

## INTRODUCTION

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

Dispositions of the Division were as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2 SEPTEMBER 44

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

The entire Third Army was immobilized as the increasing gasoline shortage assumed critical proportions. Preliminary arrangements were made at the Army level for the air supply of gasoline. 315th Engineer Battalion initiated and completed the repair work necessary on the REIMS Airport to permit its utilization by transport planes. [Page 1]

### 3 SEPTEMBER 44

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

### 4 SEPTEMBER 44

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

### 5 SEPTEMBER 44

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

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

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

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

### 6 SEPTEMBER 44

The Division made its shuttle move to the bridgehead area in remarkably expeditious style in spite of absence of road priorities. All elements had closed by dark. [Page 2]

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

The specific missions assigned the 90th Division were:

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

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

#### 7 SEPTEMBER 44

In the early hours of the morning a German reconnaissance in force moving South from LONGUYON drove elements of the 90th Reconnaissance Troop out of the town of SPINCOURT and presented a serious threat to the left flank of the Division. 358th Infantry was ordered to retake the town in the morning at daylight, utilizing not to exceed 1 Battalion. Meanwhile Div Arty concentrated its fires on the town. At daylight and 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed reconnaissance elements into SPINCOURT and reported that the enemy had withdrawn to the North after receiving heavy Artillery fire.

The Division attack order called for the capture of the high ground West of the MOSELLE River as a preliminary operation to the capture of THIONVILLE and the forcing of a bridgehead across the MOSELLE River. [Page 3]

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

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

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

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

Division CP moved just prior to dark to an exposed position West of the town of MAIRY. [Page 4]

#### 8 SEPTEMBER 44

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

The route of the 106th took them through the middle of the Division CP area. A considerable portion of the column had cleared the crossroad South of the Division CP when they were discovered and fired upon by local security elements about 0300. The Germans returned the fire promptly and vigorously and caused casualties within the Signal Company and Division Artillery Headquarters. But confused by the presence of our troops in this unexpected quarter, the column halted and consequently lost contact with those elements who had already moved through. A company of the 712th Tank Battalion was moved into the Division CP area to be in a position to counter any action on the part of the Boche and/or to destroy them in place at first light. The 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry was alerted and started in motion South to assemble immediately West of the Division CP and attack North in conjunction with the 1st Battalion 358th Infantry to destroy the hostile force. 1st Battalion 358th Infantry was directed to move from MAIRY West

to Division Artillery CP, relieve pressure there, and attack to the North on the right of and in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry. At first light the Division Headquarters displaced to HIGNY, opening a temporary CP at that location in conjunction with 359th Infantry. Division Artillery Headquarters, which had borne the brunt of the enemy night fire and was almost completely encircled by German troops, coolly evacuated itself on foot southward to the CP of the 358th Infantry.

#### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion marched South through LANDRES dropping off AT and TD elements at that location and reached Division CP shortly after daylight, where it teamed with 712th Tank Battalion and made preparations to reverse its direction and attack generally North to the town of BONVILLERS. It launched its attack at noon and by midafternoon had reached BONVILLERS. The elements left at LANDRES intercepted and destroyed 7 enemy tanks, a part of a force which had cleared South through the CP area and turned West only to find themselves at daybreak cut off from the rest of their unit. They had attempted to break back out to AUDUN only to meet annihilation at LANDRES. Other elements of their particular group were destroyed by Corps TDs further to the West. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion was moved a short distance South thus cutting the LANDRES-AUDUN Road midway between those two towns. It also intercepted and destroyed Panzer elements. The situation in the 359th Infantry area had clarified sufficiently by midafternoon so that regiment could be reoriented to the Northeast in preparation for an advance on AUDUN. [Page 5]

#### 358th Infantry:

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

#### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion had been started East from Hill 313 toward NEUFCHEF but had been recalled by Division in the light of developments in other sectors of the Division area. Shortly after its reestablishment on Hill 313, a German battalion supported by tanks, attacked West toward the unoccupied hill immediately North of the 1st Battalion position. Unobserved, and withholding their fire until the German advance had exposed the flank of the entire column, all weapons took up a murderous fire of artillery, mortar, MG and flat trajectory cannon which in a space of a very few minutes annihilated the force. Those few remaining were quickly taken prisoner. The 2nd Battalion committing all three companies, surrounded BRIEY on three sides and forced the surrender of the German garrison of upwards of 300 men. 3rd Battalion remained at AVRIL connecting up the two flank Battalions.

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

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

#### 9 SEPTEMBER 44

The anticipated counterattack did not materialize and by midmorning the Division was prepared for the resumption of the attack. [Page 6]

#### 359th Infantry:

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

#### 358th Infantry:

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

#### 357th Infantry:

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

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

## 10 SEPTEMBER 44

### 357th Infantry:

1st Battalion advanced with slight opposition North to HAYANGE, a sizable industrial town in the gorge between Division Objectives 2 and 3. The leading company cleared the town and was well up on the side slopes of the eminence to the North when a German column reentered the town from the East. This force was liquidated after a considerable fight. Shortly before dark the company on the high ground North of the town was counterattacked and driven back. 2nd Battalion, relieved at BRIEY by Company A 315th Engineer Battalion, moved eastward through the thick country and occupied the regimental objective. 3rd Battalion remained at AVRIL.

[Page 7]

358th Infantry closed in the FONTOY area as a preliminary to further advance. 1st Battalion moved Northeast and occupied ANGEVILLERS preparatory to the attack on the high ground Northwest of THIONVILLE. 3rd Battalion advanced in midafternoon and occupied ALGRANGE, a town in the gorge Northwest of and adjacent to HAYANGE. From that point it launched an assault up precipitous slopes to secure a foothold on the dominating plateau which marked the West extremity of Division Objective Number 2. Its advance was fiercely resisted by the Boche entrenched high up on the slopes. The fight was joined at close quarters, but the Germans held firm and at darkness the Battalion was still short of its objective. During the night the Boche withdrew.

359th Infantry attacked Northeast at 0700 and by 1400 had secured all assigned objectives. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions advanced in a coordinated effort and secured AUMETZ and the high ground to the North and West thereof. The Maginot defenses in this area were unmanned. 1st Battalion following in their wake completed mop up of the large forest West of AUDUN. Motor patrols from the Regiment entered the town of LONGVY within LUXEMBOURG border and made fleeting contact with elements of V Corps.

90th Reconnaissance Troop and the 43rd Cavalry Squadron were enabled by the slackening German resistance to push their reconnaissance several miles beyond leading infantry elements, in the northern sector of the Division Zone.

## 11 SEPTEMBER 44

### 357th Infantry:

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

### 358th Infantry:

3rd Battalion resumed attack at daylight and had seized the high ground East of VOLKRANGE

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

359th Infantry displaced East from AUMETZ to occupy a new reserve position Northeast of ANGEVILLERS and in conjunction with the 90th Reconnaissance Troop pushed reconnaissance eastward to GAVISSE. [Page 8]

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

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

#### 12 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

##### 358th Infantry:

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

359th Infantry displaced again to the vicinity of HETTANGE GRANDE prepared for rapid



movement of the East to seize that key terrain feature, BASSE KONTZ, which dominated the area for miles around. [Page 9]

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

#### 13 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 358th Infantry:

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

359th Infantry dispatched 3rd Battalion to FORET DE CATTENOM with the mission of patrolling to the river between MALLING and KIESELRAU, making an obvious display of force in that area.

90th Reconnaissance Troop and 43rd Cavalry Squadron continued reconnaissance toward the river line East and North of the 359th Infantry. Although enemy elements prevented their actual approach to the river they were able to establish a series of OPs which kept both banks of the river under continuous surveillance.

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

#### 14 SEPTEMBER 44

The revised mission of the Division read as follows:

- a. Contain THIONVILLE and vicinity with minimum force, vigorously patrolling line of the MOSELLE River within zone in conjunction with 43rd Cavalry Squadron. [Page 10]
- b. Relieve the 7th Armored Division within the zone by 142000B. Priority of relief to 2nd Infantry Regiment (at this time attached to 7th Armored Division). Relief in the form of coordinated attack to prevent disruption of position. Main effort on the South.

c. Attack 150715B to destroy enemy within zone West of the MOSELLE River.

358th Infantry, (less 3rd Battalion) reinforced by the 344th FA Battalion, 1 Battery of 345th FA Battalion, Company A 607th TD Battalion, 1 Light and 1 Medium Platoon 712th Tank Battalion and Company B 315th Engineer Battalion, was left in the original zone of action with the mission of holding the river line from UCKANGE North to GARCHE inclusive. The 43rd Cavalry Squadron took over the zone from GARCHE North and East to the Division boundary maintaining contact with the right elements of the 5th Armored Division.

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

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

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

Divisions CP open West of BATILLY. [Page 11]

#### 15 SEPTEMBER 44

357th Infantry launched an attack on the right of its zone with the 1st Battalion in the assault. Advancing through thick woods and under conditions of poor visibility, the Battalion initially seized a quarry at the little town of MARENGO, to protect its right flank and then changed direction toward FORT AMANVILLERS. By late afternoon it had advanced well up the North slopes of the Hill mass, on the summit of which lay the fort, but increasing enemy resistance brought the advance to a halt. The 2nd Battalion on the left of the 1st Battalion improved its positions and reconnoitered for a jump-off line.

358th Infantry was frustrated in every attempt to get patrols across the river. As an interesting sidelight, on this day 10 fortress guns in the casements Northwest of THIONVILLE were put into action by our troops and began interdiction of the approaches to THIONVILLE from the East. 3rd Battalion was moved by motor to an assembly area at ST MARIE AUX CHENES as Division Reserve, and I Company dispatched to AMNEVILLE to assist the 90th Reconnaissance Troop covering the river line.

359th Infantry attacked on the right of its zone with the 2nd Battalion, which had for its mission the capture of JEANNE D'ARC. Vicious fighting developed in the draw Northeast of GRAVELOTTE and progress was extremely slow. I Company was dispatched at noon to clean the woods North of the 2nd Battalion to protect its rear.

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

#### 16 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

##### 359th Infantry:

2nd Battalion continued its attack to clean out the draw East of GRAVELOTTE. The Boche were exceedingly well dug-in and progress was slow and costly. By nightfall the enemy had been liquidated as far South as the road East from GRAVELOTTE, but the price had been high, as a continual hail of mortar and artillery fire fell on this Battalion. [Page 12]

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

South of METZ, in the bridgehead area, the 5th Infantry and 7th Armored Divisions were making negligible progress in the face of stout resistance and sporadic enemy counterattacks.

#### 17 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

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

##### 359th Infantry:

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

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

places presented a serious problem.

#### 18 SEPTEMBER 44

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

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

#### 19 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 357th Infantry:

2nd Battalion was reoriented to face East, taking over responsibility for the area previously held by I Company 358th Infantry and the 90th Reconnaissance Troop. One company [Page 13] was dispatched to RICHEMONT to clean up enemy patrols which had entered that town the previous night. This mission was accomplished without incident and contact secured with E Company 358th Infantry at UCKANGE. 3rd Battalion sustained a counterattack on its right flank and 1000, but repulsed it without loss of ground.

##### 358th Infantry:

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

##### 359th Infantry:

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

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

#### 20 SEPTEMBER 44

Work continued on the Division portion of "OPERATION THUNDERBOLT". Aside from a small flurry on the right flank of the 359th Infantry, artillery exchanges and [constant?] patrol

activity, the day passed without incident.

#### 21 SEPTEMBER 44

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

#### 22 SEPTEMBER 44

The stalemate continued on the entire Corps front.

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

Preliminary plans were made for the relief of 358th Infantry by Task Force Polk (attached to the 83rd Division). [Page 14]

#### 23 SEPTEMBER 44

No change in the general situation.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to 357th Infantry to fill a gap between the 1st and 2nd Battalions. 1st Battalion 357th Infantry seized and outposted the town of HARANGE SILVANGE. An attempted advance of the 1st Battalion 359th Infantry southward on the right flank of the regiment was stopped abruptly by enemy resistance.

#### 24 SEPTEMBER 44

357th Infantry captured the towns of BRONVAUX and TERNEL. A French detachment operating in conjunction with the 1st Battalion seized the high ground in the BOIS de L'ABBE in the left center of the Regimental zone.

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

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

#### 25 SEPTEMBER 44

359th Infantry shifted the 3rd Battalion to GRAVELOTTE in preparation for the limited objective attack planned for the 26th.

357th and 358th Infantry stepped up patrol activity along the river.

Division CP moved to DONCOURT.

#### 26 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 359th Infantry:

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

358th Infantry was relieved, under cover of darkness, by the 3rd Cavalry Group reinforced (Task Force Polk) and by E Company 357th Infantry which latter unit occupied UCKANGE. [Page 15]

#### 27 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 359th Infantry:

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

358th Infantry moved by motor and marching from the THIONVILLE area to assembly area in the vicinity of ST MARCEL and VIONVILLE, with the 1st Battalion replacing the 3rd Battalion at ST MARIE AUX CHENES as Division Reserve. L Company was dispatched to GRAVELOTTE under regimental control to relieve F Company 359th Infantry. Division ordered full reconnaissance of the proposed zone of action South of GRAVELOTTE now occupied by the 3rd Cavalry Squadron.

#### 28 SEPTEMBER 44

##### 359th Infantry:

At daybreak a counterattack was launched against the 3rd Battalion from the West and from the South. It was repulsed with heavy enemy losses. One hour later and enemy force of approximately 200 men moved West against the 1st Battalion from the direction of MOSCOU FARME. Withholding their fire until the enemy had advanced within 20 yards the 1st Battalion practically annihilated this group; those remaining alive were either taken prisoners or fled in great disorder back to the FARME. There they were halted, regrouped and reinforced and

promptly caught in the massed fires of 5 Battalions of artillery. For the remainder of the day the enemy was quiet in this sector. Shortly after dark he again attacked I Company on the extreme right of the regiment, but made no impression on our defenses.

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

At a unit Commanders' conference, called by the Commanding General, plans were discussed for the thinning out of our position areas in order that more men might be made available for assault training and for rehabilitation. Construction was initiated on shelters for front-line troops with the primary objective of providing for them a drying and warming place. [Page 16]

#### 29 SEPTEMBER 44

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

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

#### 30 SEPTEMBER 44

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

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

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

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