

their objective when resistance and darkness forced a halt two hours before midnight. When another effort on the morning of 4 July brought no success, General Ridgway ordered the wheeling movement by the other regiments to begin. Each battalion of the 508th was to attack one of the triplet hills while the 505th moved south along the division boundary to protect the open right flank.

Problems immediately arose when two battalions of the 508th and the glider regiment disputed the use of a covered route of approach. Because of the delay involved in co-ordinating the route and because of withering fire from both the Poterie ridge and Mont Castre, the two battalions made little progress during the day. The third battalion, on the other hand, had by noon gained a position from which it could assault the westernmost eminence, Hill 95. Following an artillery preparation reinforced by corps guns, two rifle companies made a double envelopment while the third attacked frontally. The battalion gained the crest of the hill but, unable to resist the inevitable counter-attack that came before positions could be consolidated, withdrew 800 yards and re-formed.

Meanwhile, troops of the 505th moved south along the division boundary, advancing cautiously. Reaching the base of Hill 95 that evening, the regiment made contact with the 79th Division and set up positions to control the St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte-la Haye-du-Puits road.

His battalions now in direct frontal contact with the German positions but operating at a disadvantage under German observation, General Ridgway

ordered a night attack. As darkness fell on 4 July, the men moved up the hedgerowed and unfamiliar slopes of the Poterie ridge. The 325th Glider Infantry secured its objective on the eastern slope of the ridge with little difficulty. The battalion of the 508th Parachute Infantry that had taken Hill 95 during the afternoon only to lose it walked up the slope and secured the crest by dawn. A newly committed battalion of the 507th Parachute Infantry, moving against the easternmost hill, had trouble maintaining control in the darkness, particularly after making contact with the enemy around midnight. Withdrawing to reorganize, the battalion commander sent a rifle company to envelop the hill from the east while he led the remainder of his force in a flank approach from the west. Several hours after daylight on 5 July the two parties met on the ridge line. The Germans had withdrawn.

Another battalion of the 507th moved against the center hill of the Poterie ridge, with one company in the lead as a combat patrol. Reaching the crest without interference and assuming that the Germans had retired, the advance company crossed the ridge line and formed a defensive perimeter on the south slope. Daybreak revealed that the men were in a German bivouac area, and a confused battle took place at close range. The remainder of the battalion, which had stayed on the north slope, hurried forward at the sound of gunfire to find friend and foe intermingled on the ridge. Not until afternoon of 5 July did the battalion establish a consolidated position.¹⁹

¹⁹ Pfc. James L. Geach of the 325th Glider Infantry, though he had never handled a rocket

During the afternoon the 82d Airborne Division reported Hill 95 captured and the Poterie ridge secure. Small isolated German pockets remained to be cleared, but this was a minor task easily accomplished. Maintaining contact with the 79th Division on the right and establishing contact with the 90th Division in the valley between the Poterie ridge and Mont Castre on the left, the 82d Airborne Division assumed defensive positions.

In advancing the line about four miles in three days, the airborne division had destroyed about 500 enemy troops, taken 772 prisoners, and captured or destroyed two 75-mm. guns, two 88-mm. antitank guns, and a 37-mm. antitank weapon. The gains had not been without serious cost. The 325th Glider Infantry, which was authorized 135 officers and 2,838 men and had an effective strength of 55 officers and 1,245 men on 2 July, numbered only 41 officers and 956 men four days later; the strongest rifle company had 57 men, while one company could count only 12. Casualties sustained by this regiment were the highest, but the depletion of all units attested to the accuracy of German fire directed from superior ground.

By the morning of 7 July, all enemy pockets had been cleared in front of the airborne division. Lying in the rain-filled slit trenches, the men "began to sweat out the much-rumored trip to England."²⁰ The probability appeared

good: two days earlier the 79th Division had briefly entered la Haye-du-Puits, the 90th had moved up the slopes of Mont Castre, and the 8th was almost ready to enter the lines.

Mont Castre

The action at the Poterie ridge was not typical of the VIII Corps attack launched on 3 July, for while the 82d Airborne Division swept an area relatively lightly defended, the 79th and 90th Divisions struck strong German positions in the la Haye-du-Puits sector. Trying to execute the V-shaped maneuver General Middleton had projected, the infantry divisions hit the main body of the *LXXXIV Corps* on two major elevations, the Montgardon ridge and Mont Castre. Their experience was characteristic of the battle of the hedgerows.

The ability of the 90th Division, which was making the corps main effort on the left (east), was an unknown quantity before the July attack. The performance of the division during a few days of offensive action in June had been disappointing. The division had lacked cohesion and vigor, and its commanding general and two regimental commanders had been relieved. Maj. Gen. Eugene M. Landrum, with experience in the Aleutian Islands Campaign the preceding year, had assumed command on 12 June and had attempted in the three weeks before the army offensive to reorganize the command and instill it with aggressiveness.²¹

launcher, seized a bazooka and fired several rounds, forcing two enemy tanks to withdraw. He was awarded the DSC.

²⁰ William G. Lord, II, *History of the 508th Parachute Infantry* (Washington: Infantry Journal, Inc., 1948), p. 37.

²¹ [Maj. Roland G. Ruppenthal], *Utah Beach to Cherbourg*, AFA Series (Washington, 1947), p. 129; Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, pp. 402-03.

To reach his assigned portion of the corps intermediate objective, General Landrum had to funnel troops through a corridor a little over a mile wide—a corridor between Mont Castre on the west and the Prairies Marécageuses de Gorges on the east. His troops in the corridor would have to skirt the edge of the swampland and operate in the shadow of Mont Castre, a ridge about 300 feet high extending three miles in an east-west direction. The western half of Mont Castre, near la Haye-du-Puits, was bare, with two stone houses standing bleakly in ruins on the north slope. The eastern half, densely wooded and the site of an ancient Roman encampment, offered cover and concealment on a height that commanded the neighboring flatland for miles. No roads mounted to the ridge line, only trails and sunken wagon traces—a maze of alleys through the somber tangle of trees and brush. If the Germans could hold the hill mass, they could deny movement to the south through the corridor along the base of the eastern slope. Possession of Mont Castre was thus a prerequisite for the 90th Division advance toward Périers.

Reflecting both an anxiety to make good and the general underestimation of German strength, General Landrum planned to start his forces south through the corridor at the same time he engaged the Germans on Mont Castre. The division was to attack with two simultaneous regimental thrusts. The 359th Infantry (Col. Clark K. Fales), on the right, was to advance about four miles through the hedgerows to the thickly wooded slopes of Mont Castre, take the height, and meet the 79th Division south

of la Haye-du-Puits. The 358th Infantry (Col. Richard C. Partridge), on the left, was to force the corridor between Mont Castre and the *prairies*. In possession of the high ground, in contact with the 79th Division, and holding the corridor east of Mont Castre open, General Landrum would then commit the 357th Infantry (Col. George H. Barth) through the corridor to the initial corps objective.

To provide impetus across the hedge-rowed lowlands, General Landrum ordered the 357th, his reserve regiment, to mass its heavy weapons in support and the attached tanks and tank destroyers also to assist by fire. In addition to the organic artillery battalions, General Landrum had a battalion of the corps artillery and the entire 4th Division Artillery attached; the 9th Division Artillery had been alerted to furnish fires upon request.

The driving, drenching rain, which had begun early on 3 July, was still pouring down when the attack got under way at 0530. At first it seemed that progress would be rapid. Two hours later resistance stiffened. By the end of the day, although American troops had forced the Germans out of some positions, the *Seventh Army* commander, Hausser, was well satisfied. His principal concern was his supply of artillery ammunition.²²

The 90th Division advanced less than a mile on 3 July, the first day of attack, at a cost of over 600 casualties.²³ The

²² *Seventh Army* and *AGp B KTB's*, 3 Jul.

²³ The account of tactical operations is based upon the official records (the After Action Reports, operations orders, periodic reports, and journals) of the units involved.

Germans demonstrated convincingly, contrary to general expectation, that they intended and were able to make a stand. The 90th Division dented only the outpost line of resistance and had yet to make contact with the main defenses. "The Germans haven't much left," an observer wrote, "but they sure as hell know how to use it."²⁴

If the Germans had defended with skill, the 90th Division had not attacked with equal competence. Tankers and infantrymen did not work closely together; commanders had difficulty keeping their troops moving forward; jumpy riflemen fired at the slightest movement or sound.

The experience of Colonel Partridge's 358th Infantry exemplified the action along the division front for the day. One of the two assault battalions of the regiment remained immobile all day long not far from the line of departure because of flanking fire from several German self-propelled guns. The other battalion moved with extreme caution toward the hamlet of les Sablons, a half-dozen stone farmhouses in a gloomy tree-shaded hollow where patrols on preceding days had reported strong resistance. As infantry scouts approached the village, enemy machine gun and artillery fire struck the battalion command post and killed or wounded all the wire communications personnel. Unable to repair wire damaged by shellbursts, the unit commanders were without telephones for the rest of the day.

Judging the enemy fire to be in large

volume, Colonel Partridge withdrew the infantry a few hundred yards and requested that division artillery "demolish the place" with white phosphorus and high-explosive shells. The artillery complied literally, and at noon riflemen were moving cautiously through the village. Ten minutes later several enemy tracked vehicles appeared as if by magic from behind nearby hedgerows. A near panic ensued as the infantrymen fled the town. About twelve engineers who were searching for mines and booby traps were unable to follow and sought shelter in the damaged houses.

To prevent a complete rout, Partridge committed his reserve battalion. Unfortunately, several light tanks following the infantry became entangled in concertina wire and caused a traffic jam. Anticipating that the Germans would take advantage of the confusion by counterattacking with tanks, Partridge ordered a platoon of tank destroyers to bypass les Sablons in order to fire into the flank of any hostile force. He also called three assault guns and three platoons of the regimental antitank company forward to guard against enemy tanks. The 315th Engineer Combat Battalion contributed a bazooka team to help rescue the men trapped in the village.

The Germans did not attack, and in midafternoon Partridge learned that only one assault gun and two half-tracked vehicles were holding up his advance. It was late afternoon before he could act, however, for German shells continued to fall in good volume, the soft lowland impeded the movement of anti-tank weapons, and the presence of the American engineers in les Sablons in-

²⁴ Penciled ltr to Brig Gen Claude B. Ferenbaugh (n.d.), 83d Div G-2, G-3 Jnl and File.

hibited the use of artillery fire. After the engineers had worked their way to safety, Partridge at last brought co-ordinated and concentrated tank, artillery, and infantry fire on the area, and a rifle company finally managed to push through les Sablons that evening. Colonel Partridge wanted to continue his attack through the night, but an enemy counterthrust at nightfall, even though quickly contained, convinced General Landrum that the regiment had gone far enough.

The excellent observation that had enabled the Germans to pinpoint 90th Division activity during the day allowed them to note the American dispositions at dusk. Through the night accurate fire harassed the division, rendering reorganization and resupply difficult and dangerous.

Resuming the attack on 4 July, the 90th Division fired a ten-minute artillery preparation shortly after daybreak. The German reaction was immediate: counterbattery fire so intense that subordinate commanders of the 90th Division looked for a counterattack. Not wishing to move until the direction of the German thrust was determined, the regimental commanders delayed their attacks. It took vociferous insistence by General Landrum to get even a part of the division moving. No German counterattack materialized.

Colonel Fales got his 359th Infantry moving forty-five minutes after the scheduled jump-off time as a surprising lull in the German fire occurred. Heading for Mont Castre, the infantry advanced several hundred yards before the enemy suddenly opened fire and halted further progress. Uneasy specu-

lation among American riflemen that German tanks might be hiding nearby preceded the appearance of three armored vehicles that emerged from hedgerows and began to fire. The infantrymen withdrew in haste and some confusion.

Through most of the day, all attempts to advance brought only disappointment. Then, at dusk, unit commanders rallied their men. Unexpectedly the regiment began to roll. The advance did not stop until it had carried almost two miles.²⁵

The sudden slackening of opposition could perhaps be explained by several factors: the penetration of the airborne troops to the Poterie ridge, which menaced the German left; the heavy losses sustained mostly from the devastating fire of American artillery; and the lack of reserves, which compelled regrouping on a shorter front. With great satisfaction the Germans had reported that their own artillery had stopped the 90th Division attack during the morning of 4 July, but by noon the *LXXXIV Corps* was battling desperately. Although two battalions of the *265th Division* (of *Group Koenig*), the *77th Division* remnants, and a battalion of the *353d Division* succeeded in denying the approaches to Mont Castre throughout 4 July, the units had no local reserves to seal off three small penetrations that occurred during the evening. Only by getting OKW to release control of the

²⁵ Capt. Leroy R. Pond, a battalion commander, and Pvt. Barney H. Prosser, who assumed command of a rifle company (upon the loss of all the officers) and two leaderless platoons of another company, were key figures in the advance. Both were awarded the DSC.

15th Parachute Regiment and by committing that regiment at once was the *Seventh Army* able to permit the *LXXXIV Corps* to refashion its defensive line that night.²⁶

Despite their difficulties, the Germans continued to deny the 90th Division entrance into the corridor between Mont Castre and the swamp. German fire, infiltrating riflemen, and the hedgerows were such impediments to offensive action that Colonel Partridge postponed his attack several times on 4 July. Most of his troops seemed primarily concerned with taking cover in their slit trenches, and American counterbattery fire seemed to have little effect on the enemy weapons.

When part of the 358th Infantry was pinned down by enemy artillery for twenty minutes, the division artillery investigated. It discovered that only one enemy gun had fired and that it had fired no more than ten rounds. Despite this relatively light rate of fire, one rifle company had lost 60 men, many of them noncommissioned officers. The commanding officer and less than 65 men remained of another rifle company. Only 18 men, less than half, were left of a heavy weapons company mortar platoon. A total of 125 casualties from a single battalion had passed through the regimental aid station by midafternoon, 90 percent of them casualties from artillery and mortar shelling. Tired and soaking wet from the rain, the riflemen were reluctant to advance in the face of enemy fire that might not have been delivered in great volume but that was nonetheless terribly accurate.

²⁶ OB WEST KTB, 1330, 4 Jul; *Seventh Army KTB*, 4 Jul, and *Tagesmeldung*, 5 Jul.

Although German fire continued, the 358th Infantry got an attack going late in the afternoon toward the corridor. With the aid of strong artillery support and led by Capt. Phillip H. Carroll, who was wounded in one eye, the infantry moved forward several hundred yards to clear a strongpoint.²⁷ By then it was almost midnight. Because the units were badly scattered and the men completely exhausted, Colonel Partridge halted the attack. Long after midnight some companies were still organizing their positions.

On its second day of attack, 4 July, the 90th Division sustained an even higher number of casualties than the 600 lost on the first day.²⁸ Mont Castre, dominating the countryside, "loomed increasingly important." Without it, the division "had no observation; with it the Boche had too much."²⁹

More aware than ever of the need for Mont Castre as a prerequisite for an advance through the corridor, General Landrum nevertheless persisted with his original plan, perhaps because he felt that the Germans were weakening. Judging the 358th Infantry too depleted and weary for further offensive action, he committed his reserve regiment, the 357th, on 5 July in the hope that fresh troops in the corridor could outflank Mont Castre.

The 357th Infantry had only slight success in the corridor on 5 July, the

²⁷ Captain Carroll was awarded the DSC.

²⁸ 90th Div AAR, Jul. FUSA Daily Estimated Loss Reports, July, gives 549 casualties sustained by the organic units on 4 July as contrasted with 382 reported for the previous day, but the figures for both days were incomplete.

²⁹ 90th Div AAR, Jul.

third day of the attack, but on the right the 359th registered a substantial gain. Good weather permitted tactical air support and observed artillery fires, and with fighter-bombers striking enemy supply and reinforcement routes and artillery rendering effective support, the regiment fought to the north and northeast slopes of Mont Castre in a series of separate, close-range company and platoon actions. Still the Germans continued to resist aggressively, launching repeated local counterattacks.³⁰ The failure of the 357th Infantry to force the corridor on the left and the precarious positions of the 359th on the slopes of Mont Castre at last compelled General Landrum to move a battalion of the 358th Infantry to reinforce his troops on Mont Castre, the beginning of a gradual shift of division strength to the right.

Colonel Fales on 6 July sent a battalion of his 359th Infantry in a wide envelopment to the right. Covered by a tactical air strike and artillery fire and hidden by hedgerows on the valley floor, the infantry mounted the northern slope of Mont Castre. At the same time, the other two battalions of the 359th and a battalion of the 358th advanced toward the northeastern part of the hill mass. Diverted by the wide envelopment that threatened to encircle their left and forced to broaden their active front, the Germans fell back. The result was that by nightfall four battalions of U.S. infantry were perched somewhat precariously on Mont Castre. Not only did General Landrum have possession of the high ground, he also owned the highest point on the ridge line—Hill 122.

Success, still not entirely certain, was not without discomfiture. The wide envelopment had extended the 90th Division front. A roving band of Germans on the afternoon of 6 July had dispersed a chemical mortar platoon operating in direct support of an infantry battalion, thus disclosing gaps in the line, and had harassed supply and communications personnel, thus revealing the tenuous nature of the contact between the forces in the valley and those on the high ground.³¹ To fill the gaps and keep open the supply routes, General Landrum committed the remaining two battalions of the 358th Infantry in support of his units on Mont Castre, even though concentrating the weight of his strength on the right deprived the troops on the left of reserve force. Two complete regiments then comprised a strong division right.

The decision to reinforce the right did not entirely alleviate the situation. The terrain impeded efforts to consolidate positions on the high ground. Underbrush on the eastern part of the hill mass was of such density and height as to limit visibility to a few yards and render movement slow. The natural growth obscured terrain features and made it difficult for troops to identify their map locations and maintain contact with adjacent units. The incline of the hill slope, inadequate trails, and entangling thickets made laborious the task of bringing tanks and antitank guns forward.³²

Evacuation of the wounded and supply of the forward troops were haz-

³⁰ 90th Div G-3 Jnl, 0255, 7 Jul.

³¹ 90th Div G-3 Jnl, 2330, 6 Jul; Lt Col Charles H. Taylor's Notes on Mont Castre, ML-1071.

³⁰ *Seventh Army KTB (Draft)*, 5 Jul.

ardous because obscure trails as well as the main routes were mined and because many bypassed or infiltrating Germans still held out in rear areas. The understrength infantry battalions were short of ammunition, water, and food. Seriously wounded soldiers waited hours for transportation to medical installations. One regiment could hardly spare guards or rations for a hundred German prisoners. Vehicles attempting to proceed forward came under small arms and artillery fire. Much of the resupply and evacuation was accomplished by hand-carry parties that used tanks as cargo carriers as far as they could go, then proceeded on foot. A typical battalion described itself as "in pretty bad shape. Getting low on am and carrying it by hand. Enemy coming around from all sides; had 3 tks with them. Enemy Arty bad. Ours has been giving good support. No report from [the adjacent] 1st Bn."³³ General Landrum relieved one regimental commander, who was physically and mentally exhausted. About the same time the other was evacuated for wounds.

Rain, which began again during the evening of 6 July, added to General Landrum's concern. Conscious of the enemy's prior knowledge of the terrain and his skillful use of local counterattack at night as a weapon of defense, General Landrum drew on the regiment engaged in the corridor to shift a battalion, less one rifle company, to reinforce Mont Castre and alerted his engineers for possible commitment as infantry.

³³ 90th Div G-3 Jnl, 2340, 6 Jul; Engr Ops, 2000, 5 Jul, 90th Div G-3 Jnl File; 315th Engr Combat Bn Jnl, 1530, 6 Jul, and 0020, 7 Jul; 358th Inf Jnl, 7 Jul.

General Landrum's anxiety was justified, for the enemy counterattacked repeatedly during the dark and rainy night, but on the morning of 7 July the 90th Division still possessed Hill 122 and the northeast portion of the ridge. One battalion summed up the action by reporting that it was "a bit apprehensive" but had "given no ground."³⁴

Continuing rain, deep mud, and the difficulty of defining the enemy front hindered further attempts on 7 July to consolidate positions on Mont Castre. Judging the hold on the high ground still to be precarious, General Landrum placed all three lettered companies of the engineer battalion into the line that evening.³⁵ With the division reconnaissance troops patrolling the north edge of the Prairies Marécageuses de Gorges to prevent a surprise attack against the division left flank and rear, one battalion of the 357th Infantry, less a rifle company, remained the sole combat element not committed. During the night of 7 July General Landrum held onto this battalion, undecided whether the situation on Mont Castre was more critical than that which had developed during the past few days in the corridor on the left.

In the corridor, Colonel Barth's 357th Infantry had first tried to advance along the eastern base of Mont Castre on the morning of 5 July. Shelling the regimental command post, the Germans delayed the attack for an hour and a half. When the fire subsided, Colonel Barth sent a battalion of infantry in a column of companies, supported by

³⁴ 90th Div G-3 Jnl, 0425, 7 Jul.

³⁵ 90th Div Sitrep 58, 8 Jul; 315th Engr Combat Bn Jnl, Jul.

tanks, toward the hamlet of Beaucoudray, the first regimental objective.

Between the regimental line of departure and Beaucoudray, a distance of about a mile, a tar road marked the axis of advance along a corridor bordered on the east by encroaching swamps, on the west by a flat, grassy meadow at the foot of Mont Castre. Near Beaucoudray, where the ruins of a fortified castle indicated that the terrain was tactically important a thousand years earlier, a slight ground elevation enhanced the German defense. The position on the knoll was tied in with the forces on Mont Castre.

Aided by artillery, infantry and tanks entered the corridor on 5 July, knocked out a German self-propelled gun, and moved to within 1,000 yards of Beaucoudray before hostile artillery and mortar fire halted further advance. With inadequate space for the commitment of additional troops, the battalion in the corridor sought cover in the hedgerows while the enemy poured fire on the men. A platoon of 4.2-inch chemical mortars in support became disorganized and returned to the rear.

On 6 July, early morning mist and, later, artillery and mortar smoke shells enabled a rifle company to advance through Beaucoudray and outpost the hamlet.³⁶ This displacement created room for part of the support battalion. While two rifle companies north of Beaucoudray covered by fire, two other companies advanced several hundred yards south of the village. The result gave Colonel Barth good positions in the corridor—with three rifle companies

³⁶ The 357th Inf AAR, Jul, contains the following account in detail.

south of Beaucoudray, two immediately north of Beaucoudray, and one at the entrance to the corridor, the regiment at last was ready to drive toward the division objective.

The achievement was actually deceptive. The troops were in a defile and in vulnerable positions. As nightfall approached and with it the increasing danger of counterattack, Colonel Barth moved his regimental antitank guns well to the front. His defense lost depth when General Landrum decided to move the battalion that constituted Barth's regimental reserve to reinforce the Mont Castre sector. Fortunately, Landrum left one company of the battalion in position north of the corridor as a token regimental reserve.

The Germans, meanwhile, had reinforced their positions in the la Haye-du-Puits sector with the *15th Parachute Regiment* and had been making hurried attempts since 5 July to commit part of the *2d SS Panzer Division*, the last of the *Seventh Army* reserve, in the same sector. To maintain their principal defenses, which were excellent, and allow reinforcements to enter them, the Germans had to remove the threat of encirclement that Colonel Barth's 357th Infantry posed in the corridor. Remnants of the *77th Division* therefore prepared an attack to be launched from the reverse slope of Mont Castre.³⁷

At 2315, 6 July, enemy artillery and mortar fire struck the right flank of the U.S. units in the corridor as a prelude to an attack by infantry and tanks. The American antitank weapons deployed generally to the front and south were for the most part ineffec-

³⁷ *Seventh Army KTB (Draft)*, 5-7 Jul.

tive.³⁸ One of the three rifle companies south of Beaucoudray fell back on the positions of a company north of the village. The other company north of Beaucoudray fell back and consolidated with the company at the entrance to the corridor. The six rifle companies of the two battalions became three two-company groups, two of them—those immediately north and south of Beaucoudray—in close combat with the enemy. Fused together by the pressure of the German attack, the consolidated two-company units inside the corridor fought through a rainy, pitch-black night to repel the enemy. When morning came the group north of the village appeared to be in no serious danger, but the group south of Beaucoudray had been surrounded and cut off.

To rescue the isolated group, Colonel Barth on 7 July mounted an attack by another rifle company supported by two platoons of medium tanks. Despite heavy casualties from mortar fire, the infantry reached the last hedgerow at the northern edge of Beaucoudray. There, the company commander committed his supporting tanks. A moment later the commander was struck by enemy fire. As the tanks moved up, the Germans launched a small counter-attack against the right flank. By this time all commissioned and noncommissioned officers of the company had been either killed or wounded. Deprived of leadership, the infantrymen and tankers fell back across the muddy fields. Difficulties of reorganizing under continuing enemy fire prevented further attempts to relieve the encircled group that afternoon.

In quest of ammunition, a small party of men from the isolated group reached safety after traversing the swamp, but the battalion commander to whom they reported deemed the return trip too hazardous to authorize their return. In the early evening, radio communication with the surrounded companies ceased. Shortly afterward a lone messenger, after having made his way through the swampy *praieres*, reported that one company had surrendered after enemy tanks had overrun its command post. Although Colonel Barth made his reserve company available for a night attack to relieve any survivors, the ineptitude of a battalion commander kept the effort from being made.

Sounds of battle south of Beaucoudray ceased shortly after daylight on 8 July. When six men, who had escaped through the swamp, reported the bulk of both companies captured or killed, Barth canceled further rescue plans.³⁹ Apprehensive of German attempts to exploit the success, he formed his regimental cooks and clerks into a provisional reserve.

After five days of combat the 90th Division had advanced about four miles at a cost of over 2,000 casualties, a loss that reduced the infantry companies to skeleton units. Though this was a high price, not all of it reflected inexperience and lack of organization. The division had tried to perform a difficult mission in well-organized and stubbornly defended terrain. The German defenders were of equal, perhaps superior numbers—approximately 5,600 front-line combat-effective troops of the 91st, 265th, 77th,

³⁸ 357th Inf Jnl, 16 Jul.

³⁹ The Germans took 250 men and 5 officers prisoners. *Seventh Army KTB (Draft)*, 8 Jul.