that town still defended by the enemy. [Page 23]

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

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

On the right flank 90th Reconnaissance Troop, supported now by a platoon each of light tanks and tank destroyers, continued screening and contact mission. During the morning it captured STUCKANGE and, finding its continued progress eastward blocked by dense minefields, swung south along the Division boundary. In a dismounted assault on REINANGE it

took 50 prisoners and began cleaning the heavily mined approaches. On the opposite flank of the Division, 359th Infantry, now completely covered by the advance of the 10th Armored Division, assembled in OUDRENNE as Division reserve.

Teamwork among the several components of the Division developed in five months of hard combat was paying off. The artillery was meeting every demand for fires and anticipating the bulk of the requests. Tanks and tank destroyers rendered close effective support at all times. The Engineers were closely integrated with the infantry in the assault team formations and had the routes open to traffic immediately behind the leading infantry elements. The pressure exerted by the Division on the METZ garrison was making itself felt as evidence came to light of accelerated movement to the east [Page 24] from that town. The north pincers of the Corps was advancing on schedule.

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

1st and 2nd Battalions 357th Infantry attacking against moderate resistance had secured by noon ELZING and the ridge line to the east. 3rd Battalion moved through BUDLING and cleaned out the HACKENBERG fortifications. Inspection indicated that the direct fire of the 155 mm self-propelled guns had demolished the walls and turrets, torn the guns loose from their mountings and had killed all occupants of the turrets and casemates. A small infantry-tank force dispatched south from ELZING developed a brief battle in KEDANGE against 3 enemy tanks which were quickly dispersed. As the 1st Battalion advanced rapidly onto the high ground in the BOIS DU COMTE D'HUNOLSTEIN overlooking HOMBROUG-BUDANGE, 2nd Battalion uncovered an enemy strong point in the town of KLANG. A gap in depth between battalions of thus developing, 3rd Battalion which had completed its mission, was rapidly staged forward and thrown into the gap from the northwest to consolidate the left half of the regimental objective pinching out the 2nd Battalion. In the KLANG action E Company was maneuvered to a position southwest of the town while F Company contained it from the northeast. When supporting tanks arrived from KEDANGE E Company assaulted the town. As the tanks approached, the enemy left his prepared position and fled toward KEMPLICH and in so doing was annihilated by the concentrated fire of F Company north of the road and the reserve company of the 3rd Battalion south of the road.

90th Reconnaissance Troop on the right flank, in a brisk fight, captured VOLSTROFF, moving in on the town from the west and the north. Subsequently it developed considerable resistance at the crossroad west of METZERESCHE. Contact with elements of the 95th

Division was made by a circuitous route for the Troop and their continued westward probing had developed the existence of a continuous mine belt paralleling the river for 3 or 4 km eastward. [Page 25] [Page 26 missing]...

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

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

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

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

At 1100, 90th Reconnaissance Troop advanced south across the Division boundary and make contact with reconnaissance elements of the 735th Tank Battalion, supporting the 5th Division, thus completing the encirclement of METZ which by this time had been half reduced by the 5th and 95th Divisions. 90th Infantry Division's role in the METZ operation was completed. [Page 27]

### THE SUMMARY

The foregoing account, written strictly from an operational standpoint, has concerned itself mainly with the movement of infantry battalions since it is through them alone that the course of an action can be charted. As a consequence, that which has been left unsaid of the actions and acts of some units and individuals has left great gaps in the narrative -- gaps which must be plugged with a miscellany of detail if the narrative is to have full body and life and present a true and comprehensive picture. No mention has been made for example of the company commander who having lost KERLING joined another assault Company, lead it back

and gave his life in the retaking of the town; nor of the Lieutenant who personally placed charges and blew open the first shelter on FORT KOENIGSMACHER; nor of the wiremen who worked unceasingly in bitter cold waste deep water to maintain cross river communications; nor of the forward observers who lying in exposed positions cooling and calmly adjusted the fire which repulsed many a counter attack; nor of the engineer soldiers who groped in the dark to find, disarm and remove the devilish Schu or plastic mine, knowing full well the odds were against survival; nor finally of the individual riflemen -- cold, wet, hungry, tired -- to fall at his leader wherever he led, always under fire, risking his life a hundred times a day, but always moving forward. Omitted also is the sterling work of the fire direction personnel who constantly at their posts fired every mission with great speed and accuracy; and supply people who produced at the desired time and in the desired quantity every requested item it was humanly possible to procure. The citations are innumerable but in final analysis, it was everyone performing his particular task as best he knew how that produced the perfect teamplay.

West of the MERDERET RIVER and in the FORET DE MONT CASTRE, in the bitter fighting which characterized June and July, this 90th Infantry Division had demonstrated its capacity to slug it out and win against the best and most determined soldiers of the Reich. In the rapid encircling maneuver which turned the flank of the German Seventh Army yet had shown its aptitude for bold, daring strokes where flanks and contact were forgotten and the payoff was speed of execution. At the FALAISE GAP it had proved that it could develop and maintain its terrific bunch. But it was the MOSELLE crossing which called upon the Division to display the full extent of its versatility and of courage. It was the MOSELLE crossing, climaxing the proud history of a tried division, which called for the prompt and unerring application of every lesson learned in five months of combat. The demands were met in full measure and the success of the operation, a foregone conclusion to the men of the 90th, thereby insured. [Page 28]

In eleven days and nights of continuous combat the 90th Division won a brilliant victory. Attacking across a major river in the face of strongly manned fortifications which had been months in the making, it had achieved complete tactical surprise and overrunning the first line of defense insured its maintenance on the far bank. In so doing it had succeeded in the triple combination of the night assault, a river crossing and the penetration of a fortified area. Hampered by the worst river conditions in history and despite heavy resistance on all sides it had nonetheless deployed eight battalions in the first 24 hours and had relentlessly driven forward to secure its initial objective. It had assaulted and gained in 60 hours the formidable and offtime called impregnable FORT KOENIGSMACHER with its complete Battalion garrison. It had reduced all MAGINOT fortifications within its zone. Without benefit of armor or antitank support it had seized and consolidated its bridgehead. For four days and four nights it had maintained itself without a bridge and had supplied itself across a mile and a half of swirling treacherous waters. It had withstood three major counterattacks (two in regimental strength, all supported by armor) and numerous lesser ones. Its infantry, with indomitable courage and resolution, despite all handicaps had gained each objective. With a bridge established behind it the Division had lashed out with renewed vigor and advanced beyond expectations. From concrete emplacements, trenches and fortified houses it had taken 2100 prisoners. When the enemy defenses crumbled it was primed for the pursuit -- though it had sustained 2300 casualties in a week of constantly heavy fighting, it still possessed the dash and spirit to advance 21 km to the final objective in the closing hours of the operation. It had captured or destroyed 25 tanks, 15

assault guns, 75 artillery pieces and over 200 vehicles. It had accomplished on schedule is every assigned mission.

VAN FLEET  
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## PART II

### THE DRIVE TO THE SAAR

24-30 November 1944

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

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

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

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

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

21 November 44

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

357th Infantry:

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

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

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

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

### 359th Infantry:

By 2000, regiment was disclosed as follows:

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

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

(c) AT Company outposted in the vicinity of VRY.

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

358th Infantry still in its assembly areas at METZERVISSE, METZERESCHE and LULLANGE, awaiting call from 10th Armored Division. Meanwhile that latter unit, having passed through the 3rd Cavalry Group, was finding going difficult where just previously the cavalry had been making excellent progress. Immediately beyond the relief line, they unexpectedly encountered a switch position of the SEIGFRIED LINE, stretching in a continuous belt from the SAAR River through OBERLEUKEN and TETTINGEN to the MOSELLE. Although lightly held at the outset, the armor's initial hesitation had given to the enemy two precious days to greatly reinforce the defending garrison and the task of penetration became hourly more formidable.

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

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

### 22 November 44

1st Battalion, 357th Infantry was relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry and assembled at HESTROFF closing by 1215. [Page 2]

3rd Battalion, 359th Infantry occupied GUINKIRCHEN and HINCKANGE with one reinforced platoon of L Company each while the remainder of the Battalion displaced to CHARLEVILLE-sous-BOIS.

358th Infantry: Was ordered to attack the following morning to breach the LINE, seizing SINZ and MUNZINGEN and establishing a bridgehead for the armor. Initial assault was planned for the 2nd and 3rd Battalions supported by the entire Division Artillery, with the 1st Battalion prepared to assist either assault unit.

Intelligence estimates showed elements of the 416 German Division to be holding the line generally between NENNING (0204) and MERZIG (2094). The total frontline strength of the Division was estimated at 1000 men, most of whom were in concrete pillboxes. Some were in open emplacements between the pillboxes. It was estimated this line was supported by 4 Battalions of Field Artillery and some 12 cm mortars. Number of enemy tanks was unknown. Shortly before the 358th Infantry's attack the enemy's strength in the TETTINGEN-OVERLEUKEN area was estimated to be around 300 men. But due to the previous activity of the 10th Armored Division in the area, there were already indications of heavy reinforcements arriving in the area.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

The zone assigned to the 90th was delineated on the South by the NIED River as far as NIEDALTDORF thence ran to East to include BUREN and REHLINGEN; on the North, it included HALSTROFF and MONDORF thereafter following the valley to the river. The 357th Infantry and 359th Infantry were earmarked for employment in the right and left zones respectively and so notified. [Page 3]

23 November 44

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

358th Infantry:

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

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

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

24 November 44

357th Infantry:

Leaving behind a covering shell to be relieved by elements of the 95th Division and 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Regiment moved by shuttling at 1030. 1st Battalion assembled at COLMEN, pushing A Company to NEUNKIRCHEN and REMELSDORF. The remainder of the regiment assembled in a column formation with 2nd Battalion vicinity of BIBICHE and 3rd Battalion in vicinity of DAMPONT FARM.

359th Infantry, initiating movement at 0800, sent its 2nd Battalion to outpost a line from FLASTROFF to LE GROSSENWALD WOODS; relief of the Armor in that area was completed by 1600. 1st 3rd Battalions assembled at WALDWEISTROFF and HALSTROFF respectively. The shell left in the old area was relieved late in the day by elements of the 379th Infantry and closed into the regimental assembly area after dark. [Page 4]

90th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered into positions along the NIED to maintain contact between 357th Infantry vicinity FILSTROFF and 379th Infantry initially as CONDE-NORTHEN.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

358th Infantry:

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

On this day, elements of two regiments of the 90th Division were fighting inside Germany for the first time. [Page 5]

#### 25 November 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

##### 359th Infantry:

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

##### 358th Infantry:

At daylight I Company, followed by L Company, attacked and secured TETTINGEN and pushed North to contact K Company, all unaware of K's critical situation. It smashed into the besieging

Germans and, teaming with the remainder of K Company, drove them back to the North edge of BUTZDORF. In the action I took considerable casualties and emerged with the one officer.

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

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

During the night, Corps, appraised of the condition of the regiment after its excruciating three-day fight, directed relief of the 358th Infantry as soon as possible and its return to the 90th Division. The regiment had acquitted itself nobly -- it had captured 500 prisoners, 2 towns and a part of a third and had reduced 26 [Page 6] pillboxes. It had made the deepest penetration into the switch position of the SEIGFRIED to be effected by any unit during the year 1944.

#### 26 November 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

3rd Battalion attacked through the 1st Battalion at 1100 from the direction of SCHWERDORF. I Company, leading, drove a wedge into the heavily defended town of FURWEILER. K Company was moved up on the right of I Company and together these Companies finally reduced the stronghold, taking 107 PWs. I Company then displaced to the East to outpost the Battalion zone, while L Company move forward to the town.

##### 359th Infantry:

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

358th Infantry was relieved during the day by the armored infantry somewhat rearward of the existing frontlines and reassembled in the towns originally occupied. Arrangements were

quickly completed for the movement of the unit to VECKRING BARRACKS the following day for thorough rest and rehabilitation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Throughout the day, forward elements of the Division had been subjected to a sustained pounding by enemy artillery from across the SAAR River, supplemented by SP guns still on the West Bank. While infantry resistance had not yet been particularly strong, rapid forward movement was greatly hampered by the effectiveness of enemy demolitions and minefields which made the attack zone and engineers' nightmare. Meanwhile, on both flanks, adjacent divisions were echeloned to the rear, experiencing similar obstacles and responsible for a wider front. [Page 7]

#### 27 November 44

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

358th Infantry closed VECKRING BARRACKS at 1515.

#### 28 November 44

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

In the past two days the Division had consolidated its gains, firmed its communications and through patrols, obtained an accurate picture of the enemy resistance West of the SAAR River. With the 95th Division coming rapidly on the right rear, it was prepared for an unchecked assault on the SAAR 29 November.

#### 29 November 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

1st Battalion by 0800 had cleared the wooded expanse on the high ground North of HEMMERSDORF. Proceeding into the town of HEMMERSDORF, A Company encountered considerable resistance and it was not until 1700 that the coordinated action of A Company from the Northeast, a Tank Platoon from the North and G Company 379th Infantry (95th Division) from the southwest had cleared the town. With this action completed the remainder of the 1st Battalion assembled in SCHWERDORF preparatory to commitment South of the NIED the following day. [Page 8]

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

#### 359th Infantry:

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

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

#### 30 November 44

#### 357th Infantry:

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

1ST Battalion assembled at NIEDALTDORF at 0600 and crossed to the South bank of the NIED in assault boats. Its organic transportation and supporting tanks and tank destroyers were routed via the BOUZONVILLE bridge. B Company, the leading assault unit, passed through G Company 379th Infantry South of HEMMERSDORF and continued eastward unopposed until the BOIS DE KERPRICH was reached. From this point on the advance to BUREN was marked by heavy enemy artillery and Nebelwerfer fire and gradually increasing Infantry resistance. By dark however, B Company had fought its way well into BUREN. The battle raged throughout

the night with undiminished fury. A and C Companies staged forward but held in column to protect the Battalions' extended right flank. [Page 9]

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

359th Infantry:

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

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