

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

First U.S. Army

1-30 September 1944

Prepared by G-3



OPERATIONS OF FIRST U.S. ARMY  
1 - 30 September 1944

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INTRODUCTION

Operations of the First U.S. Army during the month of September were those of an interior unit on an exploitation and development mission. It is true that the direction of advance at one time cut across the line of retreat of German forces east of the lower reaches of the SEINE River, as will be seen in a more detailed narrative which follows. However, in general, the period was one of direct advance in a clear cut zone of action. It will be recalled that the First U.S. Army, fanned out from a corps rear boundary reaching from CHARTRES to DREUX, crossed the SEINE on a front extending from MELUN to MANTES-GASSICOURT, and then directed its efforts almost exactly northeast with a right boundary between the First Army and the Third Army on its right, running from MELUN irregularly above RHEIMS to RETHEL and thence east, and a left boundary between the First Army and the British Second Army on the left running northeast from MANTES-GASSICOURT past ALBERT and BAPRUME to TOURNAI and thence east above MONS.

As the month opened the First U.S. Army had reached a line between BRETEUIL and MONTDIDIER on the left and RETHEL on the right except of course for some bulges where advances had not been uniform. Shortly thereafter there was a change of direction and a broadening of front so that the army right boundary then ran almost due east from SPOISSONS, and the north boundary ran slightly north of east from TOURNAI to the neighborhood of DUSSELDORF. Within this corridor the First U.S. Army exploited the disorganization of the hostile forces and pressed against a withdrawing enemy. This enemy began to resist our progress with some stubbornness about the middle of the month as our forces approached and finally reached the eastern frontiers of BELGIUM and FRANCE.

As an intelligence statement prepared on 31 August had indicated, it appeared that the German Seventh Army, which had resisted our attacks in NORMANDY, had been practically completely demolished or scattered. To our north facing the British were those portions of the German Fifteenth Army which had not been sent as reinforcements



to the German Seventh Army. To our right front were portions of the German First Army which had defended the west coast of FRANCE from the LOIRE River to the Spanish border. It had yielded two divisions to the debacle of the Seventh Army and had been charged with blocking advances of the Third U.S. Army between CHARTRES and ORLEANS, at which it was not successful. It appeared to be operating south of the OISE River. With this German First Army south of the OISE and with the bulk of the German Fifteenth Army to our north, in front of the British and defending the channel ports, it appeared that the drive of the First U.S. Army in process at the commencement of the month, which had already reached northeast with its right on RHEIMS and its left considerably refused to the northwest, might be striking into an open gap. After the capitulation of PARIS, the rapid advance of the First U.S. Army in the last days of August seemed to indicate that unusual opportunities were offered for continuation of the exploitation. Intelligent study conceived that the most favorable action of which the enemy might be capable would be "to withdraw as rapidly as possible for a final stand to the west wall under the concept of fortress GERMANY." It was said in the intelligence statement drawn up on 31 August that "the enemy must appreciate that the largest factors operating in his favor are the logistic problems confronting the allied armies in Europe and the approach of autumn rains with its mud and poor flying weather," and that "it is, therefore, probable that he will delay upon favorable terrain." To the enemy rear were the ARDENNES and ARGONNE Forests, the heights of the WOEVRE, the VOSGES Mountains, and the very considerably obstacle of the MEUSE River.

Our actions must be marked by speed and vigor. If supply agencies in the rear could support rapid forward movement in strength, it might be possible to break through the substantial enemy defensive lines before he could reinforce them. Our efforts to do this would be handicapped to some extent by the fact that we would be operating on a very broad front, a front far broader than normal for an army and a front so broad as to thin our forward fighting strength, even if it could be strongly supplied with munitions for



fighting and gasoline for mobility. The preceding paragraphs give a general picture of what was at first conceived to be the prospective shape of our operations for the greater part of the month to come. The question would be whether the First U.S. Army could advance fast enough to render the enemy incapable of making a stand along the west wall and to force him to make his first serious stand on the RHINE. However, substantial German forces to the north and northeast appeared to create what might be either an opportunity for a large capture or, if they were still well organized, a serious danger on our left rear. These alternative opportunities in that direction caused a postponement of our progress directly east.

On 1 September there was a very important change in direction as soon as it became apparent that the rapid armored advance on our left, our refused left center, and the speedy advance of the V and VII Corps on our right was creating a front with a wide and deep re-entrant south of ST QUENTIN, northeast beyond LAON. It appeared that there were substantial German forces immediately to the north, and there was a chance of creating another pocket. We aimed at our enemy, not at terrain.

The boundary between the V and VII Corps had run northeast from SOISSONS and LAON. On 1 September it was changed to run directly north from LAON. With its left on LAON, the 1st Division moved rapidly and aggressively almost due north. On its right, the 9th Division in the same VII Corps also proceeded north, but soon had to face some of its units east to protect our now exposed right flank. This change in the V--VII Corps boundary, combined with only slight alteration of the XIX--V Corps boundary, resulted in a pattern which would eventually practically pinch out V Corps. In fact that corps was given an "assembly line" running across its front from CAMBRAI to LE CATEAU.

It appears at this time that operations of the First U.S. Army for the month of September can therefore be logically divided into the following major periods: (1) The thrust to the north, including

the reduction of the MONS pocket, (2) the change of direction to the east, including the creation of a new zone of action for the V Corps and movement of its elements into that zone and also including the rapid progress to obtain bridgeheads across the MEUSE River, (3) the eastward drive beyond the line of the MEUSE until serious resistance was met, (4) development of the enemy defenses, (5) preparation for an effort into GERMANY.



THE DRIVE TO THE NORTH



It will be recalled that as the month opened the First U.S. Army, in a zone of action approximately northeast, had its front line extending irregularly from RETHEL on the right through MONT-CORNET, MARLE, LAON, BOISSONS, COMPIEGNE, and PRECY-SUR-OISE toward BEAUVAIS, with elements advanced along the left boundary beyond ST JUST in the direction of MONTDIDIER not far from the British 6th Parachute Division near BRETEUIL and the British 11th Armored Division at AMIENS. Since the most interesting activities of the next three days took place on our left flank, progress of the action will for those three days be described from left to right.

On 1 September the XIX Corps on our left continued pushing forward Combat Command "A" of the 2d Armored Division. This division had previously passed through the 79th Division, but on a broadened front moved to the left front and was driving in a zone to the left of the 79th rather than taking over the 79th Division's zone. Its Combat Command "A" reached BAPAUME by noon, and by night, driving sharply to the northeast against light resistance, stood with some of its elements at BAPAUME and others far in advance, 10,000 yards beyond, northwest of CAMBRAI along the ESCHAULT River, followed closely by a RCT of the 30th Division which was at AISZECOURT LE HAUT northeast of PERRONE with successive units at ROSIERES and FLAUCOURT southwest of PERRONE. In the zone of the V Corps the 5th Armored Division led the advance followed by a RCT of the 4th Infantry Division by noon approaching CHAUNY beyond NOYON and by night having its Combat Command "A" at AUTREVILLE near CHAUNY and its Combat Command "B" following in rear occupying COMPIEGNE and completing the clearing of the FORET DELAIGUE, north of the AISNE River.

The same day VII Corps commenced its northward thrust with its new west boundary running slightly east of north from LAON up to and through the west edge of the FORET DE MORMAL. Although both its 1st and 9th Divisions were to move northwards, the latter would likewise be charged with the defense of the right flank of the corps and it was to be expected that a great deal of its strength would

be kept in rear to protect that flank. Consequently, the major effort of the corps might be expected to be exerted by the veteran 1st Division with a long time reputation for fast movement and hard hitting. The zone of action of this division was approximately 11 miles wide. Its left boundary was the corps left boundary already described. Its right boundary ran almost due north from SIBONNE and then practically parallel to and only slightly to the east of the highway north VERVINS--LA CAPELLE--AVESNES, and MAUSEUGE. By noon Combat Command "B" of the 3rd Armored Division was through VERVINS and by night on an east and west line through LA CAPELLE with 1st Division elements at VOYENNE (southwest of MARLE) and OHIVRES (northwest of SIBONNE). On its right Combat Command "A" of the 3rd Armored Division with the 39th and 60th Infantry Regiments of the 9th Division was extended along the AUBE River from ETRÉAUFONT (south of LA CAPELLE) extending east to AUBENTON.

On 2 September in the zone of the XIX Corps, Combat Command "A" of the 2d Armored Division reached the line DOUAI--CAMBRAI and by 1330 had crossed the Belgian border and taken its objective near RONGY, followed by Combat Command "B". By night the 30th Division, coming up from the rear, was on its objective at CAMBRAI. In the zone of the V Corps, elements of the 5th Armored Division proceeded as far as the line CAMBRAI--MONTAY (above LE GATEAU) and with a ROT of the 4th Division at LANDRECIES by the southern tip of the FORET DE MORMAL. This corps had had only light resistance. It had been ordered to stop on this line and was already assembling units of the 28th Division preparatory to a move to a new zone of action to the right and to the east of the zone of the VII Corps. This was the pseudo-pinpoint. This line was to form the bottom base of a pocket.

In the zone of the VII Corps, on the same day, Combat Command "B" of the 3rd Armored Division reached by noon across the SAMBRE to VIEUX--MESNIL (west of MAUSEUGE) with the 1st Division about 8 miles in rear at AVESNES and by night these units were well forward and just west and southwest of MONS, these two units being generally extended north and





2. south on the east side of the FORET DE MORMAL. In the meanwhile on the right of the VII Corps the 9th Division had entered BELGIUM at 1107 through the wooded area to the northwest of HIRSON and proceeded to the vicinity of CHARLEROI so that by night this division had matched the advance of the 1st Division on its left. Its units were disposed approximately as follows: Combat Command "A" of the 2d Armored Division was at MARPENT along the SAMBRE River; the 60th Infantry was on the south edge of CHARLEROI and in the neighborhood of HAM-SUR-HEURE south thereof; the 39th and 47th Infantry Regiments were concentrated in an area which may be described by the triangle BEAUMONT--SOLRE--TRELON. The 9th Division had thus driven north without extending its right flank so that Combat Command "A" and its 60th Infantry Regiment formed the top of a large triangle whose sides reached south to an approximate point in the neighborhood of the forest of TRELON. To the right and east of this large triangle was the gap in the enemy's strength of which mention has previously been made. This area was covered by elements of the 4th Cavalry Group.

On 3 September there was a general clean-up and readjustment period. The XIX Corps on the left continued its rapid advance to the northeast and in the afternoon prepared to turn toward the east. Its 79th and 30th Divisions were assembled south of the British boundary at TOURNAI. The 2d Armored Division had its Combat Command "A" near TOURNAI, and the 113th Cavalry Group was near DOUR (southwest of MONS), both of these covering the west of the MONS--BAVAI pocket, and its Combat Command "B" at MARCHIENNES in the general assembly area. In the zone of the V Corps, Combat Command "B" of the 5th Armored Division was at ESCAUPONT (north of VALENCIENNES) and other elements of the division were assembled and preparing to move to the new zone.

On the same day, 3 September, in the zone of the VII Corps, there was greater activity. The 3rd Armored Division occupied MONS. Its Combat Command "A" was at that town and at HARMIGNIES (southeast of MONS) and Combat Command "B" to the north and west of MONS. The



1st Division generally to the south of MONS, attacked west against the pocket of fleeing enemy who had come in at a converging angle. Advance units of the 1st Division were generally extended on a line south from MONS to close the area between that town, BAVAI, and FORET DE NORNAL, where large numbers of confused enemy units had been checked and disorganized.

On the extreme right of the VII Corps the 9th Division began to direct its attention to the east turning itself momentarily in that direction. Behind the screen of the 4th Cavalry Group who by noon had their elements on a line CHARLEVILLE (MEZIERES)--ROCROI, and in the afternoon extended their reconnaissance from PRIMAY to DONCHERY (west of SEDAN), the 9th Division moved east on the MEUSE River in its new zone. Its 47th Infantry was still in the vicinity of BEAUMONT. Its 39th Infantry was well concentrated considerably south of CHARLEROI in the area FRAIRE--PHILIPPEVILLE--FLORENNES, and its 60th Infantry advancing east of the TRELON area through the neighborhood of BAIYAS, CHIMAY, and MARIEMBOURG was up to NEUVILLE by night, just below the 39th Infantry. As a consequence, with one regiment in rear (the 47th at BEAUMONT), the division was well concentrated in the center of its zone behind the screen of the 4th Cavalry Group and only approximately ten miles from its next important phase line to the east, the course of the MEUSE River north and south of DINANT.

The actions of the preceding three days should perhaps be briefly summarized, in order to give a clear picture of this maneuver and its success. It had been known that some elements of the German Seventh Army, picked troops who had been allowed to escape first across the SEINE, and elements of other forces which had been on the channel coast were possibly in a position in which the northward drive by the VII Corps might cut them off and force them against the sea. They, however, attempted to escape eastward through MONS. The advance of the 1st Division toward that city, in depth, interposed a barrier which neither the enemy nor ourselves at first recognized. Pressed, although only lightly by armored and cavalry



elements of the XIX Corps, they were moving rapidly northeast in great strength toward MONS. The heads of some of their columns ran into the rear of units of the 3rd Armored Division in the neighborhood of that city. Infantry of the 1st Division, pushing forward on a mopping up mission, hurried to support the endangered armored units. They found themselves flank to flank from the forest of MORMEL through BAVAI to MONS against a large mass of thousands of the enemy, estimated to be between 20,000 to 30,000. This mass was blocked on the south by the V Corps position from CAMBRAI to LANDRECIENES and on the west by the XIX Corps from the vicinity of VALENCIENNES. This enemy had, however, been in the mood for flight and not for fight. They gravitated east against the VII Corps. Mixed columns of men and vehicles of all types were <sup>h.</sup> ~~broken~~ into utter confusion by finding our troops between them and GERMANY striking them from the side. There was heavy fire poured upon them. Their casualties were enormous; they surrendered in small groups and in groups running into the hundreds. Without coordination or effective leadership in this confused situation, they were wiped off the tactical strength of the German Army. Our prison camps were crowded.

The fact that these units might have been available to man the defenses of GERMANY itself opened up to us a great opportunity. Those defenses would be just so much less strongly held if we could reach them before other units might be brought into them. This circumstance caused a quick readjustment in the army plan to be made even before the captures southwest of MONS were entirely complete. It will have been noted that the 9th Division was already developed, although not yet deployed, ready for the movement east.



### THE CHANGE OF DIRECTION TO THE EAST

On 3 September, although elements of many German units attempting to withdraw from the lower reaches of the right bank of the SEINE River were still in the zone of action of the XIX Corps east and west of MONS and considerably north of CHARLEROI and NAMUR, V Corps was given a new zone of action on the right paralleling the First--Third Army boundary, which ran from north of RHEIMS to just south of SEDAN. The new left boundary of V Corps ran from LAON generally northeast and then east so as to cross the MEUSE River just south of GIVET, about half-way between NAMUR and SEDAN. The front in the difficult country included in this new zone of action was held by broadly extended units of the 4th Cavalry Group pending the arrival of the 4th and 28th Infantry Divisions and 5th Armored Division of V Corps. This shift of zone of action for the V Corps resulted for most of the rest of the month in the advance of the First U.S. Army practically directly east with three corps abreast from north to south (left to right) in the following order: XIX Corps, VII Corps, and V Corps.

Left (or northern) boundaries of these corps were to be as follows:

XIX Corps (with British) south of TOURNAI--south of BRUSSELS--thence generally east above MAASTRICHT and towards DUSSELDORF.

VII Corps (with XIX Corps) MONS well north of CHARLEROI, NAMUR, and HUY, just above LIEGE, thence just north of AACHEN and east to a point midway between COLOGNE and BONN.

V Corps (with VII Corps) LAON, GIVET to a point on the RHINE well south of BONN.

On 4 September the First U.S. Army had made considerable progress with the resumption of pressure against disorganized and withdrawing enemy forces to the east, while still standing against and capturing prisoners in what was called the MONS pocket. By night the situation was about as follows. In the new zone of the V Corps, reconnaissance elements of the 102d Cavalry Group had units in CHARLEVILLE (by MEZIERES) and advanced reconnaissance into BELGIUM in the valley of the SEMOY (SEMOIS) River as far as MARAIS and north thereof at LOUETTE-ST PIERRE near the important road junction of





GEDINNE. To the rear of these units between ROCROI and CHARLEVILLE the 5th Armored Division and the 4th Infantry Division were closing into assembly areas and preparing to cross the MEUSE, over which two foot bridges and one treadway bridge had already been completed, and the 28th Division (also in V Corps) had closed in the vicinity of LE THOUR, west of RETHEL and north of RUISIMB. In the zone of the VII Corps, our front line formed a right angle with the city of NAMUR at the point of the angle. The right face extended south along the MEUSE and the left face generally west from NAMUR. On the east face two regiments of the 9th Division were on the west bank of the MEUSE between GIVET and DINANT, temporarily delayed by blown bridges. To the north of these elements the 2d Battalion of the 47th Infantry of the 9th Division, far in front, entered NAMUR at the bend of the MEUSE at 2300 hours, with the 1st Battalion of this regiment echeloned to the right rear covering the space between it and the other infantry units of the 9th Division. To the west of this point, the 3rd Armored Division had cleared the northern outskirts of CHARLEROI and extended almost to FLEURUS. Portions of the 3rd Armored Division were south of MONS, where they stood to support the 1st Division which, extending nearly south from that city, faced west instead of east against the remnants of the MONS pocket reducing enemy attempts to break through to the east. The 1st Division during this day captured 5000 prisoners of war in this pocket from the increasingly disorganized enemy withdrawal which, moving east and northeast constantly, ran into our forces which had been moving north.

In the zone of the XIX Corps most of our troops, excepting the 115th Cavalry Group which pressed against the MONS pocket from the west, were occupying assembly areas and preparing to advance to the east against disorganized enemy forces paralleling the Anglo-American boundary which from TOURNAI ran only slightly north of east from TOURNAI. The 30th and 79th Infantry Divisions and Combat Command "A" of the 2d Armored Division were south of TOURNAI and Combat Command "B" of the 2d Armored Division south of DENAIN. A British Guards Division on this date captured BRUSSELS, so that the front line here was deeply refused from BRUSSELS back of MONS and

forward through CHARLEROI, principally in the zone of action of the XIX Corps.

From this situation, onward for a few days, operations can perhaps best be described by giving the activities of our three different corps for the period separately.

#### V Corps



In the zone of the V Corps, on our right, adjacent to the advance of the Third Army, activities consisted principally at first in bringing up the main strength of the corps in order to support reconnaissance elements which had crossed the MEUSE River through the heavily forested country. By the morning of 5 September, the 5th Armored Division had gotten a Combat Command across that river east of MONTHERME (about 9 miles north of CHARLEVILLE), with its other Combat Commands, the same afternoon, pressing eastward on a broad front south of that city and the river. On 6 September, the 12th Infantry of the 4th Division swept across the river south of VIREAUX and continued driving east with units of the 102d Cavalry Group on its right, covering the area south as far as the SEMOIS River. Meanwhile, Combat Commands of the 5th Armored Division had reached beyond and to the southeast of CHARLEVILLE as far as GERNELLE, LA MORGNE, and VENDRESSE, with reconnaissance elements at PONT MAUGIS (south of SEDAN) and YONGY. All of this action had taken place before noon. By evening progress had been so rapid as almost to double these advances along most of the front, so that the 4th Division had then reached, on a broad front, the line held by the reconnaissance elements on 4 September, practically from MARAIS through LOUETTE-ST PIERRE and thence through PELERNE toward GIVET, with a leading battalion as far east as BIEVRE. The same day, the 5th Armored Division occupied SEDAN, held two Combat Commands in the vicinity of that city and SINGLY, southwest thereof, and pushed its Combat Command "A" to the front astride the CHIERS River, covered by elements of the 102d Cavalry Group covering a zone of almost 12 miles astride the CHIERS and MEUSE Rivers, almost as far as DOUZY. This advance had been made against scattered

and spotty resistance, front lines were fluid, and resistance was generally light except at specific roadblocks.

On 7 September, still in the zone of the V Corps, the 4th Division continued to advance on both flanks with leading elements reaching MAISSIN and PALISEUL, north of the Semois River. Meanwhile, to the south, one regiment of the 28th Division, which was now up and inserted in the advance on the right of the 4th Division, reached STE.GEOILE, important road and rail junction on that river; and another regiment of that division crossed the CHIERS to MATTON and BLAGNY, having passed through advance elements of the 5th Armored Division which were now being recollected and reassembled. On 8 September the corps began to encounter more stubborn resistance from the enemy, consisting of strongpoints, roadblocks, and defense favorable in terrain features, although it was apparent that he was still conducting a delaying action in this zone and not establishing a static defense. Although at particular places his resistance encountered was very determined, the corps now stood with its two infantry divisions abreast in the front line, and the 5th Armored Division moved through the 28th Division to attack east toward ARLON and LONGVY. On 8 September, at this stage, the 4th Division had its left flank units well advanced into the ARDENNES Region, very nearly on a line from JEMELLE to ST HUBERT, with its right flank bent back from ST HUBERT to a position about 3 miles east and south of PALISEUL. On the right of the corps zone, the 28th Division was advancing with both flanks somewhat refused, its left flank being on the Semois River at HERBEAUMONT, its center approaching JAMOIGNE, and its right at MARGUT at the junction of the CHIERS and MARCHE Rivers.

#### VII Corps

During the course of these operations the situation in the VII Corps, now become center corps while moving to the east, had been considerably more difficult. On 4 September, it will be recalled, the 1st Division and part of the 3rd Armored Division had been involved in the reduction of the MONS pocket, while the 9th Division had been pushing toward the east and had reached the line

of the MEUSE, not only in its own zone of action somewhat south of NAMUR, but also taking NAMUR itself, with a battalion extended far to the left. In the rear of this battalion at NAMUR, a portion of the 3rd Armored Division had captured CHARLEROI and had elements to the northeast of that city. In the rear on 4 September, while the 1st Division continued to reduce enemy attempts to escape to the east in the area south of MONS and took 5000 prisoners that day, the 3rd Armored Division continued to move toward NAMUR. On 5 September the capture of prisoners in the FORET DE MORMAL area southwest of MONS had brought the total captured to 15,000 during the preceding 48 hours, with an estimated 10,000 still in the woods. Also on 5 September portions of the 39th Infantry and the 60th Infantry established themselves across the MEUSE, north and south of DINANT. On 6 September, the 1st Division left the 16th Infantry to continue mopping up and moved eastwards, north and south of CHARLEROI. The 3rd Armored Division moved on HUY with Combat Commands astride the MEUSE River and actually occupied HUY with a leading part of one of its elements. In the zone of action of the 9th Division, bridgeheads were well established across the MEUSE although the enemy there engaged that unit with heavy infantry weapons and also employed tanks, self-propelled weapons, nebelwerfer, and flame throwers in an attempt to prevent the crossing, south of DINANT.

A battalion of the 39th Infantry which had crossed the MEUSE River north of DINANT advanced upon that town from the north, and on 7 September the 9th Division completed clearing the enemy from DINANT after constructing a bridge across the MEUSE. Moderate enemy resistance checked the 39th Infantry from moving farther to the east, although not before it had progressed more than 6000 yards beyond that city. Also on 7 September, reconnaissance elements of the 3rd Armored Division reached LIEGE before noon, Combat Command "A" advancing to that city to meet only moderate resistance before night, while Combat Command "B" passed beyond and to the east as far as ROMSEE, north of the FORT DE CHAUDFONTAINE,



and the 1st Division was closing into assembly areas close in rear of these advancing elements.

On 8 September, the VII Corps mopped up the final enemy resistance in LIEGE, the 83rd Reconnaissance Battalion stood astride the road toward HERVE and BATTICE, and the 47th Infantry (attached to the 3rd Armored Division) covered the area to the southeast in the neighborhood of BEAUFAYS. On the left or north flank, the 1st Division continued to advance with negligible contact with the enemy, two of its regiments being in the vicinity of HUY and one approximately ten miles north thereof at FAIMES, just below WAREMME on the corps boundary. Farther south, on the right flank of the corps, the 9th Division continued to advance against determined and well-organized defenses conducted by panzer grenadiers of "Der Fuehrer" Regiment against the expansion of our bridgehead south of HOUX and north of DINANT. This resistance was not, however, enough to prevent extremely rapid forward movement by the 9th Division. By the night of 8 September, numerous penetrations had forced <sup>the enemy</sup> to abandon any attempt at a defensive line and to resort to delay by setting up at roadblocks and communication centers strong points of infantry groups supported by light tanks or armored cars. In spite of these efforts on the part of the hostile forces, the advance of the 9th Division had reached points at some places ten and in others twenty miles east of the crossing of the MEUSE. The forward elements of this division and reconnaissance units in advance of them were substantially east of the road south from the neighborhood of NEUVILLE EN CONDROZ (southwest of LIEGE) to MARGE, with its right front largely covered by elements of the 4th Cavalry Group.

#### XIX Corps

During this same extended period, while the V Corps on the right and the VII Corps in the center were pushing forward to form a line which ran from south to north up to and slightly in front of LIEGE, the XIX Corps on the northern flank was engaging in rapid forward movements. It will be recalled that the left boundary of



the XIX Corps, which was also the boundary between the First U.S. Army and the British on our left, had run generally northeast from BEUVAIS to TOURNAI, where it turned and thereafter ran generally toward the east. In pushing up northeast in this direction after the XIX Corps had encountered the enemy units fleeing from the British zone and had assisted in enclosing them in the operation which pinched out the V Corps, it happened that the XIX Corps found itself momentarily in a position with practically no enemy on its front in its zone of action. Enemy in this neighborhood withdrawing in disorder were beating themselves into capture against the fixed situation of the 1st Division to the east. In these circumstances XIX Corps employed the day of 4 September in assembling its 30th and 79th Infantry Divisions and its 2d Armored Division. The 79th Division was being released to the Third Army, the 30th Division and Combat Command "A" of the 2d Armored Division were on the British boundary just south of TOURNAI, and Combat Command "B" of the 2d Armored Division, against the VII Corps boundary, was just south of DENAIN (between VALENCIENNES and CAMBRAI). As has already been mentioned, the British Guards on this day had captured BRUSSELS. There was a long avenue forward between BRUSSELS and CHARLEROI for the XIX Corps to sweep up. On 5 September, reconnaissance elements from this corps had moved so rapidly that they were five or six miles east of MONS before noontime, and by night the 113th Cavalry Group's forward elements were beyond BRUSSELS on a line which ran from the neighborhood of the FORET DE SOIGNES past the vicinity of WAVRE to GEMBLOUX generally southeastwards from BRUSSELS, already somewhat ahead of the British whose contact units were on the left rear near HAL. The following day, 6 September, the 113th Cavalry Group continued rapidly towards the east as also did the 2d Armored Division. By noon its forward units were on a line LOUVAIN--EGHEZEE, nearly ten miles ahead of the previous night's line, with further more forward units at JODOIGNE. By night they were on a line which ran generally north and south through TIRLEMONT and NAMUR except for an irregular re-entrant at JODOIGNE, where some resistance was met. During the same day, the



three major elements of the 2d Armored Division were closing up fast. By noon of 7 September they were at NIVELLES south of BRUSSELS, near SOIGNIES, and at OBOURG just northeast of MONS, and by night the 2d Armored Division was at WAVRE with Combat Command "A" slightly in rear, slightly north of SOIGNIES. Enemy resistance began to stiffen in this zone of action. Across the entire front of the XIX Corps his infantry dug in at crossroads and at towns and fought delaying actions with anti-tank guns and some tanks, resisting with a special stubbornness at JODOIGNE. This resistance, however, was only momentary for the 113th Cavalry Group forged ahead nearly 30 miles, reached the ALBERT Canal at a point 2 1/2 miles east of HASSELT, and thence in an irregular line bent back through ST TROND and forward near WAREMME on the VII Corps boundary. At the same time, the 30th Division was pushed up toward the front from TOURNAI to a position just southwest of WAVRE in rear of the 2d Armored Division. On 8 September the advance of the 113th Cavalry Group, leading the forward surge of the XIX Corps, continued rapidly so that by noon units were 7,000 yards from MAASTRICHT and by night close in and patrolling the ALBERT Canal to the south. The 2d Armored Division had followed closely in the wake of this advance and had elements slightly northeast of ST TROND, while elements of the 113th Cavalry Group were near GRAND AXHE and GRANVILLE, close by the corps boundary and near rear elements of the 1st Division in the VII Corps zone west of LIEGE at the important road junction of NOVILLE. The power of the XIX Corps was well up and delaying action and blowing of bridges across the ALBERT Canal by the enemy could not stop it from future exercise of its power.

We may take it that the 8th of September marks the end of the operation for the change of direction toward the east and complete readjustment for the efforts in the new direction. From the neighborhood of LIEGE south almost in a direct line the VII and V Corps were well advanced in their zones and providing adequate coverages during the forward movement on their parts of the broad front. Their forward elements were well advanced beyond SEDAN on the south and LIEGE to the north. That the XIX Corps was not yet completely up,

does not destroy the correctness of this general principle. For although the 2d Armored Division and 30th Division were somewhat in rear, the 113th Cavalry Group leading the movement of this corps was well out in front, and by the next day was in touch with the line of the ALBERT Canal which runs almost directly north from LIEGE to the British boundary.

Future efforts would be to drive in the three corps against the German frontier in order to develop what strength the enemy might have there and what weaknesses he may not have been able to repair. The next four days were devoted to this drive east.



THE DRIVE TO THE EAST

XIX Corps



On 9 September the XIX Corps devoted most of its energies to closing up for the stroke across the water obstacles to its front. The 2d Armored Division, during the previous night, had assumed positions at KERMPF and BEURS near HASSELT and ST TROND respectively, astride the diagonal road which runs between those two larger towns. It was planned to have them advance at 1300 hours 9 September, when gasoline could be secured. The 30th Division in rear was forward of JODOIGNE at noon and by night concentrated at HEX, MOMALLE, and REMICOURT southwest of TONGRES and only about a dozen miles from the MEUSE River. In the morning of the same day, the 113th Cavalry Group entered HOLLAND near MAASTRICHT and established patrols along the ALBERT Canal, where all bridges were found blown and crossing sites strongly defended. By night these cavalrymen were patrolling the west bank of the MEUSE River from HERSTAL north of LIEGE on the corps boundary across the entire front of from 25 to 30 miles to EYSAEN on the British boundary and had elements in MAASTRICHT itself. On 10 September the cavalry maintained its patrols, and the 2d Armored Division remained in its positions between ST TROND and HASSELT, except that it was reported that Combat Command "A" had moved forward as far as EBEN (south of EBEN EMAEL). In the meantime, the 30th Division advanced northeast on a front of approximately six miles with its left on the road between TONGRES and MAASTRICHT and occupied HACCOURT and FORT EBEN EMAEL.

On 11 September the XIX Corps made its stream crossings. Units of the 113th Cavalry Group passed over the MEUSE on the right flank near LIEGE and moved north along the east bank of the river in the morning until by night they occupied a line from south of VISE west of the BATTICE Road down to and somewhat below the corps boundary. The same morning the 3rd Battalion of the 119th Infantry (30th Division) established a small bridgehead over the ALBERT Canal and the MEUSE River about two miles south of VISE and constructed a bridge, and that evening had two battalions across and advanced in rear of



the cavalry east and northeast on the line VISE--DALHEM. The 2d Armored Division and the 82d Reconnaissance Battalion patrolled from north of HASSELT along the British boundary to and along the MEUSE, covering the left flank of the corps whose main effort it now appeared was developing on the right of its zone of action to envelop the MAASTRICHT neighborhood from the south.

By noon of 12 September, the corps had established its crossing. Its left was still protected from HASSELT to MAASTRICHT by cavalry patrols. The 1st Battalion of the 117th Infantry (30th Division) entered HOLLAND west of MEBON headed north from VISE, and the 119th Infantry on the south was near MORTHOUX with a road between these two towns defining the advanced bridgehead. By night this bridgehead had been extended against enemy rear guard action so that, in the zone of the XIX Corps, it reached from STE GERTRUID to a point approximately a mile east of TERBORST and may be said to have been parallel to and approximately two miles south of the road out of MAASTRICHT toward GULPEN. These units were well up on high ground moving north. The center, the left front, and the left boundary of the corps were still covered by mobile and armored units.

VII Corps

On 9 September in the zone of action of the VII Corps the enemy attempted to establish a defense line which numerous penetrations forced him to abandon. He then attempted to delay by setting up at roadblocks and communication centers strong points of infantry groups supported by light tanks or armored cars. East from LIEGE the operations of the VII Corps developed generally into a thrust by the 1st Division on the high and relatively open ground along the LIEGE--HERVE--BATTICE--AACHEN Road; a drive by the 3rd Armored Division astride the valley of the VESDRE River over terrain which was hilly and torturous; and an attempt by the 9th Division to move over the more open but still somewhat broken ground south of that river through and northeast from THEUX. By noon of 9 September, Combat Command "B" of the 3rd Armored Division, with the 47th Infantry,



had reached LIMBOURG but not in strength, although the division itself was approaching VERVIERS against scattered resistance, coming with two columns well north of the VESDRE River reaching a point about two miles from VERVIERS and with Combat Command "B" south of the river approaching PEPINSTER and THEUX. The 1st Division on the left had relieved the 3rd Armored Division at LIEGE and moved on HERVE. The 9th Division on the right met stiffening resistance but followed about four miles to the right rear of Combat Command "B" and by night was just west of LOUVEIGNE. On the extreme right on a front of approximately 20 kilometers the 4th Cavalry Group maintained contact with the V Corps and had its patrol line generally from HAMOIR to HAMPTEAU near the corps boundary.

On 10 September the 1st Division advanced 10,000 yards against enemy rear guard action to reach BATTICE (east of HERVE), with one regiment on its left rear cutting the road between TIGNEE and FT D'EVEGNEE. The 3rd Armored Division definitely occupied VERVIERS by noon. The enemy had defended roadblocks in our line of advance and defended approaches to numerous blown bridges with 20mm and anti-tank fire. The 9th Division south of the VESDRE River against scattered resistance had moved to a point 2,000 yards east of THEUX but had sent its 60th Infantry off on a temporary mission to cut a highway to the south of the river crossing at AYWAILLE in rear of the 4th Cavalry Group patrols. On the same day the 4th Cavalry Group advanced its patrols, especially on the right, so that they extended from MALMEDY in the mountainous country on the right to the HOIGUE River south of THEUX.

On 11 September the 60th Infantry returned to the area of its division, the 4th Cavalry Group secured the front from the line MALMEDY nearly to TOLLEUR on the HOIGUE River south of VERVIERS. The 9th Division had its 47th Infantry beyond VERVIERS and its other elements near and in rear of THEUX. The 3rd Armored Division occupied EUPEN with one Combat Command and was driving northward with two others. The 1st Division on the left was disposed on an arc with a radius of about six miles, north and approximately that



distance from VERVIERS with its left elements above BOLLAND (northwest of HERVE) with its center at the AUBEL road junction and its right slightly over a kilometer north of WELKENRAEDT almost on line with the 3rd Armored units above LUPEN. The 3rd Armored Division thus was the head of a wedge pointed northeast in the left center of the corps zone of action.

On the morning of 12 September, the 3rd Armored Division definitely occupied EUPEN and extended patrols to the southeast. By 1405 hours its leading elements crossed the border into GERMANY. Combat Command "A" moving northeast encountered dragon's tooth obstacles west of WALHEIM and prepared to reduce them. Combat Command "B" penetrated more nearly directly east and over the frontier to the north of ROTGEN. On the left the 1st Division advanced northeast against strong enemy resistance including tanks, infantry, mines, and roadblocks. Its 18th Infantry occupied GEMMENICH. Its 16th Infantry crossed the border at 1515 hours and advanced well into the AACHENER BRADT FOREST. The 9th Division concentrated in the vicinity of VERVIERS, after mopping up with two battalions of the 39th Infantry, in the rear zone of the 4th Cavalry Group. On the right the 4th Cavalry Group pushed forward to a line from WEYWERTZ to ST VITH, approximately 7 miles east and ten miles southeast of MALMEDY respectively.

#### V Corps

On 9 September, on a front of nearly 40 miles, V Corps registered substantial advances of approximately 13 miles on all parts of its zone of action, moving against numerous roadblocks and some artillery fire. On the corps left, the 4th Division (close against the boundary and not far remote from the 4th Cavalry Group covering the right flank of the VII Corps) had its 12th Infantry along the DURTHE River between RENDEUX and LAROCHE. About 8 miles directly south, its 8th Infantry had reached the vicinity of HERBAIMONT on the road between CHAMPLON<sup>and</sup> BASTOGNE, and its 22d Infantry, refused to the rear, was at RECOGNE about a mile west of LIBRIMONT. The 28th Division was passed through by the 5th Armored



HEADQUARTERS  
2d INFORMATION AND HISTORICAL SERVICE

Official history of V Corps lists first entrance of its troops, and as far as is known, of any Allied troops, on German soil as being at 1805 hours on 11 September 1944.

A five-man reconnaissance patrol from the 85th Cav Rcn Sq, with 5th Armd Div, went 400 yards across the German border to reconnoiter Siegfried Line positions. Patrol was led by S/Sgt Holzinger. Other members of the patrol were T/5 Coy Locke, Cpl. Ralph Diven, PFC McNeil and Lt. Delille (said to be the first Frenchman to cross the German border).

Interview with the Exec.O of the 85th Cav Rcn Sq by M/Sgt Forrest Pogue, 2d Info & Hist Sv, sets the time that the patrol crossed the border at 1630 hours on 11 Sept, 1944.



R.F.S.

R.F.S.

4<sup>th</sup> Div - 14 Sept 44 Siegfried Line

Crossed at (L-015847) at 1300 hrs.  
[patrol entered Germany Sept. 12-2021 hrs]

28<sup>th</sup> Div - 15 Sept 44

At 1800 hrs, took hill 553 (934756)

a/a great

St Col. Gayle



Dist. & Dir

Capt Chappelle.

HEADQUARTERS  
2d INFORMATION AND HISTORICAL SERVICE

28th Inf Div      Unit

Co B (reinf), 109th Inf Regt, crossed bridge east of LEILER, LUXEMBOURG, (858713) at 2030 hours on 11 September 1944.

Co I, 110th Inf Regt. reinf with MG plat, 81 mm mortar plat, AT plat and Cn Cò Plat, crossed German border vicinity of STUPBACH at 2330 hours 11 September 1944 and went to HARSPELT.

4th Inf Div      Unit

Dismounted patrols of the 22d Inf Regt crossed the border of Germany at 2345 hours 11 September 1944.

5th Armd Div

According to S-3 Journal of 81st Tk Bn, one plat of light tanks from Co D, 81st Tk Bn, entered Germany on 11 September 1944. An interview by M/Sgt Pogue with Capt Charles P. DeBevoise, S-2 of 81st Tk Bn, this patrol crossed the German border at 1800 hours on 11 September 44.





Division but advanced with its left regiment to NEUFCHATEAU and its right regiment forward to HABAY-LE-NEUVE. The 5th Armored Division had its Combat Command "R" at ETALLE in the valley of the BEMDIS less than 5 miles from the right flank of the 28th Division and its Combat Command "A" in LUXEMBOURG at PETANGE north-east of LONGWY while its Combat Command "B" remained in reserve south of BEDAN near REMILLY. On 10 September the advance on the left of the V Corps sector was not so rapid, the 4th Division, however, reaching the general line SAMREE--MABAMPRE--BASTOGNE for a maximum progress of approximately 8 miles. On its right the major pressures and advances of the corps were on the southern flank where the 5th Armored Division reached to and east of the city of LUXEMBOURG with Combat Command "B" north of that city at STEINSEL and its Combat Command "R" across the ALZETTE River to ANGELSBERG farther to the north, and just west of HEFFINGEN. These units were followed by the fast moving elements of the 28th Division which by night had occupied HABEROY, GUIRCH, and MECHER-DUNKRODT on a front of over 20 miles running north and south through ARLON above LONGWY. Although these units were still more than a dozen miles in rear of the elements of the 5th Armored Division, their advance had covered more than that distance that day against scattered enemy opposition occupying isolated strong points.

On 11 September the V Corps continued its rapid advance, principally on the right flank, although the 4th Division on the left advanced to the AYWAILLE--BASTOGNE Road with its main strength by noon and patrols were reported to have entered GERMANY at 1045 that morning. In the center the 110th Infantry of the 28th Division reached the LUXEMBURG border by the cities of LONGVILLY and OBERWAMPACH, and the 109th Infantry reached the CLERP River to the east thereof. On the right the 5th Armored Division applied continuing pressure, so that its CCR was in the vicinity of DIEKIRCH, its COB across the ALZETTE River about 6 miles north of LUXEMBOURG, and its COA on the high ground about 4 miles northeast of that city.

*with company units of these regiments later reported to have entered Germany at 1930 and 2030 respectively*

*Lake's report indicates that a platoon of the 31st Tank Co. and a patrol of the 85th Cav Hq. entered Germany at 1900 and 1805 respectively.*

*85* *SA* *patrol 1805*



On 12 September the 102d Cavalry Group continued patrolling the corps left flank and made contact with the VII Corps whose 4th Cavalry Group extended to ST VITH. The 4th Division assembled near MULDINGE, and the 28th Division (less 112th Infantry) assembled near BINSFELD (west of WEISWAMPACH) by noon after rapid advances from the previous day's positions. Patrols of the 112th Infantry were across the German border near HARSPELT, where they reported no resistance. That afternoon the main strength of these two divisions crossed the border and established themselves on high ground east of the stream line from STEINEBRUCH (above WINTERSEPELT) south to the neighborhood of DANNEN (between the border and DALEIDEN). Farther south along the same stream line CCB of the 5th Armored Division was well across near STALZEMBOURG above VIANDEN, CCR stood about 3 miles southeast of DIEKIRCH, and CCA on a three-mile front had moved northeast to a point nearly 12 miles from LUXEMBOURG toward TRIER and not far northwest of GREVENMACHER, with the 112th Infantry of the 28th Division attached and assembled in support a few miles in rear at ERNGSTER.

Except for this forward thrust of the armored units about 10 miles in advance, the V Corps now stood on a line in its zone of action which may be described as running practically north and south from ST VITH (in VII Corps zone) to the city of LUXEMBOURG (near the Third Army boundary). As the border was crossed, although there were apparent weaknesses in some spots, resistance seemed to have stiffened. The corps was covering a front of slightly more than 50 miles. Its main strength was in the armor on its right flank and the closely knit units of the 4th Division on its left flank. The country in front of it was wooded, hilly, and broken by many stream lines.

In the zone of the VII Corps, as well as in that of the V Corps, the German frontier had been crossed, and it appeared that contact had been made with the SIEGFRIED Line itself, if that line had not actually been breached at some spots. The First Army was now disposed with units in five countries: FRANCE, BELGIUM, HOLLAND, LUXEMBURG, and GERMANY. It is not incorrect, however, to say that

12 September marks the approximate end of the sustained drive of the First U.S. Army to the east. Only in the zone of the XIX Corps had the frontier not yet been reached. That corps had faced difficult water obstacles in the line of the ALBERT Canal and MEUSE River which ran north through a broad flat valley above LIEGE with distant and dominating hills to the east, affording excellent artillery observation of any advance which we might make. The XIX Corps was, of course, taking rapid steps to bring its front forward even though the British were not up in strength on the left. The principal of these steps was the crossing of the MEUSE south of VISE and an envelopment of the MAASTRICHT locality. Except in this zone advances for many days were nowhere near as marked as they had been during the previous period.



DEVELOPMENT OF ENEMY DEFENSES



By 11 September it had begun to be apparent that the enemy was acting with speed to repair a difficult and dangerous situation. His losses in the MONS--LE CATEAU pocket and his action in trying to defend the LUXEMBOURG--METZ--NANCY sector left a gap in his lines between TRIER and MAASTRICHT. To fill this gap he used police and line of communications, signal, and other service units. Toward this gap the widely extended First U.S. Army drove. The penetration of the first belt of the west wall south of AACHEN by the VII Corps made it appear by 15 September that a gap had been found in his formidable defenses. The generally low estimates of the state of the fortifications in the wall between AACHEN and TRIER, previously indicated in Engineer and G-2 reports, were sustained. The enemy had tried to fill the gap with reinforcements which consisted of extremely young troops and L. of C. units. The former fought hard and with spirit; the latter were uninspired. Both were untrained, without combat experience, and of low combat efficiency. Our front was excessively long; our supply was difficult and distant, and the principal problem was whether or not we would be able to exert the pressure to drive in the enemy's scratch reinforcements before he could bring up stronger and better troops and reinforce his fortifications and supply machinery by general use of the civil population.

Combat troops of the First U.S. Army were well up. A corps rear boundary on 13 September ran north to south generally through NAMUR and SEDAN, following, however, the course of local rivers.

The period of 12 days from 13 to 24 September inclusive may be called the period of the development of enemy defenses. Events of this period did not exactly justify the optimistic conclusions drawn on 11 September that a definite gap had been found in the enemy defenses of any particular importance at the particular location south of AACHEN. Pressure there and at other points, although resulting in penetrations of his line at particular spots, revealed no special thinness or weakness except in certain stretches



of bad terrain where the difficulties of movement were such that we could not exploit these in force and such indeed that we were quite able to protect ourselves against inroads on his part by having mobile armored cavalry groups cover extended portions of our front which partook of this character.

Comparison of situation maps of 13 and 24 September will indicate advances, but these advances were small. They were limited to particular portions of the line and left us very nearly paralleling his frontier, our strength against his strength, and our weakness against his weakness. Any gaps which might develop we would have to create. The principal of these gaps we hoped to make at the point already mentioned south of AACHEN, where veteran divisions of the VII Corps which had successfully created and exploited the breakthrough of ST LO, <sup>had</sup> successfully changed direction and driven north on this side of the SEINE to create the MONS pocket, and had brilliantly again swung to the east along the north edge of the ARDENNES, were now in a position to take advantage of any promising situation. If the enemy had been unable to create a defense along this portion of the line, these divisions reinforced by armor would be able to crack through to open country suitable for swift movements to seize the lower end of the RHINE Valley.

This attitude on our part, at this time, when we had completed our rapid drive to the east, was not so much a prophecy or a forecast as it was an optimistic plan by which we might be able to take the fullest advantage of a favorable situation. Such situations have a habit of not springing easily to life. Any enemy, even a disorganized one, always attempts to frustrate the stroke which might be the most dangerous to him. On this occasion our enemy threw in broken and fragmentary, but still capable and seasoned portions of his forces.

We had to fight to develop the situation. We had to fight to fix his strengths where we might be able to make a new analysis and strike with more decisiveness at some early future date.





### XIX Corps

During this period, on our left flank, the XIX Corps had its own left constantly exposed. It was driving up the east bank of the MEUSE River, covering its left rear with mechanized armor. On 13 September, its 30th Division cut the MAASTRICHT--DULPEN east--west highway and captured MAASTRICHT and BERG. The next day some of its units and those of the 113th Cavalry Group began striking more to the east and northeast. On 15 September the 2d Armored Division cleared the area north of the ALBERT Canal, crossed north of MAASTRICHT and on the 16th, with the newly attached 99th Infantry Battalion protecting the area in the left rear in its place, struck towards HESLEN and its road and rail junction, attacking northeast with Combat Commands abreast, such on a 7-mile front. On 17 September that division occupied SITTARD, cut the SITTARD--HEERLEN Road to the southeast, and pushed towards GEILENKIRCHEN, while the 30th Division on 19 September advanced a distance of more than 5,000 yards abreast the 2d Armored Division so that these two faced and threatened GEILENKIRCHEN from the north and east faces of the woods near GEILENKIRCHEN and extended a line to the south from those woods. While the 2d Armored and 30th Divisions prepared to attack east against the SIEGFRIED Line at this place, (repulsing a combined tank, infantry, and artillery counterattack in the process) the 113th Cavalry Group from 22 September onwards held the line on the north flank from BERG to SITTARD and relieved the 2d Armored Division down the SITTARD--HEERLEN--GANGELT--GEILENKIRCHEN Road as far as GANGELT itself. This permitted regrouping of the 2d Armored Division for future action. On the 23rd of September, the 99th Infantry Battalion extended its patrols to MAESEYCK and made contact there with the Belgian Brigade in the British zone. On 24 September there was no material change in position. Moderate artillery fire was received on the front. The forward line of this corps generally ran north and south from the woods west of GEILENKIRCHEN although slightly refused in the right center of the corps zone and on the left flank. The southern portion of this position was generally from GEILENKIRCHEN south on the high ground slightly more than a mile west of and practically paralleling the railroad from



GEILENKIRCHEN to AACHEN nearly to the corps boundary.

Operations of the XIX Corps had, during this period, developed into substantial exploitation of the earlier crossing of the MEUSE River above LIEGE until the entire area in the corps zone of action had been secured to an average depth of approximately 15 miles on a front almost as wide.

VII Corps

In the 20 mile wide zone of the VII Corps, most of the activity during the period from 13 to 24 September inclusive was in the northern half of the corps front. This was the attempt to exploit the weakness south of AACHEN by by-passing that town and cutting it off in rear by means of a thrust northeast with divisions abreast. The right boundary of the 1st Division passed about five miles south of that town and its left boundary (also of VII Corps) about two miles north thereof. Its main effort was to be on its right to cut the roads and railroads which supplied and supported AACHEN from the east and northeast. Its initial positions on 13 September were three miles to the west and one to four miles south of AACHEN. On 14 September this division penetrated the west wall against light resistance, lightly held or vacated pillboxes, and advanced steadily although slowly that day and the next. There was <sup>15</sup> *sketch and struggle with* no change in the situation here on 16 September, but the enemy counterattacked strongly on 17 September. By this date the advance had progressed far enough so that the town of SPOLBERG loomed on the right flank. During the rest of the period, the 1st Division was unable to make substantial progress into or around AACHEN, it repulsed enemy attacks, fought into and mopped up part of the SPOLBERG area, but was unable with the stronghold of AACHEN on its left rear to drive forward to its critical objective on the corps left boundary and to completely enclose AACHEN against the 30th Division (XIX Corps) on the left. During the same period the 3rd Armored Division, on the right of the 1st Division moving in a narrow zone, struck towards SPOLBERG itself, it seized WALHEIM on 13 September, went through the first line of west wall defenses on the 14th, and the second line on



the 15th with an element of its Combat Command "B" beyond and east of STOLBERG and by the 16th of September, was practically surrounding STOLBERG itself. On 17 September the 3rd Armored Division was counterattacked, but pushed east against enemy counterattacks and pressure on that day and the next near MAUSBACH. On 19, 20, and 21 September, assisted by mopping up operations by the 1st Division, it captured the high ground east of STOLBERG on 20 September, fought into the outskirts on the 21st, occupied STOLBERG itself on the 22d, and by the 24th was able to attack north from that city towards ESCHWEILLER. Progress, however, was difficult and the division was unable, as the 1st Division on its left had been, to reach the assigned objective on the corps boundary.

In the meanwhile, the 9th Division, which commenced the period assembled in the neighborhood of EUPEN, attacked northeast towards DUREN through a heavily wooded area. On 13 September it had taken a line from the woods south and east of EUPEN running HOSPERT--REINARTZHOFF--CAMP ELSENBOORN facing and approximately 2 miles west of MONSCHAU on a broad front. Later movements of this division were principally confined to the left half of its zone of action, advancing through the woods and past ROTGEN, which was taken on 16 September, penetrating the SIEGFRIED Line and pushing northeast. It had by 17 September reduced pillboxes and overcome heavy small arms and artillery fire to occupy a position from SCHEVENHUTTE practically south to a point east of LAMMERSDORF and thence across open country to HOFEN. Thereafter progress was slow, resistance was stubborn, many pillboxes had to be overcome, and enemy counterattacks commenced on 22 September. The division, although attempting to advance northeast, was generally confronted by an enemy to the east, and the eastern edge of the forest area had not been cleared.

While these operations were going on, the 4th Cavalry Group occupied almost the right half of the corps front, patrolling the MONSCHAU and BUCHHOLZ Forests along the German border to the V Corps boundary on the right. There was some resistance to these patrols near the town of HOFEN, and after the 60th Infantry had

mopped up enemy resistance in the HOFEN--ALZEN area south of MONSCHAU, the 4th Cavalry Group took over that area as well when the 60th Infantry moved by motors to strengthen the forest area east of ROTGEN. Avenues through the areas covered by this group, although difficult, were numerous; yet the cavalry group held them firmly.

V Corps



In the zone of the V Corps on the south the front was exceptionally broad, and the principal activities were near the northern and the southern boundaries. On 13 September the 4th Division on the left, north, continued its advance on German soil through extensive minefields, roadblocks, and under hostile artillery fire. Its activities for the next few days carried it generally from the southeastern end of the SCHNEE EIFEL near BUCHET forward through that wooded area until by 24 September it was through the SCHNEE EIFEL on a line running northeast facing OLZHEIM and MONTHEIM. This advance was made constantly against stiff resistance, and enemy counterattacks which were commenced locally on the 19th of September by units from a company to a little more than a battalion. The 28th Division on the right and somewhat to the rear was slightly across the border on 13 September, but faced enemy resistance throughout the period, including automatic weapons fire, artillery fire, and pillboxes, although not the numerous small counterattacks which the 4th Division had met. By 17 September its position may be described as being refused behind the right flank of the 4th Division and standing slightly across the German border from HABSCHIED through KESFELD to DANNEN and thence south along the east bank of the OUR River south to include VIANDEN just above DIEKIRCH. Up through 24 September there was no material change in these positions.

To the south some elements of the 5th Armored Division supported by infantry of the 28th Division had driven well ahead on 13 September and captured GREVENMACHER in the valley of the MOSELLE River, while others farther to the north, reached and crossed the



OUR River, and were mopping up WALLENDORF. These positions were not maintained. Attempts to cross the SAUER and the OUR south and north of WALLENDORF were only partially successful. The enemy counterattacked on 17 September; the advance was checked in this neighborhood at the WALLENDORF crossing. On 18 and 19 September counterattacks continued and part of the division was required to withdraw to cover DIEKIRCH on the south on 19 and 20 September and on the north of that town on 21 and 22 September. Meanwhile, the advance to GREVENMACHER with light units was likewise pushed back so that by 24 September the front here stood short of that town and approximately through the small village of BETZDORF. It was apparent that on the broad front on which it was operating V Corps had not been furnished sufficient strength to move forward decisively or even to hold isolated advances against stubborn enemy action.

above

It will be seen from the paragraphs/summarizing activities of XIX, VII, and V Corps successively that the 12-day period from 13 to 24 September, following the drive to the east, had been taken up with probings and readjustments against the fortified enemy positions. Attempts to find weak gaps in that position and to exploit them with parts of our far flung forces had been only partially successful. For the clean up operations east of PARIS and the rapid drive which had come to a close practically on 12 September (except in the zone of XIX Corps, where it extended into this period) the extremely broad front was appropriate. For thrusting through an enemy position, our forces may quite properly be described by the dangerous word overextended.

#### ARMY ARTILLERY ACTIVITIES

In a report for an earlier period of the operations of the First U.S. Army, it was stated in a prefatory passage that it appeared desirable to emphasize the unusual. Normal organization and normal activities may be said to be established doctrine in our service. Performance in the field in accordance with these, although recorded so as to have a formal record of operations, is not of



exceptional value as compared with record of activities out of the ordinary, for instance, activities which may be of value in demonstrating either new tactics, special adaptations to special circumstances, or unusual adjustments which may have been made and which may in the future be worthy of imitation. Such matters require special emphasis. It was in accordance with this view that an earlier report of this army made a particular point of discussing the use of the pinchout operation which had been long and steadily taught in our schools, but not fully proven previously by an American Army in battle.

It is in accordance with this line of thought that it seems desirable to make special mention here of certain uses of Army Artillery during the month of September. A high proportion of army artillery is heavy artillery, not capable of especially rapid movement and not needed except against strongly disposed enemy units. This was the reason that artillery operations during the first half of the month of September were on an extremely reduced scale.

The rapid separate advances of the corps north and east from the SEINE River offered no opportunity for massed employment of artillery. Divisional artillery reinforced by the attachment of a nominal amount of corps artillery proved sufficient to break the light enemy resistance encountered. The bulk of the corps artillery, advancing by bounds between successive positions of readiness, was seldom within range of the enemy. Although tank destroyers proved invaluable for reconnaissance, flank guards, and in direct fire against roadblocks, there was no heavy anti-tank action.

Consequently, it was decided to use army artillery and surplus corps artillery units to supplement the supply, transportation, and communication facilities of both the First Army and the several corps. Guided by the First Army Artillery Officer, the Commanding Officer, 32d Field Artillery Brigade implemented this decision by (a) reorganizing the immobilized field artillery units into provisional



trucking battalions, (b) organizing a provisional signal company to assist the Signal Officer in recovering cable in rear areas, (c) supplementing the overstrained line of communications by the loan of officer couriers and Air OP Sections to the Ordnance Officer, Quartermaster and Surgeon, and (d) furnishing officers and enlisted men for use on guard and labor (mostly ammunition handling) details.

Of the above listed activities, the trucking activities were possibly the most impressive, in terms of results accomplished. At one stage, a total of eighteen field artillery battalions were hauling supplies for the First Army, with approximately 450 heavy (2½ ton, or better) trucks and over 200 light (¾ ton) trucks so engaged. Although the number of available trucks fell off sharply during the last half of the month, when numerous battalions were returned to action, approximately 17,200 tons of supplies were hauled some 16,700 miles during September 1944. This special task was accomplished in such a highly efficient manner that it seemed fitting to commend the Commanding Officer, 32d FA Brigade and his command for the great assistance rendered to the First U.S. Army during this critical period.

The initial assault and rapid penetration of the near edges of the SIEGFRIED Line occasioned no great increase in our artillery activity. Self-propelled 155mm guns were employed with excellent effect in an assault role to reduce concrete fortifications. However, as the momentum of our attack slackened for want of supplies, enemy resistance, both infantry and artillery, increased materially. Rapid centralization and resumption of activity by corps artillery was necessary in order to mass fires against numerous enemy counter-attacks and to counterbattery the active enemy artillery. The 32d FA Brigade was recommitted in the artillery role on 17 September to support the proposed attack of VII and XIX Corps to the RHINE. Our artillery fire increased materially after 20 September. Heavy ammunition expenditures, not balanced by resupply, required a return to stringent rationing.

Artillery fires throughout the remainder of the period, though

13 Sept. 142 FA Group (VII) 34 with Div and against Bochen.  
16 min 2.40 m



heavy, were nevertheless limited to only the most lucrative targets, especially obtaining excellent effect on the industrial plants, railroad network, and supply installations in the AACHEN sector. A combination of direct fire by self-propelled artillery and tank destroyers, and precision fire by heavy artillery, has proved sufficient to reduce all types of fortifications encountered to date in the SIGFRIED Line.





PREPARATION FOR FURTHER ADVANCE

By 25 September it was plain that the enemy had succeeded in manning and improving his west wall defenses, not only with remnants of the battered divisions from FRANCE, but also his scratch units and some formations which may have been intended for use elsewhere. The enemy supply lines were shortening; ours were lengthening. The enemy was garrisoning the west wall with everything he could lay his hands on. His morale, stopped declining and tightened and hardened as he began to fight on his home soil. Delay in our advance made it apparent that the exploitation was definitely at an end. Just as in NORMANDY, a new study, a new scheme of maneuver, a new concentration of forces, and a new effort would be needed to break through to the RHINE. This new requirement was marked by the additional fact that the territory to our front was far more difficult than that over which the First Army exploded like a rocket through the German lines east of St LO, and the gap between AVRANCHES and MORTAIN.

Throughout most of the month the First U.S. Army had been operating with the following distribution of its major units:

V Corps: 4th and 28th Infantry Divisions and 5th Armored Division.

VII Corps: 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions and 3rd Armored Division.

XIX Corps: 30th Infantry Division and 2d Armored Division.

These units were at this time covering a front of approximately 80 miles, obviously excessive. The 102d Cavalry Group with the V Corps and the 4th Cavalry Group of the VII Corps and the 113th Cavalry Group of the XIX Corps, were holding front line sectors almost as wide as divisions. The country was mountainous and heavily wooded. To reinforce our strength, particularly in the area where the principal push would be made, it would be necessary to bring in additional troops as well as to narrow the First U.S. Army front as a whole. The additional troops brought in consisted of the 29th Infantry Division, returned to the First U.S. Army from the Third U.S. Army after it had assisted in the capture of the



city of BREST, and the 7th Armored Division.

The 7th Armored Division would not be immediately available for the forward drive. It had to be used to cross the former Anglo-American boundary and clear up a substantially large area west of the MEUSE River (MAA3) in the former British zone while the British 21st Army Group was seriously involved in reducing the channel ports earlier bottled up but not yet captured, and in attempting to rescue parachute units from the farther bank of the RHINE River.

A Belgian Brigade was covering the marsh land in rear of the west bank of the MEUSE River, extending practically to the north army boundary. A temporary change in the Anglo-American boundary so that it ran slightly north of northeast from the neighborhood of HASSELT enclosed a long leg of mutton area whose west side was the line just described and whose east side was the line of the MEUSE. In this odd protuberance of the boundary, it was intended that the 7th Armored on the north and the Belgian Brigade on the south should operate.

The 29th Division was placed below this exceptional area and in the zone formerly occupied by the 2d Armored Division, ready to operate on the left of the 30th Division.

Far to the south, the Third Army boundary was changed so as to run from just south of LUXEMBOURG then somewhat north of TRIER and to include practically the entire valley of the MOSELLE in the zone of that Army. This resulted in a material shortening of the Army front.

The few days remaining up to the end of the month were taken over with adjustments in conformity with the estimate made at this time and with instructions issued to prepare for a calculated blow. On 25 September there was no important change in the situation except the drawing of the new boundary line between the First and Third Armies as described above, although patrols were, of course, active probing enemy dispositions locally. On 26 September, in the zone of the XIX Corps, the 29th Division and 7th Armored Division



began to arrive; in the zone of VII Corps enemy artillery fire increased; and in the zone of the V Corps the 83rd Division of the Third Army relieved Combat Command "A" of our 5th Armored Division and assumed responsibility for the extreme southern part of our former zone of action. The new boundary left LUXEMBOURG, ECHTERNACH, and the SAUER River south of WALLENDORF in the zone of the Third Army and Combat Command "A" took over the thin portion of this corps front which had been covered by the 102d Cavalry Group from VIANDEN to DAHMEN and the south flank of the center (28th) Division of this corps. On 27 September the 7th Armored Division up on the left, advanced to WEERT, and the 113th Cavalry Group moved north as far as the Anglo-American boundary, but elsewhere there was no material change on the front. On 28 September the 60th and 39th Infantry Regiments in the 9th Division made slight advances, the latter in conjunction with preliminary air and artillery bombardment. The front of this division, sweeping around in the shape of a huge question mark, was slightly more than 14 miles long, with the 47th Infantry east of STOLBERG, the 39th Infantry at LAMMERSDORF, and a portion of the 60th Infantry approaching MONSCHAU (most of the 60th Infantry in the forest north of LAMMERSDORF). On 29 September the 28th Division made limited advances near KESFELD, but there was no major activity elsewhere on the army front except that the 7th Armored Division and the 29th Division closed up completely from the rear up into their new areas. On 30 September, the 29th Division relieved the 2d Armored Division in the wooded positions west of GEILENKIRCHEN, and took over a zone which fanned out northeast from those positions, leaving the major (southern) portion of the corps zone of action to the 30th Division. The 2d Armored Division was preparing to attack eastwards north of AACHEN in conjunction with and leap-frogging the 30th Division, so as to complete the encirclement of the town of AACHEN, where stubbornly resisting German troops still held out in spite of being enveloped from the south and east by the 1st Division in the adjacent VII Corps.

Instructions for decisive action in this vicinity had already

been prepared. However, the necessity of making new dispositions for this action and of securing favorable weather for supporting aerial bombardment delayed putting such an effort into effect until after the end of the month.

On the night of 30 September the army front line from left to right (north to south) may be described as running from OVERLOON where the 7th Armored Division on a special mission was reported facing east in marshy terrain near VLIERDEN, HOLLAND, on a line almost directly south through the area west of the MAUSE River held by the Belgian Brigade to BIFTARD covered by the 113th Cavalry Group. Thence the 2d Armored and the 29th Divisions were in position along the road and near and west of GEILENKIRCHEN. Almost directly south along the line of the WURM River to a point about five miles north of AACHEN the 30th Division held the front. AACHEN was nearly surrounded from the northwest, southwest, and southeast by units of the 1st Division. Eastwards the 3rd Armored Division held STOLBERG and ground slightly to the north and also to the east thereof. Commencing at SCHEVENHUTTE the 9th Division held a front running almost south through the woods east of ROTGEN and LAMMERSDORF thence to MONSCHAU and cavalry patrols covered the border from the forest of MONSCHAU to the upper reaches of the OUR River. In the zone of the V Corps the front ran along the eastern edge of the SCHNEE EIFEL to the northwest of PRUM and thence was refused to the neighborhood of KESFELD from which it ran almost directly south and just inside the German frontier to north of VIANDEN. South of this point DIEKIRCH was well projected by elements to the front as far as the new Third Army boundary which diagonaled up the map, northeast about 7 miles southeast of DIEKIRCH.



FIRST U.S. ARMY  
Order of Battle - Major Units

Date	V Corps	VII Corps	XIX Corps
29 Aug	4th Div 28th Div 5th Armd 2d Fr Armd	1st Div 9th Div 3rd Armd	30th Div 79th Div 2d Armd
8 Sept	4th Div 28th Div 5th Armd	1st Div 9th Div 3rd Armd	30th Div 2d Armd
20 Sept	4th Div 28th Div 5th Armd	1st Div 9th Div 3rd Armd	30th Div 2d Armd
27 Sept	4th Div 28th Div 5th Armd 102d Cav Gp	1st Div 9th Div 3rd Armd 4th Cav Group	29th Div 30th Div 2d Armd 7th Armd 113th Cav Group



SKETCHES FROM PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
DAILY SITUATION MAPS OF:

31 August 1944  
2 September 1944  
4 September 1944  
13 September 1944  
24 September 1944

