

S-2 "After Action Report" - for month of Sep 44

Phase I - (1-4 Sep 44, incl)  
Movement from BAR LE DUC to ROSIERES-EN-HAYE.

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The morning of 1 Sep 44 found the 318th CT and attachments in and around BAR LE DUC, where they had pulled into late the preceding night.

The arrival of liberating American forces in this French city immediately following the hasty exit of the Nazi "Supermen" caused a wholehearted celebration among the civilian population the like of which none of us, who had become accustomed to receiving the acclaims of liberated French people all the way across France, had ever before witnessed.

At 0800, 1 Sep 44 CT 8 began its continued movement to the East, prior reconnaissance having disclosed that only relatively small enemy delaying forces opposed our advance. Activities of these forces consisted of blowing bridges over our route of march to delay our advance.

Three PWs taken during the night were from the 29th Regt, 3d Inf Div. Interrogation of these PWs disclosed that at least a part of this Div had only recently arrived in FRANCE from the Italian front and were to be used in rearguard action, but the swift advance of American forces had compelled their retreat on 30 August in a general Easterly direction.

Our route of march for the day took us through SAVONNIERES, LONGEVILLE, and LEROUVILLE, arriving at 1900 at a point about 3 miles West of COMMERCY where we bivouacked for the night in the woods.

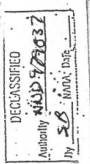
COMMERCY having been cleared of all remaining enemy resistance during night 1-2 Sep, CT 8 moved through the town on the morning of 2 Sep, the Regtl CP being set up in woods near the highway about 1 1/2 miles Northeast of the town at 1020.

Since CT 8 was, at this time, in Div reserve, its primary missions were security and reconnaissance.

One PW taken on 2 Sep was from 1st Co, 305th GAF Signal School Regt. This Company had an original strength of 220-250 men.

Enemy activity in CT 8 sector consisted of harassing night patrols, and mines and road blocks put out as delaying factors by the enemy during their retreat.

During the period 1-4 Sep, inclusive, there was very little enemy activity, due partly to CT 8 being in Div reserve, but due chiefly to the fact that the



enemy retreated so swiftly as to make it almost impossible to maintain contact. Information gained from PWs taken during this period gave added proof that the enemy had left behind for rearguard and delaying actions only small, disorganized and scattered forces from various and sundry units; while withdrawing his main forces further East to a point where he could make a determined stand.

On 4 Sep CT 8 moved forward from its position 1½ miles NE of COMMERCY, the Regtl CP being set up vicinity of ROYAUMEIX. This move was made by foot march, the route taken leading through GIRONVILLE, JOUY-SOUS-LES-COTES, BOUCO and SANZEY.

Phase II (5-11 Sep, incl)

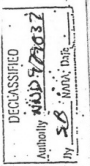
Battle to clear West Bank of MOSELLE RIVER in vicinity of the FORET DE LAVANT GARDE.

During this time, as always, intelligence agencies worked continuously day and night endeavoring to gain all possible information of the enemy opposing us. From the time that CT 8 was first committed in combat the IPW Team attached to the CT, more than any other intelligence agency, proved to be of inestimable value in providing the S-2 with timely and accurate information of the enemy. For patrolling, manning OPs and liaison between adjacent units the Regtl I & R platoon, as well as the Battalion intelligence sections, fulfilled their missions in an excellent manner.

In this connection due mention must be made of patriotic French civilians, most of whom were members of the FFI, who went on countless missions through the enemy lines and produced correct intelligence which was especially valuable in furnishing artillery targets. Some of their men who never returned give mute testimony of their great courage and their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the cause of the liberation of FRANCE.

It was at this time that our advance to the East which had, in recent weeks been so swift as to allow the enemy no time for anything but hasty withdrawals, was brought practically to a standstill due, not to stiffening enemy resistance, but to the fact that our supplies had been unable to keep pace with us. It is felt that solely because of this enforced delay the enemy was given time to form an MIR along the MOSELLE RIVER, preparing hasty defenses and bringing up reinforcements.

Interrogation of PWs had disclosed that we were faced by elements of the 3d and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. In addition to these two units PWs were taken from numerous other units, the strength of some as low as 20-30 men, giving conclusive evidence of the disorganization and extreme shortage of manpower



existing in the German Army. Other evidence pointing to manpower shortage in the ranks of the enemy was in ages of the men, being, for the most part, either over or under normal combat age; and their state of training, some having had as little as two weeks basic training.

One PW, taken 3 Sep, stated that a recent German GHQ order had been given to all troops to the effect that "No German soldier would be permitted to retreat across the RHINE".

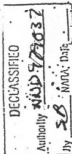
On 4-5 Sep an I & R patrol, sent forward with the mission of determining enemy strength and dispositions along the West bank of the MOSELLE, reported enemy defensive positions 3 to 5 kilometers west of the River, numerous enemy patrols active in that area and enemy artillery located East of the River firing on our positions West of River.

The enemy situation confronting CT 8 at this time, as compiled from all available sources, put the main enemy forces, consisting of elements of two Infantry Divisions, plus organic artillery, occupying commanding ground on East bank of the MOSELLE, with delaying forces estimated as at least one Battalion West of River occupying the towns of BELLEVILLE, MARBACHE AND POMPEY, the FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE, and Hills 220 and 326. These delaying forces were identified 5 Sep as 1st Bn, 92d GAF Regiment.

On 5 Sep 3d Battalion, 318th was given the mission of taking Hills 220 and 326. At 1525 on 6 Sep they succeeded in taking Hill 326. Due to the fierce enemy resistance encountered, it was necessary on 7 Sep to commit 2d Battalion, 318th to assist the 3d Battalion in wiping out enemy resistance in our sector.

In view of this resistance, plus additional PW identifications, it is believed that the entire 92d GAF Regt, consisting of three Battalions and Company strength of 220 men, opposed us at this time.

During the night 7-8 Sep the 92d GAF Regt was relieved by elements of the 553d Volks Grenadier Division, a unit which had not previously been identified on the Western Front. This division was composed of three Regiments (1119th, 1120th, 1121st), one Artillery Regiment, one Fusilier Battalion, one Engineer Battalion. Each Infantry Regiment was composed of two Battalions and an Assault Company of 1 Machine Pistol platoon and 2 Engineer platoons. Each Battalion was made up of 3 rifle companies and 1 Hvy Wpns Company; plus 1 Inf How Company per Regt.



The 1553d Assault Gun Battalion, attached to the 553d Gr Div, was committed 7 Sep in POMPEY-MARBACHE sector in support of Grenadier units of the 553d Gr Division. This Battalion was composed of three batteries of five 75mm assault guns on Mark III chassis each; Battalion had strength of 160 men; AG crew of 4 men.

These units had mission of counterattacking and driving our forces back but were unsuccessful.

Due to poor communications with our forward elements, the Regt CP moved forward 8 Sep from vicinity of ROYAUMEIX to a point in woods approximately 1 1/2 miles West of ROSIERES-EN-HAYE.

During the night 8-9 Sep the enemy withdrew the bulk of his forces from the West to the East side of MOSELLE RIVER, leaving only scattered strong points of resistance to harass and delay our advance. On 9 Sep CT 8 pushed through the FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE, occupying positions on West bank of MOSELLE RIVER from BELLEVILLE South to LIVERDUN, thus completing the mission of driving the enemy from the West side of the River in its sector.

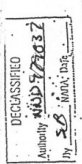
Phase III (12-30 Sep, Incl)

Crossing of the MOSELLE RIVER at DIEULOUARD and battle of the Bridgehead.

Higher headquarters had decided that CT 7, occupying positions on West bank of MOSELLE directly North of us, would force a river crossing at DIEULOUARD 12 Sep and secure a bridgehead on the opposite side. Immediately after this accomplishment, CT 8 (less 1st Bn, which had been attached to US 4th Armd Div) was to utilize the crossing made by CT 7 and push to the South and East, CT 7 in the meantime with mission of pushing to the North.

FW reports at this time indicated that the ground East of the MOSELLE from NANCY North to BEZAUMONT was defended by the 553d Gr Div, with the 1121st Gr Regt on the North flank, BEZAUMONT being the boundary line between the 553d on the South and 3d Pz Gr Div on the North, the 29th Pz Gr Regt of this unit being on the Div South flank.

It was believed that the enemy had scattered his forces thinly, but with considerable automatic weapons supplemented by mines and booby traps, at all strategic points along the river line, while holding his main forces in mobile reserve some distance behind this line; thus enabling him to utilize the maximum of his defensive powers to repel our crossing at whatever point we might attempt it. If such was the enemy's plan however, it failed to work out.





CT 7 began its attack at 0400 12 Sep and encountered heavy automatic fire, supported by artillery and mortar fire from concealed positions East of the river. CT 7 effected a crossing in record time, meeting considerably less resistance than had been anticipated, with the result that CT 8 began moving to DIEULOUARD at 0730 to cross behind them. The bridge remained under constant artillery and mortar fire throughout the day and night, but CT 8 units encountered no small arms nor automatic fire while crossing.

The Regt CP of CT 8, having moved at 0800 12 Sep from its location  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles South of DIEULOUARD, moved again at 1100 into a factory building in DIEULOUARD near the canal, which also had to be crossed. After dark the CP moved across the river, closing in at 2130 by the roadside about one kilometer North of LE PON DU MONS.

At 0300 13 Sep the enemy launched a counterattack from the Northeast, completely overrunning all opposing forces in its path, and by 0530 had reached the CT 8 Regt CP, which had not previously been warned of the counterattack nor its progress. Miraculously, the enemy attack was halted there long enough for the 2d Bn, 318th to be brought up and drive it back.

According to information from PWs taken 13 Sep the enemy attack of that morning had been made by the 29th Pz Gr Regt (with the probable exception of two companies), plus the 4th company, 103d Assault Gun Bn; and 2d company, 3d AT Bn; all from the 3d Pz Gr Div. Their mission had been to attack from the vicinity of FORET DE FACQ and reoccupy the high ground East of the MOSELLE.

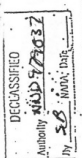
The average strength of companies in the 29th Pz Gr Regt was 40-50 men, although some were up to a strength of 80 men. Most of the companies had 5-7 IMGs and 2 HMGs; 4th, 8th and 12th companies had four 80mm mortars and four 120mm mortars each.

4th Co, 103d AG Bn, committed in counterattack of 0300 13 Sep, was equipped with bazookas, grenade launchers, AT rifles and 2 IMGs. 1st, 2d and 3d companies of this Bn were equipped with 75mm AG (SP) on Mark IV chassis.

2d Co, 3d AT Bn was equipped with fourteen 75mm AT guns (SP) on Mark IV chassis, ten of which were used in counterattack of 130300.

3d Arty Regt, 3d Pz Gr Div was composed of 3 Bns, 1st and 2d with twelve 150mm Field Hows.

While the first counterattack of the day was being driven back and the Regt CP moved from its position in the field to the nearby town of LE PON DU MONS,



another enemy attack was launched, this time on our South flank from the vicinity of AUTREVILLE. This attack, also successfully repulsed, was made by 5th Co, 1121st Gr Regt, 553d Gr Div, supported by one platoon of the 13th (Inf How) Co. 5th Co had 100 men in company, equipped with 12 IMGs; 13th Co had 3 platoons, each equipped with four 75mm Inf Hows.

On 14 Sep 3d Bn, 318th attacked MOUSSON HILL, occupying it at 0930 after meeting comparatively light resistance. They were counterattacked at 1525 by a force estimated at two companies, but were able to repulse it.

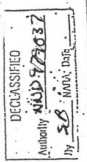
The 3d Co, 115th Pz Gr Tng Bn was identified 14 Sep in our sector in the enemy attack on MOUSSON HILL. Company was composed of approximately 130 men; 10 IMGs in company.

On 15 Sep the enemy launched three counterattacks simultaneously at 0600 and a fourth attack at 1600. One attack, coming from the Northeast and made by 115th Pz Gr Tng Bn, supported by fire from FONT A MOUSSON, succeeded in retaking ATTON, thereby cutting off our 3d Bn on MOUSSON HILL. Remnants of the 29th Pz Gr Regt reorganized in FORET DE FAQQ and from there launched an attack with two Bns abreast directed against ST GENEVIEVE and LOISY. The enemy failed to take LOISY but succeeded in taking ST GENEVIEVE. A third counterattack at 0600 was launched from the East by the 115th Pz Gr Regt, SS March Bn, 103d AG Bn and an unidentified Panzer unit between ST GENEVIEVE and LANDREMONT. This attack was repulsed.

The fourth counterattack of the day was made from the Southeast from vicinity of MOREY and BELLEAU at 1600 by elements of 1119th and 1121st Gr Regts, 553d Gr Div; 92d GAF Regt (recently attached to 553d Div by General Order); and 1553d Arty Regt. This attack was stopped by our Arty before the enemy made contact with our troops.

On 16 Sep the enemy made three unsuccessful counterattacks against MOUSSON HILL and two equally fruitless attacks on LOISY - the first one at 0415, the second at 0700. The second attack on LOISY came from the Northeast and was made by an estimated 200 Infantry troops, supported by 4 tanks plus heavy artillery and mortar fire.

Another new unit, identified 16 Sep in action on our South flank on FALAISE HILL, was Combat Team 9/XII. This CT consisted of four companies of approximately



140-150 men per company; one IMG and one grenade launcher per squad. The morale of these troops was found to be poor as many of them deserted on first contact with our forces. The CT had been formed during early part of Sep 44 of Reservists from Casual Centers, most of them having had previous combat experience; their ages ranged from 18 to 42 years.

The 1st Bn, 318th reverted to 318th control 16 Sep and, driving in from the East, retook ST GENEVIEVE. At 1900 the same day contact was reestablished with our 3d Bn on MOUSSON HILL.

The 49th SS Pz Gr Brigade was identified 17 Sep, a part of its 1st Bn having been committed the preceding day in the attack on LOISY. Brigade was composed of three Bns, four companies per Bn, approximately 160 men per company. This unit was completely motorized and used as a mobile reserve for commitment in whatever sector along the front where a break-through by American forces appeared most imminent.

From this time to the end of September numerous small enemy units were identified in our sector, but few of importance as the enemy very frequently changed some of their unit designations. Some of these units were Assault Bn AOK I, March Bn 'Nancy', Tng Regt 'Toul', CT Kuchar, CT Glatz, CT Hildebrandt, and 438th Repl Tng Bn.

Having driven the enemy from the area from MOUSSON HILL South to CUSTINES, CT 8 launched a drive 21 Sep to the Southeast through BOIS DE LA RUMONT to BRATTE, occupying this town 23 Sep. From BRATTE our attack turned to the Northeast with the mission of driving the enemy from their high ground on Hill 407, MT TOULON and MT ST JEAN. 30 Sep found CT 8 still fighting to complete that mission. Remnants of the 1119th and 1121st Inf Regts, 553d Div were fighting stubbornly to hold this high ground, with the 1119th responsible for MT TOULON and the 1121st responsible for MT ST JEAN.

