

flame-throwing British tanks, the division eventually was forced to give way. On the evening of 8 July, Rommel and Eberbach decided to prepare to evacuate Caen. They began by directing that all heavy weapons be moved across the Orne River, which flows through the city.<sup>7</sup>

The Luftwaffe field division lost 75 percent of its infantrymen and all of its battalion commanders in those units in contact with the British. No longer able to fight as an independent unit, the division was attached to the *21st Panzer Division*. The *12th SS Panzer Division* lost twenty medium tanks, several 88-mm. pieces, all its antitank guns, and a high percentage of its troops. All together, Rommel estimated losses as the equivalent of four battalions of men. Eberbach moved the *1st SS Panzer Division* to positions southeast of Caen to forestall a British breakthrough, but Kluge, by refusing to permit its commitment, accepted the eventual loss of Caen.<sup>8</sup>

On the morning of 9 July British and Canadian troops entered Caen from the flanks and reached the Orne River. The bridges across the river had been destroyed or were blocked by rubble, and there the troops halted.<sup>9</sup>

The Allied ground commander, General Montgomery, had not moved much

closer toward the Breton ports, he had not gained much maneuver space, nor had he captured all of Caen. But he had inflicted heavy losses on the Germans. With *Panzer Lehr* moving to the *Seventh Army* sector to counter the breakthrough threatened by American troops between the Taute and the Vire, *Panzer Group West*, after meeting the British attack, was in difficult straits.

On 10 July Montgomery directed the British Second Army to drive south between Caumont and Caen in order to broaden the beachhead and open lateral routes of communication. Subsequently, the army was also to advance across the Orne River at Caen toward Falaise, if it could do so "without undue losses," in order to position its armor for a drive in strength farther south or toward the Seine. The First U.S. Army was to continue its offensive to the south.<sup>10</sup>

Vitaly interested in maneuver room and the Breton ports, General Bradley had been attempting to move out of the Cotentin swamps to dry land along the Coutances-Caumont line, where he could mount an attack toward Brittany. But after nearly a week of bitter fighting, both the VIII and the VII Corps on the army right seemed to be halted, and the XIX Corps had been unable to develop and extend its bridgehead between the Taute and the Vire. Since the Germans were defending with unexpected determination, making excellent use of the terrain, and inflicting considerable losses, prospects of continuing a frontal attack along the well-defined corridors leading through the Cotentin

<sup>7</sup> OB WEST KTB, Anlagen 536 and 537.

<sup>8</sup> Conf, Rommel and Eberbach, 2100, 8 Jul, and Telecon, Rommel and Gause, 1115, 9 Jul, Pz Gp West KTB; Telecons, Rommel to Kluge, 0655, 9 Jul, Speidel to Blumentritt, 0950, 9 Jul, Eberbach to Tempelhoff, 0910, 11 Jul, AGp B KTB; Eberbach to Rommel, 10 Jul, Pz Gp W KTB, Anlage 104; Map dated 10 Jul, OKW Wfst Op (H), Lage West, Stand 9.VII.44; OB WEST KTB, 9 Jul.

<sup>9</sup> Ltr, Eisenhower to Montgomery, 10 Jul, SGS SHAEF File 381, Opn OVERLORD, I (a).

<sup>10</sup> 21 AGp Dir, M-510, 10 Jul; Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, p. 120.



BRITISH TROOPS clearing away rubble in Caen, 9 July.

marshes appeared to assure only a repetition of painful progress at prohibitive cost. Getting to the first objective, the Coutances–Caumont line, would so weaken the army that a delay would have to preface a subsequent effort to get to Brittany.

Searching for a different way to gain the Coutances–Caumont line, General Bradley began to consider that a powerful attack on a very narrow front might dissolve the hedgerow stalemate. Yet before he could mass forces on a narrow front, he had to get at least partially out of the Cotentin lowlands. He decided

that ground near the Lessay–St. Lô–Caumont highway might serve his purposes. A compromise objective, it would perhaps give sufficient dry land for the attack to the Coutances–Caumont line.

While General Bradley was bringing his idea to maturity, the slow and painful advance through the hedgerows continued.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Toward Lessay*

After five days of attack in July, Gen-

<sup>11</sup> Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 329; FUSA Opns Instrs, 8 Jul.

eral Middleton's VIII Corps had moved only to the high ground near la Haye-du-Puits. General Wyche's 79th Division, on the right, occupied most of the Montgardon ridge; General Ridgway's 82d Airborne Division had taken the Poterie ridge in the corps center; and General Landrum's 90th Division, on the left, held precarious positions on the northeast portion of Mont Castre. The infantry divisions were to have met just south of la Haye-du-Puits to pinch out the airborne troops and allow them to return to England, but by the evening of 7 July the divisions on the flanks were still more than three miles apart. (*Map II*) They had each sustained casualties of close to 15 percent of original strength. To give the attack impetus, General Middleton committed the newly arrived 8th Division.

To make room for the new unit, General Middleton redrew the division boundaries. He restricted the 79th Division to a narrow sector along the west coast of the Cotentin, where it was to perform a clearing mission as far south as the Ay River estuary. He reoriented the 90th Division from a south by southwest direction to an axis of advance generally south by southeast; at the Sèves River near Périers the 90th was to be pinched out on its left by the VII Corps in the Carentan-Périers isthmus and on its right by the 8th Division. To the fresh troops of the 8th Division, General Middleton gave the mission of making the main effort of the corps: moving to the Ay River between Lessay and Périers and securing a bridgehead over the river.<sup>12</sup>

Although la Haye-du-Puits was in the

8th Division zone, General Middleton directed the 79th Division to take it, probably because the 79th had already started the job.<sup>13</sup> The town was held by only about 150 Germans, who lacked antitank weapons but defended with machine guns, small arms, and mortars. Virtually surrounded, shelled almost constantly by artillery and tanks, the Germans had mined the approaches to the town and refused to capitulate. The 79th therefore made a thorough plan of attack; artillery, armor, and tank destroyers were to support an assault battalion of infantry.

Late in the afternoon of 8 July, as heavy fire crashed overhead, infantrymen moved toward German mine fields strung with wire in checkerboard patterns about a foot off the ground. As the riflemen tried to high-step over the wire, enemy mortar bursts bracketed them. Machine gunners in trenches that the Americans had not even suspected of being in existence opened fire. Taking many casualties, three rifle companies advanced. Engineers placed their white tapes across mine-swept areas, while bulldozers cut avenues through the hedgerows for the supporting tanks. The infantry reached the northwest edge of la Haye-du-Puits by evening. One rifle company by then was without commissioned officers, but its men methodically cleared the railroad yards and inched toward the center of town. After a bloody house cleaning by the light of flaming buildings, the 79th Division turned la Haye-du-Puits

<sup>12</sup> VIII Corps FO 7, 7 Jul, and AAR, Jul.

<sup>13</sup> 79th Div Telecon, 2330, 7 Jul, VIII Corps G-3 Jnl File; Msg, 28th Inf to 8th Div, 0705, 8 Jul, 8th Div G-3 Jnl and File.

over to the 8th Division at noon, 9 July.<sup>14</sup>

Except for taking la Haye-du-Puits, the VIII Corps made no advance during 8 and 9 July. The temporary stalemate resulted from the last German attempts to retake the heights near the town—the Montgardon ridge and Mont Castre. Although the Germans failed to reach the high ground, they did prevent progress toward Lessay-Périers.

At the time it appeared that the failure to move for forty-eight hours rested squarely on the 8th Division, which was exhibiting the usual faults of a unit new to combat. Commanded by Maj. Gen. William C. McMahon, the 8th was rated one of the best-trained U.S. divisions in the European theater. Nevertheless, hesitation, inertia, and disorganization marked its first attempts to advance. Inaccurate reporting of map locations, large numbers of stragglers, and poor employment of attached units were usual symptoms of inexperience, but the division also demonstrated a particular ineptness in the realms of organization and control. When the 90th Division insisted that a regimental commander take responsibility for a sector assigned to him, he reported, "We explained we could not do so tonite or tomorrow morning. Must have time." After the division had struggled for a day to attain a measure of organization, a neighboring unit noted, "Everyone was more or less confused. . . . They didn't seem to be operating according to any particular plan." The deputy army commander, Lt. Gen. Courtney H.

Hodges, visited the division commander and learned that "the 8th had made no known progress, for reasons not very clear."<sup>15</sup>

The commitment of the division coincided with vigorous local counterattacks launched by the enemy. Nevertheless, even after the enemy was repelled or contained, the subordinate units failed to press forward. General McMahon confessed more than once that he did not know exactly what was holding up his troops.<sup>16</sup> The solution he applied was to relieve the commanders of both committed regiments. About the same time the energetic assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Nelson M. Walker, was killed as he attempted to organize an infantry battalion for an attack.<sup>17</sup> Finally, four days after committing the 8th Division, General Middleton relieved the commander.

Brig. Gen. Donald A. Stroh, formerly assistant commander of the 9th Division, assumed command. Advocating side-slipping and flanking movements, he committed his reserve regiment immediately in hope of gaining his objective quickly. Without special hedgerow training, the division learned through its own errors how to solve the problems of attack and soon began to manifest that steady if unspectacular advance that was feasible in the hedgerows. The troops moved with increasing confidence, maintaining momentum by by-

<sup>14</sup> 314th Infantry Regiment, *Through Combat*, p. 22; Wyche Diary; 79th Div AAR, Jul; VIII Corps G-3 Jnl File, 7 and 8 Jul; 8th Div G-3 Jnl, 8 and 9 Jul.

<sup>15</sup> 8th Div G-3 Jnl, 8 Jul, and entry 2400, 9 Jul; 90th Div Msg, 1105, 8 Jul, and VIII Corps Msg, 0940, 9 Jul, VIII Corps G-3 Jnl and File; CI 47 (8th Div); 357th Inf Jnl, entry 1017, 9 Jul; Sylvan Diary, 10 Jul.

<sup>16</sup> 8th Div G-3 Jnl, entries 1810, 8 Jul, and 1540, 9 Jul.

<sup>17</sup> General Walker was posthumously awarded the DSC.

passing small isolated enemy groups.<sup>18</sup> Despite continuing resistance, the division occupied the ridge overlooking the Ay River on 14 July and began to reconnoiter for crossing sites.

The 79th Division, which had attempted to advance south of the Montgardon ridge, had sustained heavy casualties and had moved not at all during 8 and 9 July.<sup>19</sup> A typical rifle company had one officer and 94 men on 7 July, only 47 men two days later.

When German pressure lessened on 10 July, General Wyche again moved the division toward the Ay estuary, a blue blob of water shimmering tantalizingly three miles away in the midst of the green lowland. Jockeying his subordinate units in a series of apparently unrelated moves, short jabs that took advantage of local enemy weakness, General Wyche pressed his advance down the terrain that sloped toward Lessay. A fortunate mistake that occurred in the late afternoon of 11 July facilitated progress. Bombing inadvertently 4,000 yards inside the safety line, American planes rendered unexpected close support. As a result, the division easily took Angoville-sur-Ay. The re-

maining distance to the Ay River was marked by decreasing resistance.

The 79th Division reached the Ay River on 14 July. Although Lessay remained in German hands, General Wyche had cleared the coastal sector between la Haye-du-Puits and the estuary. The effort might have seemed easy in retrospect, but it had cost close to 2,000 men.<sup>20</sup>

On the corps left, the 90th Division, which had been brutally handled by the Germans while taking Mont Castre and trying to push through the Beaucoudray corridor, clung doggedly to positions on the northeast portion of Mont Castre. As the enemy launched strong and repeated attacks on 8 and 9 July, General Landrum reinforced his infantry not only by committing his engineers but also by forming and employing miscellaneous groups of cooks, drivers, and clerks, as well as dismounted cavalry, to guard lines of communications and fill gaps in the infantry positions. To perform the normal engineer functions in the division area, the corps temporarily attached one of its battalions to the 90th Division. The 82d Airborne Division also helped. One enterprising officer set up a consolidated observation post in a château stable tower and on 8 July massed the fires of his regimental mortars on a counterattack in the 90th Division zone. This was a last burst of exuberance for the airborne unit; three days later the troops moved to the beach for transport to England.<sup>21</sup>

As the German pressure diminished

<sup>18</sup> VIII Corps Msg, 1430, 12 Jul, 8th Div Msg, 1800, 12 Jul, and Jnl, entry 1900, 12 Jul, 8th Div G-3 Jnl File; CI 47 (8th Div). Capt. Harry L. Gentry, an artillery officer who took command of leaderless infantry soldiers during an attack, 1st Lt. William L. Pryor, who singlehandedly covered the withdrawal of his company, and Pfc. Leo T. Zingale were awarded the DSC for their actions on 10 July. Pfc. Walter S. Wanielista, for his actions on 11 July, and Sgt. Harry Weiss (posthumously), for his singlehanded capture of a pillbox on 13 July, also received DSC's.

<sup>19</sup> T/5 John G. Prentice of the 125th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, for remaining in his tank though it had been set ablaze by an enemy shell and continuing to fire his gun until killed by a second direct hit, was awarded the DSC.

<sup>20</sup> 79th Div AAR, Jul; Wyche Diary; FUSA Daily Estimated Loss Rpt.

<sup>21</sup> 315th Engr C Bn Jnl, Jul; 82d Abn Div AAR, Jun and Jul.

on 10 July, the depleted regiment on the 90th Division left, the 357th Infantry, attacked in the Beaucoudray corridor. Enemy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire brought disorganization at once. The previous loss of commissioned and noncommissioned officers made effective control difficult. When two rifle companies broke ranks and fled, the regiment canceled further offensive effort for the day.

At the same time, a battalion of the 358th Infantry pushed through the dense thickets of Mont Castre and put to rout platoon-sized groups of Germans at close range. In the late afternoon the leading company with the help of six tanks reached the edge of the woods and the south slope of Mont Castre. As they left the concealment of the trees, German self-propelled guns opened fire on them. Flat-trajectory shells destroyed the tanks immediately and forced the infantry company, reduced to one officer and twenty-four men, back into the forest.<sup>22</sup>

Despite this local success, the Germans at the end of 10 July at last virtually abandoned Mont Castre. On the following day the 358th Infantry descended the south slope of the hill mass against little opposition.<sup>23</sup> The situation eased; General Landrum relieved the division engineers of their infantry role. On 12 July the 357th Infantry moved through Beaucoudray against no more than perfunctory opposition.

By this time the division strength was so diminished that small German delaying groups exacted proportionately higher prices for local objectives. No company totaled more than a hundred men. Operating as a single battle group of but 122 men and 4 officers, the rifle components of the 3d Battalion, 358th Infantry, suffered 40 casualties, including all of the officers, at a crossroad ambush on 12 July.<sup>24</sup>

Reduced ranks and fatigue, the hedge-row terrain, and tactical, supply, and communication difficulties combined to deny the 90th Division a rapid advance in pursuit of a withdrawing enemy. It was 14 July when the division reached the Sèves River and established contact with the VII Corps on the left. General Landrum was finally at his objective, three miles north of Périers, but the move across the few miles from Mont Castre had cost almost 2,000 casualties.<sup>25</sup>

After twelve days and over 10,000 casualties, the VIII Corps had moved across seven miles of hedgerows to the banks of the Ay and the Sèves River. Early hope that the Germans would break quickly had long been dispelled. The enemy had given ground only grudgingly. Not until 10 July had the Germans weakened even slightly. Not until 13 July had they begun a genuine withdrawal to positions south of the Ay and the Sèves.

For all the lack of encouragement from an American viewpoint, Choltitz,

<sup>22</sup> Taylor Notes on Mont Castre, ML-1071. Lt. Col. Jacob W. Bealke, Jr., and Capt. John W. Marsh received the DSC, the latter posthumously, for their actions this day.

<sup>23</sup> Pfc. Theodore G. Wagner, who crawled forward alone to destroy a key machine gun emplacement with grenades, was awarded the DSC.

<sup>24</sup> 1st Lt. Hubert G. Miller, a company commander who though wounded took command of a leaderless battalion, and Lt. Col. Frederick H. Loomis, who led four tanks and ten men in a successful attack, received the DSC.

<sup>25</sup> 90th Div AAR, Jul; FUSA Daily Estimated Loss Rpts, Jul.

the *LXXXIV Corps* commander opposing the VIII Corps, had been increasingly concerned. He had suffered a minor brain concussion, and what was worse, he had seen all the reserves in his sector committed by 12 July, even the new arrivals from Brittany. The *Panzer Lehr* commander had threatened simply to take off with his tanks if he did not get reinforcements. Without reinforcements to send, Kluge on 13 July authorized the corps to fall back to the south banks of the two rivers. The withdrawal begun that evening was gradual and orderly.<sup>26</sup>

For the Americans, the Lessay-Périers line was only about one third of the distance to Coutances, the original VIII Corps objective. When the grinding attack through the hedgerows ceased, at least temporarily, on 14 July, Coutances, fourteen miles to the south, seemed as unattainable for the moment as Berlin. Yet a new army operation was being contemplated, an operation hopefully designed to gain Coutances more easily than by continuing a purely frontal assault.

#### *Toward Périers*

From a one-division limited objective attack, the VII Corps effort had become a two-division attack in the Carentan-Périers isthmus. By 8 July the 83d and 4th Divisions had made such small gains, despite strenuous action, that there was still no space to employ the available 9th Division. The narrow zone of operations and the terrain had inhibited

maneuver. Numerous streams and marshes and the hedgerows had broken large-scale attacks into small, local engagements. A resourceful enemy—the *6th Parachute Regiment*, more and more units of the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division*, and artillery and tank elements of the *2d SS Panzer Division*—had felled trees to block the roads, used roaming tanks in mobile defense, and covered crossroads with devastating fire. Though depleted and battered by superior numbers, the Germans had shuffled their units skillfully and continued to make expert use of the terrain. They had revealed no signs of cracking suddenly under the weight of the corps attack.

Because of improved weather conditions, over a hundred planes of the IX Tactical Air Command on 8 July attacked along the VII Corps front only a few hundred feet ahead of a front line marked by artillery. The assistance had small effect. Even more discouraging was evidence that the Germans were bringing more tanks into the Carentan-Périers isthmus. Enemy patrols, each composed of a tank and fifteen to thirty infantrymen, probed the front and made local penetrations, two of which overran battalion aid stations of the 83d Division.

The forward positions of the corps were about five miles below Carentan and still a mile short of Sainteny. Twelve air miles due south of Sainteny was the final corps objective, a portion of the high ground extending generally from Coutances to Caumont. At the rate of advance made the preceding week, the final objective was at least a month and a half distant, but General

<sup>26</sup> Telecons, Pemsel to Speidel, 1315, 13 Jul, and Choltitz to Pemsel, 1930, 13 Jul, *Seventh Army* Tel Msgs; Telecons, Speidel and Zimmerman, 1635 and 1700, 13 Jul, *AGP B KTB*; *OB WEST KTB*, 13 Jul, and *Anlagen 611* and *612*.

Collins kept his interest focused on it. The 4th Division was to secure high ground near Périers, then move south to cut the Lessay-Périers highway. The 83d Division was to gain the west bank of the Taute River, cross the stream, and move south to cut the Périers-St. Lô road. The 9th Division would have to be employed outside the Caretan-Périers isthmus.<sup>27</sup>

On the right (western) half of the Caretan-Périers isthmus, General Barton was finally able on 8 July to bring all three regiments of his 4th Division into the sector available to him, but only the 22d Infantry (Col. Charles T. Lanham) was directed toward Périers. Deployed on the narrowest portion of the isthmus, squeezed by the Prairies Marécageuses de Gorges on the right, the regiment was on the verge of leaving the narrow neck of land that ends near Sainteny. Even this prospect meant little, for the area southwest of Sainteny offered small hope of rapid advance. Dry ground suitable for military operations was nonexistent. The sluggish Sèves and Holerotte Rivers were swollen with rain, transforming the six miles of approach to Périers into a desolate bog scarcely distinguishable from swamp. The division not only had to fight the soggy crust of the land and the high water table, it also had to cross innumerable drainage ditches, small streams, and inundated marshes in an area without a single hard-surfaced road. The terrain alone would have been a serious obstacle; defended by Germans it was almost impassable.

Restricted by inadequate maneuver

space, hindered by soft marshland, handicapped by the difficulties of observation, General Barton was unable to concentrate the power of his infantry and supporting arms in a sustained effort. Even the four battalions organic to the division artillery and the additional attached battalion of medium artillery were rarely able to mass their fires effectively. Because of the compartmentalizing effect of the terrain, General Barton attacked with regimental combat teams that pursued quite independent actions. Some measure of co-ordination in the attack could be attempted at the regimental level; more often it was feasible only at the battalion echelon.

While the 22d Infantry fought through the narrowest neck of the isthmus and the 12th rested in reserve, the 8th was trying to clear in a slow and methodical operation the small area on the division right rear, the area just north of the corridor and adjacent to the Prairies Marécageuses de Gorges. Four separate attacks since 8 July had failed. But on 10 July the Germans launched a counterattack; with enemy soldiers in the open for the first time, American artillery and mortar fire decimated their ranks. Striking quickly, the 8th Infantry caught the enemy off balance. Infantry and tanks swept the area, collecting 49 prisoners, burying 480 German dead, and incurring 4 casualties in return. On 11 July the 4th Division was ready to add the 8th Infantry to its effort toward Périers and attempt to blast through the corridor just north of Sainteny.

Still there was no sudden propulsion forward. The 22d Infantry moved into swampy terrain on the right for about

<sup>27</sup> VII Corps AAR, Jul, FO 5, 9 Jul (and Annex 2).



two miles against diminishing opposition; patrols crossed the Holerotte and the Sèves Rivers on 11 and 12 July and sought to make contact with the 90th Division, which was descending along the western edge of the great marsh. The other two regiments in columns of battalions fought toward Périers against strong resistance. Aided by occasional dive-bombers during the infrequent days of good weather, the division had advanced about two miles below Saint-eny by 15 July. At the end of that day, still four miles short of Périers, General Barton received the order to halt.

The 4th Division was to be relieved and sent into reserve. In ten days of combat it had sustained approximately 2,300 casualties, including three battalion commanders and nine rifle company commanders.<sup>28</sup> Progress at this cost was prohibitive. The division was to rest for a vital role in the forthcoming First Army operation hopefully designed to end frontal attack.

Hampered by similar conditions, the 83d Division on the left in the meantime had been trying to advance south along the road that crosses the isthmus laterally to the Taute River. The division was to secure the western bank of the river where a mile-long causeway traverses the Taute River flats; it also had to secure its original objective, Sainteny, which was now on its extreme right flank.

The 83d Division's major problem at first centered around German tanks. Increasing numbers of them were becoming apparent, not in concerted offensive action, but individually, backing up the defensive line. The 83d Division

used tank, artillery, tank destroyer, and bazooka fire effectively to destroy them. Nevertheless, so many tanks were in evidence that subordinate commanders found it difficult to think beyond the necessity of eliminating them. Weakened by attrition and fatigue, the units failed to press toward their objectives even after eliminating the tanks that barred the way.

Thinking in the broader terms of taking the main objectives, General Macon exercised close supervision. When the 330th Infantry failed to advance during the morning of 9 July, he could see no reason for it.<sup>29</sup> Just some tanks, the regimental commander explained, but he had a plan to eliminate them; just as soon as he accomplished this, his attack would get under way. General Macon suggested that with bazooka teams well forward and tanks in close support the regiment could attack and thereby accomplish both purposes, but the regimental commander insisted that he had to send out the bazookas before he moved his infantry forward.

"If you just send a [small] party down there," General Macon warned, "you will be fooling around all day."

"Yes, sir," the regimental commander agreed. But first he had to make certain that the enemy tanks were destroyed.

General Macon patiently explained that it was "awfully bad for the morale of the troops" to wait in place "hour after hour; you've got to keep moving," he insisted.

When General Macon phoned three

<sup>28</sup> CI 30 (4th Div); 4th Div AAR, Jul.

<sup>29</sup> The following is taken from the telephone messages in the 83d Division G-2, G-3 Journal.

hours later, the regimental commander admitted that progress had been negligible. Aware of how physically and mentally tired all the subordinate commanders were, General Macon made his next move with reluctance. "I'll have to send someone down there to take over," he said. "We have got to take that objective."

Ten minutes later General Ferenbaugh, the assistant division commander, was on his way to assume temporary command of the regiment. That evening General Macon relieved the regimental commander.

The objective was the Taute River west bank, but the 330th failed to reach it on 9 July. The 331st, on the other hand, finally took Sainteny on that day, assisted by several fighter-bombers and by an adjacent unit of the 4th Division. In terms of real estate, the objective had little to offer, for it had been gutted by white phosphorus shells; it was nevertheless an important milestone on the road to Périers.

With the 4th Division assuming the task of driving toward Périers, the 83d Division turned its entire effort to reaching the west bank of the Taute. The immediate objective was the western point of the mile-long Tribehou causeway across the Taute River flats. When reached, the causeway would provide a crossing site for part of the division, which was to join other units that were sweeping the east bank of the Taute. The remainder of the 83d Division was to clear the west bank of the Taute to another causeway and cross there to the east bank.

Continuing toward the west bank of the Taute, the men found that enemy

tanks and assault guns, often dug into the ground and employed as pillboxes, dominated the few trails in the area. Neither dive-bombing nor artillery and tank-destroyer fire appeared to have any effect on them. Although anti-aircraft guns of 90-mm. caliber were brought forward, they too appeared powerless to dislodge or destroy them.<sup>30</sup> Only bazooka teams of infantrymen, approaching by stealth to close range before firing their rockets, were capable of taking out the tanks and assault guns.

Prisoners, who said that cooks and bakers were acting as riflemen, gave the 83d hope that the German defenses were cracking, but the enemy had some butchers too, and optimism vanished as the Germans continued to defend with the skill of trained infantrymen. Nevertheless, at the end of 13 July, the 330th Infantry reached the west bank of the Taute near the causeway. To make the advance, the regiment had destroyed over twenty tanks in four days. On 14 July the 330th Infantry crossed the Tribehou causeway and joined other units in sweeping the east bank of the Taute. The regiment was temporarily detached from 83d Division control.

The remaining two regiments of the 83d attacked to reach the other causeway south of the Tribehou crossing site but made little progress. On 13 July several enemy tanks advanced boldly and sprayed a battalion position with machine gun fire, causing the unit to withdraw from a hard-won objective. Cruising tank-infantry teams surrounded the 3d Battalion, 331st Infantry, that night and isolated 126 men for two days before adjacent units could come for-

<sup>30</sup> VII Corps Msg, 1020, 10 Jul, FUSA G-3 Jnl.