

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

e. Division CP was located at DONCOURT.

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

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

1 OCTOBER 44

358th Infantry, previously on a 1 hour alert status for employment in the XII Corps zone, was released to the Division.

359th Infantry effected redistribution, thinning the frontline garrison and replacing the 3rd Battalion with elements of the 1st.

Patrolling, training in assault tactics and rehabilitation continue. [Page 1]

2 OCTOBER 44

No special activity on the Division front.

357th Infantry, assigned the mission of capturing the high ground Northwest of MAIZIERES-

LES-METZ, as a prelude to the assault of the town itself, made necessary redispositions to gather sufficient force to launch the attack.

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

3 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry: attacked at 0430 with C and G Companies and gained the North portion of a huge slag pile Northwest of MAIZIERES against slight resistance. By midday they had driven South to control the entire heights and dominate enemy positions in the town. Enemy reaction manifested itself in an attack in company strength against G Company at 2100. The fight continued until midnight when the Boche withdrew with heavy losses.

358 Infantry:

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

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

4 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry consolidated positions newly won by the 2nd Battalion and continued plans for the assault on MAIZIERES.

358 Infantry:

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

Training and rehabilitation continued in all units. [Page 2]

5 OCTOBER 44

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

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

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

6 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry:

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

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

7 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry:

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

- a. F Company from position on the South edge of the slag pile to support the attack by fire; thereafter to relieve E Company in northern half of town;
- b. E Company from forward assembly position between BOIS DE L'ABBE and the slag pile to attack to East, South of the slag pile to cut the town in two; block to the South and mop up the northern half;
- c. G Company to follow E Company E to RR tracks; then turn South and capture factory area. [Page 3]

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

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

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

8 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry:

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

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

9-10 OCTOBER 44

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

10 October was highlighted by the brief visit of the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General George C Marshall accompanied by Lt. General Patton, CG Third Army and Lt. General Handy, Chief of OPD. [Page 4]

11 OCTOBER 44

The type of resistance encountered by the 2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry in MAIZIERES-LES-METZ made it clear that a complete Battalion of that Regiment would have to be freed of other missions to prosecute a general assault. Such a redistribution however was impracticable in view of the extended frontage of the Regiment. Consequently the decision was made to temporarily attach the 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry to the 357th Infantry to relieve the 3rd Battalion of the latter unit. Simultaneously the 359th Infantry was directed to relieve prior to 2130, I Company of the 358th Infantry then occupying GRAVELOTTE.

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

Two important directives received from XX Corps at 2115:

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

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

Squadron.

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

12 OCTOBER 44

All planned dispositions were accomplished without incident on this day; 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry completed relief 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry at 0900; 2nd Battalion 358th Infantry moved from GORZE to assembly area vicinity VIONVILLE closing 1730; 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry relieved 2nd at MAIZIERES at 2050, the latter assembling at ROMBAS for a brief period of rehabilitation and rest. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry relieved 3rd Cavalry Squadron on line at 2225. 3rd Cavalry Squadron assembled for the night in rear of the 1st Battalion preparatory to movement into the Zone of Task Force Polk. [Page 5]

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

13-17 OCTOBER 44

357th Infantry:

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

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

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

358th Infantry:

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

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

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

357th Sector:

1 Company, 609th TD Battalion)	
2 Platoons, 607th TD Battalion	) Under 343rd FA Battalion
2 Platoons, 712th Tk Battalion	)
4 88's (German)	Under 282nd FA Battalion
3 105's (German)	Under 345th FA Battalion
1 4.2" Cml Mortar Company	Under 357th Infantry [Page 6]

358th Sector:

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

359th Sector:

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

Task Force Sundt:

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

Task Force Polk:

807th TD Battalion

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

18 OCTOBER 44

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

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

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

19-22 OCTOBER 44

During this period, thanks to favorable weather, close support fighter-bombers stepped up attacks against installations in the METZ area, striking, at Division request, CPs, supply points, communications and troop concentrations. [Page 7]

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

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

23-25 OCTOBER 44

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

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

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

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

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

Infantry, less its left company.

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

MAIZIERES, although, worthless itself, possessed importance in that it sat squarely astride the most direct and best protected route to METZ; moreover its capture would threaten German supply routes into the north forts. The joint occupation of the town by Americans and Germans for a prolonged period was disappointing to higher headquarters, XX Corps secured an ammunition allowance which it promptly earmarked for the 90th Division for the reduction of that town. Division promptly issued instructions to 357th Infantry to capture the town at the earliest practicable moment, while containing enemy in remainder of Zone with minimum force. Target date for completion of operation was set at 2 November. [Page 8]

26 OCTOBER 44

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 OCTOBER 44

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

1st Platoon, A Troop, 43rd Cavalry Squadron, was attacked in MANOM by numerically superior

Boche combat patrol which hit the outpost at the Southeast corner of town. Counterattack plans had contemplated such an occurrence and were rapidly put into execution. The Boches, disorganized by entanglements with our minefields, were shattered by the weight of the platoon's counterattack and withdrew, leaving an abundance of weapons and equipment.[Page 9]

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

28 OCTOBER 44

Maintaining pressure from the North, Company C attacked that 1530 and captured a block of buildings East of the City Hall in MAIZIERES. Our own Artillery had nearly destroyed the houses and the heavy German mortar and artillery fires which fell immediately after our troops moved in, completed the job. Cellars being nonexistent, the area became untenable and the Company withdrew but retained control by fire. With the enemy thus diverted B, I and L Companies moved into the factory area in preparation for the following morning's assault. Meanwhile the Corps Artillery poured 8" and 240mm Howitzer shells into the City Hall creating widespread damage. The attack plans had been well-developed and firmly coordinated; any reasonable breaks would assure success.

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

29 OCTOBER 44

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

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

B and I Companies thrust straight through the town by 1600 had reached the East edge, cutting the German garrison in two. L Company and A Company (which had been swung around from the North to follow B Company) widened the breach to the South and North respectively. The

Boches remaining alive, disorganized by the onslaught, began surrendering in groups. By dark the 357th Infantry controlled all the town except the City Hall area [Page 10] a demolished section of the South end and a block of buildings which C Company had captured and relinquished the preceding day.

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

30 OCTOBER 44

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

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

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

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

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

d. Artillery Support. -- Excellent throughout the attack. During the afternoon 29 October, 8" and 240mm howitzers adjusted on and destroyed the City Hall (75 yards from the frontline troops). Remarkable Shooting! Moreover the Artillery destroyed practically all booby traps and mines. Finally it denied to the enemy that freedom of movement which prevented him from shifting troops to meet our strength.

During the late afternoon, 1st Battalion took over all of MAIZIERES, releasing the 3rd Battalion for movement to ROMBAS and Regimental Reserve. [Page 11]

31 OCTOBER 44

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

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

* * * * *

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

VAN FLEET
COMMANDING
STILWELL
G-3
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