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THE OPERATIONS OF THE THIRD BATTALION, 14TH INFANTRY
(71ST INFANTRY DIVISION) AT AMBERG, GERMANY, 22 APRIL 1945
(CENTRAL EUROPE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Executive)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION ATTACKING
A CITY

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- A-1 The Invasion of Western Europe, part 2 (January to May 1945)
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- A-2 XX Corps Operational Report, US Army
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- A-3 The History of the 71st Infantry Division
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- A-4 After Action Report, Third US Army, Vol. I, Operations
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the Third Battalion, 14th Infantry, 71st Infantry Division, in the attack on AMBERG, Germany, 22 April 1945.

In the European Theatre of Operations, as of 22 March 1945, the Allies had virtually destroyed the German armies in the west. On 22 March the western Allied Forces were at the Rhine and were preparing to follow through and destroy the German army. Three army groups under General Eisenhower were poised on the Rhine River ready to drive across Germany. The 21st Army Group in the north under General Montgomery was held up temporarily in the crossing of the Rhine in the Ruhr area. In the middle of the Allied line the 12th Army Group under General Bradley was faring much better. The bridgehead at REMAGEN had forced the Germans to commit all their available troops in this sector. Events happened so fast and the pressure of the American armies was so great that the German forces opposing the 12th Army Group, particularly those opposing the Third Army, did not have the time or the opportunity to gather enough troops to make a determined stand. The Sixth Army Group in the south under General Devers was in the process of reducing an enemy pocket and straightening the front lines in the area west of KARLSRUHE. (See Map "A") (1)

The conquest of Germany east of the Rhine was divided into three phases. The first phase called for the encirclement of the Ruhr beginning on 23 March 1945. To carry out the first phase, General Eisenhower planned to trap the large concentration of troops and supplies in the Ruhr by a huge double penetration of the German defenses along the Rhine at two positions about 110 miles apart, in the north by the 21st Army Group and in the south by the 12th Army Group. Following the break-through the plan was for the two army groups to carry out a double envelopment simultaneously from the north and south and join

forces at PADERBORN, the eastern end of the Ruhr valley. The plan was carried out with more success than was hoped for, particularly in the south along the 12th Army Group front. On 1 April elements of the 12th Army Group contacted units of the 21st Army Group at PADERBORN. Thus by 1 April the Ruhr was completely surrounded and the first phase of the conquest of Germany was complete; and within this great pocket was trapped one third of the German forces on the western front. (See Map "A") (2)

Before the invasion of the Continent General Eisenhower had been directed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to enter the Continent of Europe and together with other United Nations undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces. Thus by the encirclement of the Ruhr, which had isolated the industrial heart of Germany, the Allied armies had accomplished a part of their mission and were ready to carry out the remainder - the destruction of the German armed forces. (3)

On 1 April 1945 General Eisenhower decided to concentrate on a powerful drive through the middle of Germany along the KASSEL - LEIPZIG axis. The factors influencing Eisenhower in his decision were that the terrain between KASSEL and LEIPZIG offered no major obstacles and was suited to the rapid movement of armor, and that a drive along the central route would reduce the last industrial area of Germany, the LEIPZIG - CHEMNITZ area, and cut the country in half. General Eisenhower's plan was first to destroy the enemy forces encircled in the Ruhr with the 12th Army Group and then with the 12th Army Group to drive along the line KASSEL - LEIPZIG to the Elbe River. (4)

The plan was executed with clock-like precision and by 15 April all missions given to the 12th Army Group were accomplished. The Ruhr pocket was reduced and 325,000 prisoners together with immense quantities of supplies were captured and units of the 12th Army Group had reached the Elbe River. Thus the second phase of the conquest of Germany was completed. (See Map "A") (5)

(2) A-1, p. 41; (3) A-1, p. 44; (4) A-1, p. 45; (5) A-1, p. 49

*Details of the Land Mat
Narrowing*

The last phase of the complete conquest of Germany began on 16 April. General Eisenhower's strategy was designed further to divide, isolate, and destroy the German forces remaining in the south and north. It was believed at this time that the enemy's only important capability was to hold out in the "National Redoubt" in the south where elements of about 100 divisions faced the Allied forces; and since in the center the western Allied armies had reached the line of the Elbe, the limit agreed upon with the Russians, Eisenhower's decision was to hold in the center and concentrate on drives to clean up the flanks. (6)

On 17 April SHAEF issued a directive to the army group commanders for the 6th Army Group in the south and the 21st Army Group in the north to drive eastward. The 12th Army Group was ordered to hold the Elbe River line and to launch an attack to the southeast to contact the Russian armies in the Danube valley of Austria. The brunt of the drive eastward again fell upon the able shoulders of the 12th Army Group and in compliance with General Eisenhower's directive, General Bradley assigned the Third Army the mission of driving southeast down the Danube valley to join with the Russians. (See Map "A") (7)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

On 17 April, 12th Army Group directed Third US Army to attack southeast along an axis of advance, REGENSBURG - LINZ, to make contact in the Danube valley with the Russians who were attacking concurrently from VIENNA to the northwest. (See Map "A")

Accordingly, General George S. Patton Jr., commanding the Third US Army, issued orders on 17 April to three of his corps, the III, XII, and XX to attack along the axis REGENSBURG - LINZ and gain contact with the Russians in the Danube valley. The XX Corps in the center of the three corps was to make the main effort. After four days of preparation and regrouping of its units, XX Corps, which at this time consisted of the 71st, 65th, and 80th Infantry Divisions and 13th Armored Division moved south from CHEMNITZ to the area east of NURNBERG and lined up for the attack with the 65th and 71st Infantry (6) A-1, p. 49; (7) A-1, p. 50-51.

Divisions abreast - the 71st, which was located in REUTH, on the left. The 80th Infantry Division was in corps reserve near BAMBERG, while the 13th Armored Division which had just completed a 250 mile march from the Ruhr pocket was held initially in reserve near BAMBERG to perform much needed repair and maintenance on its vehicles. (See Map "A") (8)

On 17 April the 71st Infantry Division received orders to attack the next day and thus begin the big drive that was to continue until meeting the Russians in Austria. Of the enemy situation in the Division Zone of Action we learn from the Division G-2 Estimate that enemy resistance was scattered, that enemy movements to the south and southeast into the National Redoubt area were reported indicating that a strong defense was planned somewhere in the Danube valley. It was considered that the enemy was capable of defending and delaying on critical terrain features and in communication centers, of launching small scale counter-attacks, of a limited reinforcement of front line units, and finally of attempting small scale airborne sabotage operations behind the Division lines. At this time, 17 April, the German 36th Infantry Division located in the vicinity of SULZBACH faced the 71st Division in its Zone of Action. (See Map "B")

The terrain facing the Division was rugged with many cross-compartments and streams. There were many small wooded areas and rather abrupt hills rising up to 600 ft. All the roads in the Division zone converged on centers of population where many roadblocks could be set up within the towns and cities. (9)

From a supply point of view this operation could be supported adequately except for class I supplies, type "A" or "B". Because of the long supply lines and congested rail traffic the problem of distributing "A" or "B" type rations to the troops was very difficult especially in the matter of selecting suitable depots and issuing a balanced ration. In view of this and because the Division was moving so rapidly, the operational type ration, of which there was ample, was drawn from Army Supply Points and distributed to units. (10)

The Division General Staff completed its plans for this operation on the night of 17 April and, after approval by the Division Commander, the (8) A-2, p. 1-2; (9) A-3, p. 71; (10) A-4, p. 361.

MISSION?

three combat teams of the Division, the 5th, 14th and 66th were given their orders to jump off in the attack on the morning of 18 April from the line TROCKNAU - CREUSSEN. (See Map "B") The Division Commander, Major General Wyman, planned to attack initially with three regimental combat teams abreast, the 14th RCT on the left (north) the 5th RCT in the center, and the 66th RCT on the right. As the Division Zone of Attack narrowed one RCT would be pinched out and go into reserve. Speed of movement was paramount. With the great distances to be covered and the wide Division Zone of Action it was necessary for some plan to relieve each RCT in turn. And for the first time since the crossing of the Rhine River the Division was assigned a Zone of Operation without an armored force to precede it and soften the advance. With armor no longer in front it was now possible to fully employ the Division Artillery, air support, the attached Heavy Tank Battalion and Tank Destroyer Battalion. At this time a Regimental Combat Team of the Division consisted of an Infantry Regiment, a Battalion of Light Artillery (105 mm), a Heavy Tank Company, a Tank Destroyer Company, an Engineer Company, and a Medical Company. Except for the artillery which was in direct support, these units were attached to regiments for extended periods throughout an operation. (11)

On the morning of 18 April the 14th RCT, the 5th RCT, and the 66th RCT jumped off to the southeast against enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire and swept the heavy woods to their front. On 19 April the 5th RCT pushed ahead and reached PEGNITZ that night. The 14th and 66th RCT moved slowly through the woods in their zones. (See Map "B") (12)

On the next day, 20 April, the three RCTs continued their advance to the southeast abreast, with movement being hindered more by heavy woods and rough terrain than by enemy action. On 21 April the 66th RCT broke out of the VELDENSTEINER WALD and swept into NEUHAUS where the 500 year old medieval castle belonging to Hermann Goering was located. After a stiff fire fight with over a hundred SS troops the castle was captured completely furnished with priceless works of art which Goering had looted from German occupied countries. From here the 66th RCT went on to take VELDEN, an important road center, after engaging and destroying (11) A-3, p. 72; (12) A-3, p. 72.

two enemy armored units. While this action was going on the 14th RCT on the left ran into a stiff, small arms fire fight with elements of the German Luftwaffe ^(wounded) on the SULZBACH - BAYREUTH highway about half way between the two cities. After the 608th Field Artillery Battalion (105 mm) in direct support of the 14th RCT, and the Regimental Cannon Company laid down a heavy concentration on the enemy the defenses were broken by the marching fire of the infantry. The stiff resistance was explained when a complete fighter plan factory and an underground assembly plant were found in the defended area. During this engagement enemy mortar and artillery shells fired from VILSECK, in the 26th Infantry Division Zone, fell on units of 14th RCT. A task force from the 14th Infantry was organized to destroy the German artillery and mortars in VILSECK, and after permission was obtained to cross over into the Zone of Action of the 26th Infantry Division, this task force accomplished its mission and captured the town. On the same day, 21 April, the 5th RCT operating in the center encountered terrain difficulties and a poor road net which slowed up its advance. However, the 5th RCT reached and captured AUERBACH and a newly constructed four lane military highway connecting AUERBACH with SULZBACH. Exploiting this discovery the 5th RCT promptly shuttled forward 17 miles to the northern edge of SULZBACH to end the days operations. (See Map "B") (13)

The next important objective in the Division Zone of Action was the city of AMBERG and the Division Commander ordered the 14th RCT and the 5th RCT to advance in their respective zones to the line HAHNBACH - ROSENBERG by the night of 22 April, and to continue the attack on order. The Division General Staff was making plans to capture AMBERG on 23 April with the 14th RCT and 5th RCT supported by the Division Artillery and an air strike.

On 22 April the Third Battalion of 5th RCT launched an attack on SULZBACH and captured it. Other elements of the 5th Infantry circled to the west of SULZBACH and attacked the town of ROSENBERG from the south resulting in its capture. This action blocked the escape of hundreds of enemy troops from SULZBACH. The 66th RCT on this day met little or no resistance in sweeping the woods on the right of the Division Zone and in cutting the NURNBERG - SULZBACH highway and railroad. (See Map "B") (14)

(13) A-3, p. 73-74; (14) A-3, p. 74.

the 26th Infantry Division

Details not included

The 14th RCT which had reached VILSECK and SCHLICH on the night of 21 April was still on the Division left (north) and that night the Regimental Commander received an order from Division to launch an attack on the morning of 22 April to the southeast generally astride the main highway in the direction of AMBERG, and to capture and secure HAHNBACH and continue attack on Division order. (See Map "B")

On the enemy situation at this time the pattern of intelligence reports established that the enemy was fighting a delaying action in an effort to gain time to gather enough strength to make a last determined stand on the Danube River. Intelligence data available to the 14th Infantry S-2 indicated that the Germans with the remnants of an infantry division and attached armor intended to establish a strong defensive position generally along AMBERG as one line in their system of successive delaying positions.

In fighting against our dismounted infantry which consumed most of its time screening woods and towns, the Germans were able to delay our advance long enough to pull out of their hastily defended positions with most of their men and armor. Constant contact with the Germans was not maintained and the enemy was accomplishing his mission of delaying our advance to gain time for a larger force which was establishing a strong deliberate defense somewhere to the south. Accordingly, instructions were received from Division that the drive to the southeast would be accelerated, and that small pockets of enemy resistance would be by-passed. The Division SOP of carefully sweeping all woods and searching all houses was discarded. Hereafter all elements of the regimental combat teams would when practicable use every means of transportation to speed the attack. For the man who walked through the heavy woods across streams and over hills in the futile search for Germans, this change in operation was a welcomed blessing. Doubtless the change in method of movement was considered tactically safe and reasonably secure so we can assume that a whole-

sale collapse of German resistance was in sight. However, to the 14th RCT in its mission to capture HAHNBACH, a move by motor in the face of a known enemy defense could not be made so the 14th RCT Commander made plans to slug it out on foot with the Germans. (15)

One great comforting feeling that the Regimental Commander enjoyed at this time was that the enemy had no air capabilities. No German aircraft of any strength had been seen or reported for such a long time that Intelligence Officers at all levels no longer considered it as a capability in making a G-2 Estimate.

Having considered all the enemy capabilities, and with the town of HAHNBACH as the objective, the 14th RCT Commander decided for the sake of closer control to continue the advance by phase lines, i. e. Battalions would attack to a phase line and report to Regiment. Advance to the next phase line would be on order from Regiment.

Accordingly, the Regimental Commander issued an order for the Battalions to attack from SCHLICH southeast to phase line 6, just south of HAHNBACH, with the First and Third Battalions abreast, the Third on the left. The Second Battalion was held initially in mobile reserve in the vicinity of SCHLICH with the mission of relieving the Third Battalion on phase line 6. The Third Battalion was to make the main effort with a Zone of Attack astride the highway leading to HAHNBACH. Priority for artillery fires from the supporting Light Artillery Battalion (608 F.A. Battalion) would go to the Third Battalion. (See Map "C") (16)

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK

The terrain over which the Battalion would have to fight was rolling. The main highway to AMBERG ran generally along a ridge with low ground and small streams on either side of the road. Lying in the valley of these small streams were several small settlements with houses clustered around stream junctions in the lowest parts of the valley. Between these villages were many patches of cultivated forests. In general, the terrain favored the attacker. (17)

The Battalion plan of attack on HAHNBACH was to employ all three rifle companies abreast, I on the left, K in the center astride the
(15) A-3, p. 75-76; (16) A-5; (17) personal knowledge

highway, and L on the right. M Company consisting two platoons of Heavy Machine Guns, and the 81 mm Mortar Platoon was placed in general support of the Battalion. For this operation the Third Battalion had attached one platoon of B Company 761st Tank Battalion and one platoon of B Company 635th TD Battalion. The Battalion Commander's plan in the employment of the platoon of tanks was to attach one section of three tanks to K Company, and the other section of two tanks to I Company. The tanks were to assist the rifle companies in destroying enemy automatic weapons and armored vehicles besides providing the companies with a maneuvering force and shock action. The platoon of Tank Destroyers and the Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon were to follow in rear of M Company and engage enemy armor in the Battalion Zone of Action. Each rifle company had an artillery forward observer to provide the companies close and continuous artillery support. All the units organic and attached to the Battalion were linked together by radio in a Battalion Command net using the SCR 300 Radio. The Battalion Commander established an observation post and had both wire and radio communication with his Command Post. With the Battalion Commander at his observation post were the Battalion S-3, S-2, and the Artillery Liaison Officer.

down enemy

The Battalion Commander issued his order on the night of 21 April for the attack to jump off at 0700 hrs., 22 April, from SCHLICH, (phase line 4) astride the highway to HAHNBACH. (See Map "C") (18)

THE ATTACK ON HAHNBACH

At 0700 hrs., 22 April, the Battalion jumped off and advanced rapidly astride the highway against only scattered resistance. The first organized resistance was met from prepared positions from the towns of MULLES and IRLBACH where small detachments of German infantry and armor were placed at strategic points. After a hard fire fight the leading platoons of I and K Companies broke the German defense and both of these towns were captured. The attack regained momentum and the three rifle companies proceeded unopposed until reaching the town of SUSS where K Company encountered and captured a section of 88 mm guns and an armored vehicle. A large gasoline supply point was also captured in SUSS. (See Map "C") (19)

(18) personal knowledge; (19) A-6.

HAHNBACH was located about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of SU and lay astride the highway in a valley. The Third Battalion reached the high ground overlooking HAHNBACH from the north at 1100 hrs. The Battalion S-2 had reported that more than 200 Germans with about 15 tanks were defending HAHNBACH. To check this information the Battalion Commander requested a report on the enemy from the Division Artillery S-2 through the Artillery Liaison Officer with the Third Battalion. Making full use of liaison aircraft and radio communication the Artillery S-2 confirmed the report on the enemy strength in HAHNBACH.

(20)

Here was the ideal situation for the attack. The Battalion held the key terrain - high ground overlooking the objective - and an excellent avenue of approach to the town.

The Battalion Commander saw here an opportunity to employ the full fire power of the Battalion and decided to attack HAHNBACH using Infantry-Artillery and Tanks as a team. His plan was to form a base of fire from the high ground northeast of HAHNBACH with I Company, M Company, the Battalion A.T. Platoon, an attached A.T. Platoon, and a section of two medium tanks, while K Company with a section of three tanks made up the maneuvering force and was to approach HAHNBACH through a covered avenue of approach and attack the town from the northwest after fire was lifted from the town on order from the Battalion Commander. L Company was on the right flank of the Battalion and its mission was to protect the right and rear of the Battalion and to move forward abreast of K Company up to phase line 6. An artillery forward observer was with each rifle company. The Battalion Commander had available on call from the Division Artillery the fires of one Battalion of 105 mm howitzers with the reinforcing fires of a Battalion of 155 mm howitzers.

Division Artillery had sent out a Liaison aircraft with an observer and direct radio communication was affected between the Third Battalion Liaison Officer and the observer in the aircraft.

On signal from the Third Battalion Commander the artillery fired several concentrations with a Battalion of 155 mm howitzers on known enemy positions in HAHNBACH. The Battalion Commander from his O.P.

(20) Statement by Lt. Col. Paul G. Guthrie, then Battalion Commander of Third Battalion, 14th Infantry, on 5 February 1949.

on the high ground could see the entire front. After the artillery lifted the Third Battalion opened up with heavy machine guns, light machine guns, 81 mm mortars and 60 mm mortars. Anti-tank guns and even the tank section attached to I Company fired several rounds from position defilade. On order from the Battalion Commander these fires were lifted and K Company assaulted HAHNBACH employing marching fire. L Company moved down to the road running west out of HAHNBACH and sealed the escape of Germans to the west. K Company was successful in its assault and the town surrendered at 1200 hrs. I Company followed K Company into HAHNBACH and cleaned out the snipers and gathered up the prisoners. However, the German tanks that were reported in HAHNBACH escaped to the south. The Battalion had reached phase line 5 and prepared to move out in the same attack formation to phase line 6. (See Map "C") (21)

Shortly after leaving HAHNBACH the Battalion encountered enemy artillery and mortar fire which held up the leading elements of I and K Companies. This enemy fire was silenced by counter-battery fire from the supporting Field Artillery Battalion. *uheck*

In approaching the woods south of HAHNBACH the leading platoon of I Company received very heavy automatic fire from a section of light tanks. The platoon suffered several casualties including the platoon leader. The platoon sergeant quickly took command and sent a rocket launcher team to knock out the tanks. The launcher failed to fire. A second rocket launcher team from the second platoon was dispatched and this launcher also failed to fire. Finally, a third rocket launcher team from the third platoon was sent up to knock out the tanks. This launcher fired successfully and the team got two direct hits knocking out both tanks. Eight prisoners were taken in this action. An investigation on the misfires of the rocket launchers revealed that none of the launchers in the Battalion had been test-fired prior to going into action. (22) *uheck*

After this action all companies moved forward against scattered resistance and at 1600 hrs. reached positions along phase line 6

(21) Statement of Lt. Col. Paul G. Guthrie, 5 February 1949

(22) Statement by Capt. Jack Null, then Third Battalion S-2, 14th Infantry, 1 February 1949.

(Battalion objective) at about five miles north of the city of AMBERG. Along this phase line the Battalion had been previously directed to halt and be relieved by the Second Battalion. However, since the Third Battalion had so successfully exploited a break-through in the enemy defenses around HAHNBACH and were presently engaged in pursuit of the enemy, the Battalion Commander thought it unsound to break contact now so he requested permission from the Regimental Commander to continue the attack toward AMBERG. The Division Commander's permission was obtained and then the Regimental Commander altered his original plans to relieve the Third Battalion, instead he assigned the Second Battalion a Zone of Action on the left of the Third Battalion so that now all three Battalions were abreast and prepared to attack AMBERG with the main effort still being made by the Third Battalion astride the main highway to AMBERG. (23)

THE ATTACK ON AMBERG

The First Battalion, in its Zone of Advance to the south, had reached phase line 6 east of ROSENBERG at 1630 hrs. and was prepared to push on forward to AMBERG enveloping the city from the west. The Second Battalion moved by motor from its assembly area in VILSECK down to the town of URSULA along phase line 6 and by 1700 hrs. was deployed in preparation for the attack on AMBERG from the east. (See Map "C")

It is interesting to note here that the highway to AMBERG was the main axis of advance for the Division and it was in this direction that the XX Corps was making its main effort for the Third Army. As was previously stated, AMBERG was the most important objective in the Division Zone of Action for 22 April, so that the mission of the Third Battalion of the 14th Infantry, to capture and secure AMBERG, was indeed a very important one. (24)

At 1800 hrs. all three Battalions of the 14th RCT launched a coordinated attack on AMBERG. The Third Battalion was still making the main effort and went storming down the highway and by marching fire overcame increasingly stronger enemy resistance. The enemy tried to slow down the momentum of the Battalion by setting up road blocks and barriers. Overcoming all of these obstacles the leading elements of the

(23) Statement by Lt. Col. Paul G. Guthrie, 5 Feb. 1949;

(24) Statement by Lt. Col. Paul G. Guthrie, 5 Feb. 1949.

Battalion reached the northern outskirts of AMBERG at 2030 hrs. Here the leading units of I Company received heavy small arms fire from a farm house. The second platoon of I Company was pinned down as a result of this fire. The lead scout of the second platoon (Pfc. Gonzales) on his own initiative got up in face of the enemy fire, circled the farm house, threw three hand grenades through the window, broke down the door and went in firing his rifle from the hip. The platoon leader, upon seeing what Gonzales was doing rushed the platoon forward and stormed the farm house. On entering the house he found Gonzales standing over three dead Germans and guarding three prisoners. (25)

*Enemy strike
Companies not
shown*

The First Battalion in the meantime had continued its advance screening the woods and towns in its zone, and at 2030 hrs. had reached a point two miles northwest of the city. The Second Battalion continued in its mission to attack AMBERG from the east, encountered only scattered enemy resistance and reached the northeastern edge of AMBERG at 2030 hrs. Darkness was beginning to fall and the city had not yet been taken. Troops of the Third Battalion were nearly exhausted for they had hiked over rugged terrain and encountered enemy resistance for 15 miles in the last 12 hours.

The Third Battalion Commander readied his troops for the last phase of the assault which began at 2100 hrs. The Battalion pushed directly south with all three rifle companies in line supported by a platoon of tanks and tank destroyers. Several enemy armored cars and tanks were encountered on the route and were either destroyed or scattered by the Anti-Tank Platoon.

Leading elements of K Company were approaching the main entrance to AMBERG from the north, a long highway bridge over a railroad cut, when the enemy in a further attempt to delay the rapid advance of the Battalion blew this bridge to a pile of twisted steel and rubble. The situation looked bad for the Battalion. A detour now without a reconnaissance would be difficult. To make matters worse the enemy had established barricades of steel beams and heavy logs on all the side roads leading from the main highway. Foot soldiers could maneuver around these road blocks but the Battalion Commander wanted his platoon of tanks in close support of the infantry in the assault on the city, so his chief concern now was to find a route for the tanks. On the recommendations of the

(25) Statement by Capt. Null, 1 Feb. 1949.

*where was
this?*

tank platoon sergeant and over the objections of the tank platoon leader, the Battalion Commander ordered the platoon of tanks down into the railroad cut across the tracks and over an old brick bridge that the Germans had prepared for demolition but for some reason had not blown. The rifle men from I and K Companies followed close behind the tanks. So with the assistance of tanks, the leading elements of the rifle companies reduced the last groups of enemy resistance outside the city and finally reached the center of AMBERG at 2230 hrs. (See Map "D") (26)

not on map →

The battle was not won nor had the city surrendered. Fighting went on from house to house. The night was very black. It had been raining all day and there was no moon. The city was in total darkness. Control was extremely difficult. Squads became lost and platoons became detached from their companies. The Battalion commander had the only plan of the city of AMBERG, an aerial mosaic. Locations by street names or city blocks were impossible. The Third Battalion became disorganized and confusion resulted. Some of the civilian population mistook the American soldiers for the retreating German soldiers and greeted the Americans with steins of beer as they passed taverns and bars. In a similar incident, while L Company was entering AMBERG, a group of walking wounded Germans from a hospital on the northwestern edge of the city mistook the Americans for German soldiers and joined the tail of the column.

When physical contact between units of the Battalion was lost and could not be regained, the Battalion Commander decided to pick a prominent point in the city and establish himself there. This way, if he could inform his company commander of his location, some sort of communication and contact could be established. Communication with the SCR 300 Radio had gone out before entering the city so that messengers had to be used. The Battalion Commander decided to use the city hall as his forward command post since it was located on the square in the center of the city. (See Map "D") Taking a detachment of men from K Company, he proceeded toward this building and found it bolted. The door was forced open and on entering he saw a council of German officials and army officers in session in a large assembly hall. Apparently this council of officials had been surprised and one of them tried to use the telephone. The city telephone exchange was still operating and the telephone facilities were intact. On seeing this a sergeant from K Company who

accompanied the Battalion Commander hit this official across the arm with the butt of his rifle and broke his arm. The Battalion Commander announced to the council that the city was surrounded and demanded the surrender of the city by this group which consisted of the city mayor and council together with the military commander of the city and his staff. It was later learned that this group had met to decide whether to surrender the city or defend it. The premature arrival of the Americans cut the meeting short and made it easier for them to decide to surrender. The city mayor, speaking for the group, formally surrendered the city of AMBERG at 2400 hrs., 22 April, and gave the Third Battalion Commander a signed surrender which read: "I, the Oberburgermeister, do unconditionally surrender the city of AMBERG to the American Armed Forces." (27)

Realizing that the city was lost to the Americans the city mayor thought it best to cooperate and try to keep the war damage down to the minimum. He and the city council offered their services to the Battalion Commander in restoring law and order in the city. Unfortunately there was no way for these German officials to notify the German soldiers who were still resisting the American troops of the surrender of the city. At this point the Battalion Commander could have used a military government officer or team to assist him in taking over the government of the city. The Battalion Commander was obviously too busy fighting his Battalion and could not devote any time to governing the city. The German mayor remained in the city hall which became the Battalion C.P. and was shortly faced with many problems that required the decision of the American Commander who of course was not present to take the necessary action. Moreover, the Battalion Commander had no knowledge of military government and was not qualified to take over the task. It was not until early the following day that a military government officer from Division HQ came into the city and assumed control.

After the city had formally surrendered the Battalion Commander set out to notify his companies of the location of the Battalion C.P. He sent his S-3, S-1 and communications officer to gain contact with his companies. Shortly after leaving the C.P. these three officers were ambushed by a German armored car. The jeep in which they were riding was badly shot up but luckily they managed to escape injury and jumped to safety into a nearby (27) Statement by Lt. Col. Guthrie, 5 Feb. 1949.

moat. The Germans knowing the general location of the Americans kept them penned up in this moat for three hours until troops from I Company drove the Germans off and "liberated" the Battalion Staff Officers. During these three critical hours the Battalion Commander had lost the services of most of his staff and still had not contacted his companies.

Throughout the entire fighting in the city the Battalion Commander had wire communication, however, with the Battalion Rear C.P. and with the Regiment. The Battalion Communications Platoon had done an admirable job of extending wire directly behind the Battalion Commander throughout the entire operation. (28)

For several hours during this operation the Battalion Commander was out of range of the Battalion Command Post with his SCR 300. To regain communication the Battalion Commander used the Artillery Liaison Officer's SCR 610 Radio which had a greater range and which netted with a similar radio that the artillery made available to the Third Battalion at the Third Battalion C.P. And on numerous occasions when the Battalion wire communications were out temporarily, the Battalion Commander used the Artillery Liaison Officer's wire net and just as often the Artillery Liaison Officer used the Third Battalion wire communications. (29)

Shortly after the German mayor had surrendered the city the Battalion Commander ordered the Battalion Executive Officer to move the Command Post and all the personnel and Battalion vehicles to the new C.P. at AMBERG. This was accomplished and the entire Battalion had closed in AMBERG by 0100 hrs., 23 April. Most of the Battalion transportation was parked in a small area in front of the new Command Post. This error of parking the transportation of the entire Battalion in a small area in the front lines became more obvious and more glaring during daylight the next morning. (30)

Finally, at 0230 hrs., after the return of the three Battalion Staff Officers who had been ambushed, contact was made with all the units of the Battalion and radio communication with the companies was established by using the Artillery Liaison Officer and company forward observer radio net. The eastern half of the city to include the city hall was screened of German soldiers and was under control of the Third Battalion. (See Map "D")

(28) Personal knowledge; (29) Statement of Lt. Col. Guthrie, 5 Feb. 1949;
(30) Personal knowledge.

Only a very narrow river which runs through the middle of AMBERG separated the Americans in the eastern half from the German soldiers in the ^{western} eastern half of the city. But most of these German troops had been pursued all day by the Third Battalion and seemed very willing to stop fighting for the night. Having pushed his troops as much as they could physically take, the Third Battalion Commander decided to hold what he had, button up for the night and continue cleaning out the city the next morning. (See Map "D") (31)

In the meantime, the First Battalion of the 14th on the right, having advanced over very rough terrain in its Zone of Action, defeated in detail small groups of riflemen and armor along successive delaying positions and finally reached the western edge of AMBERG at 2330 hrs. and made contact with units of the Third Battalion at 2400 hrs. The Second Battalion of the 14th on the left met light resistance and progressed more rapidly reaching the northeastern edge of AMBERG at 2300 hrs. Contact with units of the Third Battalion was made about 2330 hrs. Although the city had formally surrendered at about 2400 hrs., when the city mayor signed the surrender document, the city was not actually captured and secured until 0700 hrs., the next day, 23 April, when all three Battalions of the 14th Infantry began a coordinated house to house screening operation. The remnants of the German units defending the city had in the meantime withdrawn to the southeast. The city was completely cleared of German troops by 1500 hrs. on 23 April. Security posts were placed at all bridges and at all approaches leading into the city. The battle for AMBERG was over and the Third Battalion of the 14th Infantry had added another German city to its already long list of objectives taken. (32)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The importance of the Third Battalion's attack on AMBERG should be emphasized because this Battalion did a job that the Division Commander estimated would take two Regimental Combat Teams to do. It is true that the Battalion enjoyed air superiority, favorable terrain, excellent communications, good equipment and superior supplies, but the fact remains that the Third Battalion overcame overwhelming odds in numbers (31) Personal knowledge; (32) A-6.

to capture and secure AMBERG, the most important objective in the Division Zone of Action on 22 April 1945. A great deal of credit is due the officers of the Battalion for their sound judgement and good leadership, and to the men in the Battalion for their grim determination, team work, physical endurance and fighting hearts. This 22 April 1945 was the day of all days for the Third Battalion; nothing could have stopped them on this day when unit esprit hit its peak.

During this operation the supply of rations Type "A" or "B" could not be affected because the units were moving so rapidly. Unit trains were sometimes 20 or 30 miles away and were desperately trying to keep up with the combat elements, much less trying to prepare hot meals. The issue and consumption of the operational type ration had no adverse effect on the morale or health of the troops.

The enemy was fighting a delaying action along successive positions in an effort to gain time, conserve manpower and gather strength for a deliberate defense somewhere in the Danube River valley. In fighting against our dismounted infantry which consumed most of its time screening woods, the Germans were able to accomplish their mission. In facing a situation like this unit commanders, from the Division down to include the Third Battalion, should have employed a highly mobile and hard hitting maneuvering force to cut the enemy off from the rear while hitting him frontally with dismounted infantry. Also in this connection, constant frontal pressure should have been maintained against the enemy and every effort should have been made to motorize the infantry to follow close behind the fleeing enemy giving him no chance to stop and organize a defense.

In the attack on HAHNBACH the Third Battalion Commander made good use of the Division Artillery intelligence collecting agency in confirming a report on the enemy in HAHNBACH. Artillery observers, particularly those in Liaison aircraft, can obtain very valuable information on the enemy.

For the attack on HAHNBACH the Third Battalion Commander employed the full fire power of the Battalion and attached units successfully because he organized an infantry-artillery-tank team with a well coordinated and well timed plan of fire and maneuver. This action bears out the current teaching on the employment of an infantry-artillery-

tank team in combat. It must be borne in mind, however, that adequate and reliable communication is essential in this team to insure coordination.

I Company's misfortune in having two out of three rocket launchers fail to fire at a critical time in the action below HAHNBACH deserves mention here because it was later learned that none of the rocket launchers in the Battalion had been test-fired prior to going into combat.

The Third Battalion gained the element of surprise in the attack on AMBERG, and despite the loss of control the Battalion was able to hold the city until help came from the First and Second Battalions. The importance of having adequate and reliable communications and sufficient city-plan maps during city fighting at night was felt by all unit commanders. Maximum use was made of the artillery wire and radio communications when the normal Third Battalion communications went out.

In entering the city at night with so little control and by bringing in the Battalion supply train the Third Battalion was vulnerable for a counter-attack which fortunately did not take place.

A military government team was sorely needed by the Third Battalion Commander to govern the city after its surrender.

Despite the difficulties encountered by the Third Battalion in its attack on AMBERG the operation was very successful. A mission big enough for two Regimental Combat Teams was accomplished by the Third Battalion because this Battalion was aggressive. This proved very conclusively that aggressive action wins battles.

No figures are available on the number of casualties inflicted on the enemy. However, more than 25 pieces of armor were destroyed during the days operation and over 400 prisoners taken. The Third Battalion lost only six men and one $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton vehicle during the days operation from SCHLICH to AMBERG. (33)

LESSONS

1. Pursuit of an enemy force must be aggressive. Never lose contact and do not give the enemy time to rest or reorganize.
 2. Surprise affected by a smaller force will frequently result in the
- (33) Personal knowledge.

defeat of a larger force.

3. Only operational type rations should be used in the pursuit.
4. In the pursuit the pursuing force should be highly mobile and hard hitting.
5. Adequate and reliable communication is necessary to the successful conduct of battle.
6. Division Artillery Intelligence is very often an excellent source of enemy information.
7. Armor can best be employed in the pursuit by seizing and holding critical terrain features.
8. All individual or crew-served weapons should be test-fired prior to use in combat.
9. Military government teams should accompany combat elements and be prepared to take over control of captured towns and cities.
10. In the pursuit by-pass small pockets of resistance and maintain constant frontal pressure on the main enemy forces while an enveloping force cuts his escape.
11. The infantry-artillery-tank team if used properly is highly successful in combat.