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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 361ST INFANTRY (91ST INFANTRY
DIVISION) AT LIVERGNAND, ITALY, 10-13 OCTOBER 1944
(NORTH APENNINES CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY REGIMENT AT-
TACKING IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN

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Note: There are very few times when references are made to any written history as it is my belief that the action of the 361st Infantry during the period 10-13 October 1944 is incorrectly reported. The action as reported in this monograph is from personal observation and by talking with Captain C. Sigmen of Company K, Captain Christ Hald of Company I, S/Sgt. J. Walraven and S/Sgt. C. Palmer of Hq Co, 361st Infantry.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph is the operation of the 361st Infantry, 91st U. S. Division, at Livergnano, Italy, 10-13 October, 1944, during the North Appennines Campaign.

In order that the reader can better orient himself, it is well to remember some of the major events which preceded this action.

The American Fifth and British Eighth Armies had successfully landed in Italy during the fall of 1943: (1) had fought their way north against heavy resistance to capture the city of Naples on 1 October; (2) then ^{was} to be held for months of bitter winter fighting south of Cassino. (3) It was during this winter campaign that the Fifth Army tried to alleviate the stalemate by landing at Anzio on 22 January 1944 (4) only to be held by strong German positions until 11 May when the new offensive operation began. (5) Not until 25 May did the forces of the Fifth Armies join near the town of Borgo Grappa. (6) Again the Fifth Army as a single unit fought its way north against a fanatic enemy to liberate the first capitol of an Axis dominated country when Rome was freed by American troops on 4 June 1944. (7) (See Map "A")

From Rome, north to the Arno River, which was reached by elements of the 1st Armored Regiment and riflemen from the 361st Infantry on 16 July, (8) the American Fifth Army fought

(1) A-3, p. 1; (2) A-2, p. 44; (3) A-3, p. 25; (4) A-3, p. 27; (5) A-3, p. 37; (6) A-3, p. 45; (7) A-3, p. 49; (8) A-4, p. 70.

against a strong German delaying action. But to the north of the Arno lay the towering Apennines and the Gothic Line. As is stated in the Fifth Army History "Until the Allied troops could break through the Gothic Line and reach the Po Valley, the German position in Italy was as strong as any previous time in the Italian Campaign." In September the Gothic Line was breached by both the Fifth and Eighth Armies. (9) In the Fifth Army sector the 91st Division had pierced the strongest defenses by the capture of Futa Pass on 22 September. (10) Futa Pass was the key position on the vital supply line from Florence to the north. The taking of Futa Pass and the Gothic Line had been costly for the 91st Division who had lost 1,247 of its fighting strength in a period 13-18 September inclusive. (11) From 22 September until 5 October Infantrymen of the Fifth Army moved from one mountain ridge to the next in what seemed to be an endless succession of fortified positions manned by some of the strongest of Hitler's forces. (12) (See Map "B")

From 5-9 October only short advances were made. (13) Each mile being paid for in loss of the fighting strength of the Division. Not only the enemy, but rain, fog, cold weather and the endless sea of mountains were slowing the Infantryman in their attempt to reach the Po Valley.

THE GENERAL SITUATION 10 OCTOBER 1944

The main thrust of the Fifth Army in its effort to get out of the mountains and into the Po Valley before the heavy

(9) A-1, p. 108; (10) A-1, p. 68; (11) A-1, p. 87;
(12) A-2, p. 122; (13) A-2, p. 122.

winter set in would fall to the II Corps. (14)

In front of the II Corps was the strongest natural defensive line yet encountered. (15) From west to east: the 34th Division was facing the Monterumici hill mass, the 91st Division would have to cross the exscarpments at Livergnano. In the 85th Division zone was bald topped Mount delle Formiche, and the Monterenzio hill mass. On the Corps right flank the 88th Division was facing Mount delle Tombe and the Gesso ridge. (16) Each of these mountains and ridges was fortified and manned by the best troops that the Germans could muster. Mount delle Formecci was held by elements of the 267th Grenadier Regiment, 956th Grenadier Regiment and the 362nd Fuselur and Anti-tank Battalions. Elements of the 1060th Regiment were in reserve. Facing the 88th Division were elements of the 98th Grenadier Division, elements of the 44th Grenadier Division, and part of the 362nd Grenadier Division. The 34th Division was confronted with elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division and the 4th Paratroop Division. Only in the 91st Division zone was there an enemy order of battle organized into a single command of comparatively fresh troops. The 91st Division was confronted with the 65th Grenadier Division reinforced with the 10th Parachute Regiment and an unknown amount of armor. (17) The plan, or third phase of the Apennine Campaign, was to have the 85th Division make the main effort. (18) The 91st Division was to assist in the capture of Mount delle Formeche and the 88th Division to clear the

(14) A-2, p. 123; (15) A-2, p. 131; (16) A-2, p. 131;
(17) A-2, p. 132-139; (18) A-2, p. 123.

Santerno Valley. The veteran 34th Division was to maintain constant pressure and provide flank protection to the west of Highway 65. Two regiments of the 34th Division were to move to the east of the 91st Division to relieve elements of the 85th Division. In accordance with this plan the artillery of the II Corps had thrown the greater part of its strength behind the 85th and 88th Division. (19)

91ST DIVISION SITUATION

During the night 9 - 10 October the 91st Division had: the 363d Infantry committed on the right flank of the division sector with the objectives Casa Trieste, Hill 377 and Hill 357, and to aid in the advance of the 85th Division. (20)

The 362d Infantry was continuing its advance towards Villanova, Hill 518 and Le Fosse. (21)

The 361st Infantry had reached the escarpments and one company had entered the town of Livergnano. (22)

361ST REGIMENT SITUATION

(See Map "C")

The situation of the 361st Infantry Regiment on the morning of 10 October was far from being sound from a tactical view point. The regiment was far in advance of units on its left and right. Mount delli Formeche in the 85th Division sector was still controlled by the Germans. It offered excellent observation for the placing of enemy fire, not only on the 361st Regiment's front but its flanks and rear as well. On the left Mt. Adone afforded the Germans ex-

(19) A-2, p. 123; (20) A-4, p. 164; (21) A-4, p. 156;
(22) A-4, p. 157.

cellent observation for placing artillery and self propelled fire into the regiment's supply line and its routes of communication.

Nature had also played its part on helping the enemy. First, the rains had made the country side a sea of mud and tiny streams. The fog which had shrouded the country for the last few days had allowed the regiment to maneuver up and onto the escarpments, but had also aided the enemy to withdraw his outpost and consolidate his positions without the observation of our liaison planes. The 361st Infantry knew they must advance across the escarpments and did so under the cover of the fog. What the 361st Infantry did not know was where the enemy positions and strong points were. The Germans had fortified all likely avenues of approach and under the cover of the fog the 361st Infantry had moved into those strongly defended areas. (23)

It is hard to picture the movement of the 361st Infantry as a regiment, instead it is best to remember that through the rugged terrain each company had maneuvered individually under the cover of the fog. When the fog lifted:

A Company was consolidating its position on Hill 409. Casualties had been moderate in the enlisted ranks but heavy among the commissioned personnel.

B Company had flushed the enemy from Prato di Magnano and had supposedly moved into position just south of Livergnano.

C Company after a brief fire fight near Le Trece had

(23) Personal knowledge.

maneuvered into position southwest of Livergnano.

E, F and G Companies through excellent command by both the 2d Battalion Commander and the company commanders had kept its tactical unity and had fought its way to the top of the escarpments only to find that once on the top they were completely surrounded by the enemy. (24)

I Company who had been so successful in moving troops to the vicinity of La Fortuna earlier was to remain in position and protect the rear and left flank of the regiment.

K Company was in Livergnano. The company had entered the town under cover of the fog only to be met with heavy machine gun and SP fire. Captain Sigman, K Company Commander, had entered this town with his lead troops and had found suitable shelter in a large stone house from which he could control the movement of his company. Captain Anderson, Commander of B Company, had entered the town with Captain Sigman in order to better engage his troops as they entered town. The 1st Battalion Commander had (according to Captain Sigman) informed him he would move B Company up Highway 65 until it reached the first group of buildings on the south slope of Livergnano, at which time Captain Anderson was to take tactical command in collaboration with the K Company Commander in the securing of Livergnano. (25)

L Company had entered Cant via the high ground to the rear of the town. The company had been heavily counterattacked from the exposed flank to the west and had lost, through casualties or capture, at least half of its strength. After

(24) Personal knowledge; (25) Statement of Capt. Sigman; Personal knowledge.

successfully beating off the counterattack the remainder of the company had fought its way forward until one platoon had reached Predosa. (26)

10 OCTOBER 1944

Thus on 10 October 1944 as the fog lifted over the valley and the escarpments, Colonel R. W. Broedlow, Commander of the 361st Infantry, was ordered to press the attack with everything he had under his command. (27)

From a vantage point at La Geardia Colonel Broedlow was able to see across the valley, along the edge of the escarpment and into the edge of Livergnano. He had communications with all battalion commanders and through radio he could contact the greater part of his companies. Had it not been for the quick thinking and accurate and timely ordering of movement by the regimental commander the loss of the regiment would have been certain.

K Company was under constant mortar and tank fire. The troops were hungry and tired, the platoon leaders were inexpressioned^{ve}. All were looking to Captain Sigman for moral support, but Captain Sigman was even more tired than they. Two nights previous while in Barborola the surgeon had talked to him and had recommended that he take a rest, as months of battle were playing havoc with his nerves, but Captain Sigman had requested he be allowed to remain with his company until this phase of the battle was over. All of K Company, except for ten men, had entered the same house and Captain Sigman had eighty men looking to him for

(26) Personal knowledge; (27) Personal knowledge; Statement of Colonel Broedlow.

the leadership he was too tired to give. Captain Sigman and Captain Anderson were still waiting for B Company to move into town, when, at 1000 hours the Germans started shelling the house with fire from two tanks and a battery of 120 mm mortars. Little by little the house began to crumble and fall until there were few men remaining alive. Captain Sigman having received no assistance from B Company changed his radio channel to the regiment net and requested assistance from the regimental commander. This was the first Colonel Broedlow knew of the plight of K Company. He immediately ordered the 1st Battalion Commander to move B Company into support of K Company and at the same time requested and received artillery support from one battalion of 105^{mm} and one battalion of 155^{mm} howitzers. His plan was to seal the north sector of town with a ring of artillery fire and move another company of Infantry into town. But the 1st Battalion Commander had moved B Company to the foot of Hill 603 and was unable to disengage them from the fight. All other troops were either in fire fights or too far away to assist. Then Colonel Broedlow heard Captain Sigman say, "Here they come, if help doesn't get here soon we will either have to surrender or all be killed". Suddenly the firing in Livergnano ceased and Colonel Broedlow knew he was left without a K Company.

In the meantime the 2d Battalion on the escarpments was withstanding constant mortar and artillery fire. The casualty problem was holding first priority and ammunition was running low. Colonel Broedlow, seeing that advance by the 2d Battalion was impossible, and that relief by the 363d Infantry was in

successful
progress, directed the companies on the escarpments to hold their positions with F Company turning to the rear and reopening the route of supply and evacuation. The move was successful with E and G Companies holding a so called front line and F Company protecting the rear. Even with the supply line open it took from 12 to 17 hours for the evacuation of the wounded to the battalion aid station.

Colonel Broedlow's orders were fast, but the movement of the troops was slow. Rugged terrain with enemy artillery and mortar fire made it almost impossible to move more than a few men at a time.

His orders to his companies were short and positive. The company commanders maneuvered by his guidance:

A Company was moved from Hill 409 until it reached I Company which was to stay at La Fortuna and protect the flank and front until such time as other troops could reach positions so that a second attempt could be made in breaching the German defenses at Livergnano.

B Company was to maneuver into a position at the base of Hill 603.

C Company was to consolidate its positions for an attack to the north and west to clear the enemy from Molinetto.

L Company which had fought its way to Predosa was to move north along the west side of Highway 65.

which was
At one time the company was held to position for 70 minutes under a constant barrage of mortar fire, only to move forward into a mine field. By midnight of the 10th L Company's fighting strength had been reduced to twenty-

eight men. (28)

During the late hours of the 10th the new K Company was being formed in the Service Company area.

From midnight 10 October until the early hours of the 11th the action in the regimental zone was limited to re-supply, evacuation of the wounded and getting replacements to the rifle companies. Colonel Broedlow knew that the task before him was not an easy one. Battle casualties within the regiment were moderate, but replacements were slow in coming and all companies were greatly understrength. Non-battle casualties had been fairly high as many men had fallen from the escarpments in an attempt to reach safer positions. Morale was low and competent leaders within some of the companies were nil. A Company had lost all but one officer and there were no qualified N.C.O.'s to do the missions which were to befall this company. Colonel Broedlow recognized this situation and immediately screened the Regimental Headquarters Company for officers and N.C.O.'s. To A Company he sent a Captain and two Staff Sergeants. In the action that was to follow one of these Staff Sergeants actually commanded A Company and was able to lead it out of a trap. The other, Staff Sergeant John Whalraven, with his commanding officer, withstood one assault by the enemy and allowed the company to withdraw to a safer position.

The plans made during the night were as follows:

Move Company A, 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion into hull defelade position to the rear of La Guardia so that

(28) Personal knowledge.

direct fire could be placed into the caves on Hill 603. As it was estimated that Hill 603 was the key to the control of Livergnano.

A Company would be given the responsibility of diverting the enemy by attacking Hill 554.

B Company was assigned the mission of assaulting and occupying Hill 603.

C Company would continue the attack to the north and west and secure Hill 433 until such time as the 3d Battalion could be regrouped to take over that sector.

The 2d Battalion on the escarpments would continue the attack against Hill 592 and Hill 504.

The 3d Battalion would move into position to prepare to attack to the west and north to secure the left flank of the regiment.

11 OCTOBER 1944

(See Map "D")

In the 2d Battalion zone on the escarpments the situation had become grave. Companies E and G were being held under constant artillery and mortar fire coming from the east. (It was at this time that General Clark ordered the 91st Division Commanders to commit the complete 363d Infantry in the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry sector.) The 2d Battalion was unable to move.

At 0735 hours 11 October B Company attempted to advance one platoon against Hill 603 and send one platoon into the eastern edge of Livergnano. Both platoons were driven back under heavy mortar and small arms fire. It was

later estimated that these two platoons had received the fires from a platoon of mortars, artillery fire from three tanks and rifle and machine gun fire from one reinforced rifle company.

Companies A and C had been unable to move during the daylight hours due to the direct tank and artillery fire coming from the Mt. Adone and Hill 554. At approximately 1400 hours Colonel Broedlow ordered the 1st Battalion Commander to hold both companies in position and attempt a night attack to seize Hill 554 and cut Highway 65 north of Livergnano.

The 3d Battalion was somewhat successful in regrouping and by nightfall had started the movement into the left flank sector.

The greater part of 11 October was spent in regrouping and feeling out the enemy positions.

Highlights of the day were not all within the regimental zone but many things which would play a leading role in the fighting during the days to come had occurred; they were:

1. On the right, the 85th Division had reached the crest of Mt. delle Formeche.
2. General Clark had ordered the commitment of the 363d Infantry to relieve the 2d Battalion of the 361st Infantry.
3. The Commanding General of the 91st Division had requested and received priority for air missions over the 361st Infantry Regiment's sector.
4. Companies A and B of the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion were in position to give direct fire support

to the front.

5. Word had reached the troops of the 361st that elements of the 34th Division would be on both flanks of the present regimental zone. This was good for the morale of the men in the 361st, as many of the old timers knew that General Bolte would do everything possible to keep the flanks closed up. (Actually the left sector or 362d Infantry was relieved by the 135th Infantry, 34th Division at 2400 hours 12 October, but the 85th Division was not relieved until 15 October.)

At midnight, Companies A and C started their attack. Both companies used every means of concealment and with the complete darkness of the night were able to move forward in a column of platoons.

C Company was very successful and moved one platoon into Molinetta and the remainder of the company onto Hill 433, just to the east. Opposition was light and few casualties were sustained. By 0800 hours 12 October, C Company had consolidated its position and was ready to continue the attack.

The attack of A Company was somewhat different. Although the history book^s do not record this; A Company refused to move because of lack of reinforcements. It was Captain Mohler and Staff Sergeant Walraven who led the company forward. Both were armed with BAR's and both were ready to take Hill 554 by themselves if necessary. A Company, all forty odd, followed close behind, but there was

little fight in A Company and the flank patrols were soon back with the main body of the company. Little is known of just what happened but it is believed that Captain Mohler and Staff Sergeant Walraven reached the crest of Hill 554 only to find that the company had been caught between a murderous cross fire from machine guns and under a heavy concentration of mortar fire. Captain Mohler was wounded and later that morning killed. Staff Sergeant Walraven was attacked by a German platoon, but by using the rapid fire of two BAR's was successful in causing the enemy to pause long enough for him to pick up the commanding officer and try to carry him back to the company area. It was while this was taking place that A Company started to break under the strain. The quick thinking of Staff Sergeant Palmer, who had joined from Regimental Headquarters Company, was all that held the company together. He issued orders and the men obeyed him. A Company was saved, but they had failed to take Hill 554. Colonel Broedlow ordered the 2d Platoon of C Company at Hill 433 to take over A Company's mission. C Company fought bravely and reached the crest of the hill only to be beaten off by direct fire from two 88 SP guns. (29)

12 OCTOBER 1944

(See Map "E")

In the early morning B Company had launched an attack against Hill 603. Attack formations were hard to visualize, rather it was a mission of squads climbing a cliff against

(29) Personal knowledge; Statement of S/Sgt C. Palmer.

grenades and small arms fire. Colonel Broedlow knew that Hill 603 was the key to Livergnano and knew the B Company's mission was to be strenuous. He ordered that all possible support be afforded them. Company A, 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion fired 300 rounds into the caves on the hill. Air strikes were made by fighter bombers, some landing within 350 yards of the fighting troops. (30) The supporting artillery fired approximately 8,000 rounds, all landing within the Livergnano area. Company B started up the hill while the first shock of the fires were being felt by the enemy. Hill 603 became a picture of fire -- the men of Company B were pitted against the escarpment and that fire. *See page 11*

Squad leaders led their men from the foot of the hill and started to crawl up the escarpment. Slowly the men moved up against the enemy before them, only to find that they were moving into the striking zone of the machine gun fire from Hill 481. Colonel Broedlow shifted the fires of the Tank Destroyer Battalion from Hill 603 to Hill 481, the machine guns were silenced but the enemy took advantage of the shift in fires and met Company B with grenades and rifle fire. Men fell, some from the enemy fire and even more from the lack of footing on the escarpment. Hill 603 became a battle of squad and platoon sergeants trying to maneuver their men into position from which they could assault the caves. At last came the fire from the Tank Destroyers again, and the enemy was unable to stay at the mouths of the caves. Company B moved in and the Germans were willing to give up. After the caves, the escarpment flattens out into a small

(30) Personal knowledge.

ledge then starts up again. Across this flat the squad leaders must move the men. The enemy had placed heavy mortar and bands of machine gun fire on this ledge and even though it was just a few feet of flat ground it took almost super human effort to get the men to cross. Once again it was the squad leaders who encouraged the men, by crossing first and then signaling the men one by one to follow. (31)

By night fall, although they had not reached the crest of the hill, Company B was in a good position for the attack at daylight of the 13th. During the night 12 - 13 October Company B was counterattacked by the enemy who used flame throwers and grenades. *in what effect?*

The day of the 12th found little change in the position of the 2d Battalion as no gains were made. One platoon of Company F, reinforced by a platoon of Company M had attempted to move against Hill 592 but were forced to withdraw after receiving heavy casualties. (The platoon from M Company, which was a machine gun platoon, was cut off from the rifle platoon of F Company and was overrun before they could get their machine guns into action. It is well to note that the men of the Heavy Weapons Company had, almost to the last man, replaced their rifles and carbines with pistols. (32)

The 3d Battalion had spent the full day of 12 October in an attempt to maneuver into a position from which it could launch an attack to the known enemy positions to the north

(31) (32) Personal knowledge.

and west. The use of the word maneuver is in the broadest sense of the word, as it was a maneuver through mine fields and under heavy concentrations of enemy mortar and artillery fire.

13 OCTOBER 1944

(See Map "F")

During the night of 12 - 13 October, Companies A and C changed missions. Company A would again attack Hill 554 and Company C was told to hold the position at the foot of the hill and protect the flanks until such time as the 3d Battalion was able to move into its newly assigned sector. It was a busy night for the supply and medical men of the regiment. Casualties were evacuated from every sector of the battlefield, men who carried supplies forward carried the wounded to the rear. (The men used to supply and evacuate the forward areas came from Service and Anti-Tank Companies as well as the Regimental and Battalion Headquarters Companies.)

(33)

At daybreak of 13 October Company A made its assault on Hill 554 and almost reached the crest of the hill before it was thrown back by heavy mortar fire and the direct fire from two German tanks which had been hidden in the church at the top of the hill.

Company B launched its attack at dawn, and again it was the small unit leaders who directed the action. In a series of short assaults, through machine gun fire and against a well entrenched enemy the company moved forward

(33) Personal knowledge.

until it reached the top of the hill at 1200 hours. It was the action of such men as Platoon Sergeant John Sumpster from Bakersfield, California who deserve the credit for taking Hill 603, he was the first man to reach the top of the hill and had actually led his men all the way.

In the 2d Battalion zone things were also brighter, as the attack of the 363d Infantry had cleared the enemy from much of the high ground on the escarpments. E and G Companies were able to move into Casola by using the old Infantry tactics of one company laying a base of fire while the others maneuvered. In the case of Casola, E Company did the firing while G Company moved against the strong points. So fast was the maneuver that 57 enlisted men and one German officer were taken prisoner. This was almost the combined strength of E and G Companies at that time. Company F had used Indian tactics in maneuvering onto Hill 592 and with a quick coordinated attack was able to capture the hill. By mid afternoon the 2d Battalion had reorganized and was moving to the west to cut Highway 65.

In the Third Battalion sector, I and L Companies had assaulted the strong points of Lagla and Hill 345 with great success. Company K was held in regimental reserve near the rear elements of I Company so that the men could get somewhat adjusted to the life of a combat soldier.

By nightfall 13 October, Hill 603 was controlled by B Company. The escarpments had been breached by the 2d Battalion and the Germans were in danger of being cut off from the rear. The Third Battalion had secured and anchored on the left flank.

Only Company A had failed to reach its objective, but during the night of the 13th the enemy on Hill 554 and in Livergnano fired their last round at the 361st Infantry and pulled out. The next day, 14 October, the new K Company entered Livergnano, and as Jack Bell, Associated Press writer wrote, "they went into a city battered by American big guns, dive bombers -- and after we got there, by German artillery. They carried out the General's order to take Livergnano 'at all cost'".

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

To make a fair analysis of this operation it is well to remember the mission of the Armies in Italy. Although it has been said that Italy was only a diversionary campaign the orders still read "defeat the enemy." Such was the order of the 361st Infantry Regiment in its fight across the escarpments at Livergnano.

The fight for Livergnano was centered on the taking of the high ground that dominated the village and its roads to the north and south. To do this Colonel Broedlow had few alternatives, as the terrain greatly limited any movement of men within the area near the village itself. For some 2,500 yards to the east of Livergnano the escarpment could be scaled in only three or four places and then the men would have to move up in single file. To the west of Livergnano the escarpments turned to the north and to flank the escarpment the troops would have had to move into the valley of the Rino River and directly under the fires from Mount Adone. Only at Livergnano was there a pass through the

escarpments and this was heavily armed.

The first criticism is that the 361st Infantry was given the mission that belonged to two regiments rather than one combat team. If the early planning of the third phase had shown that the 361st Infantry was to be committed alone against these escarpments the regiment should have been allowed to have had a period of rest and been reinforced, or at least been brought up to fighting strength. As it was committed five days earlier in a place where resistance was strong and the terrain was against them, the regiment was far below its peak of ability when it reached the escarpments.

The 85th Division was slow in taking Mount della Formeche and it was two days before the right flank of the 361st Infantry was free from fire on its flank and rear. It is hard to realize why Fifth Army Staff should have made its main effort in the sector to the right of Highway 65, and even harder to realize why the 85th Division, instead of the 34th or 88th Divisions were not committed in that sector. The right flank of the 361st Infantry was always in danger until such time as the 34th Infantry Division had replaced the 85th Infantry Division. On the left the 362d Infantry knowing it was to be pinched out by the 361st Infantry had failed to press the attack. Hence the 361st Infantry was with both flanks subject to enemy fire.

Within the regimental zone the weather and terrain had forced the regimental commander to decentralize his command. Most companies were actually fighting for objectives which were in no way in contact with another company.

Company I, who according to history so gallantly cut Highway 65 at La Fortuna, had lost contact with B and C Companies who were within yards of them. What history does not tell is that Company I did cut the highway only to remain very quiet while the enemy passed through them. History says that Company I forced the withdrawal of 300 soldiers and six Tiger tanks. Had Company I kept contact with C and B Companies it is believed that they might have challenged the withdrawal and fewer troops and less armor would have been present to defend Livergnano the next day.

There is no end of credit due the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry in its gallant fight on the escarpments to the east of Livergnano. At no time did they ever fall back and even when completely surrounded by the enemy the troops responded to a command to open an avenue of evacuation and supply. The writer is in no position to know why the 363d Infantry was so slow in reaching the escarpments, but does know it was not until General Clark ordered the relief of the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, that the attack of the 363d Infantry was pressed with any vigor. Had the relief been made on the 10th of October when it was ordered to the battle of Livergnano would not have been so costly.

The loss of Company K in Livergnano on 10 October was due to two things. First, Captain Sigman should never have been allowed to resume command of his company after he had been challenged by the surgeon. He was neither physically or mentally capable of standing another day of hard combat. Second and mainly, the commander of 1st Battalion failed to carry out his initial plan and changed the objective of B

Company without informing anyone of his action.

The success of the battle is greatly due to the timely shifting of supporting fires and the first hand issuance of orders by the regimental commander. The assault on Hill 603 though commanded by individual squad leaders was under the personal direction of the regimental commander at all times.

The success of the 361st Infantry in driving the Germans from Livergnano and the escarpments was of little tactical value to the Fifth Army, as the key to the Po Valley lay not in Livergnano, but the towering height of Mount Adone.

In committing the 65th Grenadier Division against the 361st Infantry, the Germans had used their last full strength division in Italy and was forced to withdraw the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from the 8th Army sector in order to halt the drive along Highway 65 into the Po Valley.

LESSONS

Those lessons that were emphasized during the operation are:

1. Tactical unity of command in battalions ^{if} most important. Only in the 2d Battalion did the battalion commander have a force with which he could maneuver his troops.

2. Armored support, even in mountainous terrain is of great value when properly used. ^{What is proper use in mountainous terrain - better lesson!} Without the direct fire of the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion it would have been almost impossible for B Company to have taken Hill 603.

3. Battle weary commanders should be replaced before they become a liability. K Company under proper command might have withstood the first assault on their position

had its commander thought faster and moved the bulk of his men from one building.

*Thompson
gun*

4. The use of fire by one company onto a position while another company maneuvers against that position's flank is still the quickest and cheapest way to gain an objective.

aimed

5. Small unit commands closely coordinated into a single objective is most likely to succeed if properly executed.

ok

6. Commanding officers should always keep their subordinates, as well as their superiors informed as to their plans and changes of plans. (The writer believes that the failure of the 1st Battalion Commander to carry out his original plan to move B Company into Livergnano behind K Company not only abetted in the loss of K Company but also lost the initial surprise of the attack.)

good

7. A good communication system is all important where companies are fighting for a single objective.

air

8. The men armed with rifles or carbines should not be allowed to replace those weapons with pistols. The pistol may be a good personal protective weapon, but is practically useless against an infantry attack.

9. Air strikes are of great value in close support of attacking infantry and if properly guided, they can neutralize close support weapons of the enemy.