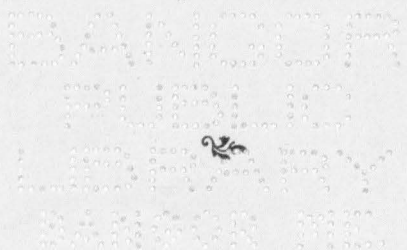


THE BATTLE OF THE RUHR POCKET

A COMBAT NARRATIVE

By

RICHARD A. BRIGGS



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FOREWORD

This book is not intended to be a critical manual for the guidance of those interested in studying military tactics. Nor is it meant to be a glorified novel, or fiction, of an important battle of World War II. This book is being published for the benefit of those individuals, chiefly the infantrymen, tankers, and artillerymen, who fought and defeated the Germans in this great battle. This book will attempt to show to that individual what part his particular unit played in connection with the other units which were all tightening the noose around Mr. Adolph's neck.

All too often a doughboy would take part in what was a decisive battle of the war, or campaign, and come out of the battle with very little knowledge of what he or his unit was trying to accomplish. He likewise had very little knowledge what other friendly divisions, or regiments were doing when his company was busy trying to capture a town, village, or cross roads. The author has spent considerable time at the Adjutant Generals' Army Records Center, in Kansas City, as well as at the Armored School, Fort Knox, in tracking down as far as possible what part each division played in each day's action. Naturally, after 12 years many records have been destroyed. Where official records were lacking, he has talked with many individuals, who took part in the Battle of the Ruhr, to bring each unit's action into its proper perspective.

The "Battle of the Ruhr Pocket" actually took place during the period from April 1 (when the pocket was closed by the junction of the First and Ninth Armies), until about April 19, 1945, when the last resistance took place near the Ruhr River. During this period over 825,000 men were locked in deadly combat. When it was all over some 325,000 Germans were in the Prisoner of War stockades.

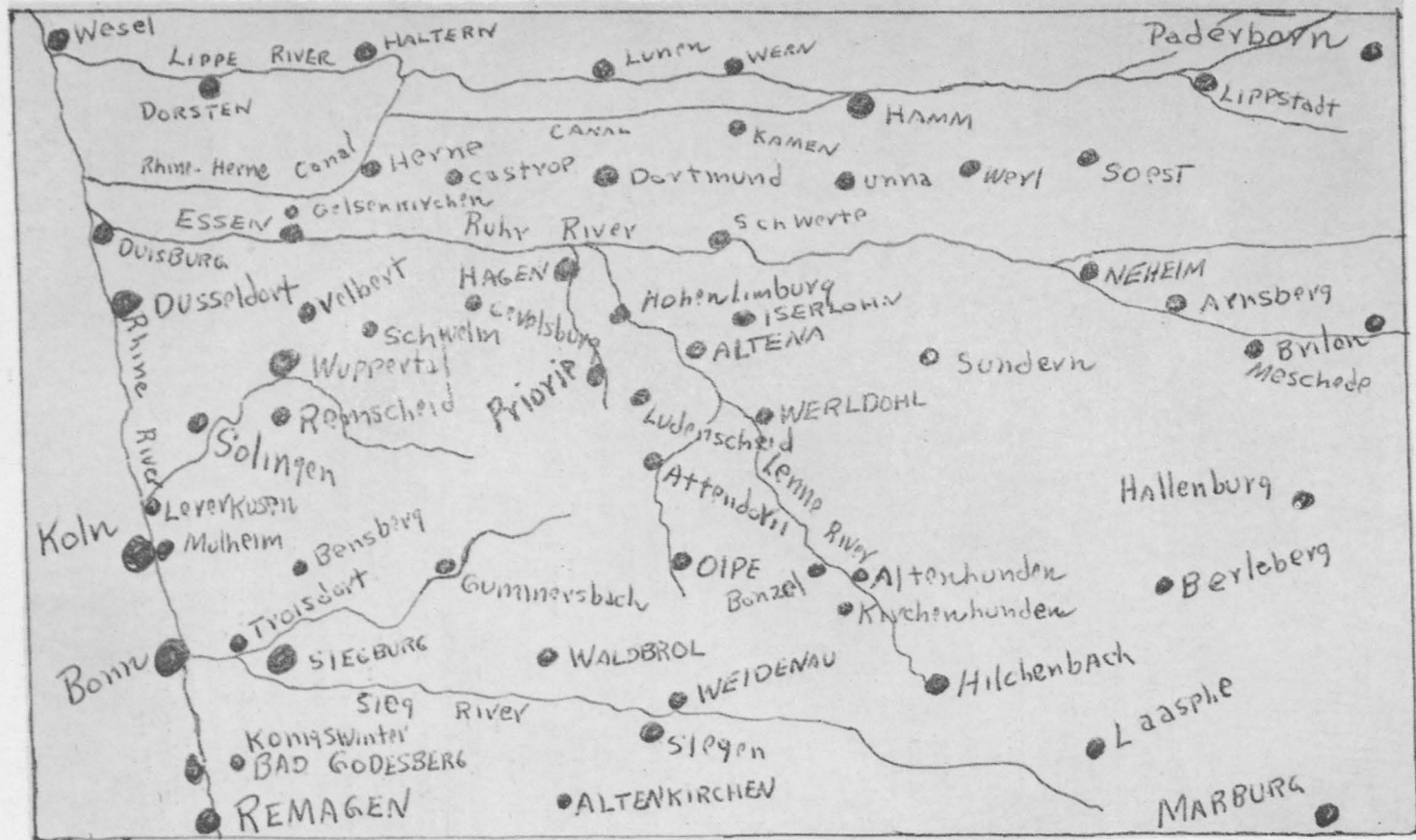
The author, in order to give the reader more of the background and preparation for the battle, actually takes the reader back to the seizure of the Remagan Bridge, and traces each division as it crosses the Rhine and encountered the enemy in what later turned into the greatest pincer movement the world has ever known.

Many books have been published on World War II, but probably none touch on a battle or campaign which was so different from the others than does this book. As you read this volume the publisher hopes you are able to secure a better knowledge of the "Battle of the Ruhr Pocket" as it unfolds before you in the peace and contentment of your home and office.

The author of this book remembers the Ruhr well. He served as a combat infantryman throughout the entire engagement and when asked today what he remembers most about the Ruhr replies;

"Three things—88's, 88's, and more 88's.

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Many large cities dotted the countryside in the Ruhr Pocket.

INTRODUCTION

One month before the end of World War II, one of the most unusual, and yet decisive battles in the history of the world took place. It was known as "The Battle of the Ruhr Pocket".

In this battle some 825,000 men locked in a life and death struggle, and in this engagement the American army came out victorious, and Hitler's once proud Wehrmach came out defeated—annihilated. Years and years from now historians will look back at this great battle with fascinated attention. It will rank with Gettysburg, Stalingrad, and Waterloo as one of the most decisive battles of all times.

Prior to the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket the German army still maintained a strong defense line in the west, as well as on the Russian front. The Germans, even though being forced to retreat behind the Rhine, for an all out defense of the fatherland from the east bank of the river, nevertheless maintained complete control of all units and had a fairly static defense setup to hold the allies across the river.

However this plan was upset in early March 1945 when the 9th Armored Division of the First Army in a bold and surprising move seized the railroad bridge at Remagan before the Germans had a chance to destroy it. At once the 78th and 99th Infantry Divisions were rushed across the bridge and the Americans had a foothold, however feeble it might be, on the east bank of the Rhine.

The demolition officer whose duty it was to destroy the bridge, had his head removed from his body as a result of this great failure, but that did not remedy things one bit as far as the military situation was concerned. Within a few days the First Army was firmly established on the east bank of the Rhine.

Even though the Remagan Bridge was seized in a surprise move, the overall plans for the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket had been planned as far back as 1942, when the Battle of Britain was still going on. While the Luftwaffe showered bombs on London, Coventry, and Southampton, a small planning staff known as COSSAC (Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Command) drew up plans which called for an eventual climax of the European War to take place in a great envelopment battle, which would call for the encirclement and defeat of the Ruhr.

Yes, the overall plans called for an encirclement of the Ruhr sector. Although the locations and actual events took an unexpected turn with the seizure of the Remagan Bridge, these same overall plans drawn up in England in 1942 were used.

As our armies poured across the Rhine at Remagan, British and American units further north, above the Ruhr were pulling at the bits, ready to leap across the Rhine and carry the war deep into the heart of Hitler's homeland. Within a week from the time our forces broke out of the Remagan bridgehead, and our northern group of armies crossed the Rhine at Wesel, a huge pincer movement had been completed and some 325,000 Germans were trapped in the Ruhr pocket.



Thousands of Germans captured in the Remagen bridgehead were walked back to our PW cages before the Lundendorf bridge collapsed.

Never again, after the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket, were the Germans able to establish a defense line whatsoever. In the Battle of the Ruhr, the backbone of Hitler's army was destroyed, and all control of the war was lost for good. There were many other engagements in the European War which were more heatedly contested, but none were as decisive as this battle. After the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket our armies were free to roam the continent as they saw fit, and only scattered resistance could be thrown up against them. The German war machine had truly been destroyed in the "Battle of the Ruhr."

What about the opposition encountered in the Ruhr? Some people refer to it as scattered skirmishes. It may be true that the Germans resorted to a strong-point type of warfare in the Ruhr, but it is interesting to note the following points in regard to the engagement in order to realize the determined opposition that was encountered in the Ruhr.

(1.) The Ninth Army casualty lists for the week of April 3 to April 9 showed a total of 2932 casualties. The following week of April 10 thru April 16 there were 2506 casualties. From the time the Ninth Army entered combat in September, 1944, to the end of the war in Europe, there were only four other weekly periods when the casualties were higher. They were in November, 1944, and February 1945, when the bitter action north of Aachen and the Roer River took place. Besides the total casualties, there were only two weeks when there were more KIA's than there were during the week of April 3-9.

(2.) The tankers suffered unusual losses during this period also. The 740th Tank Battalion, which was attached to the 8th Division and 86th Division, suffered the loss of more tanks in the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket than they did in the Battle of the Ardennes, which was one of the most fierce battles of the war.

(3.) The Ruhr was one of the prime targets of our Air Force from the early days of the war. As this was the center of the industry so necessary to keep the army in the field, it was only natural that the Germans would defend this area from air attack with every means possible. At nearly every village, hamlet, and cross road in the Ruhr was located an anti-aircraft battery, better known as flak guns. The heavy fire encountered from these guns resulted in this area being called by our air force boys as "flak alley." When the ground forces neared the Ruhr, these flak guns were lowered and fired point blank into our combat forces, resulting in heavy losses.

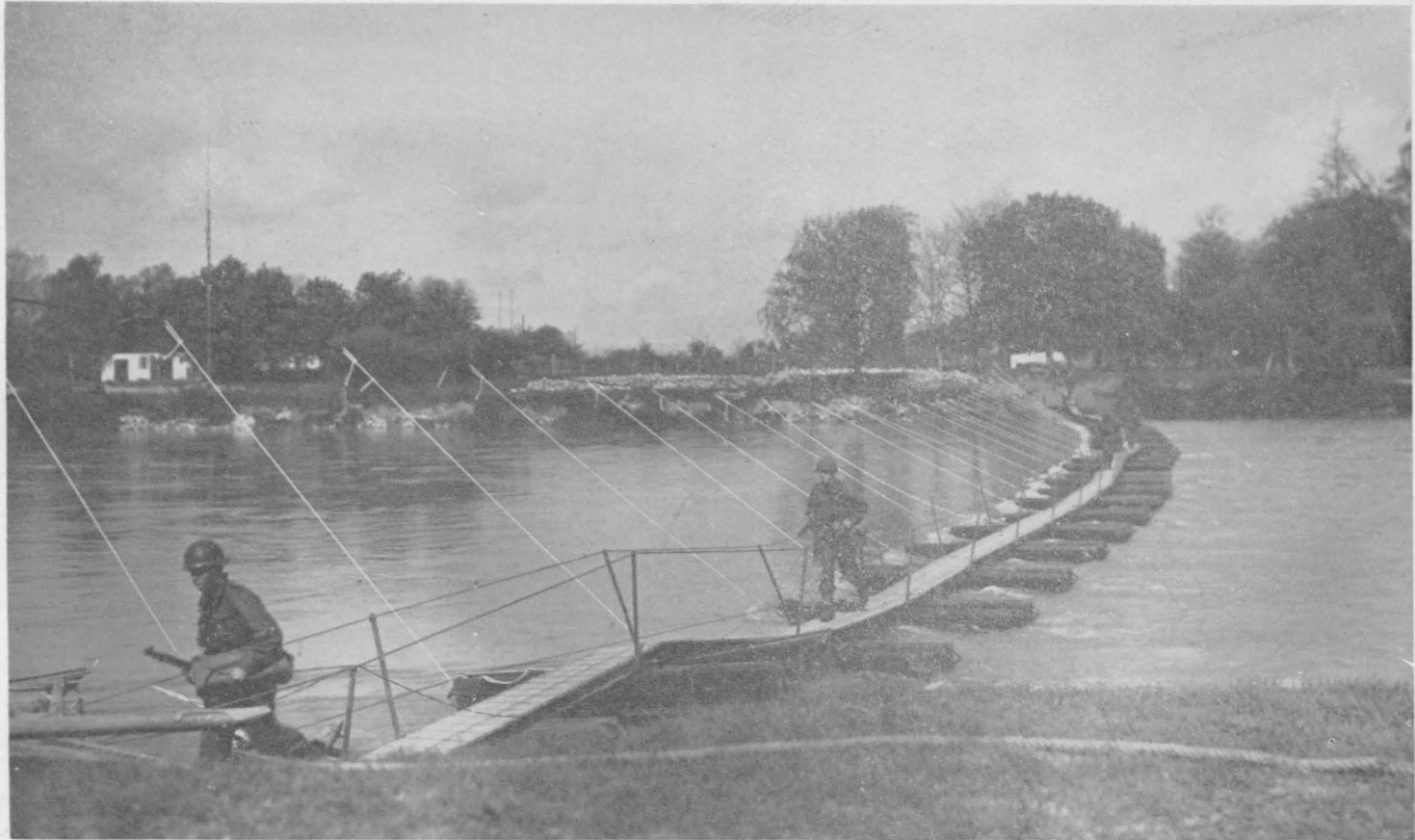
(4.) It is true the Germans did not resort to trench warfare or a solid defense line in the Ruhr, but fell back and centered their defense around these strong points, where these flak batteries were located.

The Battle of the Ruhr Pocket was fiercely fought by the Americans as well as the enemy. Up to this time our GI's had not seen the horror camps, where political prisoners, slave laborers, and prisoners of war were forced to live like rats. But as we over-ran these prisons, and saw with our own eyes what sordid conditions existed in these camps, a new fighting spirit arose in the blood of the American troops. One and all, there came a determination to get this war to an end and punish those responsible for the atrocities so common as we moved along.

The stage was set for the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket in early March 1945, when the First Army seized the prize of the war, the Remagan Bridge. As the few infantry and armored regiments in the bridgehead itself inched forward a foot at a time to secure a few miles of territory, from which to launch an offensive, the other allied armies in the west were likewise planning big things. The British, Canadian and four other American armies had drawn up to the Rhine and only a signal from General Eisenhower was needed before the grand offensive was on.

We shall not dwell on the earlier engagements (such as the crossing of the Roer, the drive across the Cologne plain, and the battle of the Saar,) which indirectly led to the Battle of the Ruhr, in this volume. Their place rightfully belongs in another engagement.

In this volume we shall start with the period about five days after the Remagan Bridge was siezed, when the First Army was preparing to break out of the small bridgehead in which they were compressed. This was the true beginning of the great engagement in which we are interested.



The treadway bridge was used throughout Germany in the forever dangerous crossing of swift, mountain streams.

CHAPTER 1

PRELUDE TO BATTLE

On March 13 the Twelfth Army Group issued a letter of instructions to all field commanders which in effect set the stage for the future operations which resulted in the encirclement of the Ruhr. General Bradley ordered the First Army to proceed with the following missions:

- (1.) Continue to secure the Remagen Bridgehead from a point along the Rhine near Bonn, in an arc thru Buisdorf, along the south bank of the Sieg River, thru Uckerath, Eggert, and Leutesdorf to a point on the Rhine downstream from Koblenz.
- (2.) Defend the west bank of the Rhine River elsewhere from the Ninth Army area in the north to the Third Army area in the south.

At this point the First Army area extended from Worrington, on the Rhine north of Cologne, all the way to Koblenz, where the Third Army sector commenced.

In order to comply with the directive of March 13 issued by General Bradley, the army commander of the First Army, General Hodges, ordered a reshuffling of his divisions, and a general attack.

Operations in the First Army sector were to be conducted as follows:

(1.) The VII CORPS (1st Army) was to consist of the 1st Infantry, 8th Infantry, 78th Infantry, and 104th Infantry Divisions as well as the 3rd Armored Division. This corps was to maintain contact with the 9th Army on the Rhine north of Cologne, defend the west bank of the Rhine from Worrington to Bonn, and attack out of the Remagen Bridgehead northward toward the Sieg River. Thus the VII Corps was to operate on both banks of the Rhine River at the same time.

(2.) The III Corps, consisting of the 9th Infantry Division, 99th Infantry Division and 9th Armored Division. The 7th Armored Division was temporarily attached as Army Reserve.

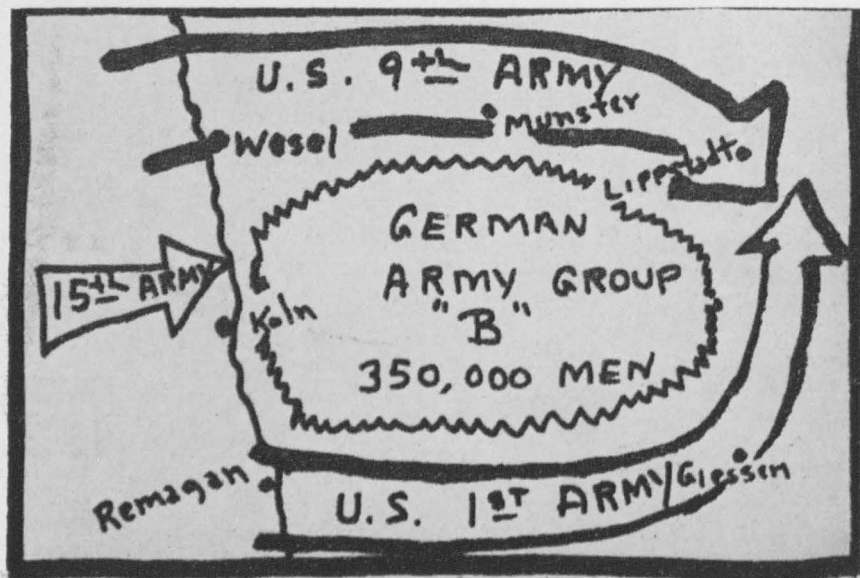
(3.) The V Corps was to maintain defensive positions along the Rhine in the southern sector of the First Army area.

In other words, the First Army was ordered to break out of the bridgehead, but the initial objective did not yet indicate the scope of the attack, nor its accomplishments.

On the morning of March 16 the attack was under way. The VII Corps assumed control of the 78th Infantry Division in the bridgehead area, and the fighting "Lightning" Division continued its attack northward. Konigswinter fell to the 78th Division after an advance of some 2,000 yards downstream along the Rhine. Meanwhile the 9th Division cleared several towns in the central area of the bridgehead, now under III Corps control. The 3rd Armored Division which had been in defensive positions on the west bank of the Rhine near Cologne was

relieved by the 104th Division.

All along the First Army front in the bridgehead area, the infantry and armored units were cracking through the German positions and a breakthrough was in the making. Within a very few days the 78th Division had fought its way through rugged territory to within sight of the banks of the Sieg River. The veteran 1st Division attacked through Wiessen and Betzdorf and were in a position to later defend



Three American armies were used to liquidate the Ruhr Pocket.

a perimeter on the south rim of the Ruhr Pocket. The 8th Division had relieved the 104th Division at Cologne and the Timberwolves moved into the VII sector of the bridgehead. In late March the 8th Division was relieved by the 86th Division and the 8th Division likewise moved into the bridgehead.

The American First Army rolled into a full "Blitzkrieg" about March 24, and within a few days American tank columns had raced all the way to the vicinity of Paderborn and Lippstadt where a junction was made with the Ninth Army. With this junction the Ruhr Pocket was born, or we should say hatched.

Spearheading this attack and the linkup with the Ninth Army was VII Corps' 3rd Armored Division, under the command of General Maurice Rose. Fighting in close contact with the 3rd Armored Division was the veteran 104th Division. These two units carried the ball the entire distance from the Rhine to Paderborn. As these divisions raced into the north German plain, other divisions turned off the main route of advance and slowly put up a "perimeter" defensive position surrounding a large number of Nazis known to be trapped in the Ruhr.

The Breakout From the Bridgehead

By March 20 the First Army was poised for a breakthrough. The Remagan Bridgehead Battle, for all practical purposes was over. American forces in the bridgehead were being built up at a rapid pace.

Statements by the hundreds of German prisoners now being interrogated by intelligence teams continued to describe the disorganization and defeat in evidence behind the enemy lines. Only the iron-hand control of the Nazi party leaders and top-ranking members of the SS and German Army High Command prevented a breakdown of morale and general collapse of the entire armed forces. It was only a matter of time until they could no longer impose their will on the disillusioned enlisted man. Many of the officers taken prisoner during the latter part of March clearly indicated that the German High Command feared a breakthrough, and the enemy well knew that the chips were down, and that there was no longer room to retreat.

Even the Air Force had its demoralizing effects on the enemy. The Air Force day after day made repeated attacks on communication centers, ordnance dumps, and supply installations. Prisoners reported a critical shortage of fuel and ammunition, as well as the one thing that keeps an army going—food.

On March 20, General Hodges relayed to all unit commanders a Letter of Instructions which outlined the future operations of the First Army. These orders made brief mention of the preparations in the north for the U. S. Ninth Army in conjunction with the British 21st Army Group to make an amphibious assault across the Rhine north of the Ruhr. At the same time Patton's Third Army was to direct its attention toward Frankfurt am Main.

But the chief portion of these orders from General Hodges to all unit commanders of the First Army was to state the immediate objectives of these units. At this time the III Corps in the Remagan Bridgehead consisted of the following units: 9th Infantry Division, 99th Infantry Division (with 18th Cavalry Squadron attached); 9th Armored Division in Corps reserve. On the west bank of the Rhine, between Remagan and Cologne the VII Corps was in defensive positions with the following units: 104th Division, 8th Infantry Division, 7th Armored Division. Two units already in the bridgehead—the 78th Division, and the 1st Infantry Division—were fighting on the left flank in the bridgehead area. The V Corps meanwhile protected the right flank of the First Army with two divisions, the 2nd Infantry and 69th Division.

The First Army battle plan called for an all out attack out of the bridgehead area to commence about March 24. The drive would be between the Sieg River on the north and the Lahn River on the south with the communication center of Limburg, on the Autobahn as the first objective. After securing the high ground north of Limburg the army was to attack toward Giessen and thus swing northeasterly toward Kassel.

The general plan for attack out of the bridgehead called for the VII Corps to continue current operations to secure the Sieg River line

as well as to maintain the defense west of the Rhine from the vicinity of Bonn northward through Cologne to the Ninth Army area near Worringen. The VII Corps was to consist of the 1st Division, 8th Infantry Division, 78th Division, 86th Infantry Division, and the 104th Infantry Division as well as the 3rd Armored Division.

(The VII Corps was at first assigned the mission of protecting the west bank of the Rhine at Cologne. The 8th Infantry Division assumed this duty until March 27 when they were relieved by the newly arrived 86th Infantry Division. The 8th Division then moved through Bonn and into the bridgehead area where they took over a portion of the front facing what within a few days would become the Ruhr Pocket. A few days after the 86th Infantry Division went on line near Cologne, the U. S. 15th Army assumed control over the front between the U. S. 9th Army and 1st Army in the west. The 15th Army at once relieved the 86th Division with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 86th Division reverted back to control of the VII Corps, and moved into the Remagen Bridgehead area.)

It was the VII Corps whose duty it became to be the flanking force which closed the Ruhr Pocket. Once the attack out of Remagen was under way, events went at a rapid pace. As the VII Corps raced around the southern edge of the Ruhr to an eventual linkup with the Ninth Army, the III Corps would attack due east from Remagen with the 9th Infantry and the 99th Infantry Division and the 7th Armored Division. The attack got under way on the morning of March 24.

The 78th Infantry Division (with attached task force from the 3rd Armored Division) attacked toward the Sieg River east of the Autobahn and seized Buisdorf and Hennef. The 78th Division now maintained a fairly constant front along the Sieg River. This river served as the defensive line along the south flank of the Ruhr until the all-out attack to annihilate the Ruhr Pocket got under way about April 4-5.

(At this stage (March 24), it must be remembered there was no Ruhr Pocket; in fact, the only troops east of the Rhine was the forces in the Remagen Bridgehead. When we speak of the Ruhr Pocket at this time, the pocket as it was after the linkup at Paderborn, is what is referred to.)

The 1st Infantry Division attacked on the right of the 78th Division and advanced toward Stromberg and Wissen. As the 78th Division pulled up to protect the extreme left flank of the First Army, the veteran 1st Division did likewise further east. To the right of the Red One, the 3rd Armored Division and the 104th "Timberwolf" Division teamed up to spearhead the VII Corps through Altenkirchen into central Germany.

At first, the VII Corps met only moderate delaying action but within a short time the enemy turned to bitter contested counter-attacks. Enemy tanks began to appear in increasing numbers. On March 25 alone, in the 1st Division area, there were 45 artillery concentrations which fired on enemy counter-attacks.

By March 26, our armored columns were over 25 miles east of the Rhine and moving forward at a rapid pace. In the advance toward the east, the 3rd Armored Division entered and cleared Altenkirchen, a communications center, as well as a German Army Headquarters town.

(Altenkirchen was blown to a mass of ruin by our Air Force. When it became known that the enemy was using the town as headquarters to direct the forces opposing the Americans at Remagen, our Air Force struck the town time after time. By the time the tankers entered the city it was just one big heap of rubble.)

As the First Army armored columns raced forward on March 27, the 78th Division extended its front along the Sieg River all the way from its mouth upstream to Stromberg, a distance of almost 30 miles. This was an unusually long front for only one division to defend. The 1st Division protected the flank from the 78th Division area eastward, to Wissen, which fell to the Red One on March 28.

By the last of March the VII Corps front covered 170 miles. VII Corps elements now held a long front on the Sieg River. The 78th Division was on the left, the nearest to the Rhine. The 8th Division arrived from Cologne and went into line on the right of the 78th Division. The 1st Division then side-stepped to the east and occupied the line facing what was rapidly becoming a trap for German forces. Further east, two regiments of the 104th Infantry Division dropped out of the mad race northward to link up with the Ninth Army and attacked the German units rapidly becoming surrounded in the Ruhr. Thus on March 29 the following American units were engaged in defending a line facing the Ruhr—in order from left to right: 86th Infantry Division, 78th Division, 8th Division, 1st Infantry Division, and 104th Division. Meanwhile, The 3rd Armored Division was continuing the flanking movement northward toward an eventual linkup with General Simpson's army; an event which would take place within 48 hours.

The 3rd Armored Division registered gains on the right flank of the VII Corps area that would put Hitler's blitzkrieg through France to shame. On March 29 alone, General Rose's 3rd Armored Division registered a 23 mile gain in the morning and a 16 mile gain in the afternoon as it advanced down the Frankenburg-Paderborn highway.

The Sieg River Line

On March 30, while other units of the VII Corps were engaged in bitter defense of the Sieg River line generally running from Siegburg to Siegen, the 3rd Armored Division registered big gains on the east flank of the corps area. The armored boys passed thru Brilon and advanced further north to within three miles of Paderborn. Mopping up in the rear of the armor was a regiment of the 104th Division. The remainder of the 104th Division was on line facing the Ruhr. Protecting the left flank of the 3rd Armored Division was the 4th Cavalry Group and units of the 3rd Armored Division.

On March 31, previous rapid gains were consolidated by the movement of troops to strengthen weak flank areas and only slight advances were made in a few places in the First Army area.

While we have been noting only the advance of the VII Corps the past few days (as it was this unit which actually cut off and surrounded the Ruhr) the other two corps in the First Army area were contributing



A doughboy seems alone in the world as he watches for a German sniper who is operating from an upstairs window on the opposite side of this street.

their bit to the over-all success of the operations. The III Corps, fighting on the VII Corps flank, raced through Giessen and then swung north toward Mehlen before it was pinched out of line and prepared to swing into action in the Ruhr Pocket. The III Corps advance was spearheaded by the 9th Infantry Division, 7th Armored Division and the 99th Infantry Division. Further south the V Corps advance was spearheaded by the 9th Armored Division with the 2nd Infantry Division abreast. Patton's Third Army kept apace on the right flank of the V Corps area.

The general situation along the VII Corps area front facing the Ruhr on the morning of April 1 was at best described as confused. As the First Army had raced eastward and then northward toward a linkup with the Ninth Army, which was to take place this very day, divisions which had dropped off enroute to contain the large German forces in the Ruhr found themselves defending long fronts, and were forced to space their units dangerously thin along the front lines. Then, as the German units trapped within the pocket began to realize that a vice was being closed around them, they attempted to break out of the trap,

forcing the troops along the rim of the pocket to engage in a bitter defense, in many cases vastly outnumbered. But to the credit of every individual and unit involved, it must be stated that never at any time during this period did they falter.

The front line along the southern edge of the pocket as of April 1, was defended by the following units with their defense areas included.

86TH INFANTRY DIVISION — The 86th Division was responsible for the defense of the west bank of the Rhine from the mouth of the Sieg River north through Cologne to the Ninth Army area. Action along this front was limited to patrols which were sent across the Rhine. The 86th Division was under the control of the U. S. 15th Army, and was at this time in the process of being relieved by the 82nd Airborne Division. The 86th Division was returned to control of the First Army the next day.

78TH INFANTRY DIVISION — Fighting as the left flank of the First Army, the 78th Division continued on the defense along the Sieg River from its mouth upstream to Wissen. Patrolling was the chief action in this area.

8TH INFANTRY DIVISION — After being relieved near Cologne by the 86th Division, the veteran 8th Division had moved into the Remagen Bridgehead area and was now defending a sector along the Sieg River from Wissen to near Laaspe. Units of the 8th Division were engaged in bitter fighting in the outskirts of Siegen, an important Ruhr industrial center.

4TH CAVALRY GROUP — The 4th Cavalry Group tankers were defending a front running northeast from Laaspe. This group smashed one German armored unit attempting a breakout from the Ruhr.

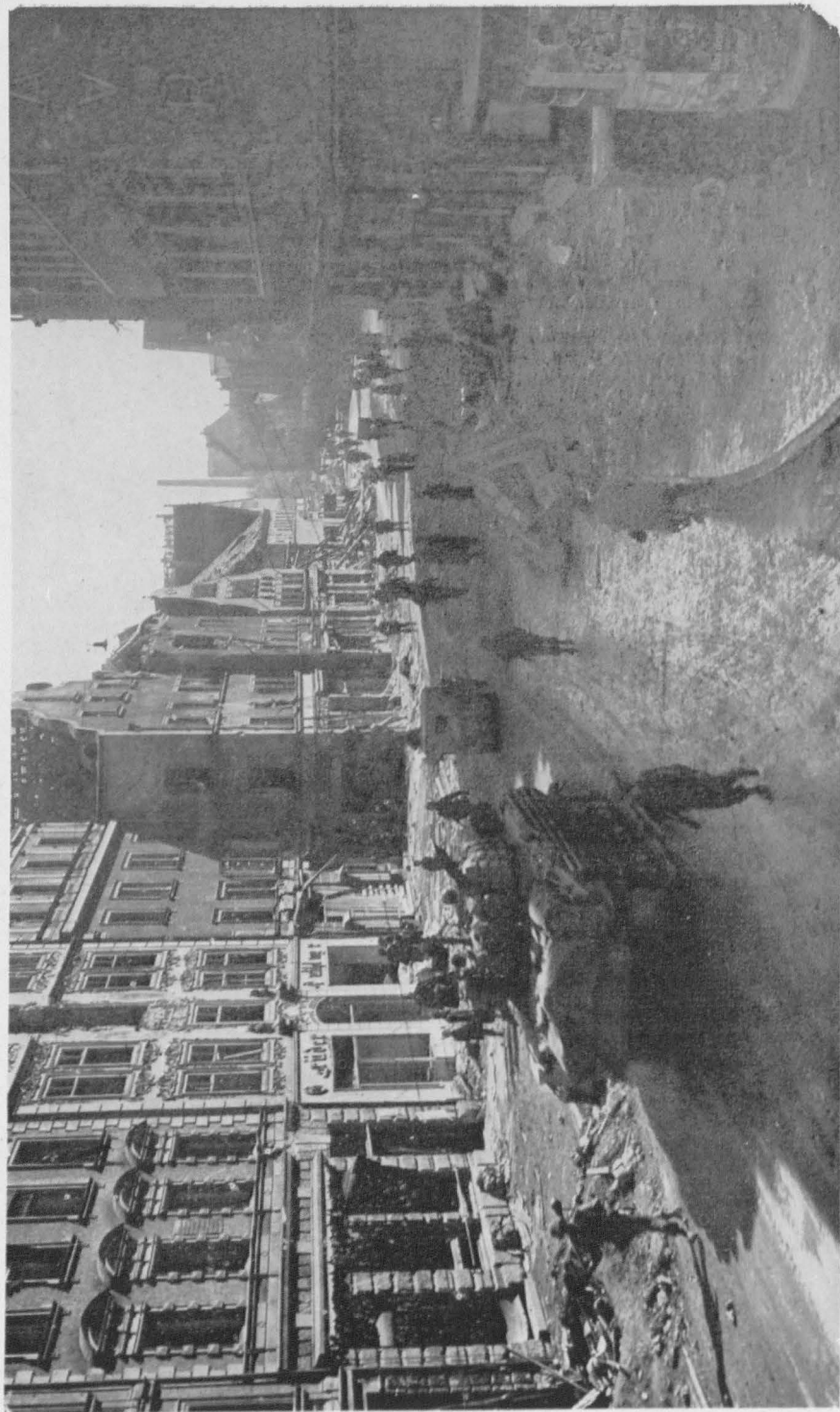
9TH INFANTRY DIVISION — The Ninth Infantry Division had been rapidly rushed north from the III Corps area near Giessen to fill a gap in the front facing the Ruhr the previous day and was on the defensive on a front extending from Berlberg northward to Medebach.

THE 104TH DIVISION—While some units of the 104th Division were mopping up in the rear of the rapidly advancing 3rd Armored Division, other units of this division, still under division control, were defending the front line facing the Ruhr in the vicinity of Korbach, as well as Brilon. The 415th Infantry Regiment was meeting especially heavy enemy counter-attacks by enemy tanks and infantry, determined to break out of the Ruhr.

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION — North of Brilon the Red One was moving additional troops into a small salient near Buren.

3RD ARMORED DIVISION — The 3rd Armored Thunderbolt which had raced out of the Remagen Bridgehead only ten days ago was still rolling and had not yet stopped. The 3rd Armored raced through Goske in blinding speed and late on April 1 made contact with the Ninth Army units near Lippstadt.

As the First Army units approached Lippstadt, the Ninth Army was known to be only a few miles away. Except for this narrow gap, an entire German Army, the elite of Hitler's Third Reich, was surrounded.



In many German cities, the civilians watched as our military might rolled past, in support of the combat troops.

CHAPTER 2

THE NINTH ARMY CROSSES THE RHINE

While the First Army's crossing of the Rhine had come rather unexpectedly, and a surprise to both allied and enemy forces, the Ninth Army's crossing of the Rhine in the north was a well-planned and well-executed military maneuver. In fact, as far back as D-Day a select staff of the 21st Army Group (British), under whose command Simpson's Army was now fighting, had been secretly planning a crossing of the Rhine barrier in this very neighborhood. It must be recalled that the master plan of the war called for the major assault of the Rhine to be in the north. Naturally, the plans of Montgomery for a huge amphibious attack between Wesel and the mouth of the Rhine suffered an upset when General Hodges' troops grabbed the Remagan Bridge and secured a toe-hold on the east bank of the Rhine in early March. In fact, Montgomery even proposed to SHAFÉ that the Remagan Bridgehead be abandoned so that it would not interfere with the original plan to attack in the north. Luckily, Eisenhower overruled Montgomery, and the First Army was given the green-light to continue the build-up and attack out of Remagan. Thousands of lives, both British and American, were thus saved.

The assault of the Rhine by the 21st Army Group in the north was a tremendous event. The U. S. 9th Army was to make the initial assault near Wesel — with a simultaneous crossing by the British further downstream. The plans which had been drawn up nearly three years before were not altered to any great extent.

Tons upon tons of bridging equipment were brought up from the rear in Holland, as well as hundreds of pieces of naval landing craft.

(It was a pathetic sight in Holland and along the German frontier behind the landing area, to see homes and business places which were situated along the highway destroyed in order to make it possible to bring these landing craft to the front. Many times these homes had completely escaped damage as the actual fighting had passed thru that particular area. As the engineers cleared the path in front of the naval craft, now mounted on huge tank retriever trucks, an officer would knock on a door, and inform the civilian that he must remove himself and his possessions within ten minutes as his home would have to be destroyed. Any protest was unnecessary — this was war. Within a few minutes a bull-dozer would turn the house into a ruin, and the landing craft would move forward until the next obstacle appeared in the way. The civilian occupant would stand in a daze and wonder in amazement what had happened. This rather cruel event occurred many times in the area, where a house built near the road would not allow sufficient room for the bulky loads to pass.)

Necessary supplies and supporting equipment were brought forward to the combat units. The 79th Infantry Division and the 30th Infantry Division were withdrawn from the front and taken to Holland where they underwent ten days of extensive amphibious training along the Meuse River.

On March 23, the assault divisions moved into advance positions, and D-Day was set for March 24. The plan of attack called for the

30th Division to attack on the left flank of the XVI Corps area and the 79th Division on the right. H-Hour was to be at 0200 on the morning of March 24. At approximately the same time, the 17th Airborne Division was to be dropped a few miles behind the enemy lines. Thus, in the Ninth Army area, the Rhine assault was to take place with three divisions in the initial attack. In support of this attack three divisions were held in reserve by the XVI Corps, ready to be rushed across the Rhine once a bridgehead was secured and sufficient maneuver room was available. These were the 75th Infantry Division, 35th Infantry Division, and 8th Armored Division.

To the south of the actual crossing sites, the XIII Corps was in defensive position, holding the west bank of the Rhine southward to the First Army boundary near Worrrington, a suburb of Cologne.

The attack was underway at 0100 on the morning of March 24 when a sixty minute artillery barrage that will never be forgotten in the Rhineland commenced. A total of 1,087 shells were fired into the enemy positions every minute. A total of 25,261 rounds were fired into the enemy positions within one hour. Ten thousand allied planes ranged over the landing area and far into the German rear attacking everything of military value within sight.



American infantrymen ride tanks in advancing thru one city in the Ruhr Pocket, which had only recently been cleared of the enemy.

The 30th and 79th Division combat teams attacked just as the dust from the air and artillery attack was lifting. The infantrymen found the barrage had left most of the defenders in a dazed condition, and by 0600 the beachhead was firmly established. Prisoners captured related that the XVI Corps troops had overran their positions before they had time to emerge from their dug-in positions. By 1530 the first day, a 1,150 foot treadway bridge was placed in operation across the Rhine.

On March 25, the Ninth Army troops expanded the bridgehead to eight miles in depth and seven miles in width. The 30th Division was advancing toward the Lippe Canal and was meeting fierce resistance near the Autobahn which transversed the area. The 79th Division on the southern flank was advancing slowly past Letkamshof. The 17th Airborne Division maintained contact on the northern flank of the corps area, with friendly British troops expanding out of their bridgehead further north.

Two days after the first crossing in this area, the attack out of the bridgehead was underway. While the 17th Airborne and 30th Infantry Divisions were fighting across open fields in the northern flank of the XVI Corps area, the 79th Division attacked through one small town after another in the general direction of the Ruhr River. In fact, advancing 79th Division infantrymen were now within sight of the smokestacks of the Ruhr industrial areas near Dorsten. One regiment of the 35th Division entered the battle when they passed through the 79th Division and gained almost two miles. The XVI Corps front in the bridgehead area now extended almost to the Rhine-Herne Canal, which was the initial objective. However, the enemy was resisting the bridgehead with many tank-led counter-attacks. But the Americans were firmly established on the east bank of the Rhine and failed to give ground to any of the Boche attacks.

By March 28 the Ninth Army bridgehead had expanded and the infantrymen were in a general advance. The 79th Division moved into Hamborn and captured the once great Thyssen Steel Works, which was now only a mass of twisted girders and wrecked machinery. The 79th Division was already in a portion of the Ruhr and was clearing a large area in the triangle formed by the junction of the Rhine and Ruhr Rivers. The division established a defense along the northern bank of the Rhine-Herne Canal on this day. The 8th Armored Division entered the battle this date and advanced several miles toward the east, with the 35th Division assisting. The units were within one mile of the large city of Dorsten.

Dorsten is Captured

Dorsten, one of the more important Ruhr industrial centers, was captured by the 8th Armored Division after a fierce battle supported by eleven artillery batteries. The town was secured about noon on March 29, and the tankers had advanced four miles beyond to Scholven by nightfall. On their right flank the 79th Division was in defensive position along the north bank of the Rhine-Herne Canal. However, the word defense is rather unfair, as this unit underwent terrific punishment from fire

from concrete pillboxes in their area. These obstacles had to be cleared by the "Cross of Lorraine" doughboys during the day.

The date of 30 March 1945, saw the XVI Corps consolidate positions in the bridgehead area. The front line of the corps area from the Rhine River eastward found the 79th Division fighting along the banks of the canal. The 35th Division, having already captured Gladbach, and the 8th Armored Division advanced slowly due east on the corps left boundry. The 30th was relieved from attachment to the corps and along with the 75th Division were assembling for future operations. By March 30, the XVI Corps front ran along the Rhine-Herne Canal all the way from the Rhine near Duisburg for 13 miles to near Bottrop. This front directly faced what within a few days would be the Ruhr Pocket. As noted above, the 79th and 35th Divisions held this line along the Rhine-Herne Canal. Meanwhile, the 8th Armored Division and the 75th Division were fighting some 25 miles east of the Rhine toward Recklinghausen and along the Lippe River. On their left flank was the British Second Army. In other words, as of March 31, the Ninth Army was committed east of the Rhine with one corps, whose front lay between the Rhine-Herne Canal and the Lippe River. Another corps, the XIII, maintained defensive positions along the west bank of the Rhine, opposite Dusseldorf. This sector was soon to be turned over to complete control of the Fifteenth Army, as was the defensive area controlled by the First Army near Cologne.

While the XVI Corps was slowly moving into position along the Rhine-Herne Canal from the vicinity of Duisburg, northeastward some 25 miles, important things were happening further north in an area recently transferred from the control of the British Second Army to the U. S. Ninth Army.

As soon as possible after the securing of the Wesel Bridgehead, General Simpson moved both the XIII Corps and the XIX Corps across the Rhine, and by March 29, all three corps of the Ninth Army were ready for commitment. At the same time the defense of the Rhine River line, on the west, was turned over to the new Fifteenth Army, and the 97th Infantry Division took over this sector of the front.

On March 30, General Simpson outlined the immediate future for his three corps, all of which were now committed on the east bank of the river. His plans were briefly as follows:

XVI CORPS — Starting at the Rhine River and moving eastward along the banks of the Rhine-Herne Canal, the 79th Infantry Division, 35th Division and 75th Division were to protect the canal and defend aggressively along a line running on the north and west banks of the canal. The Corps was instructed to be prepared to assume control of the right flank of the 9th Army from the Rhine to Paderborn.

XIX CORPS — This Corps was to initially consist of the 2nd and 8th Armored Divisions, and the 30th, 83rd and 95th Infantry Divisions. The XIX Corps was instructed to strike out of the Wesel Bridgehead along the northern flank of the Ruhr and to attempt to make contact with elements of the First Army known to be advancing northward toward Paderborn. This Corps would serve as the flanking unit on the north of the Ruhr as did the VII Corps on the south, as we have already noted. The 2nd Armored Division broke out of

the bridgehead during the night of March 30, heading due east, with the 83rd Infantry Division on their right flank. These two units carried the ball right into Paderborn and Lippstadt, for the linkup with the First Army. In the meantime both the 95th Division and the 8th Armored Division swung south in the Corps area to protect the front facing the Ruhr.

XIII CORPS — This corps was ordered to attack eastward also in conjunction with the attack by the 2nd Armored Division and the 83rd Infantry Division. This area of advance was further north than the XIX Corps. The 17th Airborne Division, 84th Infantry Division, 102nd Infantry Division and the 5th Armored Division took part in the offensive in this area.

The offensive out of the bridgehead to an eventual link-up with the First Army got under way on March 30 when the 2nd Armored Division, of the XIX Corps, struck east from the vicinity of Haltern and Dulman. Delayed only a few hours by blown bridges over the Ems Canal, the 2nd Armored began rolling eastward at a rapid rate, almost without opposition, toward a linkup that would trap some 325,000 troops in the Ruhr. The industrial heart of Germany was in imminent danger of encirclement. Thus was the end of March for Hitler on the Ninth Army front.



An anti-aircraft unit moves forward under a bombed German railroad bridge.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEETING OF THE ARMIES

Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945, will long be remembered as "Black Sunday" for the German forces on the western front. On that memorable date the advancing armies of General Eisenhower established contact near Lippstadt, thus trapping some 325,000 German troops in the highly industrialized Ruhr valley. About 1600, on April 1, spearheading tank columns from the 2nd Armored Division (Ninth Army) and the 3rd Armored Division (First Army) met on the outskirts of Lippstadt. This linking of the two forces closed a vice on General Model's entire Army Group B, which had been defending the central sector of the western front. Also trapped with Model's forces was a great portion of the Fifth Panzer Army and the First Parachute Army.

Besides the enemy armed forces trapped in the Ruhr, the drive also deprived the enemy of the use of her greatest industrial area, for the manufacture of war supplies, so necessary for the continuation of the war. Despite the numerous air attacks which had been taking place almost nightly for some four years, many German war plants had continued to operate right up to within a few hours of their capture by American forces.

A statement by General of the Army Dwight David Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, issued on April 3, stressed the importance of the accomplishments of the units which had taken part in the encirclement of the Ruhr. General Eisenhower said:

The encirclement of the Ruhr by a wide pincer movement has cut off the whole Army Group B and parts of Army Group H, thus forming a large pocket of enemy troops whose fate is sealed and who are ripe for annihilation. The most vital industrial area is denied to the German war potential. This magnificent feat of arms will bring the war more rapidly to a close. It will long be remembered in history as an outstanding battle — the battle of the Ruhr.

—General Eisenhower

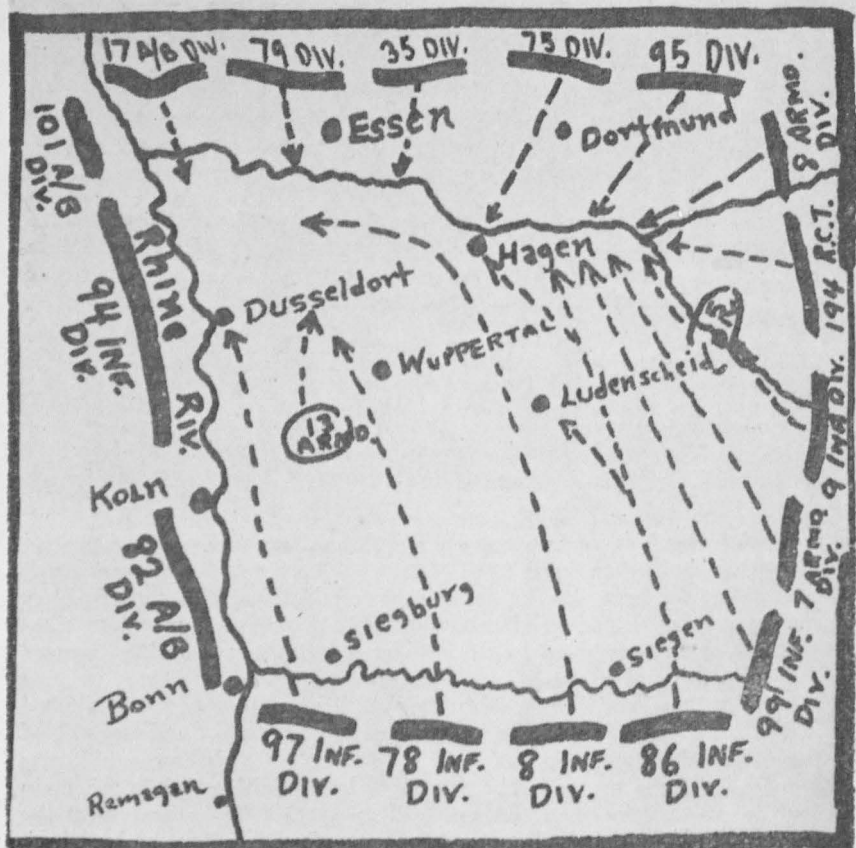
With the Ruhr at last sealed off, a general reshuffling of units, and boundaries, took place from April 1 through April 5. The general attack to liquidate the Ruhr did not get underway in full strength until April 6. Although many determined battles took place during these few days, most of them were aggressive patrols in force, mainly to test the enemy's determination and strength.

With the closing of the Ruhr Pocket, General Eisenhower was faced with a problem. Would it be best to practice a policy of containment of the surrounded troops in the Ruhr by setting up a defense perimeter around the Ruhr manned by a few American Divisions while the main body of the armies raced on eastward to capture Berlin and meet the Russians; or would it be best to draw up to the Elbe River and set back to wait until this huge pocket of enemy soldiers in the rear areas could be digested. Eisenhower decided the safest course would be to clear the rear first, thus eliminating any threat that the surrounded forces might

break out and disrupt his line of communication toward the east.

On April 2, a staff meeting was held by the army commanders at which time a general plan of attack for the liquidation of the Ruhr Pocket was worked out. The plan was rather simple.

1. The U. S. 15th Army was to maintain a defense line along the west bank of the Rhine from Bonn to Duisburg. Three divisions were to be used for this purpose.
2. The U. S. 9th Army was to make a converging attack into the highly built-up industrial area of the Ruhr with the XVI Corps crossing the Rhine-Herne Canal and striking south to the Ruhr River while elements of the XIX Corps were to attack from the Hamm-Lippstadt area toward the Ruhr River.
3. The U. S. 1st Army was to clear the densely wooded area to the south of the Ruhr River and strike north to the Ruhr to form a link with the 9th Army. The XVIII Airborne Corps was assigned to First Army for this mission along with the III Corps.



The American divisions employed in the Ruhr campaign all had a common purpose — destruction of the enemy. This sketch shows the general route of advance of each division.

Immediately upon return to their Command Posts, the three Army commanders set in motion a regrouping of their forces in order to comply with the above instructions, and in the case of both the First and Ninth Armies, to continue the attack toward the Elbe River.

In the Fifteenth Army area, the 82nd Airborne Division relieved the 86th Infantry Division at Cologne, and the 101st Airborne Division relieved the 97th Division opposite Dusseldorf. The 94th Infantry Division relieved the 95th Division to the north. Thus on the west bank of the Rhine, moving from north to south, the Fifteenth Army had the 94th, 101st and 82nd Divisions on line facing the Ruhr Pocket.

In the First Army area, the XVIII Airborne Corps assumed control of the sector adjacent to the Rhine River, and running generally along the Sieg River. In this sector, the 97th Infantry Division moved into position nearest to the Rhine. (Midway in the Ruhr Pocket battle, the 13th Armored Division took up a position along the Rhine as the 97th Division sidestepped east.) The 78th Infantry Division, 8th Infantry Division and the 86th Infantry Division were on line in that order moving from the Rhine eastward. The III Corps moved up from the vicinity of Weissen and assumed control over an area of the front from near the Hunden River northward to near Lippstadt. Units in position in this area prior to the general attack were the 99th Infantry Division, 7th Armored Division and the 9th Infantry Division (later to be relieved by the 5th Infantry Division.)

In the Ninth Army area the XVI Corps maintained positions facing the Rhine-Herne Canal with the 17th Airborne Division taking over the right flank of the Ninth Army adjacent to the Rhine River. The 79th Division side-slipped to the east, and moving in clockwise around the north flank of the Ruhr in the XVI Corps area was the 35th and 75th Infantry Divisions. The XIX Corps attacked into the Ruhr with the 95th Infantry Division and the 8th Armored Division, reinforced by the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment. These units relieved the 83rd Infantry Division which then rejoined the units of the Ninth Army moving toward the Elbe River east of Paderborn.

Thus we find on April 5, the circle around the Ruhr Pocket, as the American armies prepared to go on the offensive, held by the following units — starting at Bonn, and moving counter-clock wise around the Ruhr Pocket.

FIRST ARMY

XVIII Airborne Corps

97th Infantry Division

78th Infantry Division

8th Infantry Division

86th Infantry Division

III Corps

99th Infantry Division

7th Armored Division

9th Infantry Division

NINTH ARMY

XIX Corps

194th Glider Infantry RCT

8th Armored Division
95th Infantry Division
XVI CORPS
75th Infantry Division
35th Infantry Division
79th Infantry Division
17th Airborne Division

FIFTEENTH ARMY

XXII Corps
94th Infantry Division
101st Airborne Division
82nd Airborne Division

The order of battle for the coming phase of the war that would see an entire German Army Group completely destroyed within a period of less than two weeks, shows no less than 17 divisions committed to this one battle. However, before the battle was over the 5th Infantry Division, 13th Armored Division, and 4th Cavalry Squadron would take part in the clash. Previously, the 1st Infantry Division, 83rd Infantry Division, 104th Infantry Division, 2nd Armored Division and 3rd Armored Division had all taken an outstanding part in the battle of the Ruhr. Therefore, in all it took some 24 American Divisions to annihilate the Ruhr. Also, it will be noted that all three American Airborne divisions were committed to action in this battle. This was the only time during World War II when Eisenhower used all three of his crack airborne divisions in one engagement.

While awaiting the general kickoff of the big offensive to annihilate the Ruhr Pocket, the Ninth Army forces in the north, in particular the XVI Corps, made several offensive moves on April 4 and 5 to pave the way for the general offensive which was to get underway on April 6.

In the 75th Division area, combat patrols were sent across the Dortmund Ems Canal and secured a bridgehead on the boundry between the 75th and 35th Divisions which could be used once the main attack was underway. One entire company was sent on patrol behind the enemy lines and returned with a bag of 55 prisoners. A bridgehead of some five miles in length across the Ems Canal had been built up by the 75th Division prior to the main offensive. Likewise on the south flank of the Ruhr Pocket, the 78th Infantry and 8th Infantry Divisions had also done extensive patrolling along the Sieg River and both units had established a bridgehead across the Sieg thru which the 97th Infantry and 86th Infantry Divisions would pass on the morning of April 6 when the attack would get underway.

Perhaps it would be wise to stop at this time and review the terrain that the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket would actually be fought over.

In the north, in the Ninth Army sector, the north German Plain would be the chief battle ground. Generally speaking, open countryside, dotted by many small villages and large industrial centers, would be the territory thru which Ninth Army units would be fighting. The Ruhr River valley is intersected by many smaller streams and man-made canals, most of them with high, steep banks, often protected with dikes. These enbankments made wonderful barriers from which the Germans could

defend every inch of soil, with the least effort and use of manpower. The land along the north bank of the Ruhr lies very level; however, east of Dortmund, toward Soest and Brilon, the countryside gets very hilly and dense woods are the general rule. Another obstacle often encountered north of the Ruhr River was huge slagpiles, some almost like baby mountains. These, too, were just designed for the use by defending troops.

South of the Ruhr River, in the First Army area, the countryside was indeed a dukes mixture. In certain areas, such as along the Rhine River opposite Cologne, the countryside was rather open and level. But further east, in particular in the area through which the 8th, 86th, and 99th Infantry Divisions must advance, the terrain was made for mountain goats. One huge hill (in fact they would best be called mountains) after another would be encountered. All of these hills were densely covered with vegetation. In places the forest was so dense that it was almost impassable to humans. Perhaps deer and wild boar could transverse it but even that is doubtful. This was the most difficult terrain encountered by American forces in the European Theatre, with the possible exception of the Eifel area along the Belgian-German border.

The area through which the infantryman would be forced to fight had been known to airmen for over two years as the flak belt, as thousands of anti-aircraft emplacements were located in a belt surrounding the Ruhr cities. These ack-ack units were unexpectedly turned into anti-personnel guns during the Ruhr campaign, and when turned into a ground weapon, they can make an extremely difficult position.



Tons of war supplies were found stored in German churches, placed there by the Nazis, in an effort to prevent their being bombed by our airforce.

CHAPTER 4

THE BIG PICTURE

The consolidated attack to completely liquidate the Ruhr Pocket was scheduled to get underway on the morning of April 6. By that time the three American armies facing the Ruhr had sufficient time to regroup forces, and prepare for a general offensive.

It must be remembered that for five days preceding this great offensive, all of the divisions engaged in the Ruhr Campaign had dug in and were actually on the defense. Numerous German counter-attacks, and attempts to break out of the pocket had occurred, and many casualties had been suffered by both sides. The most serious of the counter-attacks had occurred north of Hamm, where the 95th Division was bruised several times, and in the vicinity of Wissen, in the 8th Division area, where as many as twelve major counter-attacks occurred on the 2nd day of April.

Wissen, located on the south bank of the Sieg River, was the scene of a bloody battle on that date also, when German infantry infiltrated across the Sieg and surrounded two companies of the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment (8th Division). These GIs held on desperately, while other doughboys rushed to their aid. After relieving these troops, the regiment was then forced to clear the town of Wiessen for the second time.

The over all plan to annihilate the German forces in the Ruhr was sent down to unit commanders on the night of April 4, and in general it was as follows:

1. Operations from the West

- (a) The XXII Corps of the 15th Army will continue to defend the west bank of the Rhine from Duisburg to Bonn. This Corps will also lend whatever fire support possible to advancing units on the east bank. Offensive action shall be limited to aggressive patrols across the river to keep as many enemy troops as possible engaged. The 82nd Airborne, 101st Airborne, and 94th Infantry Division shall be used for this purpose.

2. Operations from the South: The attack from the south shall be in three main efforts.

- (a) The main effort in the south shall be a coordinated drive right through the center of the pocket. The XVIII Corps, under the command of General Matthew Ridgeway, will make use of the 8th Infantry Division and the 86th Infantry Division, with the attached 740th Tank Battalion for this purpose. These divisions shall attack northward and attempt to split the Ruhr Pocket into two separate pockets in the vicinity of Hagen. They shall also protect the right flank of the XVIII Airborne Corps and maintain contact with the III Corps of the right.

- (b) The XVIII Airborne Corps shall also attack northward along the east bank of the Rhine with the 97th Infantry Division and the 78th Infantry Division. The 13th Armored Division shall be in reserve and committed once the terrain is suitable. These units shall advance northward toward Dusseldorf in coordination with the 8th Division and the 86th Division on the right flank of this corps area.

- (c) The third major drive from the south by the III Corps, under the command of General Van Fleet, using the 99th Infantry Division, 7th Armored Division, and the 9th Infantry Division. The 5th Infantry Division shall relieve the 9th Division once it arrives in the area. The III Corps

shall advance northwestward from the present lines and clear all territory south of the Ruhr and east of the Lenne River. The corps shall maintain contact with the 86th Division of the XVIII Airborne Corps on the left flank and with units of the Ninth Army on the right flank.

(d) The mission of all units of the XVIII Corps and III Corps is to clear all territory south of the Ruhr River. The army objective is the Ruhr River, where contact will be made with the Ninth Army.

3. Operations from the North: The attack will be south and west from present positions.

(a) The XVI Corps shall attack across the Rhine-Herne Canal from the present defense line, using the 17th Airborne Division, 79th Infantry Division, 35th Infantry Division and the 75th Infantry Division. The corps shall clear all the territory north of the Ruhr River and capture any bridges possible across the river for use by the forces advancing from the south. Numerous Prisoner of War Stalags and Slave Labor camps were expected to be found in the area of advance, especially near the large industrial areas. The corps shall also maintain contact with friendly forces on the left flank.

(b) The XIX Corps shall attack westward from present positions near Lippstadt. As the corps is also committed on the front facing the Elbe River, a task force shall be formed under command of the Commanding General of the 95th Infantry Division to assume control of all XIX Corps units in the Ruhr. As soon as possible, all XIX Corps units shall come under control of the CG of XVI Corps. This Task Force will engage the enemy using the 95th Infantry Division, 8th Armored Division, and the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment of the 17th Airborne Division. The 4th Cavalry Group shall be attached to this task force to protect the left flank and maintain contact with First Army units advancing from the south.

(c) The mission of all Ninth Army units is to clear all territory north of the Ruhr River and to assume military government control of all territory captured.

As the battle order for the offensive to clear the Ruhr Pocket was given to the unit commanders, the battle lines were drawn pretty much as follows: The Rhine River naturally formed the western boundary of the pocket. The Ruhr and the Rhine-Herne Canal formed the defense line to near Munster; then the lines as of April 6 followed a line drawn from Munster to Lippstadt to Brilon to Laasphe to Siegen and then along the Sieg River to the Rhine. Most of this line followed natural borders. Of the front protected by rivers and canals, the 311th Infantry Regiment (78th Division) held a bridgehead across the Sieg River, through which the 78th Division and 97th Division would pass in the attack. The 8th Division held a small bridgehead across the Sieg at Siegen, through which the 8th Division and the 86th Division would pass. In the north the 35th Division held a small bridgehead across the Dortmund-Ems Canal.

As the American units prepared for the offensive, the German forces were not just sitting back waiting. On April 5, the Krauts made attempt after attempt to break out of the pocket and rejoin what remained of the German Army further east. Some of these attacks were in the south and some in the north, but wherever they were the units called upon to repulse them found it no easy task. In most instances the Germans would employ several companies of infantry with attached King Tiger tanks. As always, the pesky 88 was handy. But to the credit of every American involved, it must be said that for every American casualty, there were ten Germans killed.

As we attempt to narrate the Battle of the Ruhr it is very difficult to write of the entire operation simultaneously, as it must be remembered that there were no less than 17 divisions involved in the engagement, and they were advancing in every direction of the compass, all with a common purpose—to knock out of the war as soon as possible all German units trapped in the Ruhr. The writer feels somewhat like a baseball announcer up in the press box with three major league games unfolding in front of him at the same time, with his job to announce all three. So for no reason other than continuity, we will write of the Battle of the Ruhr from here on, by following each main attack to its conclusion, instead of jumping from Ninth Army to First Army to Fifteenth Army and back again to Ninth Army in one breath. Therefore, we shall, for our convenience only, divide the Ruhr Pocket campaign into four operations, and treat each of them separately; although it must be constantly recalled by the reader that all operations were closely connected and the general attack was coordinated at all times.

CHAPTER 5

THE XVIII CORPS ATTACK FROM THE SOUTH

As the offensive got under way on the morning of April 6, the XVIII Corps, under the command of Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgeway, faced the enemy on a front along the general line of the Sieg River from its mouth near Bonn to a small dusty village named Schamedar (complete with its community water pump and town crier), a few miles northwest of Laasphe. The Airborne Corps had troops displaced along the corps front from west to east as follows:

(a) The 97th "Trident" Infantry Division, newly arrived after extensive amphibious training, occupied the front from the mouth of the Sieg at Bonn all the way upstream to Stromberg. All three regiments were abreast on the line. The 341st Infantry (86th Division) was temporarily attached to the 97th Division.

(b) The 78th "Lightning" Division, after almost a month of continuous service in the Remagen Bridgehead, was on line with two regiments along the Sieg from Dattenfeld to Brachbach. One regiment was in corps reserve.

(c) The 8th Infantry Division was on line from Nieder Schelden (south of Siegen) to Schamedar. All three regiments were on line. The 740th Tank Battalion was attached to the 8th Division.

(d) The 86th "Black Hawk" Infantry Division was on the defense on the right flank of the Airborne Corps, with two regiments dug-in in hill country. The 341st Infantry was attached to the 97th Division, and one company of the 740th Tank Battalion was attached to the 86th Division.

(e) The 13th Armored Division was assigned to the corps but had not yet reached the area.

The countryside through which the Airborne Corps would attack can best be described as "standing on end." The hills were steep and crowded, with the only pass ways being dirt or rock roads which wended their way through the canyons between the high hills. An occasional fire break offered additional room for movement. Throughout the entire area of advance, except in the area close to the Rhine, the firs were thick and stood dismal and dripping. The bodies of the firs begin close to the ground so that each fir interlocks its body with another. At the height of a man standing, there was a solid mass of green, but at the height of a man crawling, or stooped, there was room, and it was like a green, low roofed cave, and through this cave, moved the infantry—cold, wet and exhausted.

The XVIII Corps was actually an airborne corps, even though there were no airborne troops in it at the time, but there were many times during the Battle of the Ruhr when the doughboys would wearily climb to the top of a hill and would give their eye teeth for an airborne conveyance of some type to lift them to the top of the next hill—and often they felt that they would never reach the top of the next hill.

The corps attack was launched at 0500 hours on April 6 and made substantial progress in the center. The 97th Division on the left and the 86th Division on the right maintained their defensive positions as the veteran 8th and 78th Divisions kicked off the attack.

The 78th Division's 309th Infantry and 310th Infantry, each with a battalion of the 311th Infantry attached, made the initial amphibious assault of the Sieg River at the same time the 8th Division was crossing further east. The 78th Division Engineers cleared the mine fields along the river bank as the doughboys climbed into the plywood assault boats and made way for the north bank of the Sieg River. The Battle of the Ruhr was on. Tanks and TD's were in position along the river bank to lend fire support to the artillery units which were supporting the assault landing. On the opposite bank of the Sieg the XVIII Corps faced elements of four German divisions, identified as the 62nd, 59th, and 363rd Volksgrenadier, and 11th Panzer Divisions. Later the crack Panzer Lehr Division made its appearance facing the 8th and 86th Divisions.

The 78th Division made small gains in the bridgehead area during the morning. About noon, prisoner of war interrogations revealed that there were a number of American prisoners of war in a hospital at Waldbrol, a few miles behind the German lines just north of Wissen. Two battalions of the 309th Infantry diverted their attacks in the direction of Waldbrol, to attempt to free their fellow soldiers. Elements of Company C, 309th Infantry, managed to reach the hospital and found 71 Americans hospitalized, only one of whom could walk. The German still offered determined resistance to the attack and the patrol from Company C was forced to withdraw. However Company K, 309th Infantry finally managed to knock out several self-propelled guns defending the town and a patrol reached the hospital and was able to evacuate the 71 wounded Americans under the cover of darkness.

Meanwhile, a few miles to the right of the 78th Division bridgehead at Wissen, the 8th Infantry Division jumped off with the 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry, making the initial assault across the Sieg. Opposition in the 8th Division area ranged from medium to heavy, all depending on the type of unit opposing them. If SS troops were in the area, opposition was determined; if not, opposition was lighter.

During the afternoon, the 8th Division captured the fairly large town of Erndtebruck, where a counter-attack was crushed with the destruction of one tiger tank and two other armored vehicles. After a brisk fire fight Birkelbach fell and the doughboys dug-in around the road junctions.

In consulting a map, a casual observer may question why, in the advance of the First Army troops from the south, the 8th Division and the 86th Division leaped so far out in front of their units operating on their flanks? It may seem that they succeeded in advancing while the units fighting on the left flank of the First Army front were dragging their feet. This was not the case.

It will be noted that from Bonn north to the Ruhr River, there are numerous streams which flow east and west to a junction with the Rhine. These rivers all have large dams and reservoirs on their headwaters. By destroying these dams, the Germans could have thrown any of these



Infantrymen are here seeking shelter as a rifle squad just ahead is clearing a road block defended by Panzer troops.

streams into flood, with many American soldiers being swept to a watery grave. Therefore, Supreme Headquarters decided the safest procedure would be to have the 8th Division and 86th Division seize the headwaters of these rivers, as well as any dams and reservoirs, before an attempt was made to cross the river downstream.

Therefore, the 13th Armored, 97th Division, and 78th Division in each instance was held up at each river until the 8th and 86th Divisions had cleared the headwaters of the watershed.

On April 7, the full force of four divisions in the Airborne corps area was on the move. The 97th Infantry Division (with the 341st Infantry of the 86th Division attached) jumped off at 1230. The Trident Division, which only recently had completed extensive amphibious training in the states for an expected commitment in the Southwest Pacific, made its first river assault a successful one when it established a bridgehead across the Sieg River west of Stromberg. By nightfall a bridgehead of three miles in depth was held by the 97th Division. The doughboys entrenched themselves in a defense line and underwent a hectic night, as numerous German patrols attempted to infiltrate the lines to destroy the bridge the engineers had built during the afternoon over the swift Sieg River.

78th Division Captures Freudenberg

The 78th Division, in its own bridgehead, spent most of the day trying to capture the heavily defended town of Freudenberg, which was a key communications center holding up the advance of both the 78th and 8th Divisions. Under orders from the corps commander, the 310th Infantry Regiment (78th Division) fought through extensive artillery fire to capture the town. A total of 500 prisoners were taken in Freudenberg (a large number for a day's take at this stage of the war). Three enemy counter-attacks were repulsed by the 78th Division during the late afternoon.

The 8th Infantry Division found going very slow all day. Their advance was held up by the determined opposition around Freudenberg until that town was cleared by the 78th Division. After reeling briefly from the blow of two heavy counter-attacks, which were repulsed with some casualties, the 8th Division advanced some two miles to secure the high ridges overlooking the Sieg River. One regiment captured Erndtebrück and Schameder and dug in for the night on the outskirts of Zinse.

Meanwhile, on the right flank of the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 86th Infantry Division went on the attack in a coordinated assault with the 99th Infantry Division of the III Corps. (The 86th Division at first found themselves engaged with the enemy with only one regiment on line, as the 341st Infantry was still attached to the 97th Division and assigned the mission of mopping up enemy resistance near Siegen. At the same time, part of the 343rd Infantry was on a motorized mission for the 8th Division near Haiger.) The 342nd Infantry advanced two miles during the day along the right flank of the corps area and seized the ridges overlooking the headwaters of the Hunden River. The Hunden River flowed northward into the Lenne River which in turn emptied into the Ruhr River near Hagen. This waterway, the Hunden and Lenne Rivers, would serve as the boundary between XVIII and III Corps during the remainder of the Ruhr operations.

The 86th Division did have one grand prize for the day, however. Early in the morning of the seventh, a patrol of the 342nd Infantry passed behind enemy lines and captured the CG of the 326th Wehrmach Infantry Division, Major General Koschner.

On April 8, the 97th Division continued to enlarge its bridgehead in the mountainous terrain between Hennef and Blankenberg. The 387th Infantry (97th Division) was employed to exploit the bridgehead. On the right flank of the 97th Division, the 386th Infantry captured several high ridges south of Neunkirchen, and placed the division in position to attack that town the following day. In the division area, the 322nd Engineer Battalion completed five bridges across the Sieg River.

Wald Bron, a large German factory town, located on a stream by the same name, was the objective of the 78th Infantry Division on April 8. After capturing the towns of Freudenberg, Morsbach and Litchenberg. General Parker, CG of the 78th Division, assigned the 309th Infantry (78th Division) the task of capturing Wald Bron. As the 310th Infantry (78th Division) protected the flanks, the 309th Infantry stormed the

ancient city and knocked out the enemy strong points in the nearby valley.

In the 8th Division area, the 28th Infantry (8th Division) advanced 10,000 yards and captured Wurdinghausen and Rinske. Northwest of Siegen the 13th Infantry (8th Division) continued to mop up isolated enemy strong points which had been passed in the attack on Siegen.

(On April 8, the 740th Tank Battalion arrived in the XVIII Corps area and was attached jointly to the 8th Division and the 86th Division, and for the remainder of the Ruhr campaign this battalion proved to be the workhorse of the corps. The Tank Battalion was assigned to the two divisions to lead the attack and to lend the necessary tank support. The tankers were later commended by the commanders of both divisions for the yeoman service rendered in the Ruhr.)

At dusk on April 8, the 342nd Infantry (86th Division) launched a coordinated attack on the German railroad center of Hilchenbach. Three rifle companies of the regiment swooped down out of the hills just at dusk and caught the German garrison completely by surprise. After once clearing the town, elements of the Panzer Lehr Division attempted to reenter the town, and the 86th Division units in the city spent the remainder of the night repulsing counter-attacks.

Those Beloved "K" Rations

During most of the Ruhr campaign, the front line troops were fed C or K rations. Our supply units did a very good job of bringing up our rations and rare was the occasion when we missed our three rations a day, although most of the time we had to carry an extra ration around as the rifle companies often were situated in isolated areas.

The "C" Ration unit usually consisted of a small can of beef stew, or else pork and beans, which could be eaten either hot or cold, but tasted like a wet dish rag either way. Then there was another can which contained a "Hard-tack" like biscuit or two, three pieces of "Christmas" candy, and two Raleighs. (They always said that Lucky Strike Green had gone to war. That may be true, but GI's in the ETO were certain it was not this war, it was Raleighs which had gone to war in this theatre.) One of each can was issued for each meal, and very little variety in diet was possible for 90 per cent of the time one would always end up with the Beef Stew unit.

The "K" Ration was more compact, and easier to handle by the combat soldier, as it would easily fit into a field-jacket pocket and it was no problem at all for a foot-slogger to carry his entire day's ration with him. The breakfast unit was called "Ham and Eggs," or "Bacon and Eggs." Oh, well, they had to call it something, and it did beat spam. For dinner it was American cream cheese, and for the night meal it was hash or stew; depending on whether it was dark when you ate, and whether you could see it or not. Some always said it tasted better in the dark. With each meal there were the usual crackers, a small piece of candy, and again two Raleighs. (Those who didn't smoke had a saying, "Save your Raleighs boys, France will rise again"—naturally looking forward

to a 3-day pass back in France, and don't ever underestimate the barter value of a cigarette in France.)

Then on rare occasions, and rare indeed, for the front soldier, was the 10-in-1 rations, which were prepared to feed 10 men for one day, all three meals. These rations contained practically all of the delicacies of home, even down to sliced bacon and butter.

Then, also on rare occasions, the company kitchens would catch up with the combat units and serve a hot meal. But this was very unusual in the Ruhr, due to the rapid pace at which our forces were advancing. Whenever the kitchens were brought forward and a hot supper, followed by a hot breakfast, our doughboys were suspicious—they believed it to be an unfailing sign of a big attack just ahead, and they were fattening us for the kill.

When speaking of rations, there is one ration that you will never find mentioned in a field manual, or taught in basic training. But any GI who ever fought in Europe will never forget it. That is the "Liberated Egg Rations." Yes, give a combat soldier a brief respite from duty, say 25 or 30 minutes, and the chicken house is searched, the basement cased, and every crock and pan in the kitchen upturned until the eggs are found.

In the Ruhr, eggs were plentiful, and as soon as the GI's went into billets for the night, a fire was built and the eggs were frying. The writer recalls, on one occasion in the Ruhr, a group of infantrymen moved into billets and built a good fire on which to cook their eggs. The smoke naturally caught the enemy's eye, and a heavy artillery barrage was pinpointed on the house in which they were billeted. All the men in the platoon were lying in a prone position, flat on the floor, eating eggs, while the rifleman pressed into duty as a cook continued to jump up and turn over the eggs between shell bursts.

Another liberated ration pressed into service was venison. Whenever a company or battalion went in reserve, it was not unusual for a machine-gunner to level down on one of the small deer so often seen in the hilly, wooded area of the Ruhr. When this happened the entire company would eat venison steak, much in the style of Robin Hood.

A new division came under the direct control of the XVIII Airborne Corps on the morning of April 9, when the recently arrived 13th Armored Division moved into the area just south of the 97th Division area near Siegburg. The 13th Armored Division was immediately ordered to prepare to attack in a drive along the corps left flank adjacent to the Rhine.

On this day, all XVIII Corps units met with success in driving the enemy back toward the Ruhr, with slight advances being recorded on the left flank of the corps area, and large gains being registered by the 8th Division and the 86th Division on the right flank. Enemy resistance was heavy around all roads and towns, with numerous flak concentrations being leveled against the doughboys as they advanced over the steep hills.

The 97th Division advanced two miles along the right flank of the corps area, with all three infantry regiments abreast. The 303rd Infantry (97th Division) cleared about half of Siegburg, while the 387th and



Near Olpe, elements of the 8th Division are shown advancing beneath a bombed railroad bridge. Minutes after this photo was taken, portions of the railroad track shown fell, injuring some doughboys.

386th Infantries (97th Division) from left to right pushed the front forward to a line running from Siegburg to Neunkirchen to Harscheid.

With all three regiments attacking abreast (in order from left to right, 309-311-310) the 78th Division gained three miles to extend its front on a line from Numbrecht to Oberwiehl thence through Erdingen to Buschgrund, just above Freudenburg, the hospital town captured two days before. The 78th Division during the day was forced to pull two battalions of combat troops out of front line duty to send them 15 miles to the rear to guard food and supplies which were being looted by liberated slave laborers, many of whom were starving to death.

The 8th Division registered the big gains of the day when two regiments registered advances of approximately nine miles to capture Kreutzell, Littfeld, and the major industrial city of Olpe.

The 740th Tank Battalion made a ten mile flanking attack to seize and clear the State Forest of Siegen, where numerous German Ack-Ack units were displaced.

The 86th Division continued on the move in keeping with the advances of other XVIII Corps units on April 9, advancing some four miles to capture the town of Altenhunden, on the banks of the Hunden River at its confluence with the Lenne River.

(Enemy units known to be opposing the advance of the XVIII Airborne Corps at this time were: 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 12th Volks Grenadier Division, 9th Panzer Division, 272nd Infantry Division, 253rd Infantry Division, 340th Infantry Division, 226th Infantry Division, 12th Infantry Division, and the 150th Panzer Lehr Division. However, all of the units were known to be understrengthened.)

13th Armored Division is Committed to Action

On the morning of April 10, the XVIII Corps committed the 13th Armored Division to action for the first time, and the tankers received their "baptism of fire" in a sector of the front straddling the Autobahn which parallels the Rhine River. The 13th Armored Division area was on the extreme left flank of the corps and army area, running generally from the Rhine eastward for some eight miles. The 97th Division, which had been maintaining this section of the front, gently sidestepped east to more efficiently cover the large front to which it was assigned.

The 13th Armored Division passed through the 97th Division bridgehead near Hennef and after skirting Siegburg, which was still under siege by the 303rd Infantry (97th Division) attacked along the Autobahn and reached Lohmar by nightfall.

The 97th Division continued to mop-up the determined resistance in Siegburg, where fanatical SS troops were fighting to the death. The 303rd Infantry (97th Division), and the 341st Infantry (86th Division), which was attached to the 97th Division at the time, was used for this purpose. Meanwhile the remainder of the 97th Division made gains of four miles to reach a point in the hills southwest of Gummersbach.

In the 78th Division area, the advance was very rapid, as a decided

decline in resistance was noted. In one instance a town was actually taken by telephone.

"On April 10, a doughboy picked up a German telephone receiver, and he would hear the German equivalent of "Number, please?" A German speaking soldier would get the next town on the phone and ask for the Burgermeister or local commander and inform him that the Americans had his town next on the list if he did not surrender. This method proved very effective and soon white sheets would be flying from all the windows.

Each regiment was also using a tank equipped with a public address system. As the tank approached a town the loudspeaker would blare out:

"Stop fighting . . Surrender . . . You will be treated as Prisoners of War under the Geneva Convention by the Americans." If this warning did not prove effective the Americans had another more effective overture to surrender — an artillery barrage."

— From "Lightning, The History of the 78th Infantry Division."

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The 8th Division, which had captured Olpe the previous day, continued to pace the attack and was several miles out in front of all other First Army units. Elements of the 8th Division leaped all the way north



Throughout Germany our infantrymen continued to move forward. These doughboys are shown advancing thru a wooded area which had only recently been bombed.

to Minerzhagen and Kierspe. At 1100, on April 10, the artillery forward observers spotted a huge German horse-drawn convoy passing through the congested valley at the cross roads town of Kierspe. At once all the artillery batteries for miles around were turned against this convoy, and within minutes the entire column was relegated to a mass of ruin. For over two miles, there was nothing left but burning wreckage and mangled horse meat, with hundreds of wounded and dead Germans amidst this scene of destruction. What few men and horses that had managed to escape were in such a dazed condition, that they too were medical cases. The scene of utter destruction at Kierspe was probably not equalled anywhere else in the European War.

The 8th Division was on line with the 28th Infantry on the right and the 121st Infantry on the left. The 13th Infantry was in reserve. The 8th Division line at the close of the day was in a loop just above Kierspe.

The 86th Division, on the XVIII Airborne Corps right flank, ran up against one of the heavily fortified positions for which the Ruhr was famous, and on the boundary between the 86th Division area and the area of the 99th Division, one of the most brutal battles of the Ruhr campaign took place.

The Third Battalion, 342nd Infantry, kicked off in an attack toward the Brugg River at 0800. The battle order handed to the Battalion Commander called for the battalion to advance with all three companies abreast through dense forest for about 8 miles, to take the communications centers of Bonzel and Grevenbruk, by surprise from the flank. The fir forest in this area was almost impassable and a heavy fog limited visibility to practically zero. All during the morning the infantrymen slowly worked their way through the forest, and over several ranges of steep hills, meeting only scattered opposition from isolated MG nests.

About noon, as the companies approached the Bonzel road junction, Co. I, 342nd Infantry captured a man and woman observation team dressed in civilian clothes but carrying a field radio in a suit case. Two Russian-slave laborers were also found wandering in the woods. Several hundred yards further, as Co. I was coming down the forward slope of a hill approaching Bonzel, all Hell broke loose. Hidden in the dense undergrowth at the road junction was a regular fortress, consisting of large numbers of Anti-Aircraft guns and AA Artillery. These weapons were turned down and were fired at point blank range at the unwary Black Hawks advancing over the brow of the hill.

A platoon, led by Lt. Forrest Myers, was in the vanguard of the I Co. advance and the first to feel the blow when the Kraut installation opened up. With practically no cover on the hillside, the doughboys were at the mercy of God alone, as their position was raked by fire from the Ack Ack guns below. Out of contact with Regiment and even the rest of their battalion nearby, Co. I suffered extremely heavy casualties within the next hour and was pinned down for three hours. When the ack ack batteries first opened up, Pfc. Robert Secon, Fairfield, Conn., was the nearest to the enemy. He immediately opened up fire with his BAR and kept up continuous fire in covering his platoon which was attempting to reorganize. Pfc. Secon was killed in action as was Pfc. George Sczomak, Detroit, Michigan, who continued to advance on the enemy position armed only with a rifle until he fell mortally wounded. With only ten members of his platoon left after the initial attack, T/Sgt. Leslie Hicks, Cut Bank, Montana, reorganized the remaining members of the unit and counterattacked the Jerry. In the meantime, Pfc. Charles Murphy, Atlanta, Ga., Lt. Myers, and Pfc. Junior Robinson, of Quinton, Okla., managed to reach a

building at the edge of Bonzel from where they held on bravely through several concentrated attacks by German panzer units. They were later joined by 10 other members of their platoon.

Casualties in Co. I reached the amazing total of almost 50 per cent including the wounded and missing by three o'clock. Nearby Co. K and Co. L were catching more of the same from the flak batteries. K Company, advancing on Bonzel from the opposite direction, ran right into a King Tiger tank deployed along the road at the outskirts of town. A direct hit by a bazooka team destroyed this obstacle.

Numerous MG nests were deployed by the Germans surrounding the Flak batteries. Pfc. Lindy M. Shambaugh of Magnolia, W. Va., singlehandedly attacked one MG nest and destroyed it with a hand grenade. Pfc. Richard Mapes also distinguished himself by advancing in front of his company and setting up a MG to protect his units flank.

Co. L, 342nd Infantry was advancing on Bonzel from the left flank, when the batteries in the valley below opened fire on Item Company. As the flak guns switched their field of fire toward L Co., T/Sgt. Earl L. Roat, Cincinnati, Ohio, deployed his platoon and steadily crept to within 30 yards of the enemy, fixed bayonet and commenced to fire as he advanced ahead of his platoon. Sgt. Roat was killed by an enemy grenade as he jumped into a Jerry trench, but his gallantry inspired his platoon into over running the position. The lead scout for Co. L in the advance was Pfc. Robert C. Hurley, Lutherville, Maryland, who sustained a head wound in the initial encounter. Pfc. Hurley refused to be evacuated or even submit to medical treatment and continued to advance as lead scout until the objective was reached.

Meanwhile Co. I, on the east hill facing the town, was split in half by a German counter attack. One half of the company joined Lt. Myers in a small group of buildings at the edge of town, where they held out behind the enemy lines until counter attacking Co. K reached them late in the day. The other half of Co. I withdrew over the crest of the hill where it was reorganized by Lt. Rodney Burgin, 1st Sgt. Bill Stafford, Oxford, Nebr., and Sgt. R. L. Applegate, while Pfc. Everette Berry, company radio operator, tried vainly to establish radio contact.

Many of the casualties suffered by the 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry were lying out in no-man's land. Chaplain Gerald T. Krohn, upon learning this at Regimental Headquarters, volunteered as a litter bearer and made several trips into unfriendly territory to evacuate the wounded. While treating some of the casualties, four medical aid men were captured by a Kraut patrol, but they were released the following day by the 99th Division after 24 hours held as prisoners.

The German positions finally were eliminated at 1700 when air support arrived and a severe pounding by all four of the artillery batteries eliminated this barrier, once and for all. The 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry came out of the engagement on April 10 badly mauled, and was withdrawn from the line at 2000 and relieved by the 1st Battalion, 343rd. The battered outfit was then pulled back to Altenhuden where it regrouped and was brought back to combat strength by a large number of replacements just arrived from various IRTC's back in the states.

—Reprinted from "Black Hawks Over The Danube — The History of the 86th Infantry Division," copyright 1954.

Despite the set back suffered by this battalion, the 86th Division units captured numerous towns during the day, including Bilstein and Grevenbruk, and forced a crossing of the Bigge River, which would be used the next day in an assault on Attendorn.

Isolated enemy strongpoints, often centered around an anti-aircraft emplacement, reinforced by two or three armored vehicles and a company of infantry, provided the major opposition to the advance of the XVIII Corps on April 11.

On the left flank, the 13th Armored Division passed through the 97th Division lines and attacked in a bold move which carried the tankers to within sight of the large bend of the Rhine just upstream from Cologne. With the huge smokestacks of the Ford plant, and the towers of the Cologne Cathedral to serve as a compass the 13th Armored Division registered gains of some 7,000 yards during the day.

The 97th Division, which had side-stepped to the right to make room for the 13th Armored, advanced their forward regiments to the banks of the Agger River. Some Trident Division units were engaged in mopping up behind the advance of the 13th Armored Division along the banks of the Rhine.

A reservoir on the headwaters of the Agger River was the objective of the 78th Division during the day, and by 1600, the 310th Infantry (78th Division) held the city of Dümmling as well as its dam. The 311th Infantry in the meantime captured the town of Gummersbach.

The importance of the seizure of the dams on the headwaters of the Agger River should not be underestimated. These reservoirs controlled the entire front along the left flank of the corps area, for if the enemy were to open the gates, the entire lower Agger valley could be flooded, and make the position of any American troops north of the river untenable. Once the dams were captured, the 78th Division, 97th Division, and 13th Armored Division could attack across the river and keep pace with the remainder of the XVIII Corps.

In the 8th Division sector of the front, spearheading infantrymen of the 28th Regiment captured intact the power dam at Barse Talsp. However, the 13th Infantry found the going much tougher just north of Kierspe, and a determined fight took place there the biggest part of the day.

The 311th Infantry (78th Division), reinforced by the 78th Division Cavalry Troop, captured the dam. The recon troop was the first to reach the dam, and in searching for demolitions, one GI opened a door which appeared to lead to the inspection area below the dam, and out rushed 14 fully armed Germans, but all were in a surrendering notion.

The nearby city of Gummersbach had a pre-war population of over 20,000. On entering the city square, a huge sign had been crudely painted and left flying as a banner across the plaza which read: "We always hated Hitler, so glad you came . . . Nix Nazi." In a German bank facing the Plaza, the Military Government unit of the 78th Division seized a vault containing over 50 million marks. This was becoming an old story, this "Nix Nazi" stuff, and the GI's were not fooled by such protestations of innocence.

At nearby Loope, an entire German garrison surrendered to the 309th Infantry (78th Division) in a formal ceremony. The commander lined his entire unit up in parade formations and with tears in his eyes made a brief but touching farewell speech, and then turned and surrendered to the American commander.

Attendorn Falls to the 86th Division

On the right flank of the corps front, the 86th Division doughboys who forced a crossing of the Bigge River the previous day, hit the Germans hard from the flanks and siezed the city of Attendorn. Company A, 342nd Infantry (86th Division) was subjected to an hour of house to house and room to room fighting before the fanatical SS garrison was annihilated.

In Attendorn was located a large slave labor camp, one of the largest in the Ruhr. The inmates of this camp were forced to work 18 hours a day in the nearby mines, and were driven and beaten to their work by a stearn German task-master. When the 86th Division doughboys freed this camp, the inmates cornered the former camp commandant in a building and were intent on hanging him then and there. However, a patrol from the 86th Division managed to race him out of his barricaded building and turn him over to the Military Government for trial as a war criminal.

As our infantrymen overran the PW and slave labor camps, more and more we were able to realize the type of enemy we were facing. Here was a supposedly civilized nation, whose government and citizens had subjected people of neighboring nations, and different beliefs, to the most inhuman and cruel treatment imaginable.

As we entered these concentration camps, we were able to see with our own eyes the bake ovens, where hundreds of thousands of Jews Poles, French, Russians, Slavs and even Americans were murdered in cold blood. In these camps the SS would often burn their prisoners alive. At one camp in the Ruhr our infantrymen uncovered a slave labor camp where political prisoners were housed in low, ill-heated buildings with 200 starved individuals to a room. Wooden shelves lined the walls. These shelves were about five feet deep and three feet apart. Timbers were spaced five feet apart to divide these shelves into compartments. The final compartment was about five feet wide, five feet long and two to three feet high.

In each of these compartments the Kraut beast assigned six men—sometimes seven. Just imagine in your mind seven men forced to live in a space 5'x5'x3'; however, when a person has been starved and is no bigger around the waist than the top portion of a baseball bat, that person does not require much room.

Our forces, as they advanced through the Ruhr, saw hundres upon hundreds of these poor wretched souls as they freed them from captivity. Many of them wore the "Star of David" on their striped uniform, others just a German version of the letter "P", but one and all, they had been exposed to the most inhuman treatment possible.

The German proved himself to be "A butcher by nature, a butcher by trade."

As our own American boys were freed from the numerous PW cages in the Ruhr, they likewise told a story of mistreatment at the hands of the Hun.



At Attendorf the 86th Division rescued the former Commandant of a slave labor camp just as the inmates of his camp were preparing to lynch him. He was later tried and convicted of war crimes and received a long prison sentence.

Many of the Americans who had been captured by the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge were liberated in the Ruhr. Time and time again they told of their treatment while prisoners of the Germans. They told of being forced to walk for miles without food or water. One GI who had been taken prisoner in December 1944, was loaded on a freight car with 60 other PW's and taken for a 4 day—200 mile trip to Upper Silesta. They were given no food nor water for the trip. Their overcoats, blankets, field jackets and shoes were taken away from them. With the temperature near the zero mark, they were forced to ride for four days like this. This prisoner and his companions were forced to lick the ice on the hinges of the box-car door for water. As there were no sanitation facilities whatsoever in the car, the prisoners were forced to use a small corner of the car for that purpose. Then the German guards would enter the car and would hit the prisoners with their rifle butts and call them "dirty American swine".

Many of the American prisoners liberated in the Ruhr Pocket were wounded and badly in need of medical attention. The prisoners told how our own medics had their aid kits taken away from them and were refused supplies with which to treat their fellow prisoners. Many of the Americans released in the Ruhr weighed only 60 and 70 pounds where once they had been well built men of 170 and 190 pounds.

Scenes such as these mentioned above, left a bad taste in the front line soldiers mouth, and little pity could be expected by any German who had the gall to complain of small, trivial inconveniences.

Roosevelt Dies Ludenschied Falls

April 12, 1945, was the day our beloved President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, died at his retreat near Warm Springs, Georgia, but to the infantryman on the front line, it was just another day of misery. When the word reached the front lines, one battalion of the 86th Division, was within minutes of jumping off in a Task Force to attack the largest city thus far encountered in the Ruhr, the industrial city of Ludenscheid.

Named Task Force Pope, the 3rd Battalion, 342nd Infantry (86th Division) assembled for early chow at Attendorn and Brigadier General Van White Pope, who commanded the Task Force bearing his name, briefed the men on their task while they ate.

At 0530 General Pope radioed to General Melasky that the Task Force had just passed through the first of a series of road blocks known to be set up on the road to Ludenscheid. A handful of Germans defended the road block but our attached TD's quickly knocked them out of the war. As the Task Force advanced, the 332nd FA and 911th FA, which were given direct support, kept a barrage falling in front of the troops which was controlled by forward observers. Black Hawk infantrymen passed many dead and wounded Germans lining the road, who had felt the effect of our artillery.

At 1100 the infantrymen reached the outskirts of Ludenscheid, which lay around a high hill from the present position of the Task Force. General Pope halted the column and deployed the three rifle companies in a direct attack toward the city. Co. K and Co. L were to attack along the main road into town while Co. I was to go over the wooded hill and give the companies approaching up the road direct fire support.

A large factory was situated at the near end of town and as soon as the Task Force started around the end of the hill the enemy turned every thing he had loose on the doughboys. Co. K suffered heavy casualties but managed to continue to advance into the face of the enemy. After a half hour advance units of Cos. K and L were cleaning up the pockets of resistance within the factory site. It developed that numerous Russian slave laborers were working in this factory, and one of them braved the German MG bullets to pass out dry and warm socks, which were stored in the warehouse, to the Black Hawk troops. Co. K still met heavy resistance but Co. L, which was now entering the buildings along the north side of the town, found themselves behind the enemy, and succeeded in knocking out several 88 crews.

Meanwhile Co. I, advancing over the wooded hill on the left flank of the Task Force, ran into a hotbed of MG nests on the hill overlooking the town. Pfc. Cleo Parsons, Quanah, Texas, with utter disregard for his own safety, left protective cover and single-handedly attacked a MG nest which had his company pinned down and neutralized the position. Although wounded in the fray, he remained with his company and continued to spark its advance. Meantime a few yards away, Lt. John F. Seaton, in attacking another enemy position, fell mortally wounded when struck by an enemy shell.

During the height of the battle, General Pope received the admiration of all of his men by personally leading the rifle companies through the various phases of the engagement. At 1645, after an extended negotiation, the city finally was subdued by the superior Black Hawk forces and several hundred PW's were captured, including a detachment of SS troops, which provided plenty of souvenirs for those inclined toward them. The 3rd Bn., 342nd Inf. then mopped up several points of resistance within the city and set up a defense line for the night.

Meanwhile the 343rd Infantry, which was on the offensive east of Ludencheid, formed a Task Force whose mission it was to swing north and take the high ground south of Osterich. This Task Force was composed of the 3rd Bn., 343rd Inf., and elements of the 740th Tank Bn., and 644th TD Bn. Upon reaching the town of Huinghausen, forward elements of the Task Force were pinned down by artillery and 20mm flak. Upon reconnaissance it was discovered that the enemy held all of the dominating ground and movement was impossible. For three hours the 3rd Bn., 343rd Inf. was pinned down with any sort of defense impossible due to the intensity of the fire from the flak guns. After another two hours of pounding the German positions with heavy artillery from the 911th FA Bn., the rifle companies were able to advance and late in the afternoon Huinghausen fell to the Battalion and over 1,000 prisoners were taken by the force.

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The 8th Division advanced from 8 to 10 miles over the entire width of its front on April 12, and its lines now ran through the towns of Kreuzberg and Ehringhausen. The 8th Division, moving right up the center corridor of the First Army advance, was setting the pace for the rest of the divisions in the campaign.

In the sector assigned to the 78th Division, the 309th Infantry (78th Division) ran into its stiffest battle of the Pocket. Advancing along the left flank of the division sector, the 309th Infantry had been in contact with many German units pushing into the area by the advance of friendly American forces further south. Trapped, these isolated units sometimes fought desperately before being subdued.

"Almost on the boundary separating the two divisions (the 78th Division and the 97th Division) was the town of Drabenderhohe. The 1st Battalion, 309th Infantry cut the road just south of town and then swung west to meet the 97th

Division men. Suddenly fire opened up on the men from directly ahead. Enemy infantry was supported by 88's and AA guns. There, partially camouflaged, was a German Ordnance dump, converted hastily into a fort. The men worked to overcome this strong point. As darkness fell, the defenders finally gave ground and slipped across the Agger River. Resistance ended, the 1st Battalion, 309th Infantry, reorganized and marched four hours to catch up with the remainder of their regiment."

—From "Lightning, The History of the 78th Infantry Division."

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On the left flank of the corps area, the 13th Armored Division was advancing through the 97th Division area and was preparing to spring a trap within a trap, as the overall plans called for the 13th Armored Division to leap out in front of the other units and then swing east to trap enemy units in front of the 78th Division. But an unexpected amount of opposition held the proposed pincer movement back, and the plan was called off. Then the 97th Division, beside its mission of mopping up in the rear of the 13th Armored Division, was forced to again attack in coordination with the tankers.

Historians may never record the fact, but it is very likely that the units of the XVIII Airborne Corps were the first American outfits to fight the Koreans and they did it almost five years before other Americans forces were called on to fight in North Korea.

At one time during the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket, American infantrymen of the XVIII Airborne Corps took a flak position by storm, and captured over 100 Koreans who were fighting as part of the German Army. It seems that Koreans had at one time been in the Russian Army and captured by the Germans at Stalingrad. The Germans recruited them into their army and assigned them to anti-aircraft units. It was in this manner that they were captured by the Americans.

Koreans were not the only non-German nationality encountered in the Ruhr Pocket. An entire regiment of horse cavalry of the Hungarian Army was met and defeated near Olpe in the 8th Division area. It must be stated however, that the Hungarian troops were well trained and even in surrender never broke ranks.

On April 13, the enemy made a belated attempt to ward off disaster by unleashing several violent counter-attacks against the XVIII Corps. But these attacks were just like a dying man's last breath.

Despite these evident signs of increased determination to resist, the XVIII Airborne Corps registered large gains for the day.

As the 86th Division was clearing Ludenscheid, the 341st Infantry (86th Division) which had been returned to control of the Black Hawk Division CG after its attachment to the 97th Division in mopping up Siegen, attacked along the main road net leading into Hagen. The advance of the 341st Infantry continued without a hitch until it reached the Hagen suburb of Priorie.

At Priorie the 86th Division ran into one of the well-established flak emplacements which were scattered throughout the Ruhr, such as at Bonzel and Siegen. The entire regiment (341st) was pinned down for a lengthy period and

suffered many casualties. The regiment finally managed to break the back bone of the enemy's attack and by 1800 the enemy troops in the area were routed.

The 86th Division spearhead then started to advance again and by dark of April 13 were drawing up on the outskirts of Hagen, the huge German industrial center, where the 341st Infantry (86th Division) dug-in for the night in a circular perimeter defense. Meanwhile, the 343rd Infantry (also 86th Division) were closing in along the Lenne River the entire distance from Plettenberg to near its confluence with the Ruhr River.

Meanwhile, in the center of the corps sector, the 8th Division advanced 8 miles led by the 13th Infantry (8th Division), and reached the corps "stop line" near Wilsse, which was only 2,000 yards from the Ruhr. On the left, the 28th Infantry (8th Division) captured Radevormwald and Schwelm. In a tunnel near Wuppertal, the 8th Division captured two railroad gun batteries, three carloads of ammunition and two locomotives with steam up. In the attack on Schwelm, the 740th Tank Battalion, attached to the 8th Division, knocked out a Mark VI tank with direct fire from one of the lighter American tanks.

It was on April 13 that the 78th Division captured its first general officer of the war. He formally surrendered in the town of Lindlar, where some 1,212 prisoners were taken, the most captured by the 78th Division in any one day since they entered the lines back in Belgium.

On the corps left flank the 97th Division and the 13th Armored Division advanced to the east approaches of the demolished Cologne Bridge and by nightfall held a line running through Berg Gladbach. These two divisions were operating in close contact with each other in an attempt to bring the left flank of the corps area up even with the center area.

The Pocket is Split

April 14 was a big day in the Ruhr Pocket, for on that afternoon elements of the 86th Division and the 8th Division split the pocket in two near Hagen, when contact was made with the 75th Division which was occupying the north bank of the Ruhr near Wetter.

As the pocket was split in two many enemy units surrendered *en masse* when they realized the hopelessness of their situation.

On the right flank of the corps the 86th Division cleared Hagen and advanced an additional 3,000 yards to secure the south bank of the Ruhr River from Latmathe, at the mouth of the Lenne, all the way downstream to Hagen.

The 8th Division sent its 13th Infantry Regiment into a coordinated attack with the 86th Division and the first link-up between the First Army and Ninth Army units fighting in the Ruhr was made at 1800 hours. The 8th Division was now fighting in the heavily built up industrial areas and one industry after another fell to the three regiments. Enemy resistance increased greatly as the opposition was being forced between our opposing forces. Numerous self-propelled guns and panzerfausts



A tank crew seeks shelter in a narrow German street in repulsing a heavy German air attack in the Ruhr.

slowed the advance. Over 2,000 prisoners were taken by the 8th Division on this date.

At 0630 on the morning of April 14 the 78th Division jumped off in an attack on Lennepe and Wuppertal. The rifle company leading the attack passed through Lennepe without meeting any opposition. After passing through the town, which was a few miles south of Wuppertal, opposition increased and the Lightning Division advance was slowed to a crawl. Opposition was furnished by the crack 9th Panzer Division.

Wuppertal was the largest city in the whole area. From miles around one could see the tall smoke stacks of its silk, cotton, paper, machinery and chemical factories. The only mono-rail tramway in the world was situated there. The population totaled some 400,000, nearly as large as Cincinnati. Five miles to the south was the sister city of Remscheid, with a population of some 100,000.

By late afternoon of April 14, the 8th Division, 78th Division, 97th Division and the 13th Armored Division were all drawing up around the city and a state of siege was declared by the German forces commander. The American units moved into position for an attack on the city during the night.

The morning of April 15, 1945 dawned as a bright day, not only in the skies above, but also for the fortunes of the American troops engaged in the Ruhr Pocket. As our forces shoved off into the offensive, we found the following situation facing the troops of the XVIII Airborne Corps in the Ruhr.

The XVIII Airborne Corps and the XIX Corps of the Ninth Army had linked in the center of the Ruhr, a few miles northwest of Hagen, cutting the Ruhr Pocket into two smaller pockets. The union between



A long column of war prisoners, all captured in the Ruhr, are walked to the rear past a burned out German truck. As the Ruhr Pocket battle progressed, this became a frequent scene, as more and more of the enemy surrendered.

the two armies now stretched some 25 miles along the Ruhr River from near Hagen westward through Esborn. Meanwhile, other GIs of the Airborne Corps were facing the enemy on a general line drawn from Hagen, just south of Wuppertal and Remscheid to Leverkusen, on the Rhine just north of Cologne. A considerable pocket of Nazis still were cornered in the Duisberg-Cologne-Hagen triangle but the bulk of the enemy in the area of the XVIII Corps had been defeated. The units of the Airborne Corps (as of 0600, April 15) were engaged as follows:

The 86th Infantry Division, which had advanced to the Ruhr the previous day, was busy mopping up isolated enemy strong points which had been bypassed in the rapid advance. The 341st Infantry was on the left near Hagen, the 342nd Infantry cleared the west bank of the Lenne near Latmathe, and the 343rd Infantry still held a line position, and were meeting determined small arms fire along the right flank of the corps.

The 8th Infantry Division had completed its original mission of splitting the pocket in two, and as the enemy still was stubbornly defending the triangle in front of the 78th Division and 97th Division, it was decided to have the entire 8th Division swing around and attack in a 45 degree angle, and attempt to surprise the enemy with a flanking movement to the rear of the German lines. The 740th Tank Battalion was attached to the 8th Division to support this

mission.

The 78th Division, fighting with all three regiments abreast, advanced eight miles to the immediate suburbs of Wuppertal and Solingen. The battle to capture Wuppertal was under way.

The 97th Infantry Division attacked in the direction of Wuppertal also and severed the railway line from Neukirchen to Burscheid. The 97th Division was ordered to flank Wuppertal on the left and to attempt to meet with the 8th Division further north.

The 13th Armored Division advanced Combat Command R along the east bank of the Rhine for a distance of some three miles to the vicinity of Leverkusen, which was directly across the Rhine from Cologne.

As the XVIII Corps prepared to complete its job in the Ruhr, we will note that there were two big drives contemplated which would clear the small pocket of troops then surrounded in the area. One called for the three divisions on the left flank of the corps (namely the 78th, 97th and 13th Armored) to continue to attack to the north while the other called for the 8th Division to swing to the west and strike the German troops from the rear.

While elements of the 97th Division were attacking Wuppertal, other combat units of the division captured Solingen, another huge Ruhr industrial city.

Wuppertal was seized by the 78th Division, and the western edge of the pocket was closed considerably for the day. Meanwhile, the 8th Infantry Division, which had been ordered to swing west, had advanced some ten miles in the enemy's rear. By April 17, the Battle of the Ruhr was over as far as the infantry was concerned: from this time on it was a problem belonging to Military Government.

CHAPTER 6

THE III CORPS ATTACKS FROM THE SOUTHEAST

As the XVIII Corps attacked on the left flank of the First Army area in the southern arc surrounding the Ruhr, the III Corps, under command of Major General Van Fleet, launched an attack in close coordination which would in a brief period of ten days result in the complete destruction of all enemy forces in the Ruhr.

The III Corps was forced to fight in the most difficult terrain of any area in the Ruhr, if not of all Europe. The countryside was extremely hilly and very wooded, which made it more than easy for snipers and sharpshooters to do their deadly mission.

As this period of operations got under way on April 6, the III Corps had troops engaged as follows:

(a) The 99th "Checkerboard" Division held a front line position on the left flank of the III Corps area and were attacking in a position from Schamedar to Schmallenberg. The 99th Division was also to maintain contact with the 86th Division on their left.

(b) 7th Armored Division was to advance on a narrow front through heavy, dense woods until contact was made with Ninth Army. Two regiments were on line.

(c) The veteran 9th Infantry Division was advancing on a front running from Oberkirchen to Brilon. The 9th Division was to press the attack on the right flank of the corps area until the 5th Division was in position to relieve the 9th Infantry Division. The 9th Division was also to protect the right flank of all infantry units fighting in the Ruhr.

The III Corps mission was to attack to the northwest in close coordination with the XVIII Airborne Corps and to clear the area bordered by the Lenne River on the left, which was the common border with the Airborne Corps, and the Ninth Army area on the right, all the way to the Ruhr River.

Operations on April 6 saw gains in the III Corps area ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 yards against spotty opposition. The 99th Infantry Division captured Wingehausen and Musse, despite a determined counter-attack which struck at the lines held by the 393rd Infantry (99th Division) just at twilight on this date. The counter-attack, which was led by several tanks and strongly supported by infantry, was repulsed with heavy losses by the enemy.

Combat Command B of the 7th Armored Division overran Winkhausen and Graftschaft despite increasing opposition. On the right flank of the III Corps area, the 9th Infantry Division registered very small gains during the day, capturing numerous small towns. The rate of advance was held up, not by the opposition, but by the adverse terrain conditions.

On April 7, substantial success against the "pocket" was noted in

the III Corps area. The 99th Infantry Division, on the left flank of the corps area, gained 3 or 4 miles to establish front line positions just north of Oberhunden and Schmallenberg. The city of Oberhunden was captured by the "Checker-boarders" after a bitter fight with the enemy. The Krauts had a small fortress ringing Oberhunden, with numerous ack-ack emplacements, mortar, artillery, and dug-in tanks.

The 7th Armored Division, in the center of the corps area, cleared Schmallenberg and Gliedorf, on the headwaters of the Lenne River. Gains were also made some 3,000 yards to the west, in a night attack in coordination with the 99th Division.



An anti-tank crew takes shelter behind some German farm houses in a small Ruhr village.

The 9th Infantry Division advanced approximately two miles through rough country to capture Rehsipen, an important communications center.

The 99th Infantry Division on April 8 met heavy opposition as they attacked toward one of the main highways which crossed directly in front of the III Corps area, from east to west. The enemy had heavily fortified all the towns situated along this highway as well as many natural landmarks. The doughboys found every town stubbornly defended. Extensive use of the flak guns, which had been placed here primarily as defense of the Ruhr against air attack, was noted. The 99th Division

captured Wormbach, Felbecke, Worpe, and Saalhausen after fierce opposition by the Panzer Lehr Division, which was opposing our advance down the Lenne River valley.

The 7th Armored Division also met with stiff opposition during the day and registered only small gains. However, despite the small mileage won, the tankers more than made up for this in the numbers of enemy armored vehicles destroyed in the attack on Fredeburg, where the Panzer Lehr Division defended with many armored units. Our tankers succeeded in capturing the town and destroyed numerous enemy vehicles.

The 9th Infantry Division on the corps right flank progressed a mile through the wooded region around Bodefeld and Wester Boderfeld. The 47th Infantry (9th Division) reached out in a swift flanking movement to establish contact with the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment (17th Airborne Division attached to the 8th Armored Division) of the Ninth Army on the banks of the Ruhr River near Meschede. This bold move considerably shortened our lines and set the stage for the next move of the III Corps, a swift knife-like attack all along the corps front which would see the eventual destruction of all German opposition in the Ruhr Pocket.

On that morning of April 9, the III Corps was to burst forth with new fury. The 99th Division, attacking with all three regiments abreast jumped across the Lenne River in a lightning move and captured the town of Bracht, some 4,000 yards beyond.

Bracht, a town which was on the right flank of the 99th Div. area, was situated on an important mountain road to offer a strong defense, particularly against the 7th Armored Division operating on the flank. It was also a thorn against the side of the 394th Infantry (99th Division). On the 8th of April the air OPs spotted the enemy reinforcing the town with some 30 troop-laden trucks and half a dozen artillery pieces. The air OPs called for artillery fire. All through the night the front line soldiers could hear the screams of wounded Krauts and smell the pungent odor of burning gas, wood, and flesh as the artillery pounded away. Early on the morning of April 9, two flights of air support swooped down on the town and bombed and strafed it, laying every egg on the target area. The artillery and mortars continued to fire away. The second our barrage lifted the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry (99th Division) swarmed down from the hills and entered the town. In a half hour they were through the town and sitting on the high ground on the other side.

—From "Battle Babies, The History of the 99th Infantry Division," by Maj. Gen. Walter Laver.

The 99th Division now advanced with the three regiments reading from left to right, 395th, 393rd and 394th. The remainder of the area south of the Lenne River was cleared and the bridgehead north of the river was rapidly expanded. The Checkerboarders were some four miles north of the river by day's end.

The 7th Armored Division also experienced hard fighting during the day and cleared Fredeburg. The division's left flank also participated in the action previously described at Bracht, and patrols penetrated the enemy held territory as far as Kobbenrode. The right flank of the corps was near Mailar.

The 9th Infantry Division continued to press its attack on its last day in action in the Ruhr Pocket by advancing its 60th Infantry through the high hills east of Altenipe and just south of Ober Rarbach. The

terrain was extremely difficult as numerous streams had their headwaters in this area and one high cliff after another had to be transversed.

The 9th Infantry Division was relieved by the 5th "Red Diamond" Infantry Division at the close of the day on April 9. The 5th Division passed through the lines of the 9th Division and pressed the attack on into the heart of the "Fatherland." The 9th Division was pulled back briefly in corps reserve and later rejoined the V Corps, to which it had been previously attached, and participated in later action against the enemy in the vicinity of the eventual link-up with the Russian Army on the Elbe River.

On April 10, the 99th Division pressed its attack northward with the 395th Infantry capturing Meggen. Other units of the 99th Division turned into "mountain goats" as they attacked into the heart of the Lenne Mountain Range, and it would truly take mountain goats to traverse that terrain, much less fight in it. The units in this area captured Elspe and Odingen.

Elements of the 786th Tank Battalion and the 99th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (both attached to 99th Division) were rushed to Altenhuden late in the day to protect the 99th Division flank after the enemy had thrown several severe counter-attacks into the lines of the 86th Division, which adjoined the 99th Division sector.

The 7th Armored Division moved forward to capture Dermecke and Elsohe. The 7th Armored was busy clearing the triangle formed by the forks of the Wenne River, which flows northward to the Ruhr near Arnsberg.

Heavy action on the north flank of the III Corps area highlighted the days action on April 11. The 5th Infantry Division advanced its 2nd Infantry into Weninhausen and its 10th Infantry Regiment to Hellefeld. The 5th Division was busy maintaining contact with the 7th Armored Division on its left flank and the Ninth Army on its right, often times attacking enemy positions not knowing where friendly forces were located. The 5th Division artillery support was extremely limited as a fire order prevented them from firing too far in front of the infantry for fear of hitting Ninth Army units, fighting along the north bank of the Ruhr River.

The 7th Armored Division took Schlipruthen and Salway to highlight their action for the day.

The 99th Infantry Division gained only negligible territory to capture Serkenrode.

On April 12, the 5th Division advanced several miles to reach Enkhausen, an important communications center, which was captured after a bitter fight. The well defended town was a control point for all enemy operations in the area facing the III Corps. In the meantime the 7th Armored Division advanced west to Langenholthausen from which point CCA-7th Armored Division attacking through the 5th Division advanced eight miles along the west shore of Schirpe Lake to Hovel. Meanwhile CCR-7th Armored Division advanced southwest to a line between Garbeck and Wintrop. These moves caught the enemy off guard and large numbers of enemy PWs were taken during the day,

not as much from their desire to surrender but rather from being surprised at finding large American units roaming at will through their rear areas.

The 99th Infantry Division continued to advance along the corps west or left flank meeting erratic opposition. Numerous enemy supply dumps were over-run and many PW's were taken. The 394th Infantry (99th Division) captured Endorf, where the following order issued by the 338th Wehrmacht Infantry Division was captured, which truly depicts the condition the enemy was in.

"To take effect immediately: Troops will buy up all cattle (except one cow and pig per farmhouse) as well as all provisions and warehouse supplies . . . because of the limited ration situation, a decrease of one half size of portion of each portion of each element of the ration is unavoidable . . ."

The actions now shifts again to the right flank of the III Corps area in the Ruhr, where the 5th Division was advancing in a very narrow corridor, or front, of only six miles in width. On April 13 the 2nd Infantry (5th Division) had moved to within sight of Elsborn and Ashbeck, and was seriously engaged with the enemy in that sector. The 10th Infantry (5th Division) was fighting near the Ruhr valley towns of Holsen and Bochum.

Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division, encountered heavy resistance during the day as it met dug-in infantry, mortar, artillery, and tank units. The advance was slowed, but not the destruction showered on the enemy units who dared to oppose our tankers. CCA-7th Armored Division captured Dieling, which was one of the best defended strong points in the entire Ruhr. The 7th Armored Division now found themselves in the point of an attack with the heart of the Ruhr valley lying before them. Down in the valley to their front was the industrial center of Iserlohn and far through the hazy mist could be seen the smokestacks of Hagen and Dortmund. CCR-7th Armored Division captured the town of Neuenerode.

The 99th Infantry Division on the left flank encountered very difficult terrain that held up their advance to some extent. Fighting and climbing up, over and under one mountain after another, the fighting Checkerboard Division moved exhausted and tired from one Battleground to another. Whenever the enemy dared to oppose their advance, the dog-tired doughboys under the command of Maj. Gen. Lauer, would swarm at the enemy like demons, intent only on destruction, and destroy they did. The 99th Division captured over 4,000 prisoners during their operations in the Lenne Mountains on April 13 alone. The 99th Division on this date captured Eiringhausen, Stefonal, and Garbeck.

April 14, it will be recalled, was the day the XVIII Airborne Corps split the Ruhr Pocket in two near Hagen. That link-up left two major German pockets yet to be cleared in the Ruhr, one on the east shore of the Rhine from Dusseldorf to Wuppertal and the other a small triangle formed by the junction of the Lenne and Ruhr Rivers, roughly from the large town of Altena north to Menden, with enemy forces also still opposing the First Army west of the Lenne River in the 86th Division



Close coordination between the Infantry and Armored units was very much in evidence throughout the Ruhr Pocket campaign.

area. Compressed in this small area were unknown numbers of the enemy. The city of Iserlohn was the center of the area, and from there all enemy operations were directed.

On April 14, the 5th Division continued to close in on the east pocket of troops and met considerable opposition from self-propelled 88's. An advance of 10,000 yards brought the 5th Division to the Ruhr north of Menden. The 7th Armored Division mopped up the rear after its rapid advance of the previous day and advanced a few miles to Hemer. The 99th Division advanced 6,000 yards to clear Ihmert and Westig, on the outskirts of Iserlohn, where a defense line was set up in the expectation of an enemy counter-attack, as a large German force was known to be located in Iserlohn.

In the last few days of the Ruhr campaign, the prisoner situation became almost hopeless. Often a single GI guard would start to the rear with perhaps ten German prisoners. As the procession would move down the road, additional Germans would run out of the woods, or houses, and join the column of PW's. On one occasion two infantrymen started to the rear with 18 prisoners. As the group moved down the road to the rear whole companies of Nazis would come down out of the hills and surrender to the two lone GI's. When the column reached the point where the regimental PW collection point was supposedly located, it was found that the whole set up had moved. The two doughs felt themselves in a hopeless situation. Here they were with several hundred prisoners, many of them still armed, in the dark of night, with no way to rid themselves of their burden. The lone pair ordered all of the Germans to lie on the ground, and the two doughboys then separated and guarded the prisoners from opposite sides of a large, newly plowed barley field. They kept up their vigil all night, and when dawn came a patrol found them and escorted them to the new location of the regimental PW collection point, where they turned their prisoners over to the MPs. When the prisoners were counted it was found that the two GI's had spent the night with over 800 former super men.

April 15 was a day of unusual events in the III Corps area. The 99th Division attacked at 0600 and town after town was captured during the morning with so many prisoners streaming in that the infantry regiments found it difficult to advance. It was evident that the enemy forces were disintegrating and that the collapse of the Ruhr Pocket was near at hand. Enemy resistance was rather scattered, with many enemy soldiers opposing the American advance with token small arms fire followed by surrender. But this token resistance managed to inflict casualties upon our forces. The 393rd Infantry (99th Division) overran the towns of Utterlingsen, Dahle, Vettenscheid, Altena, Evingsen, and Nette.

Of the above mentioned towns, the most important, both from a military and civilian angle, was Altena. Altena was a fairly large town situated in a narrow valley hemmed in by high mountains on each side of the river. The Lenne River is some 300 feet wide at this point and separates the town into two portions. Large three story brick buildings face the river and from these enemy observers were operating.

Defending the town in force was the Panzer Lehr Division, one

of Hitler's crack outfits. As the 393rd Infantry (99th Division) attacked the town, the 343rd Infantry (86th Division) attacked over the hills overlooking the town to lend any support needed in eliminating the German garrison. As it turned out the support was not needed, for the 99th Division captured the town, its entire garrison and the Commanding General of the Panzer Lehr Division, General Von Hausen. Over 200 men from the Panzer Lehr Division alone were captured in Altena by the 99th Division, while some 1,000 more of its members were corraled by the 86th Division, on the right flank of the XVIII Corps.

In the sector assigned the 395th Infantry (99th Division), the doughboys bounced ahead to capture Kesbern, with two battalions racing into the village to capture the entire garrison. This regiment then went into reserve to support the main 99th Division effort of the day, the assault on Iserlohn, the largest German city ever to be attacked by the 99th Division in the war.

Using all three of its battalions, the 394th Infantry (99th Division) stormed the city, and the enemy garrison defended it with everything it had. The fight lasted throughout the day and casualties suffered by the 99th Division were heavy. The die-hard Nazi defenders resisted with the order "Die to the last man" as their battle cry. But not all the enemy troops were SS, and hundreds of members of the Volkstrum and Wehrmacht surrendered, if there were no SS officer around to drive them on.

While the fight for the city of Iserlohn raged on, a task force composed of the 3rd Battalion, 395th Infantry (99th Division) and elements of the 7th Armored Division, approaching from the north and east, overran a German POW camp in the town of Hemer. Here crowded in a small enclosure were some 23,000 allied POWs, consisting mostly of Poles and Americans, but with some Russians. They were a starving mass of humanity, some 23,000 men crowded in an area not large enough to hold 1,000 men.

Major General Walter Laver, CG of the 99th Infantry Division, describes the scene as follows:

It was a horrible sight to see these human beings squeezed into the limited area of their open air stockade, digging in the ground with their bare hands, searching, groveling, fighting for grubs and worms to eat. They had gone without food for over a week and were dying like DDT'd flies. As our leading troops arrived at Hemer, the German guards fled, and thousands of these poor, starved wretches broke out of their prison stockade and flooded the countryside in search of food. They ransacked every place they came across, hunting only for something to eat.

Through interpreters we were fortunately able to stop the exodus of the entire camp by assuring groups of them that food was on the way. It did arrive in the matter of an hour. Many who broke away came back quickly when word spread that food was being distributed. This incident, however, required the services of one entire infantry battalion, which had to be withdrawn from the attack on Iserlohn to maintain order in the vicinity of the camp. In the POW camp itself, in the very building housing the sickest of the prisoners, the Germans had three dying men to the bed. The German guards lived in luxury in the same hospital building, two guards to a room. How so-called civilized human beings could treat other humans in such an outrageous fashion surpassed all understanding. As we took over and brought them food and medical atten-



These are the living quarters of slave laborers who were forced by the Germans to work long hours in the nearby Ruhr coal mines. Three men were assigned to each bed. There were some sick, half starved men still lying under the blankets when this picture was taken.

tion, the German guards who remained were dismayed that we hurled them out of their rooms and placed fatally sick soldiers in them.

—From "Battle Babies, the Story of the 99th Infantry Division."

—An Outstanding Unit History, by Maj. Gen. Walter Laver.

Still the battle for Iserlohn continued, by late afternoon it was evident that here was a tough nut to crack. The enemy defenders of Iserlohn would not budge an inch, every attack made on the town by the 99th Division would gain only a few yards and then halt, as the SS defenders would pour a steady stream of fire down on our doughboys, who were out in the open without much cover.

On April 15 alone five German tanks were destroyed by the 99th Division in front of Iserlohn. Hundreds of German lives were needlessly lost by the idiotic fight which was taking place. Practically all the rest of the Ruhr Pocket, even the troops adjoining them on each side, had collapsed, but still the SS officers ordered, "Die in the defense of the Fatherland," and that many of them did. It is only regrettable that many American boys likewise had to die because of this frantic defense of Iserlohn.

During the night of April 15, the 99th Division dug-in along the outskirts of Iserlohn and remained in place, throwing back several tank led counter attacks.

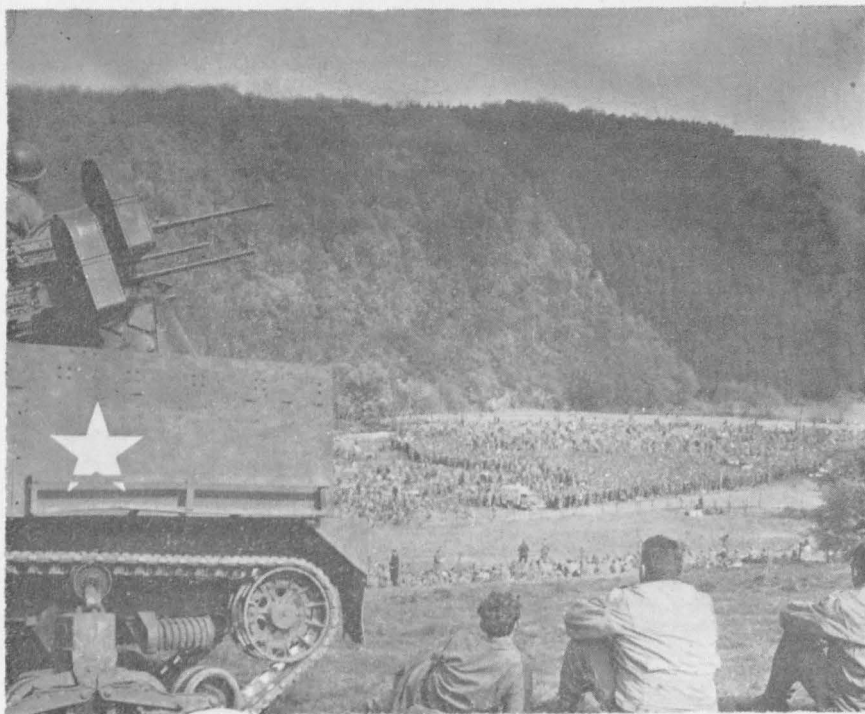
On April 16, the small pocket which remained in the eastern half of the Ruhr after the original pocket had been cut in two, suddenly without any warning collapsed, and from out of everywhere streamed German soldiers, in battle dress, to surrender. On this day alone the 99th Division took 23,000 prisoners, as the German forces (everywhere except at Iserlohn) surrendered. Eight Generals were captured on this date.

As the 394th Infantry attacked Iserlohn, where no sign of surrender had been noted, the rest of the 99th Division attacked around the town on each flank.

In mid-morning all III Corps forces were ordered to halt in place pending an expected mass surrender. The 7th Armored Division CG was at that time negotiating with the senior German commanders in the area, and a truce had been called which was to end at noon. While this negotiation was proceeding, two units facing the 99th Division took the opportunity to surrender, these were the XLVII Panzer Corps and the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. Thousands upon thousands of enemy soldiers poured through our lines, much to the amazement of the front line doughboys who were sitting in position ready to resume the attack at noon.

At 1135 the German forces surrendered to the III Corps with a mass surrender to take place immediately. But this did not include the Nazi garrison within Iserlohn, so at once the 394th Infantry (99th Division) resumed the attack on the city. However during the lull in the battle, many of the defenders lost their will to resist and after an hour more of battle, the garrison surrendered. By 1300 the 99th Division was in control of all of Iserlohn, thus ended the two day siege of the city, and thus ended all organized opposition in the eastern half of the

Ruhr Pocket. The 99th Division in the final phase of the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket from April 5 through April 17, had recorded 44,240 POWs as they passed through the gates of our prisoner camps. In turn they had liberated far more than this number in Allied POWs and slave laborers



Thousands of German Prisoners were crowded into our Prisoner of War Stockades throughout the Ruhr Pocket. Here the 740th Tank Battalion guards a large group in typically hilly Ruhr terrain.

CHAPTER 7

THE XVI CORPS ATTACK IN THE NORTH

One of the most powerful attacks thrown at the enemy in the European war was the punch delivered at the enemy pocket in the Ruhr by the Ninth Army's XVI Corps. This attack was highly coordinated with one by the First Army, and preceded by about 24 hours, with H-Hour being 0400 on April 5, whereas the First Army attack did not begin in earnest until April 6. At first General Simpson allotted the XVI Corps four divisions for its part in the Ruhr campaign, but three days after the attack began, two more divisions plus a glider infantry regiment and a cavalry group, at first organized in a task force of the XIX Corps, was attached to the XVI Corps bringing the strength of the XVI Corps up to the vast strength of six divisions.

As the drive to destroy the enemy forces trapped in the Ruhr rolled into action, the XVI Corps, under the command of Maj. Gen. John B. Anderson, faced the enemy on a line which generally faced the enemy dug-in on the south bank of the Rhine-Herne Canal and the Dortmund-Ems Canal. A natural water boundary separated the foes over the biggest stretch of the front. The XVI Corps units facing the enemy were as follows:

(a) The 17th Airborne Division, less the 194th Glider Infantry, held a front line position facing the enemy on the right flank of the corps area, adjacent to the Rhine River.

(b) The 79th Infantry Division was in position to the left of the 17th Airborne and held defensive positions along the Rhine-Herne Canal.

(c) The 35th Infantry Division was likewise in defensive positions along the north banks of the canal.

(d) The 75th Infantry Division was on the left bank of the present XVI Corps area. The 75th Division was the only XVI Corps unit on the offensive as of April 4, they having only recently established a bridgehead over the Dortmund-Ems Canal, which they were in the act of enlarging for future corps use. Attached to the 75th Division was the 116th Infantry Regiment of the 29th Infantry Division.

Where the First Army units advancing up from the south were engaged in fighting in steep, hilly, heavily wooded country, the units of the XVI Corps found the terrain over which they were to fight vastly different. This territory, which could be compared with the Mississippi Delta country in our own nation, was a level plain, through which many small streams and canals flowed, and many large cities and towns were scattered throughout the area of advance. As our forces moved into the plain, it was evident that the enemy was determined to take advantage of the many natural obstacles provided by nature. The rivers and canals had all been transformed into strong defense lines, and the thousands of enemy anti-aircraft positions had been transformed into strong fortresses.

On April 5, the 75th Division continued its advance out of the bridgehead it held across the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the attached

116th Infantry (29th Division) cleared the town of Braumbauer. To the right, the 79th Division maintained its defensive positions along the Rhine-Herne Canal and destroyed the locks on the canal.

On April 6, the 75th Division forged ahead against determined German defenders to seize positions only two miles north of the great German industrial city of Dortmund. The 75th Division repulsed an enemy counter-attack near Castrop-Rauxel with heavy losses suffered by the Germans.

On April 7, the entire XVI Corps struck out at the enemy in a strong attack aimed at accomplishing the corps mission—to destroy the enemy north of the Ruhr River.

At 0300 on April 7, the 79th Infantry Division attacked across the Rhine-Herne Canal in a drive aimed at the heart of the German war machine, the heavy industrial area of Essen, home of the Krupp Steel Mills. The attack got under way before daylight, following a demonstration by the 17th Airborne Division. The 79th Division jumped across the canal and met the 2nd German SS Parachute Division as it was moving parallel with the front to bolster German forces in the 75th Division area. Hitting this powerful enemy unit in the flank, the 79th Division attack succeeded in splitting the enemy forces, and disrupted the entire plans of the foe in this area. As the corps engineers attempted to build treadway bridges across the steep-banked Rhine-Herne Canal, the infantrymen of the 313th and 315th Infantry (79th Division) pushed on until they held a bridgehead of some five square miles.

In the meantime the 75th Division, still attacking on the left flank of the corps area, moved into the outskirts of Dortmund, and succeeded in repulsing another strong enemy counter-attack launched near the main rail line leading into Dortmund. This was the second powerful attack turned back by the 75th Division within the past two days. The massed artillery fire of the entire corps continued to pour heavy interdiction fire into the enemy troops opposing the 75th and 79th Divisions. As these two units pressed the attack into enemy positions on April 7, the 35th Division, which was in the center, and the 17th Airborne Division, along the Rhine, also continued in defensive positions along the Rhine-Herne Canal.

April 8 found the 79th Infantry Division engaged in house to house fighting in the vast factory area northeast of Essen, within sight of the smokestacks of the Essen Steel Works. The "Cross of Lorraine" Division, after suffering heavy losses, succeeded in cutting the Essen-Gelsenkirchen rail line, and Essen was cut off from the east. The total advance southward by the 79th Division for the day totaled less than two miles.

Just to the right of the 79th Division, the 17th Airborne Division's 507th Parachute Regiment crossed the Rhine-Herne Canal and advanced some two miles in the face of stiff opposition to take up positions west of Essen.

(The Rhine-Herne Canal actually proved to be tougher than the Rhine River itself to cross. Where the 79th Division crossed the canal it was a double



An artillery unit is in bivouac in a Ruhr farming area.

waterway some 35 yards in width. On each side of the canal were perpendicular walls some 20 feet high, with few places available for infantrymen to secure a foothold.)

Meanwhile, to the east, the 35th Division and the 75th Division launched an attack which resulted in gains of some two miles for the day.

On April 9, the XVI Corps attack was progressing very well with the 35th "Santa Fe" Division attacking in force in the center of the corps area with two regiments abreast. Striking south across the Rhine-Herne Canal, the 134th and 137th Infantry (35th Division) seized the town of Herne and outflanked the city of Gelsenkirchen, with patrols actually fighting within the city.

The 79th Division pressed its attack on Essen by advancing several hundred more yards to seize the town of Steele and thus cutting German forces north of the Ruhr into two pockets. Heavy enemy shell fire, both large caliber and small arms was being received by all Ninth Army units during the day.

On the right flank, the 17th Airborne Division advanced a few hundred yards to take up better positions west of Essen.

Again the 75th Division received a severe counter-attack in its area on the XVI Corps left flank. German forces crossed the Dortmund-Ems Canal in force and the 75th Division was forced to spend the greater part of the day in defense. However this third enemy attack within three days was repulsed and the 75th Division consolidated its positions as the day came to an end.

As the XVI Corps was engaged in clearing the enemy forces throughout the built-up area around Essen, Ninth Army Headquarters informed the XVI Corps commander that the large "Task Force Twaddle," a major portion of the XIX Corps, was being assigned to the XVI Corps and as of this date, "Task Force Twaddle" became an operating unit of the corps.

Task Force Twaddle

When the final battle of the Ruhr commenced the XIX Corps was assigned the mission of clearing the eastern half of the Ruhr Pocket in the Ninth Army area. At the same time the XIX Corps was engaged with the enemy some 100 miles further east, in the race to the Elbe River. In order to effectively maintain control over the XIX Corps troops still engaged in the Ruhr, XIX Corps formed a task force, named "Task Force Twaddle," under the command of Maj. Gen. Twaddle, CG of the 95th Infantry Division.

"Task Force Twaddle" became an operating unit on April 4 and faced the enemy with the following units on line along the Ruhr front, reading from right to left.

(a) The 95th Infantry Division assumed control over the area formerly held by the 83rd Infantry Division. The 95th "Victory" Division front extended roughly along the Lippe River and Canal west of Unna. The division was attacking in the general direction of Dortmund, which was the first objective of the division.

(b) The 8th Armored Division occupied front line positions south and east of Unna to Werl near the Rhine River.

(c) Task Force Faith was a task force of the larger Task Force Twaddle, and consisted of the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment (17th Airborne Division), and the 15th Cavalry Group, and this force was assigned the mission of maintaining contact with the First Army units on the left flank of the Ninth Army as well as clearing the triangle west of Merschede. The 377th Infantry (95th Division) was attached to this separate task force for a period during the Ruhr operations.

Prior to its assignment to the XVI Corps, "Task Force Twaddle" had succeeded in clearing a large portion of the Ruhr Pocket in its northeastern sector. On April 4, the day the force was constituted by XIX Corps, the 95th Division attacked southwesterly from the vicinity of Lippstadt, in the sector to the left and adjacent to the 75th Division. To the left of the 95th Division was the 8th Armored Division. With all three regiments abreast, the 95th Division had crossed the Lippe River *en masse* and had entered Werl, after a hard fight. In three days time the 378th Infantry (95th Division) had driven from its bridgehead across the Lippe-Sitten Canal to the outskirts of Hamm.

On April 5 a regiment of the 95th Division was battling for the Hamm-Soest railroad line, which was strongly defended. Meanwhile, to the south and east, the 8th Armored Division was engaged in a hard fight for the city of Korte.

On April 7, "Task Force Twaddle" captured the important road-net town of Werl. The 95th Division cleared the northern half of the town while the 8th Armored Division entered and cleared the southern half of the town.

Werl was the location of a large Luftwaffe air base as well as the site of a huge Prisoner of War camp. Thousands of Australian and British Commonwealth PWs were released and evacuated from this camp. At the air base the Americans destroyed hundreds of German planes, which were caught on the ground, unable to fly due to a lack of fuel.

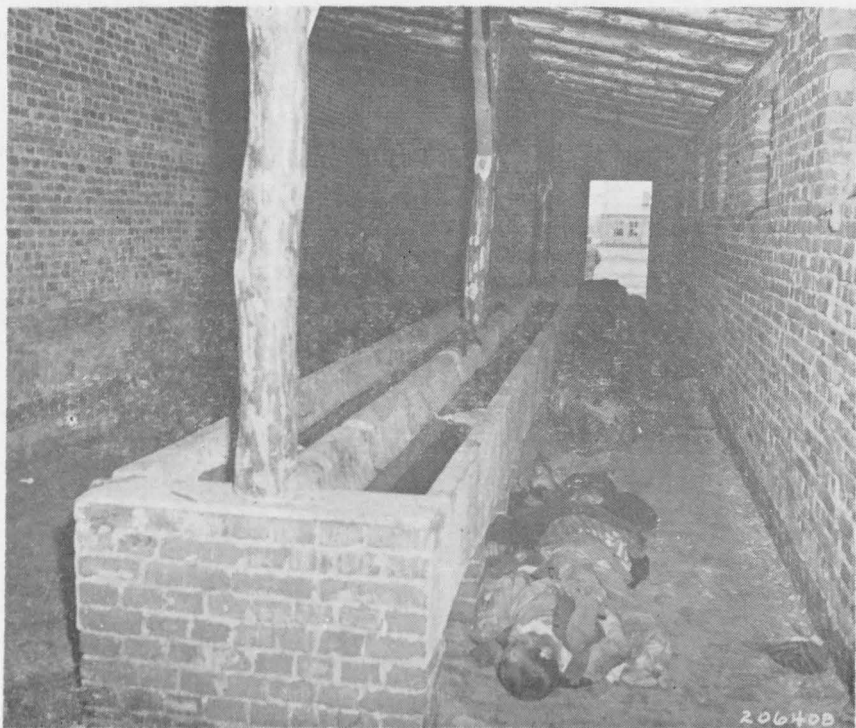
Company G, 379th Infantry (95th Division), captured a small village near Werl and settled down for the night in billets next door to what happened to be a deserted prison. On searching the prison, a door creaked open and a skinny, starved prisoner peeped out and suddenly shouted "English" and prisoners came out of nowhere from every direction. The explanation that it was Americans, not English, that had liberated them meant nothing. The thousands of Russians and Poles in the camp tore into the remaining guards with their fingernails and had to be forcibly removed from their former tormentors.

On April 8 "Task Force Twaddle" consisted of some 35,000 troops, the equal of a corps. Attached to "Task Force Twaddle" was the smaller "Task Force Faith", previously mentioned. On this date "Task Force Twaddle" received its final mission in an order from XIX Corps Headquarters. The mission was:

(a) Clear the enemy west of Goseke, to a line near Hamm and Wickede.

(b) The 8th Armored Division to continue attack west and at the same time maintain contact with Task Force Faith.

(c) Task Force Faith is to protect the left flank of the Ninth Army troops in the Ruhr.



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Their SS guards murdered these Polish nationals, minutes before they were to be liberated in a slave labor camp in the heart of the Ruhr.

April 8 saw "Task Force Twaddle" pushing steadily west, with the great German city of Hamm falling to the 95th Division. Large stores of war supplies were captured in Hamm.

In the advance on Hamm, two infantrymen of the 95th Division, Pfc. George Hyatt and Pfc. Hanes Howell, sighted a German convoy crossing a railroad bridge. Hyatt grabbed a bazooka and fired a direct hit which exploded a German truck loaded with dynamite. The explosion rocked the countryside and denied the enemy the use of the bridge in the defense of Hamm. The 95th Division at the end of the day had advanced to a point two miles south of Hamm. The 8th Armored Division had advanced eight miles and on the east flank of the task force area, the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment had made contact with First Army units at Meschede.

The main body of the task force was, however, advancing steadily toward Dortmund, with Unna being threatened by our armored columns.

The Combined XVI Corps Attacks

On April 10, the great industrial center of Essen, better known as the "Pittsburgh of Germany" and site of the great Krupp Steel works, and heart of the German heavy armament industry, fell to the XIV Corps. As our doughboys advanced through the city, the enemy blew up and blocked every major intersection. This was good evidence that the Germans planned to withdraw their remaining units south of the Ruhr River for a last ditch stand in more rugged terrain.

Essen fell to elements of the 17th Airborne Division, which occupied the western sector of the city while the 79th Division captured the heart of the city. Following the capture of Essen, the following news dispatch was carried by the press at home describing the capture of the most wanted German industrialist, Baron Krupp.

The great Krupp works at Essen, arsenal of Kaiser and Fuhrer, lay dead. For five years this steel heart of the German war machine had been a prime target of allied bombers. Last week U.S. Ninth Army men rolled past the debris, and a few miles farther south over the highwalled Villa Hugel, secluded estate, of powerful, mysterious Alfred Krupp, silent partner of Naziism, now wanted by the Allies as a war criminal.

A brace of Villa Hugel retainers blocked the door. Strapping (6 foot 5 inches) Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Sagmoen, (S-5, 313th Infantry, 79th Infantry Division) merely drew his .45 colt and a passage opened.

Colonel Sagmoen soon had his captive in tow — a thin, nervous man, balding at 37 and trimly dressed in a pin-striped business suit. The American growled: "You bastards started this war and we'll show you who's finishing it." He ordered the prisoner into his jeep.

As the jeep pulled away a servant hurried from the mansion with his master's overnight bag. He was too late.

In the kitchen of an Essen apartment, where a regimental command post had been set up, the prisoner was interviewed.

His plant had been shut down, he said, since the Heavy Allied air raid of March 11. At that time upward of 50,000 workers, including 10,000 foreign slaves were on the Krupp production line.

The Americans asked, "Why didn't you leave the Ruhr?"

Herr Krupp shrugged his bony shoulders: "I wanted to stay with my factory where I belong, with my fellow workers."

"Are you a Nazi?"

"I am a German."

"Are you a member of the Nazi party?"

"Well, yes, but most Germans are."

"What is your present salary?"

Herr Krupp was annoyed. "Must I answer" he snapped. "Yes", Colonel Sagmoen snapped back. Herr Krupp lit a cigarette from a silver case, puffed anxiously, said: "Four hundred thousand marks a year." (\$160,000 at official prewar exchange rates) All profits, he said, had been split between the Nazi government and his family.

"Do you still think the Germans will win the war?"

"I do not know, politics is not my business. My business is making steel."

The Americans thought of Krupp steel — the steel that went into U-boats, tanks, guns. They thought especially of the "Krupp Cannon" — the famed, deadly 88, destroyer of Allied men and machines all the way from El Alamein to the Rhine. They asked a final question.

"What are your plans after the war?"

Herr Krupp pondered. For five generations his family had forged steel for arms — for Napoleon, for the Hapsburgs, for the Hohenzollerns, for the

Nazis, for any customers with cash. They had made \$200,000,000.00 in World War I alone. They had profited even more fabulously — for a while — in World War II. And now? — Herr Krupp, merchant of death, answered: "I hope to rebuild the factories and produce again."

—Time Magazine, Issue April 23, 1945

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As the American forces neared the heavily industrialized Ruhr section, more and more of the slave labor camps were liberated. As these squalid camps were overrun, our soldiers became more and more disgusted with the German government and all it stood for.

Day after day we had seen these Germans accept defeat with a shrug of the shoulder, and one and all claimed they were "nix nazi." But as these slave labor camps were overrun, and we could see with our own eyes, the cruel, inhuman, and indecent treatment these poor wretched souls had received at the hands of the Germans, the more odious impression most of us received of the Krauts.

In most of these camps these foreigners, from Russia, Poland, France, Yugoslavia, and in fact all of the conquered, were crowded into



One of the famous Nazi "bake ovens", used in a German concentration camp liberated in the Ruhr, is pointed to by a Frenchman, who was rescued a few hours before he would have been cremated alive by his SS captors.

enclosures thick as flies. Little care was taken as to sanitation and medical care. For the Germans, if a man became too sick to work, he was better off dead. Food was partialed out to the prisoners in rations which couldn't keep a small cat alive. And for any individual who complained of their treatment worse was in store—a horse whipping, at the hands of the camp commandant.

Yes, this was the way the so-called super race treated the conquered. It is hard to imagine how any supposedly civilized people could treat any human being in the manner in which the slave laborers were treated.

At some of these slave labor camps, the inmates had not received any food or water for four of five days prior to their liberation at the hands of the Americans. As soon as the slaves were liberated, they at once became a difficult problem to handle. Often thousands of them would break away at once and start moving out across the country on a looting expedition, in search of food. Naturally they also had pent up feelings against the Germans which then unleashed on any and every German in sight. Many combat units had to be withdrawn from the fighting front in order to control these displaced persons, or slave laborers.

The displaced persons problem remained all through the Ruhr campaign. However, higher echelons of command set up a standard procedure whereby all of these slave laborers were kept in their enclosures after being liberated and fed, clothed and given medical treatment. However, it seemed odd to the average American soldier to see the Germans, who were the cause of this entire problem, going free and told to rebuild their cities and raise a crop, while these poor souls whose bodies and minds were warped by the cruel and inhuman treatment received at the hands of these very same Germans, were kept in the enclosures and forced to live in displaced persons centers.

However, as mentioned above, many of these DPs managed to break out as they were freed and at once went on a shopping spree. When they got out of control, looting became frequent, and the Germans were the first to turn to the American authorities for protection. Their memories were short, they seemed to forget the rape of France.

After the fall of Essen, the 79th Division swung eastward and captured Bochum, another great German steel mill city. Meanwhile, a few miles to the east the 35th Division captured Herne. The 75th Division was meeting stiff resistance between Dortmund and Herne.

Thus at the close of day, on April 10, we find the western half of the XIV Corps area with all its units closing in on the corps' objective, the north bank of the Ruhr River. All the way from Dortmund west to Duisberg, the Ninth Army had closed to within two or three miles of the Ruhr, and at some points, a defense line on the north bank of the river had been established. To the east of Dortmund, in the area of "Task Force Twaddle", now under control of XIV Corps Headquarters, the front line roughly paralleled the Ruhr River back some six or seven miles from the river.

On April 10, the 95th Division and 8th Armored Division fought a desperate battle with crack SS units just outside of Dortmund. The enemy at one point employed Tiger Tanks and several hundred infantry-



Two lone infantrymen race down an alley in clearing one Ruhr town.

men in a furious counter-attack aimed at relieving the pressure on Dortmund. The 8th Armored Division bore the brunt of this attack and succeeded in beating it off. The tankers followed up this success by advancing to within a mile of Unna and captured Frodenburg.

On the extreme left flank of the corps area, the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment continued to clear its sector in the vicinity of Arnsburg, and captured some 2,000 prisoners, many of them deserters.

Our soldiers found "liberating" very good in the heavily built up section of the Ruhr. As towns were captured by the GIs, the doughboys knew that it was very necessary that all watches, cameras, and binoculars, as well as lugers and military weapons, must be liberated. Many GIs secured their favorite "war trophy" during the latter stages of the Ruhr campaign. Then when the mass surrenders took place on April 15 and 16, Nazi trench knives, SS officers' pistols, etc. joined the huge stock of liberated material. Some officers frowned on the policy of liberating from the enemy, while others took part themselves. Despite the ruling on fraternizing, watches and lugers were not the only things liberated.

On April 11, the XIV Corps cleared the entire north bank of the Ruhr of enemy troops, except for a bridgehead the Germans still held near Dortmund. Among the cities captured were Mulheim, Oberhausen,

Witten, and Unna.

Unna fell jointly to the 8th Armored Division and 95th Division. This was an important communications center and a well executed maneuver by the 8th Armored Division resulted in the city falling with a minimum number of casualties. With the fall of Unna, the XIV Corps established positions along the Ruhr River for forty-two miles from its mouth east to the vicinity of Witten and then from Frondenburg east to Arnsberg.

After clearing Mulheim, near the mouth of the river, the 17th Airborne Division established a small bridgehead over the Ruhr and then dug-in defensive positions to await the arrival of XVIII Airborne Corps known to be advancing from the south.

Nearby, the 79th Division captured the Kettewig Bridge and likewise established a small bridgehead across the Ruhr before it too went on the defensive.

The 35th Division marched through Bochum and advanced to the Ruhr River west of Witten.

The 75th Division advanced two regiments to the Ruhr and seized the town of Witten. The remaining regiment was used to contain the enemy bridgehead south of Dortmund. There were some 1,000 German SS troops holding this bridgehead which extended to Unna and included the city of Dortmund.

On the opposite side of the bridgehead, the 95th Division was exerting great pressure on the enemy force in the vicinity of Unna which finally fell late on April 11 and then the 95th Division advanced to within three miles of Dortmund.

The 8th Armored Division, with the 194th Glider Infantry Regiment attached, was advancing at a rapid rate down the north bank of the Ruhr River and was nearing the Dortmund area.

The Capture of Dortmund

On April 12 the last major battle north of the Ruhr River took place when a giant arm of steel surrounded the great city of Dortmund. The XVI Corps had the 75th Division containing the German forces on the west, and the 95th Division, with elements of the 8th Armored Division driving in force on the city from the east.

The 95th Division entered the northern portion of the city and slowly advanced through a sector studded with minefields and road blocks. The 95th Division secured a toe-hold in the city and on the following morning, April 13, the city of Dortmund fell to the 95th Division of "Task Force Twaddle."

Then, after a rapid advance to the banks of the Ruhr, the last pocket of resistance in the XIV Corps area was cleared. However, for several more days many small fire-fights took place with scattered, isolated enemy units, which had been by-passed in the advance. One prisoner taken during the day was Lt. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein, CG of the German LIII Corps, who related that following the loss of Unna and Dortmund, he had received an order from Field Marshall Model to attempt to break out of the pocket toward the "west" with everything he had

available.— This order was never acknowledged, answered, or obeyed.

After clearing their sector of the Ruhr, The XIV Corps set up a defense line along the Ruhr River, and just sat back and waited as the XVIII Corps and III Corps drove the remainder of the enemy soldiers into their lap. A defense line along the river was maintained and numerous high ranking prisoners were captured. Among the prisoners taken by the XIV Corps in this battle were:

Fritz Schlessmann, Gauleiter of Essen

Lt. Gen. Josef Harpe, CG of the 5th Panzer Army

Franz Von Papen, former German Chancellor

But the big prize, the one wanted most out of the prisoner bag in the Ruhr, was never found. He was General Model, who commanded all of the German forces in the Ruhr.

General Model had found a solution to the surrender problem. On April 17 he announced that German Army Group B was dissolved. The men were dismissed, and thus Model avoided the responsibilities of a surrender. Then he committed suicide.

It is hard to describe the scene as the entire German Force in the Ruhr surrendered. Where only 24 hours before, these men were our enemy, and were involved in a life and death struggle, they seemed now to be only meek little men. Even the big, German paratroopers, who seemed tall and strong when seen a few days earlier leading an attack, seemed to have shrunk in stature. There was definitely little fight left in the enemy now as they lined up to enter the PW cages.

All along the Ruhr River at this time the scene was the same. Thousands upon thousands of Germans were crowded together like scared animals. The infantrymen who had fought down from the north, and up from the Remagan bridgehead, gazed in wonderment at the thousands of enemy soldiers we had captured. From high ranking field officers down to the lowly lancers (private) they were one and all the same now. Also taken prisoner in the Ruhr were hundreds of German WACs, who had been pressed into service by the SS as "soldier comforters." Call them that if you want, but it was clear they were nothing but camp followers. But true to the German concept of the super race, only the "SS" units were assigned these "comforters."

Besides the thousands of prisoners captured, every civilian in the area had to be carefully screened, as many of the SS men had changed into civilian clothes and were attempting to hide and escape capture, by posing as civilians. However, this ruse did not work as every male civilian was searched for the tell-tale tatoo, which always appeared under the SS troops left arm.

Another trick tried by the Germans was to give out mass discharges to whole units prior to surrender, and thus claiming a civilian status to escape the prisoner of war pen. But this did not work as our army did not recognize a discharge given on such short notice.

Each day as the battle approached the climax in the Ruhr, more and more prisoners were captured. The writer will always recall the occasion in the Ruhr when he was sent out on a patrol and his small group captured about ten Krauts. In a nearby house, hiding in the basement

with some women and old men, was a nattily dressed man of about 50 years of age, in a blue dress uniform complete with braid. Our small group, none of whom were well acquainted with German rank, or uniforms, at once surmised that we must have a very high ranking German officer as our prisoner. Perhaps it might be Himmler, Goebbels or no telling whom. We all pictured ourselves receiving a medal for our capture of so high ranked an officer. As we made our way back to our company, we walked all of our prisoners back through the woods for some two miles, and another two miles along a railroad track to reach our battalion area. Then as we proudly walked up to the battalion PW cage with our VIP prisoner we received a horse laugh. Our prisoner was only a street car conductor. He was at once turned free, to walk back home again, some four miles. His feet probably hurt, but not as much as our pride, by the time our buddies were through with us.

CHAPTER 8

COMBAT ACTION OF THE FIFTEENTH ARMY

Although war is hell, no matter from what direction you look at it, most any doughboy who saw front line duty would prefer the type of warfare experienced by those infantrymen who took part in the phase of the European war known as the "Defense of the Rhine River line by the Fifteenth Army."

Late in March, 1945, after the First Army had established the Remagen Bridgehead and the Ninth Army was prepared to strike across the Rhine in a major amphibious assault, SHAFÉ ordered the U. S. Fifteenth Army to be committed to action for the first time. The Fifteenth Army, under the command of Lt. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow, was ordered to assume control of the front lines along the Rhine River from Bonn on the south to opposite Duisburg on the north. During this entire stretch of front, the American forces were on an established defense line, with the wide and swift Rhine River separating them from the enemy.

The infantrymen were dug-in along the river bank and behind the low dirt dikes, which protected the lowlands from floods, while further to the rear the artillery units were dug-in behind the tall fir trees which frequented the area. Many of the doughboys occupied comfortable billets, on the first floor of a house, with a machine gun nest or OP on the upper floors of the same house. One should not get the wrong impression of this type warfare however, for despite its stationary character, which was in direct contrast with the rapid running warfare then going on across the river in the pocket, men were wounded and died here the same as elsewhere.

The Fifteenth Army assumed control of this 55-mile stretch of the front, at first manned by the following units:

(a) 102nd Infantry Division — manned the Rhine River defense line in its extreme northern portion, from Dusseldorf north to the Ninth Army area above Duisburg. This section of the front was later turned over to the 94th Infantry Division, which was in the process of moving up from France.

(b) 95th Infantry Division—At first the 95th Division assumed control over the center section of the front, but in late March it was turned over to the 97th Infantry Division and in early April the 101st Airborne Division was used in this sector.

(c) The 86th Infantry Division relieved the 8th Infantry Division on the Rhine at Cologne and held a 26-mile sector on the front until April 4 when the Black Hawks were relieved by the 82nd Airborne Division.

Aggressive action in this sector was limited mostly to patrols across the Rhine, and there were many of these. Otherwise the chief duty of the three divisions holding the west bank of the Rhine was to keep as many enemy units as possible engaged in order to relieve the pressure on the friendly units advancing into the Ruhr from both north and south.

Day after day, the doughboys in this sector did their fighting long distance, by firing at visible targets on the far side of the Rhine. Likewise

the enemy would occupy themselves by firing back at any movement from our side of the river.

On one occasion during this phase of the war, a three man wire-laying party was billeted in a house on the west bank of the Rhine, only a few yards from the shore line. After posting a security guard on the outside, two of the wiremen stretched out in a darkened room for a short cat-nap. Sometime during their sleep, the power came back on in the house and a radio began to play. The wiremen awoke to hear fluent German coming from the next room and strangely every light in the house burning. The first thought to come to their mind was that a German patrol had crossed the river and was overrunning their position. After diving head first out a window, the two men were slightly embarrassed, but relieved, to find their buddy still standing security guard on the outside of the house.

Yes, many amusing events took place during the so-called "Watch on the Rhine" by the Fifteenth Army. As this was a territory occupied by many devout Nazis, much sabotage was noted. In some sectors German agents were caught flashing signals across the Rhine to their troops, giving away the disposition of American troops. Nightly a patrol had to be dispatched along the river to shoot out the light bulbs which were lighted during the day near targets, to guide the 88 fire.

Although casualties were lighter in this sector than elsewhere in the Ruhr, the German artillery and machine gun fire did result in many purple hearts.

The author, who took part in this phase of the Battle of the Ruhr briefly, before being moved with his outfit around to the flank for the drive into the heart of the Ruhr district, recalls very well one doughboy who received a moderately severe wound in what we shall call an embarrassing place — an unmentionable place. As the wound did not require evacuation, the soldier was present when the regimental commander awarded medals and purple hearts at the end of the Ruhr engagement. As the regimental commander handed each man his purple heart, or pinned it on his blouse, he would ask him where he was wounded. The typical answer was — leg — arm — chest — leg — ankle — face. But when the colonel reached this individual he received a different answer — "at Cologne."

To the lowly enlisted man this battle was strange and confused. Here were three American divisions waiting on the west bank of the Rhine, with a disorganized enemy on the far shore. Daily rumors would come and go that at such and such time the troops on the west bank would stike across the river in assault boats and jump into the battle to clear the Ruhr.

On one occasion a platoon of infantrymen were run out of their billets for a hush-hush meeting between the regimental commander and a large group of company and battalion commanders. After the conference was over, the doughboys returned to their billets and right there on the table one of the officers had forgotten and left his briefcase. At once a look-out was placed at the door and a "looting party" was underway, pilfering through the officer's briefcase hoping to find out what was in store for this unit. About this time the regimental Commander returned for his briefcase and surprised the look-out who was unable to give a warning. He walked right up beside the GI who was the ring-leader. When the doggie looked up and saw the old man standing there you could have knocked him over with a toothpick. The regimental

CO made one memorable statement—"Just make sure you get them all back in — soldier".

Despite the rumors which always flowed, the men defending the Rhine River line had an unusual chance to view the war. As the First Army units moved up along the east bank of the river, doughboys in OPs along the west bank could often witness large tank battles on the opposite side of the river, or could get a birds eye view of German units preparing to attack or withdraw in the face of the First Army offensive.

Besides, for those who really liked adventure, they could volunteer for one of the patrols which were sent across the Rhine River almost every night. Pfc. Lloyd Daniels was one who went on one of these patrols, this one actually crossed the river one night, stayed through the next day, and returned the following night. Here is the way that Pfc. Daniels described this occasion.

"Our patrol consisted of six members beside myself. We slipped down to the banks of the river about midnight and launched our rubber boat. It was pitch-dark and our boat kept spinning around and around as we tried to make head-way against the current. We finally reached the shore almost a mile downstream from where we started. Naturally our patrol was scared stiff, but greatly relieved to know we had reached shore without being detected by the Krauts. A few yards up the bank we deflated our rubber boat and hid it under some driftwood. After bypassing some barb-wire we made our way inland — ours was a reconnaissance mission, with instructions to take a few prisoners. About a half mile from the river we sighted a pair of Germans standing guard, evidently around some type of installation. Our sergeant left the patrol and was gone about a half-hour scouting. When he came back he whispered that the Germans appeared to be guarding a road junction, and we surmised that they were MPs. Our entire patrol crawled forward to within a few yards of where they stood and upon a signal from the sergeant we jumped the two Krauts. Fortunately they were not much in the mood for resistance, or else they were taken by surprise. Nevertheless they were captured and we at once moved them back several hundred yards from the road and tied them in a wooded area. One of the men spoke broken English and was very talkative. He complained of the rations he had been receiving and apparently welcomed capture. He related that he had been fed only potato soup for the past ten days.

At daybreak we hid in some woods about a half-mile from the river. We had good visibility from where we hid and on one occasion received quite a scare when a group of some 30 or 40 "gray-tails" (i.e. Germans) passed through the far end of the woods, evidently searching for their lost comrades. Toward evening a German civilian stumbled onto our woods and we were forced to keep him with us for security reasons, much to his protest. He was bound and placed with the two German prisoners. Shortly after dark three of us went back to the road junction, which was no longer under guard, and placed several mines we had brought with us at the intersection. As soon as we returned the whole patrol started to withdraw to the river. As soon as our boat was located and inflated, we loaded the prisoners aboard, turned the civilian loose and shoved off for the far, and friendly shore. As we climbed up the west bank of the Rhine we considered ourselves lucky. We had spent over 30 hours behind the enemy lines and had never been detected and had not been shot at. Besides we had accomplished our mission by returning with two prisoners for interrogation.

The patrols which crossed the Rhine were not all as lucky as the one just described. More often the Germans would discover the patrol about half way across the river and after an OP would shoot a flare into

the air, bringing broad daylight to the entire area, an artillery barrage would be leveled on the helpless men, and often a patrol would be destroyed in the middle of the river, right in front of their buddies.

Life in the billets was far from enjoyable also, as the Germans were well armed with 88s and "screaming Minnies"¹⁾ and were determined to use up what ammunition they had left before their capture. Once the enemy located a building being used for a billet, a constant barrage would fall on the spot. This saturated shell fall resulted in many casualties.



A machine gun crew watches for a target on the opposite bank of the Rhine as American 15th Army units fight from billets in conducting a holding action along the Rhine from Bonn, north thru Cologne and Dusseldorf to near Wesel.

There is little that one can write about in this particular area of the Ruhr Pocket, as like we stated previously, the three divisions holding the west bank of the Rhine had the wide and swift river between them and the enemy.

On April 5, when the Ninth and First Armies unleashed their attack to eliminate the Ruhr Pocket, the XXII Corps defended the Rhine River line using the 94th Infantry Division, the 101st Airborne Division, and the 82nd Airborne Division.

These three veteran divisions continued to hold the defense line

until the "pocket" was closed some ten days later. Like their co-patriots who were fighting and flushing the enemy out of his lair in actual close combat, these units played an important part in the defeat of all German units in the Ruhr.

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A strange quiet settled over the Ruhr River Basin on the morning of April 20, 1945. The vast industrial plants which once turned out war supplies for the German army were lying in ruin. The coal miners were idle. Streets, roadways, bridges, railroad stations — all that once made Germany great — were now rubble. The German civilians seemed dazed from the rapid turn of events, and as an aftermath of the battle which had raged over their heads for the past few weeks. Occasionally a brief fury of shell fire would ring out in the hills as an American patrol continued to round up stragglers of the once proud Wehrmach — Nazis who were attempting to hold out in the hills.

It was only a few short weeks ago that the latest propaganda posters distributed by the Nazi government read, "Give me five more years and you will not recognize Germany again" — this statement was signed by Adolph Hitler. Now the bubble of a greater Germany had burst in their face. The once great cities of the Ruhr — Cologne, Hagen, Hamm, Wuppertal, Dusseldorf, Dortmund — were all in ruin; 90 per cent destroyed. Many of the factories, in fact a vast majority of them, were leveled to the ground. The residential areas, once occupied by the factory workers, had been gutted by fire and only the skeletons of the houses now stood.

Where once the SS officers swaggered up and down their streets, GI's, in dirty gray olive drab uniforms, many of them in their teens, had come from thousands of miles across the ocean and now occupied their cities. Long columns of replacements constantly poured along the autobahns passing through the Ruhr. These replacements moved forward to join in the battle which was now taking place some 150 miles further east, where GI Joe and Ivan were soon to link up to cut Hitler's German empire in half.

The units which had fought and won the Battle of the Ruhr were on the move again. Some of the units, such as the 8th Infantry Division, were rushing forward to join the British 2nd Army in the drive to the North Sea, while other units, such as the 86th Division and the 99th Division went south to join Patton's Third Army in the drive into Bavaria.

(On April 20th, the 8th Infantry Division, 86th Division and the 97th Infantry Division were all situated side by side after completing the mop-up in the Ruhr. The three divisions had fought with the XVIII Airborne Corps. Some two weeks later the 8th Division was in Schwerin and Wismar, on the North Sea. The 97th Division was in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, and the 86th Division was at Salzburg, Austria, only ten miles from Berchtesgaden, Hitler's famous retreat. This indicates the speed with which our forces were able to move as they raced across central Europe. Here the 8th and 86th Divisions, which had fought together in the Ruhr, had gone in opposite directions and were now (V-E day) occupying opposite corners of German-held territory.)

After the collapse of the German forces in the Ruhr, the entire area was turned over to the Fifteenth Army Military Government units. Some of the divisions which had taken part in the Ruhr engagement were assigned occupation duty in the area, while others such as the divisions mentioned above, plus the 13th Armored, 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division, 99th Infantry Division, and perhaps others saw additional combat service before V-E Day.

In retrospect, we can look back upon the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket as the world's biggest battle, from the standpoint of the number of soldiers participating. But the most important thing to remember concerning this battle was the fact that in this battle, the enemy lost all control of the war, and from this time on was able to muster only token resistance to the advance of the Allied troops. Besides this factor, the Germans also lost one entire Field Army of 325,000 men.

In the joy of final victory, the world paid little attention at the time to the Battle of the Ruhr. The link-up with the Russians, the suicide of Hitler, and the fall of Berlin dominated the news. But while these more glamorous affairs were occurring nearby, and news correspondents flocked to other sectors, the fact remains that in the Ruhr the German Army lost for once and for all the elite of the army, the crack Army Group "B", as well as portions of the First Parachute Army.

The years will come and go, and World War II will best be remembered by Suribachi, Pearl Harbor, and Bastogne, but the American combat soldiers who fought against all types of obstacles to liquidate the Ruhr Pocket contributed far more to the overall victory than is indicated at first glance.

It has now been twelve long years since the Battle of the Ruhr took place. As the veterans of this engagement look back over these twelve years a great change has taken place in the world. Nations that were our friends and allies then are our enemies now. Nations that we fought to the bitter end only twelve years ago, from outward appearances, are now our friends. A new generation has come along, and the atrocities which we witnessed, have been forgotten. The bitterness that was in the heart of almost every soldier who saw with their own eyes the concentration camps, and slaughter-house laboratories of the Nazis, has to a great extent waned. The past twelve years has seen another war in far off Korea, where perhaps even greater atrocities occurred. There have been wars and rumors of wars during this entire period.

Today we move into a future of uncertainty, little knowing what is in store for us in the years to come. But to those who took part in the Battle of the Ruhr, or for that matter any battle, no matter how large or small, there is no glory in war, no one ever wins anything. The loser is always mankind.

Let us hope that our children, grandchildren, and their children after them, are able to come up with the solution to the problem that is as old as the world itself, how to end wars for once and for all. Then perhaps the entire world can for once enjoy "Peace on earth, and good will to man."

