

General Subjects Section  
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1948 - 1949

THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION  
IN THE ARDENNES COUNTEROFFENSIVE  
IN BELGIUM  
15 - 26 JANUARY 1945  
(ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY DIVISION  
ATTACKING IN WINTER WEATHER

Major Wilson V. Ledley, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO. 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index . . . . .	1
Bibliography . . . . .	11
Introduction . . . . .	1
Background of the Ardennes Campaign . . .	4
Plan of the Counteroffensive . . . . .	10
Conduct of the Attack . . . . .	17
The Third Phase . . . . .	32
Analysis and Criticism . . . . .	38
Lessons Learned . . . . .	46
Appendix #1 . . . . .	47
Appendix #2 . . . . .	49
Map A - The Bulge	
Map B - First Army Front, January 10, 1945	
Map C - First Army Objectives, January 10, 1945	
Map D - 1st Division Attack Plan	
Map E - 1st Division Action, January 15-20, 1945	
Map F - 1st Division, January 24-26, 1945	

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- A-1 Crusade in Europe  
General Dwight D. Eisenhower  
Doubleday & Company, Inc. (Garden City, 1948)\*
- A-2 Dark December  
Robert E. Merriam  
Ziff-Davis Publishing Company (Chicago, 1947)(TIS Lib)
- A-3 Report of Operations (1 Aug 1944 - 22 Feb 1945)  
First United States Army  
Historical Division, Dept of the Army (TIS Lib)
- A-4 V Corps Operations in the ETO  
V Corps  
Published by V Corps in Europe, 1945 (TIS Lib)
- A-5 Intelligence Operations of the Fifth U.S. Corps in Europe  
V Corps (mimeograph)(TIS Lib)
- A-6 Danger Forward  
Officers of the 1st Division et. al.  
Society of the First Division (Washington, 1948)\*
- ✓A-7 Selected Intelligence Reports, Vol. II  
Office of the A.C. of S., G-2, 1st Infantry Division  
1st Division (Czechoslovakia, 1945)\*
- ✓A-8 The 16th Infantry 1798-1946  
Lt. John W. Baumgartner et al.  
16th Infantry (Germany, 1946)(TIS Lib)
- ✓A-9 Combat History of the Second Infantry Division  
2d Infantry Division  
Army and Navy Publishing Company (Baton Rouge, 1946)\*
- A-10 Appendix #1 - Letter, Major General Clift Andrus,  
Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division during  
the Ardennes Campaign, 6 December 1948 to author\*
- A-11 Appendix #2 - Daily Reports of Platoon Leaders,  
Company B, 745th Tank Battalion, January 1945.  
Personal possession of Captain Wallace E. Wardner,  
Academic Department, The Infantry School.
- ✓A-12 Work Horse of the Western Front: The Story of the  
30th Infantry Division  
R. J. Hewitt  
Infantry Journal Press (Washington, 1946)

\* Personal possession of the author.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION  
IN THE ARDENNES COUNTEROFFENSIVE  
IN BELGIUM  
15 - 26 JANUARY 1945  
(ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN)

I N T R O D U C T I O N

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Infantry Division in the Elsenborn Ridge sector on the Belgian-German border at the end of the Ardennes Campaign during the period of 15-26 January 1945. Inasmuch as the German offensive is generally conceded to have been about complete at this time, this action has not been given any special name and is variously entitled 'Resumption of the Offensive', or the 'Counteroffensive'. Although not so spectacular as several of the previous actions of this division and consequently made no headlines, its importance and the contributions to our military knowledge were not to be underestimated.

Such a statement can be safely made since this offensive took place under the worst weather conditions experienced by this division during its four hundred and forty-three days in combat. There is little doubt that the other units which were attacking during this period will readily agree. General Eisenhower sums up the action as follows: ". . . it was merely a question of whether we could make sufficient progress through the snowbanks of the Ardennes to capture or destroy significant portions of his forces." (1) A reporter covering the 1st Division puts it somewhat more vividly:

"How could you tell them, how could you convey with words cold which burned fingers as they touched metal, jammed automatic weapons and even condensed and froze breath on the diaphragms of the microphones so that our radios would not work. What narrative form

(1) A-1, p. 363

could paint the suffering of men who had no sleep for as long as three days and nights, no hot meal for days, no overcoats or blankets because they could not be brought up over the impossible roads? How could you describe the feelings of men who day after day had to fight in conditions which only polar bears could find tolerable . . . conditions which could not be worse for fighting?" (2)

And again by the same author:

"Next day the bodies were still lying where they had fallen. More distressing than the number was the fact that so many were dead of wounds which would never have been fatal under ordinary conditions.

"Nothing on wheels would function in the deep snow. The only vehicles which would operate were weasels . . . sort of tank tracked jeeps . . . and there was only one of them to a battalion. Imagine trying to supply food, ammunition and the other combat needs of a battalion with one vehicle capable of carrying only 1200 lbs.

"It meant of course that a man had 'Had it' if he stopped one. His life expectancy in that freezing cold was thirty minutes. And he knew that he could not be gotten out in thirty minutes." (3)

Merriam, in his work which may be regarded as authoritative for the period, has this to say on the subject:

"Of all the attacks made by Allied forces in Western Europe, the conditions under which this attack was made were, by all odds, the worst. The snow in many cases was waist deep, and even short infantry movements were made under the most trying conditions. The few roads were ice coated, and in many places snow blanketed the ice. Tanks were roadbound in nearly all cases, and the Germans, by carefully located anti-tank guns, aided by minefields to the fore, were able continually to hold Allied tank advances until the infantry could move forward to cope with the German strongpoints. It was unbelievably cold, near zero, and the battle for existence against the elements was at least as difficult as that against the enemy . . ." (4)

At the risk of appearing over-dramatic, these accounts have been inserted here and emphasized, since the chief merit of this action lies in the measures taken to overcome these conditions, namely the use of maneuver and handling of fire power, which assisted in achieving the surprise that was also a prerequisite to the success of the operation.

(2) A-6, p. 348      (3) A-6, p. 347      (4) A-2, p. 205

There is, of course, no way of telling at this level, but it is possible to surmise that this and similar operations raised many questions for which Task Force Frigid and other Arctic military expeditions were organized to find answers. Suffice it to say that if our forces ever become involved again in winter campaigns in the same or similar parts of the world, the operations of this period will become an object of renewed and intensive study. It is hoped that the solutions will have been obtained by that time and that the troops in the field will not suffer so grievously for the lack of necessary special equipment. It might be better to say 'desired' rather than 'necessary special equipment', since it will be shown later that such items of equipment were not essential to the success of the operation, but who can tell how much quicker the progress would have been and how many lives would have been saved had the weather conditions been fully anticipated and prepared for?

## BACKGROUND OF THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

In order to place the counteroffensive in its proper perspective in relation to the Ardennes Campaign as a whole, it is necessary to go back to the beginning when, on the morning of 16 December 1944, the German Army of the West, commanded by Field Marshal von Runstedt drove through the thinly held line of the First U.S. Army in the Ardennes. This region is a rolling, mountainous, wooded and generally rugged section along the German border in Belgium which, because of its easily defended nature, has for that very reason been thrice chosen by the Germans as an attack route in 1914, 1940 and finally again in 1944. This seeming paradox is resolved by the fact that because of its defensive characteristics, it was expected by the attackers to be lightly held and hence the vital element of surprise would be gained. This was found to be so twice before by the Germans and they were not far from wrong the third time in 1944. The Ardennes, because of its inaccessibility and poor road net, had long been shunned by outsiders. As far back as the Burgundian Wars in the Fifteenth Century, Count William de la Marck, "The Wild Bull of the Ardennes," had used it as a base of operations for his semi-marauding expeditions.

Having concentrated the bulk of its forces in the Aachen sector for the projected attack across the Roer River, the First Army under General Hodges of necessity had to weaken his line elsewhere and the natural place in which to do this was the Ardennes. There, the VIII Corps under General Middleton, held a frontage of incredible length, and it was later learned that the Germans were not at all unaware of this situation. (5)

(5) A-2, Chap. I - III

Against this weak American line, the Germans established the following line-up for the attack: In the north opposite the boundary between the V and VIII Corps, the Sixth Panzer Army comprising four SS panzer and five infantry divisions; in the center opposite the seventy-five mile front of the VIII Corps, the Fifth Panzer Army of three panzer and four infantry divisions, and the Seventh Army of four infantry divisions. (6) From this order of battle, it can easily be seen that the main weight of the attack was in the northern sector. This opinion is amply substantiated by Merriam, who stated: (See Map A)

"Aware that the brunt of the attack would be felt in the north, where not only Hodges, but eventually Simpson and Montgomery, would be directly menaced, Eisenhower split the battlefield through the middle of the breakthrough area . . . .

"By the 19th, it was apparent that the Germans were not turning south, but headed northwest toward Antwerp. It was also obvious that the enemy was considering not one but two auxiliary attacks further to the north." (6)

General Eisenhower himself states that "the northern flank was obviously the dangerous one" (7) and continues in stating:

"The 7th Armored Division's gallant action had been most helpful to the 2d Division at the vitally important Monschau shoulder until the 1st Division, under Brigadier General Clift Andrus, and the 9th, under Major General Louis A. Craig, came up to its support. Thereafter, with these three proved and battle-tested units holding the position, the safety of our northern shoulder was practically a certainty." (8)

The confidence of the Supreme Commander in these divisions is undoubtedly most complimentary, but it can be said without hesitation that this feeling was hardly shared by the units concerned, or particularly the 1st Division. This was especially so since on the morning of December 16, the division was in a rest area in the vicinity of Henri Chapelle

(6) A-2, pp. 122,124 (7) A-1, p. 353 (8) A-1, p. 348



Belgium, with much of its heavy equipment torn down for overhaul and repairs, all regimental and separate battalion commanders on leave in London, and large quotas of enlisted men in Paris.

When the German Sixth Panzer Army struck in the north, it was met initially by the 2d and 99th U.S. Divisions which were holding the forward slopes of Elsenborn Ridge. Although these units later fell back to better defensive positions along the ridge, their stand established the shoulder and canalized the German attack through the town of Bullingen and the road net further south in the VIII Corps sector. This is the action to which General Eisenhower referred above. Since the 99th was practically a green division and had been the hardest hit in the attack, it was attached to the 2d; the two were generally referred to henceforth as the 2-99th Division during this period. However, in spite of the able defense displayed by these two units, they did not have the troops to secure the open southern flank. (See Map B) (9)

The 1st Infantry was then the only reserve division in the First Army. Its 26th Combat Team was alerted and moved down to Elsenborn, fought off German paratroops along the route of march, was attached to the 2-99th Division upon its arrival early on 17 December, and won a race against the 1st SS Panzer Division by occupying the commanding positions around the town of Butgenbach. (See Maps C,D) In spite of the lack of time, these positions were occupied by darkness of the same day and it turned out that they were so well chosen that the enemy was never able to dislodge the 26th from them. This sector soon became the point of the northern shoulder when the 2-99th Division was forced back. Meanwhile

(9) A-2, p. 110

the 18th Combat Team had been taken by V Corps for the defense of its headquarters at Eupen against possible future attacks by paratroops and the remaining combat team, the 16th, was alerted to move down the night of the 17/18th. It was not expected that this move would last all night -- it was only about thirty miles -- but owing to the incredible congestion on the roads caused by the then superfluous army service units moving to the rear, it was daylight before the final elements closed in the new positions. (10)

The second phase of the defense of Elsenborn Ridge began on 20 December at dawn. While the first phase, as pointed out above, was carried by the 2-99th Division, this time the action centered about the 'hot corner' of Butgenbach and the 2d Battalion of the 26th Infantry. Inasmuch as the Sixth Panzer Army and specifically the 1st SS Panzer Division had failed in its attempt to achieve a breakthrough north of the Ambleve River, it was therefore decided to attempt to widen the northern base of the German salient. Merriam states: "Then part of the High Command reserve was thrown against this new southern flank protecting the Ridge /Elsenborn/, but again the Germans were too late -- The Germans experienced their first great setback." (11)

It is interesting to note that this 2d Battalion of the 26th was almost a new unit. On 1 December at Merode, just outside of the Hurtgen forest, it had lost two of its rifle companies which were cut off and captured, and the battalion was reorganized only a few days before it was to play such a vital defensive role. After the first coordinated tank-infantry attack of 20 December had been beaten back, the 12th SS Panzer Division attacked twice before dawn of 21 December, but each time every artillery piece within range

(10) personal knowledge (11) A-2, p. 111

opened up. Although the 10,000 rounds fired were able to hold back successfully the accompanying German infantry, tanks did get through and five were able to penetrate up to the 2d Battalion command post where they were eventually eliminated by the CP personnel with their bazookas. The following day another German regiment managed to make a penetration between two companies of the battalion with an undetermined number of infantry supported by tanks; this force was finally eliminated before dark with the help of the 18th Infantry which had been relieved from its corps mission with little time to spare. During these two days the 12th SS Panzer was known to have lost at least forty-four tanks which were seen, and probably more. Although attacks continued on 23 December, they were of much lesser intensity. That same day it was noted that purely infantry units of the enemy were arriving in the division sector. (12)

About the time that these attacks began at Butgenbach, the First Army passed to the control of Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st British Army Group. However, the Marshal apparently did not share the supreme commander's confidence in the units defending the shoulder, since during two days of the heavy fighting he dispatched aides down to see how the 26th Infantry was making out. They must have been pleased with what they saw since shortly after, orders were issued that the 26th was not to be moved from the Butgenbach sector without Montgomery's approval. (13) One cannot let this extraordinary action on the part of an army group commander pass without special notice, particularly since it was to have such an important bearing on the scheme of maneuver of the division when the offensive was resumed. It would be presumptuous to criticize this action since it undoubtedly appeared

(12) A-6, pp. 321-3 (13) A-10, Appendix #1

desirable and necessary at the time and it is indeed highly complimentary to the regiment concerned; however, allowing the restriction to remain in effect long after the danger had passed and when our own counteroffensive was to start can hardly be justified.

For the balance of the time up until 15 January there was no offensive action on the part of the Germans in the 1st Division area. With the division sector jutting out in a salient at Butgenbach and its general front being parallel to the German lines of communication to their forces further west, the consequently overloaded enemy road net was continually harrassed by heavy, accurate fire of the division and corps artillery units. The small action which follows was typical of the artillery activity during this period. (14)

One morning as the fog suddenly lifted, an enemy horsedrawn column estimated at about 250 men in strength, was revealed moving along a road on the high ground between Faymonville and Schoppen some three thousand yards to the front. Medium artillery was quickly brought down on this target and was continued until nothing more could be seen moving in the area. It was estimated that the column had been annihilated, but it was not until this ground was recovered some weeks later that this was confirmed. Men and horses which had fallen were almost perfectly preserved by the snow and a count indicated that the observer's report had been substantially correct. (15)

(14) A-6, p. 324 (15) personal knowledge

## PLAN OF THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE

There has been some argument, mainly on the part of the over zealous supporters of Generals Bradley and Patton, (16) against the plan adopted by the allied commander for clearing the salient of the Germans in the Ardennes and restoring the former line. The First Army and Montgomery have both been blamed for not attacking south from the north shoulder of the bulge to meet the Third Army attacking north and hence surround the bulk of the German forces within. This certainly sounded like the logical thing to do. Not being on a sufficiently high level to know all the facts, I wondered at the time why we did not do this. However, in retrospect, the answer is readily apparent. We have seen above the higher commander's concern for the safety of the northern shoulder. General Eisenhower makes the crucial point in his statement: ". . . it appeared likely that the German might attempt secondary and supporting attacks still further to the north in an effort to disperse our forces and accomplish a double envelopment of our entire northern wing. The Intelligence Division had some evidence that such supporting attacks were planned by the enemy." (17) We also know that the Germans had some reserves with which to do this, among them the 10th SS Panzer and the 11th Panzer Divisions which never were committed in the Ardennes fighting. (18) It seems obvious in the light of this that an attack from points as far east as the corner of the shoulder would only have courted further disaster in that any forces thus engaged would have been liable to capture by enemy attacks further north.

The plan of offensive which was adopted called for Marshal Montgomery to begin his attack on 3 January (if the

(16) A-9, pp. 271-2 (17) A-1, p. 353 (18) A-2, p. 236

expected additional German attacks had not materialized by that time) in the VII Corps sector at the far end of the enemy penetration in the west. This was to be followed by attacks in turn by the XVIII Airborne and V Corps. (See Map B) In essence the plan was to squeeze the enemy out of the salient, inflicting as much damage as possible in the process, rather than attempting the more ambitious and risky idea of trying to encircle and capture the forces within the bulge. It was apparently further decided when the offensive was formulated on 28 December, that the First Army would revert to General Bradley's control when the latter effected a junction with the Third Army in the vicinity of Houffalize. (19,20) The offensive was resumed as scheduled by VII Corps on 3 January while the XVIII Airborne and V Corps contributed by diversionary attacks.

*Operation of VII Corps*

While this action was in progress the First Army issued its letter of instructions of 10 January which outlined the plans for the other corps. During the first phase the XVIII Airborne Corps was to secure the line from NEUVILLE (near VIELSALM) to WEISMES. (20) When this had been completed, V Corps in Phase II was to attack to clear the ONDENVAL DEFILE (See Map C) "for the purpose of facilitating the attack of 7th Armored Division (attached XVIII A/B Corps)" and in Phase III to seize and control the general line parallel to the upper reaches of the AMBLEVE RIVER from just south of BULLINGEN to the northern outskirts of AMBLEVE. (21) In other words, after the gate had been opened for the 7th Armored to attack St. Vith, V Corps was to pivot the southern end of its line upon the hinge at Butgenbach and swing it generally into line with the 2d Division to the north.

(19) A-1, p. 361 (20) A-3, p. 142 (21) A-4, p. 336

This southern end of the line was that held by the 1st Division. It is curious to note that at this time the division occupied a frontage of approximately 12,000 metres with its three regiments on line, while the 2d and 99th Divisions had fronts of 4000 and 5000 metres, respectively, yet their missions were only to hold and maintain. The question immediately arises as to why V Corps did not have the 2d take over some of the 1st Division's sector, as was done later, so as to free one regiment of the 1st for maneuver in the attack. This is exactly what General Andrus of the 1st wished to have done, but for some undisclosed reason his recommendation was not approved. (22) Since the First Army was still a part of Montgomery's Army Group (the First and Third Armies had not yet met at Houffalize), apparently his old strings on the 26th Infantry at Butgenbach still held and the regiment could not be used in the attack. However, General Gerow of the V Corps evidently realized the difficulty of the mission assigned the division so he did the next best thing by loaning one of the 2d Division's regiments (the 23rd) to the 1st Division for the second phase of the offensive.

In addition to the final objective of the AMBLEVE-BULLINGEN line mentioned above, the more detailed missions assigned the 1st Division consisted of facilitating the passage of the 7th Armored Division through its lines, maintaining contact with it, and to protect the left (east) flank of the XVIII Airborne Corps. (23)

The main forces opposing the division were our old acquaintances, the 3d Parachute Division. This unit, a veteran of the German campaign in Crete, had been encountered before in Normandy and twice in the Hurtgen-Stolberg Campaign, (24) hence a certain amount of mutual respect had been engendered

(22) A-10, Appendix #1 (23) A-4, p. 336 (24) A-7, pp. 13,38

between the two divisions. This enemy unit had joined the fray at the beginning of the Ardennes Offensive with the mission of holding the northern flank of the breakthrough. It held a line facing the 30th U.S. Division and our 16th Infantry Regiment generally from beyond WEISMES east to a north-south line through SCHOPPEN with its 8th Regiment on the left, (25) the 5th on the right and the 9th in the center. Extending east from the 3d Parachute Division and generally opposite the 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments was the 89th Volksgrenadier Division which was not quite so well known to us. Its 1055th Regiment held the northern edge of the woods in the BUTGENBACHER HECK area to around the MORSCHHECK CROSSROADS which was known to be an extremely well organized position. (See Maps C, D) Its 1056th Regiment was apparently in reserve in the HEPSCHIED area, but the location of the third regiment, if it ever existed, is not disclosed. (26) In support of the 3d Parachute Division were the assault guns of the 394th Assault Gun Brigade, although this unit was not positively identified. (27) To the west of the 3d Parachute Division was the 18th Volksgrenadier Division facing part of the 30th U.S. Division. (25) (28)

(25) A-11, pp. 199,200 (26) A-7, pp. 28-30 (27) A-5, p. 81

(28) "Equally fanatical in their resistance were the Volksgrenadier (People's Infantry) divisions, organized in September 1944; the personnel of these were interchangeable with the SS divisions. The use of the words 'Peoples' and 'Grenadier' -- an honorary name bestowed upon the infantryman by Hitler in 1942 -- signified that these outfits were composed of elite fighters chosen for the defense of Germany in a mortal emergency. Although the Volksgrenadier divisions usually numbered less than 10,000 in personnel, they were extremely strong in automatic weapons, particularly submachine guns, and consequently could put up effective last-ditch resistance. This composition contrasted sharply with that of the Volksturm units organized later in the war.

"Strongest of the various types of infantry were the parachute divisions, part of the ground combat forces, but controlled by the German Air Force. These were carefully selected, well-trained and -equipped crack infantry divisions, with only a small percentage of the troops



*not shown on map C.*

It is interesting to note that the front of the 246th German Infantry Division (See Map C) extended to include the area in front of the 2d U.S. Division, as well as that of the 26th U.S. Infantry, which was a line nearly twice the length of that allotted the 3d Parachute Division. This might be interpreted to indicate that the Germans expected the initial American attack to be in the 1st Division sector in a southerly direction which is confirmed by the captured estimate of the situation of the 3d Parachute Division of 4 January listing an attack toward ST. VITH as first among our intentions. (29)

The most concise and best overall account of the enemy situation in the sector of the 1st Division is given by the Division G-2 who later wrote: "During the time between the German breakthrough and the Division's attack to the south the enemy had seen his best forces shot up, his reserves committed, his drive curbed and turned and his main power slowly draining away by attrition, lack of gasoline and the paralyzing rigors of winter. By the middle of January he no longer had the initiative of attack; his most pressing concern, in fact, was to get what he could of his indispensable panzer divisions off the hook. To accomplish this it was imperative that the shoulders of his original salient be held firm. He could not allow any reduction of the mouth of his bulge, since his road nets, clogged with traffic and blocked with snow, were already carrying capacity movement. The loss of any roads at all would be disastrous . . . . The enemy's strategic position forbade a

(29) A-7, p. 35

(28, continued) trained as parachutists. Because they had an authorized strength of 16,000 officers and men and a larger allotment of machine guns than the normal infantry divisions, the parachute troops were the best fitted of the German units for stout resistance on an extended and open front." - A-1, pp. 516-7

slow and organized withdrawal; he had to hold the ground he was on and hold it to the last man." (30)

The plan of attack and objectives finally adopted by the 1st Division for the first part of the attack (First Army Phase II) are as follows: (See Map D)

23rd Infantry - Right regiment, attached from the 2d Division. Clear and secure the ONDENVAL DEFILE, the capture the towns of MONTENAU, IVELDINGEN and EIBERTINGEN.

16th Infantry - Right center regiment. Capture the town of FAYMONVILLE, and later the village of SCHOPPEN and the high ground to its south.

18th Infantry - Left center regiment. Capture and secure the high ground called KLINGELSBURG to its direct front.

26th Infantry - Left regiment. Continue to hold the BUTGENBACH salient.

The 745th Tank Battalion (attached to the division since Normandy) supported each of the attacking regiments with a company, as did also the attached tank destroyer battalion.

Each regiment had its normal light, direct support artillery. The divisional medium artillery (5th FA Bn) (31) reinforced the light artillery of the 23d and 16th Infantry Regiments, while the attached 955th FA Bn (155 mm. howitzer) reinforced that of the 18th Infantry. The 406th FA Group, composed of the 76th FA Bn (25 pounder, British), 953rd FA Bn (155 mm. howitzer) and 941st FA Bn (4.5 in. gun) was in direct support of the division which was, in addition, authorized to call directly on the 190th FA Group (200th FA Bn, 155 mm. gun; 987th FA Bn, 155 mm. self propelled gun) for reinforcing fires. (32) Thus, the division had the fires of six medium artillery battalions (two for each attacking regiment) of various types and ranges, with one hybrid light battalion thrown in for good measure.

(30) A-7, p. 26 (31) personal knowledge (32) A-4, p. 338

It will be noted that this plan of operation involved no special maneuvering of the regiments on the part of the division. On the extended attacking front given the division, there was little opportunity to do so, and there certainly was no question of retaining a regiment in reserve. However, each regiment was able to hold out at least one battalion which, considering the three together, may be said to constitute the equivalent of a regiment in division reserve, as well as comprising the reserve of each regiment.

The plan may be considered to have been ambitious under good conditions, but it seems even more so when the following picture is taken into consideration:

"Over and above any reaction by the enemy, however, was the difficulties of the terrain and weather. Both presented conditions which were almost insurmountable. The terrain comprised a series of high ridges and deep draws, usually heavily wooded. These obstacles, difficult enough in themselves, were greatly increased by the weather; a deep snow, over a foot and a half on the level and running as high as five feet in drifts, covered the area. The ground was frozen, making it extremely difficult to dig sufficient cover. The temperature hovered around 20 degrees and the wind was strong and cutting. The weather was so bad, in sum, that during the engagement PWs often expressed surprise that the Division had been able to attack at all. The only advantage that the weather presented, and it was a somewhat left-handed one, was that the Division was often able to achieve surprise because the enemy did not believe that an attack was possible under the prevailing conditions." (33)

However, the division still had one ace to play. In spite of all the artillery which we have seen was lined up in its support, it was decided to attack before daylight 15 January without an artillery preparation. This was expected to render the surprise complete. It was later learned that the desired effect was achieved. (33)

(33) A-7, pp. 26-27

## CONDUCT OF THE ATTACK

January 15

Shortly after midnight a strong enemy combat patrol of over fifty men attacked the 16th Infantry positions. Since the Germans had been expecting our offensive since 10 January (the fact that one would come shortly was front line gossip), it is possible that they were attempting to gain additional information as to our intentions as well as troop dispositions. This patrol was finally driven back at about 0430 hours and shortly thereafter the three regiments jumped off together.

23d Infantry - Using their positions near WEISMES (Map E) as a line of departure, the 2d and 1st Battalions trudged laboriously through the snow toward REMONVAL and STEINBACH, respectively, which were defended by about 320 men of the 9th Parachute Regiment. It was an up-hill advance with the enemy in possession of good fields of fire and the dominant observation. In spite of this and the well mined approaches, which caused the loss of two tank destroyers and a tank, the two towns and 100 prisoners were taken by 1900 hours after bitter house to house fighting. (34) One source states: "Little enemy reaction to our attack on 15 January was noted on the remainder of the front," (35) however, the following accounts should indicate that this was somewhat of an understatement.

16th Infantry - The objectives of the 1st and 3rd Battalions were FAYMONVILLE and the high ground to the northeast (left rear) of the town, respectively, which were held by the 2nd Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment. Even though this regiment was facing two attacking American regiments and the town it was defending was in a valley, the defense was conducted

(34) A-7, p. 27 (35) A-5, p. 81

so well that both battalions ran into serious difficulties with the result that by nightfall only the northern portion of FAYMONVILLE was in our hands. Both units lost a tank in the minefields and each suffered about seventy casualties apiece. The History of the 16th Infantry blames those of the 3rd Battalion on the "fact that the regiment to the east [18th Infantry/ had not followed the original plan of moving up at the same time as the 16th," (36) while the V Corps account states that the 18th Infantry "demonstrated". (37) The 1st Division report shows a slightly different picture.

18th Infantry - The 3rd Battalion jumped off on schedule toward Hill 587 and KLINGELSBURG HILL which flanked and dominated the objective of the 3rd Battalion, 16th Infantry, mentioned above. However, this battalion was caught by daylight in front of the main line of resistance of the 1st Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, in wide open ground. The enemy opened up with such effective fire that what was left of one company was driven back to its line of departure, while the other was pinned down on Hill 587 by mortar and machine gun fire from three sides. The ground was so frozen that it was impossible to dig in completely although some shallow holes were blasted with grenades. (38,39,40) The net result was practically only a demonstration but it certainly was through no fault of the unit.

Although the surprise achieved through the absence of an artillery preparation probably assisted all units in getting within assaulting distance of their objectives, this actually helped the 18th Infantry very little since that regiment was attacking uphill in the open without natural cover or adequate supporting roads. On the otherhand the 16th Infantry advanced generally downhill with at least one good road leading to its objective. Secondly, FAYMONVILLE, the

(36) A-8, p. 196    (37) A-4, p. 368    (38) A-6, p. 346  
(39) A-7, p. 28    (40) personal knowledge

initial objective of the 16th, had been steadily pounded by the divisional and corps artillery for well nigh a month -- this had been their primary target. Under our constant ground and aerial observation, little could move in this important communications center without bringing down artillery concentrations, so that there was little more that an artillery preparation could have accomplished in this area that had not already been done. Furthermore, the enemy there had been thrown off balance by several full scale preparation previously which were followed by quiet periods, thus enhancing the element of surprise when the attack finally materialized by engendering a false sense of security. (41)

At the end of the first day, we find that the 1st Division had secured REMONVAL and STEINBACH, it had a tenuous hold on the northern half of FAYMONVILLE and on HILL 587, but the left flank of the 16th Infantry was exposed to enemy fire from KLINGELSBURG HILL. The most important results of the first day were purely negative in that the full realization of the difficulties of supply, evacuation and troop movement were driven home.

Some of the more detailed tactical and logistical considerations brought out included:

1. The one "Weasel" per infantry battalion was the only vehicle which could successfully negotiate the snow drifts since jeeps were practically useless except on the cleared roads.

2. Mine detection was difficult, if not impossible, since mines buried deep or under hard packed snow failed to register on the detectors.

3. When off the roads an infantryman with his equipment could go no more than three hundred yards without stopping for rest.

(41) personal knowledge (42) A-7, p. 27

4. Digging in frozen ground was impossible without first blasting the surface with grenades. Later each man was issued two half-pound blocks of TNT for this purpose, but even this had its disadvantages since the explosions often attracted enemy fire. (43)

5. Casualties had to be evacuated much more quickly than usual since once a man fell, he would become frozen and covered over by the drifting snow.

6. Some infantry units overcame this difficulty of movement only through the extensive use of German halftracks which they were fortunate in having and retaining.

7. Artillery could not follow in close support as rapidly as usual since all positions had to be bulldozed out of snow drifts; this had to be coordinated with the already overburdened engineers who had their hands full in keeping the roads open. Needless to say, the artillery was completely road bound.

8. Tractor drawn artillery had to displace, as had been learned previously, by echelon using the limited amount of 4-ton trucks in the ammunition trains as prime movers, since the grousers necessary to give traction on ice and snow had not been provided. At this time these were in the process of manufacture on a contract let by the division ordnance to a Belgian factory in Eupen.

9. Signal communications in all units were impaired since wire broke and froze in the snow while moisture condensed and froze in radio microphones. At times it was much quicker to lay new wire rather than attempt to find a break in the line under the snow. (44)

(43) A-6, pp. 347, 350 (44) personal knowledge

January 16

During the night the 3rd Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment, and elements of the 8th Parachute Regiment had retired to strong positions on the high ground in the WOLFS BUSCH south of the Ambleve River (this formed one side of the ONDENVAL DEFILE), while the 2nd Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment, had evacuated FAYMONVILLE for positions on the hill along the road leading out of the town southeast to the next objective of SCHOPPEN. (See Map E)

23rd Infantry - Although the village of ONDENVAL was cleared by noon and the high ground to the east secured, the 2nd Battalion which managed to reach the north bank of the Ambleve River was subjected to such intense tank and artillery fire from the parachutists entrenched in the WOLFS BUSCH that it was forced to withdraw back to the higher ground southeast of the village. (46)

16th Infantry - FAYMONVILLE was reported clear by 0900 hours and the regiment continued the advance with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions on the right and left, respectively, in the direction of SCHOPPEN. Because of the impossible road conditions at this time, tanks were unable to support by accompanying the infantry in this advance. In addition, the paratroops (2nd Battalion, 9th Regiment) had chosen their positions so well that they were able to pour in intense fire from three sides which forced our 2nd Battalion to hold up in the rear of the woods halfway to its objective. Inasmuch as the 3rd Battalion was still outflanked by the enemy on KLINGELSBURG and there was no cover nor supporting road in its sector, it was unable to keep pace with the 2nd Battalion, hence the latter was in turn outflanked. (46)

18th Infantry - The 1st Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, aided by unusually heavy artillery support,

(45) A-5, p. 82 (46) A-8, p. 196



continued to hold KLINGELSBURG HILL in a stubborn reverse slope defense. However, this position was partially outflanked on the west by the 3rd Battalion's short advance from the rear to the forward edge of the woods next to HILL 566 together with its attached tanks. (47) Likewise, the 2nd Battalion by-passed this position to the east, but its advance was stopped at the northern edge of the MODERSCHIED CREEK opposite the forbidding wooded hill mass known as the BUTGENBACHER HECK. There the 89th Fusilier Battalion and elements of the 1st Battalion, 1055th Infantry (both of the 89th Volksgrenadier Division) were strongly intrenched. This, together with the MORSCHHECK heights further to the east, was the main line of resistance of the enemy in this sector while the KLINGELSBURG position in front must be regarded as an outpost, although an exceedingly strong one. It will be noted that the boundary between the 3rd Parachute and 89th Volksgrenadier Divisions was clearly identified in the draw just east of KLINGELSBURG. (48,49)

The division had little progress to show for its efforts on this date. The advance of the 23rd Infantry, together with that of the 30th Division on its right, had outflanked the enemy in the WOLFS BUSCH south of the Ambleve River on both sides, but this was a strong natural defensive position which could not easily be reduced. Likewise the KLINGELSBURG position was a serious obstacle in the path of our advance even though it was half surrounded.

#### January 17

Since the primary objective of this second phase of the First Army counteroffensive was the ONDENVAL DEFILE which was blocked by the elements of the 8th and 9th Parachute Regiments holding out in the pocket intrenched in the

(47) A-11, Appendix #2 (48) A-4, p. 368 (49) personal knowledge

WOLFS BUSCH, the necessity of reinforcing the attack in that sector was evident in order to clear the defile for the 7th Armored Division to pass through on the way to its attack on ST. VITH. It was therefore decided by the division commander to strengthen this push by attaching the as yet uncommitted 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, to the 23rd Infantry. The move was completed this date.

During this day the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry, carried its advance well into the ROHR BUSCH which formed the east side of the ONDENVAL DEFILE in an attempt to clear the passage and move beyond the enemy pocket across the Ambleve River in the WOLFS BUSCH. Inasmuch as the 16th Infantry was already in an exposed salient, it remained in the positions taken the previous day.

18th Infantry - A platoon of the 5th Parachute Regiment, supported by two tanks, launched a counterattack against our 3rd Battalion while at the same time the enemy artillery fire was again as intense as had ever been encountered by the division. The slackening of this fire the previous day was believed to have been caused by the 3rd Parachute Artillery Regiment (which corresponds to our Division Artillery) moving to more secure areas. (50) This is a very likely assumption since most German artillery was horsedrawn, except in the panzer divisions, hence any fast, simultaneous displacement, particularly under such weather conditions, would materially reduce its capabilities of furnishing supporting fire.

After the 3rd Battalion had repulsed the German attack, it succeeded in securing HILL 566 which dominated SCHOPPEN to the south in the 16th Infantry's sector and thus drew the noose more tightly around KLINGELSBURG HILL. This action also partially covered the exposed flank of the 16th

Infantry, which thus permitted it to resume its advance toward SCHOPPEN the following day.

January 18

Just prior to the time when the 23rd Infantry was to jump off in continuing the attack, the enemy 8th Parachute Regiment, which had been reinforced only recently with 160 Luftwaffe replacements, together with other elements of the 9th Regiment amounting to three to four hundred men supported by five to seven self-propelled guns started a major counter-attack against the 1st Battalion in the center of the ROHR BUSCH. The immediate objective of this undoubtedly was to relieve the pressure on the outflanked elements of the two enemy regiments still holding out<sup>r</sup> across the Ambleve River in the WOLFS BUSCH. Secondly, we have definite evidence in the 3rd Parachute Division's estimate of the situation of 4 January (51) that the enemy had divined our intention of attacking toward ST. VITH to which this area was the key. This city was the center of a road net which was indispensable to the Germans both in extricating their valuable panzer divisions in the western portion of the bulge and in supplying the remainder. (See Maps B and C) Hence the reaction to our penetration in this region was the most vigorous encountered in the course of our attack.

This counterattack wavered back and forth through the ROHR BUSCH with much severe fighting until noon and was finally declared over at 1400 hours after the 3rd Battalion had been committed from the regimental reserve. The enemy suffered between three and four hundred casualties and (52) achieved nothing but a slight delay. Meanwhile elements of the same enemy regiments attempted to beat back the 30th Division which was encircling the WOLFS BUSCH from the west, but the attacks likewise were beaten off and that division completely broke through their position the following day. (53)

(51) A-7, p. 35 (52) A-7, p. 29 (53) A-9, p. 112

23rd Infantry - The original plan of attack for this day was for the 1st Battalion to move south toward IVELDINGEN and MONTENAU (See Map E) while the attached 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry was to cross the AMBLEVE RIVER on the west, block in the south and at the same time attack north to clean out the pocket entrenched around the northern edges of the WOLFS BUSCH from the rear. In order to understand this action more clearly, it is best to digress at this point into a more detailed consideration of the terrain in this area. The AMBLEVE RIVER, which generally flows to the west, turns north through the ONDENVAL DEFILE where it bends nearly two-thirds around the high, rugged and heavily wooded WOLFS BUSCH whereupon it resumes its westward direction. Because this hill mass was the dominating terrain feature in the area and was partially protected by the AMBLEVE RIVER (more like a stream at this point), it was an extremely strong tactical position which formed a natural pocket within our lines.

Because of the river barrier, the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, was forced to attack this position without its normal tank support. (54) However, possibly because it was covered by the noise of the above-mentioned counterattack which was going on at this same time, the battalion was able to achieve complete surprise in its attack from the south against the pocket with the result that three 88 mm. guns, four 105 mm. howitzers a half track and an ammunition dump were captured, together with the commander of the 1st Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment and the remnants of his unit. (55)

We have seen above how the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry was delayed by the enemy counterattack, but in spite of this delay, the battalion resumed its methodical advance over the difficult terrain in the afternoon and registered substantial gains which put the regiment in a good position to attack IVELDINGEN and EIBERTINGEN. (55)

(54) A-11, Appendix #2

(55) A-7, pp. 29, 42

16th Infantry - While the other two battalions remained in place, the 1st resumed the advance towards the next objective of SCHOPPEN. The movement was from behind the 2nd Battalion still located on the high ground above the town directly across country to the woods about a thousand yards to the west of the objective. (56) During this advance the enemy infiltrated to the right rear of the attacking unit through a gap which appears to have been 1000 to 1500 yards wide between it and the 23rd Infantry. With the help of the 2nd Battalion supporting by fire from the hill to the rear, the enemy was cleared out by late afternoon and the 1st was able to maintain its advanced position. (57)

Inasmuch as the 18th Infantry had been able to make little progress against the enemy entrenched in the BUTGEN-BACHER HECK, the main results of the day were the cleaning out of the enemy pocket around the WOLFS BUSCH and the fact that SCHOPPEN was dominated by the forces on higher ground on two sides. This put our troops in quite favorable positions, particularly when the German losses were also taken into consideration.

#### January 19

When this day dawned it was snowing to such an extent that observation was impossible. Although it was nearly knee deep to start, it drifted much higher and since it continued most of the day, the storm became almost a blizzard. In addition to the tracked vehicles which some units already had, several borrowed sleds (some of them horsedrawn) from the Belgians and the attacks went ahead on schedule. The weather was so atrocious that surprise was virtually complete. For the most part the artillery continued to remain silent until actually needed in the final assault.

(56) A-8, p. 197 (57) A-4, p. 368 (58) personal knowledge

23rd Infantry - The 3rd Battalion entered its objective of IVELDINGEN without opposition, but the 2nd ran into stiff resistance at about 1100 hours when it approached EIBERTINGEN which was protected by box mines, self-propelled guns and a tank. In the initial assault our troops managed to seize several houses on the northern edge of the town, but the enemy consisting mainly of Luftwaffe replacements promptly counterattacked with unusual ferocity. This attack was broken by a close-in medium artillery concentration directed by the accompanying forward observer of the reinforcing 5th Field Artillery Battalion. (59) However, it was only after more severe hand-to-hand fighting that the enemy was eventually pried out of his cellar positions and began to withdraw to DEIDENBERG at about 1400 hours. (60)

16th Infantry - Although on the previous day two battalions of this regiment were in position to assault SCHOPPEN from two sides, the 1st Battalion continued to push through the woods to the south until it gained the high ground just north of EIBERTINGEN, thus restoring contact with the left flank of the 23rd Infantry and closing the existing gap. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion, which had been in reserve, moved in the blizzard down the road directly on SCHOPPEN. Progress was extremely slow in the deep snow, but the Germans were unable to see the advance and hardly suspected that an attack was being made. Outposts were eliminated before they could warn the enemy troops hiding for protection from the weather in the cellars of the town. This objective was taken by 1100 hours and the attacking battalion took up defensive positions on the hill about 500 yards southwest of the town. Meanwhile, the reserve 2nd Battalion moved due south from its supporting position and filled in the gap between the 1st and 3rd Battalions. (61) With only small adjustments the 16th Infantry

(59) personal knowledge (60) A-7, p. 29, A-5, p. 83  
(61) A-8, p. 199

continued to hold these positions until the next phase of the attack on 24 January. It will be noted that this left most of the regiment out in the woods and snow for five days with the result that supply and the prevention of frostbite became major problems. The engineers worked through the night of the 19/20th, but roads were still blocked completely by stranded vehicles in the morning.

18th Infantry - Likewise under cover of the blizzard, the 3rd Battalion moved southeast across the exposed draw separating it from the western edge of the BUTGENBACHER HECK which gave it a toe hold on that formidable obstacle. Simultaneously the 2nd Battalion crossed the MODERSCHIED CREEK to the south and effected a junction with the 3rd; thus the KLINGELSBURG outpost was completely cut off. The tanks of the 3rd Battalion were then brought around to rejoin its supported unit over the roads in the 2nd Battalion sector. (62)

With the opening of the ONDENVAL DEFILE, the way had finally been cleared for the 7th Armored Division to attack towards ST. VITH and by 0730 hours 20 January, all friendly roadblocks were removed from its path. Although this occurred nearly twenty-four hours behind schedule (63), the achievement of the 23rd Infantry in accomplishing this hard mission was a notable one. In addition to the difficulties of weather which all units suffered (including the enemy), the most forbidding terrain was encountered in this area. Secondly, we have seen that the enemy resisted here more stubbornly and certainly counterattacked more vigorously than elsewhere in the division sector.

#### January 20-23

Although the attachment of the 23rd Infantry to the 1st Division was over according to the corps order with the

(62) A-11, Appendix #2 (63) A-6, p. 328

completion of the second phase, this regiment continued on during 20 January and captured MONTENAU, the last of its objectives, by 1800 hours. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, had been relieved from its attachment to the 23rd this date and the regiment itself ceased to be attached to the 1st Division during the night of 21/22 January. The permanent corps boundary became effective with the completion of the second phase and the positions of the 23rd Infantry were taken over by units of the XVIII Airborne Corps. (64,65) The 18th Infantry continued to work on the BUTGENBACHER HECK during the first part of this period with the support of numerous artillery concentrations, but the stubborn enemy was able to limit any gains to a few hundred yards. (66)

During this phase of the First Army offensive, there was ample evidence that the Nazis had been hit hard and had suffered considerable losses. We noted that Luftwaffe replacements were brought down from Holland to reinforce the ranks of the 8th Parachute Regiment at Eibertingen. However, this apparently helped matters little since prisoners reported on 21 January that all semblance of regular companies had been lost in the 8th and 9th Parachute regiments which had been combined into one battle group. (67) We also know that in addition to attempting to hold back the 23rd Infantry, the 8th Parachute also bore the weight of the attack of the left regiment of the 30th Division. (68)

Another indication was the appearance on 19 January of a company of the 352 Infantry, 246th German Infantry Division, in front of Iveldingen. This division had previously been in the Konzen-Rohren area facing the 9th U.S. Division to the north. More of this regiment appeared on the XVIII Airborne Corps front 21 January and the 404th Infantry of the

(63) A-6, p. 328    (64) A-9, p. 112    (65) A-4, p. 370  
(66) A-5, p. 83    (67) A-5, p. 83-4    (68) A-12, p. 200,204



same division was identified in the Montenau-Eibertingen area the following day. (69) The fact that the original 246th Division sector in the north continued to be held by the third regiment of the division, together with its fusilier battalion indicated that the Germans had no more reserves to commit in this area, aside from the 1056th Infantry at Hepscheid which continued to be the only general reserve for the whole sector. It was further learned 22 January that a battle group consisting of a company each of the 5th, 8th and 9th Parachute Regiments had been formed with the mission of forming a defense line southeast from Moderscheid along the far bank of the stream of the same name. (70)

That the enemy did not withdraw his outflanked forces from the Butgenbacher Heck so as to shorten the lines of the depleted 3rd Parachute Division during this lull in the American offensive illustrates the stubborn and almost foolhardy tenacity with which he contested every favorable terrain feature. It can readily be seen from the map that a line constructed from the Morschheck Crossroads southwest along the high ground behind the Moderscheid Creek would have substantially shortened the German line, offered good defensive positions, and eliminated the danger of encirclement to the 5th Parachute and 1055th Infantry Regiments in the Heck positions. In summary, the dispositions of the Germans were: elements of the 246th Infantry Division along the west boundary of the 1st U.S. Division, the 3rd Parachute Division holding the center from the vicinity of AMBLEVE up into the BUTGENBACHER HECK, with the 89th Volksgrenadier Division occupying the main part of the HECK through BULLINGEN and up opposite part of the 2nd U.S. Division.

(69) A-5, p. 83 (70) A-5, p. 84

While this phase of the American attack was in progress, important changes took place in the higher command. On the morning of 15 January, Major General Gerow turned over the command of the V Corps to Major General Huebner, former commander of the 1st Division, which thus ended that anomalous situation of a corps with two commanders existing for over a month. (71) General Huebner had been designated to command the corps and had actually left the division two days before the German breakthrough, but for reasons never publicized, General Gerow retained control while the latter and his staff stood in the sidelines. Although the corps order for this counteroffensive was issued by General Gerow but carried out by his successor, apparently the latter had assisted in its formulation since there is no evidence to indicate that there were any important changes in the basic plan when he assumed command of the corps.

Secondly, patrols from the First and Third Armies met at Houffalize on 16 January and in accordance with the previous directive of SHAEF, the First Army reverted from the control of Field Marshal Montgomery to that of General Bradley at midnight 17/18 January. Along with this changeover went Montgomery's strings on the use of the 26th Infantry which had had such curious effects in the preceding phase. Consequently, the 1st Division's east boundary was promptly changed to shorten its line by the assignment of the Butgenbach sector to the 2nd Division. The relief of the 26th Infantry by the 9th commenced on 21 January and completed two days later.

(71) A-4, p. 368

### THE THIRD PHASE

The stage was now set for the final attack order of the 1st Division to seize the final objective, the high ground from AMBLEVE to BULLINGEN, assigned in the corps Field Order #34. With the 26th Infantry in assembly area south of BUTGENBACH, the division had returned to the conventional "two up and one back" formation and finally had a sizeable force with which it could maneuver. The division plan (72) in general called for sideslipping the various units into position, often using the areas held by other or neighboring forces as lines of departure. The attack was laid out in phases as follows: (See Map F)

Phase #1 - 26th Infantry, moving from behind the lines of the 2nd Division at BUTGENBACH, seize the MORSCHHECK CROSSROADS with a battalion (1st), while a battalion (1st) of the 18th Infantry advanced frontally against the adjacent forces in the BUTGENBACHER HECK.

Phase #2 - Passing through the MORSCHHECK position of the 26th Infantry, a battalion (2nd) of the 18th Infantry was to seize MODERSCHIED while another battalion (3rd) of the 26th gained a portion of the ridge south of MORSCHHECK dominating HEPSCHIED. Meanwhile, a battalion (2nd) of the 16th Infantry was to push south and secure the southern edge of the woods called the BAMBUSCH about 1000 yards north of MIRFELD.

Phase #3 - Using the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry's position at MODERSCHIED as the line of departure, two battalions (1st and 2nd) of the same regiment were to extend the line of the 26th Infantry southwest along the ridge.

Phase #4 - Passing through the objective of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, a battalion (3rd) of the 16th Infantry was to secure MIRFELD at the end of the ridge which was the final objective of Phase III of the First Army counteroffensive.

(72) When this attack order was issued, the writer had an extra copy of the accompanying overlay made in anticipation of retaining it in his personal files when the war was over. On it were also noted the battalions assigned to the various regimental objectives, together with the times these were reported as secure.

The artillery line up behind the division remained generally the same as in Phase II, with the following exceptions: the 190th FA Group lost the 987th FA Bn (155 mm. SP Gun) which had been attached to the 7th Armored Division, while the division's own medium battalion, the 5th, was to reinforce the light artillery of the 26th Infantry instead of that of the 16th Infantry which was not to play so large a part in this phase. However, the latter maintained its communications with the 16th's direct support artillery so that there was little net change. Because of the general pivoting nature of the advance, neither of the two medium battalions reinforcing the 18th and 26th Regiments needed to displace from their positions near WEYWERTZ since both could swing in position with plenty of range to spare. (73)(74)

It will be seen that this plan involved the maximum use of skillful maneuver on the part of the division in order to overcome the continuing problems of weather and the anticipated stubborn defense. The reduction of the 89th Volksgrenadier Division forces in the BUTGENBACHER HECK and MORSCHHECK CROSSROADS positions was the key to the successful conclusion of the Phase III attack. It is evident that the division plan contemplated this. By containing the BUTGENBACHER forces with a frontal attack of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, while hitting the enemy at MORSCHHECK on the flank with a battalion of the 26th Infantry emerging from the 2nd Division lines in the north and then passing another battalion of the 18th through the 26th to MODERSCHEID, any enemy forces remaining in the HECK would be completely cut off. This was particularly so inasmuch as there was no road out of that area which did not pass through SCHOPPEN (held by the 16th Infantry) or MODERSCHEID. With this accomplished, (73) A-4, p. 338 (74) personal knowledge

the already weakened and outflanked forces of the 3rd Parachute Division could be pushed off our objectives by frontal advances in the sector of the 18th Infantry which would in turn outflank those remaining in the path of the 16th Infantry.

Surprise was to be gained both by the direction of the various attacks and with the lack of special artillery preparation as at the beginning of Phase II.

#### January 24

The attack jumped off early in the morning as scheduled and by 1000 hours the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment had taken its objective for the division's first phase. This is all the more remarkable since according to the G-2, the MORSCHHECK position (held by the 2nd Battalion, 1055th Infantry) was "possibly the best organized of the enemy's defensive positions" and in addition this was on the highest ground in the whole division sector. However, he further states that the enemy probably least expected an attack in this area and that the breakthrough was achieved by means of complete surprise as we saw had been previously planned. The success of the initial assault isolated the enemy 1st Battalion, 1055th Regiment, which still remained in the western part of the BUTGENBACHER HECK. (75)(76)

The execution of the division plan continued without alteration. The 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry, gained its objective southwest along the ridge below the 1st Battalion at 1635 hours, (75) while the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, which was motorized and mounted on tanks, (76) passed through the 2nd Division and 26th Infantry positions in the attack on MODERSCHIED. The 16th Infantry supported this attack by fire from the newly gained position of the 2nd Battalion in the woods west of the town (77) and it was reported clear at

(75) A-7, p. 30 (76) see Note 72, p. 32 (77) A-4, p. 369

2210 hours. The defending 3rd Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, pulled out for HEPSCHIED at dusk. While this was going on, the 2nd Battalion, 1056th Infantry, which had previously been in general reserve in the latter town, twice counterattacked our forces at MORSCHHECK but both attacks were smothered by our artillery. (75)(76)

Thus, at the end of the day, in addition to the 280 prisoners taken, the remaining forces on the BUTGENBACHER HECK were isolated and the 1st Division was well situated to scoop them in the next day. The disorganized resistance encountered in this advance indicated that the enemy was capable of little more serious opposition in the division sector. The German decision to hold the BUTGENBACHER salient was expensive. The 2nd Battalion, 1055th Regiment, was only able to extricate a limited number of its troops as the noose was tightened. During the night of 24-25 January the 89th Volksgrenadier Division withdrew to the line HEPSCHIED - BULLINGEN with the 1056th committed in the north and what remained of the 1055th Infantry in the south. Likewise the 3rd Parachute Division pulled back to a line between HEPPENBACH and VALENDAR with the 5th Parachute Regiment in the former area and Kampfgruppe Schenk (remnants of the 9th Parachute Regiment) in the latter town. (78) With the exception of HILL 555 on the approximate boundary between these two divisions, the position was not a strong one since BULLINGEN was completely dominated by the high ground of our newly gained MORSCHHECK position.

#### January 25

The 18th Infantry attacked from MODERSCHIED and by 1030 hours the 2nd Battalion had gained its objective along the ridge just north of MIRFELD. (79) Inasmuch as their patrols found the latter village to be practically unoccupied,

(78) A-5, p. 84 (79) A-7, p. 81; see Note 72, p. 32

two companies of the 3rd Battalion, 16th Infantry, were loaded on tanks and tank destroyers so that this unit was also on its objective by 1815 hours. (80)

Meanwhile, all apparently was not going too well along the joint division-corps boundary. According to that shown in the division operation order for First Army Phase III, the town of AMBLEVE (AMEL) was just outside its right (west) boundary in the sector of the 7th Armored Division. First Army stated, "except that AMBLEVE had not been taken, the XVIII Airborne Corps was on the objectives defined in the orders of 10 January." (81) There undoubtedly was another change in orders as a result, because on the previous day we see plans being made to take this village. Apparently the 1st Division wished to have the 16th Infantry attack in conjunction with the 7th Armored Division, but the regimental commander preferred to send the 1st Battalion in alone. At any rate a platoon was dispatched from that unit on the afternoon of 25 January and AMBLEVE (AMEL) was reported secure at 2200 hours since the enemy offered only slight opposition. (82) First Army somewhat proudly announced that "AMBLEVE, AMEL and MIRFELD were all in the hands of the 16th Infantry," (83) thus making three towns out of two. (84)

Although after a short breathing spell, the division resumed the offensive which carried it through the Siegfried Line a second time, the conclusion of Phase III of the First Army Counteroffensive coincides with War Department's official conclusion of the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign on 25 January 1945, this is therefore a fitting place to end this narrative.

(80) A-8, p. 203 (81) A-3, p. 146 (82) A-8, p. 202  
(83) A-3, p. 147 (84) It will be noted that the 1:100,000 maps of this area are of Belgian origin and hence use the French spelling, while the 1:25,000 maps were part of the German series covering the border region, thus the confusion in names.

During the eleven day period of this offensive the enemy lost 1277 prisoners at the expense of 1037 casualties suffered in the V Corps, mainly in the 23rd Infantry and the 1st Division. The corps account summarizes the action in stating that the losses in the 1st Division were "relatively light considering the area of ground taken and the fact that the enemy was strongly entrenched in prepared field fortifications and towns." (85) The Division G-2 concluded his narrative of the month's operations in a most comprehensive summary which it is difficult to improve upon: (86)

"The fighting during January marked the grand deflation of the enemy's ambitious plan of 16 December. At the beginning of the month . . . he had the intention of holding what he had with infantry divisions, while he regrouped his panzers. At the end of the month he had been forced to give up even this compromise measure; the divisions which he had left to hold this salient were sacrificed, and his whole attention was devoted to pulling out everything not urgently needed to the comparative safety of the Siegfried Line . . . . The 3rd Parachute and 89th Volksgrenadier Division, attacked, mauled and cut to pieces, were not relieved, nor were they reinforced beyond a trickle from Holland."

"In spite of the dispiritedness which was evident in some cases, the enemy put up a bitter, exhausting fight for the ground that he held. At no point did he retreat without good pressure, no matter whether he held good or poor defensive terrain. The higher enemy policy of selling every foot of space for time was evident in the month's operation, and during the first days of the attack, the enemy had considerable success with his plan, although at shattering cost in personnel and equipment. His losses were indeed severe."

(85) A-4, p. 370 (86) A-6, pp. 32-33



"One element which aided the enemy in his delaying defense (though it operated against him by increasing his losses) was the bitter weather. Terrain which would have been a minor problem in supply and evacuation during the summer presented almost insoluble problems under a two-foot cover of snow . . . . Since most of the terrain covered by the Division in its advance was open ground, there were no villages or houses to shelter the troops. Many of the advance companies spent two or three successive days with no more shelter than they could dig for themselves in the frozen ground. Altogether the month's operations were as difficult as any in the Division's campaigns."

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Field Marshal Montgomery's restriction on the use of the 26th Infantry had far reaching consequences in regard to the corps and division plan of tactical operation in the counteroffensive. Had this not been in effect, it is conceivable that the corps commander might have extended the sectors of both the 99th and 2nd Infantry Divisions to the south and west with the latter taking over the areas of both the 26th and 18th Infantry Regiments. The 1st Division could then have attacked on a normal frontage with two regiments on line which was even more desirable than usual because of the extraordinary weather. We have seen that the width of the division sector was reduced as soon as it was within the power of the corps commander to do so at the commencement of Phase III of the offensive. It was then only necessary to have the 2nd Division take over from one regiment of the 1st Division since the latter's front had already been lessened when the permanent corps boundary again became effective at the end of Phase II. Another possibility would have been to have assigned the ONDENVAL DEFILE sector on the far right of the division to the 7th Armored Division, thus letting that unit fight its own way through the defile with its armored infantry battalions. However, in the past it had been the general practice when possible to have infantry divisions open the way for the armor and that undoubtedly was one of the reasons why this idea was not adopted.

The corps commander rightfully threw the whole weight of his artillery behind the 1st Division inasmuch as it was the only one of his units involved in the offensive. This again is an indication that he fully realized the difficulty of the mission he had assigned that division. Fortunately, with the corps being on a quarter circle front

such as this was, it was possible for the artillery to swing in position in order to engage any enemy attack in the north of the sector had there been any need to do so. He also acted correctly in assigning some of his artillery the dual mission of supporting the 30th Division in the adjacent corps (XVIII Airborne) sector, which had the supplementary mission of outflanking the ONDENVAL DEFILE from the west. This exemplifies the cooperation and coordination which apparently was characteristic of the operation throughout.

#### 1st Division

The plan of operation adopted by the division to secure its objective in Phase II of the Army offensive was the only one feasible under the circumstances of having been assigned to attack on such a broad front. Using anything other than a frontal attack was hardly possible on the division level since the employment of mobile striking forces to cut off and encircle the enemy was impracticable in view of the prevailing weather conditions and with one regiment held in position on orders of higher headquarters. Keeping in mind that his primary objective for Phase II was the opening of the ONDENVAL DEFILE on the right, the division commander threw the weight of the attack on that side. When it appeared that the task might be too difficult for the forces there, he properly dispatched a reinforcing battalion to assist, even though it meant weakening the regiment which was to reduce the BUTGENBACHER HECK salient, an equally strong position on the left of the front.

In the third and final phase, maneuver and attack in unexpected directions from areas held by other friendly units was employed to the maximum. Even though the beginning of this action involved a frontal assault on the enemy's

most strongly fortified position, this still holds true since an assault in that area was not anticipated by the enemy.

The division commander could have decided to hold a regiment in reserve and put the other two in the attack, but he chose the less conventional method of employing units of all three in order to strike from the flank and sideslip the regiments into position. The surprise and resultant confusion created by this maneuver was such that the enemy had no opportunity to react effectively before his main position in the BUTGEN-BACHER HECK was outflanked and lost.

It will be noted that the action in Phase II took six days while that in Phase III only lasted for two. Even though the distance to be covered in the former was considerably more than in the latter, it is conceivable that if the 1st Division had possessed a reserve force with which to maneuver it could have outflanked the ONDENVAL DEFILE from the east. It might have been thus reduced more quickly with less effort and even fewer casualties. This possibly could have been done by passing a regiment through the 16th Infantry positions in the vicinity of SCHOPPEN and attacking EIBERTINGEN, IVELDINGEN and MONTENAU from the north and east which would have cut off the defile from the rear.

#### 23rd Infantry

It is not clear why the commander of this regiment did not use his 3rd Battalion until forced to commit it during the German counterattack of 18 January. This is the more remarkable when it is realized that on the previous day he held two battalions in reserve, and yet it was on that day that the decision must have been made to reinforce the drive in this sector with the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry. Secondly, the attached battalion was assigned the difficult mission of crossing the AMBLEVE RIVER and attacking north in the

opposite direction while two of the organic battalions stayed in reserve. However, it is possible that the regimental commander foresaw the counterattack of 18 January, overestimated its severity, and hence desired a stronger reserve than normal. The latter is quite probable in view of the fact that this regiment was in a rather critical position particularly in that it was the one regiment actually involved in Phase II of the Army attack. The spirit of cooperation and general functioning of the regiment during the period of attachment was such that it seemed as if it had always been a part of the division.

#### 16th Infantry

This regiment consistently employed two battalions in assault with one in reserve, the latter of which was usually the one having borne the brunt of the previous fighting. The capture of SCHOPPEN is an excellent example of this. Although in a position to attack from two sides with the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the 1st continued to deepen the penetration, the 3rd by-passed the 2nd in a frontal attack on the town, while the 2nd Battalion went into reserve in a position such as to be able to support by fire if necessary. The fact that this attack took place during a blizzard contributed greatly to its success in that the surprise was complete. The regimental commander acted quickly in seizing the final objectives of MIRFELD and AMBLEVE with small, mobile, tank-infantry forces while he retained the initiative, rather than waiting to organize a stronger, coordinated attack. On the surface this was apparently a closely calculated risk, but in the light of the excellent intelligence available, the only logical action was to take the chance rather than run the danger of losing the initiative.

### 18th Infantry

The failure of this regiment to make substantial progress initially was undoubtedly caused by the weather and the exposed terrain over which it had to operate. The enemy in the KLINGELSBURG outpost had a strong reverse slope position controlling the flank approaches to the main line in the BUTGENBACHER HECK, while there he had every advantage of defending on high ground with the maximum cover and concealment. Both assault battalions of the 18th Infantry had to operate at least at one point in the route of advance without the support of their tanks -- the 3rd Battalion in crossing the marsh area from the west where there were no roads and which was under the direct observation of the enemy defending SCHOPPEN, and the 2nd Battalion in the exposed approach to the center of the HECK. In both instances our forces were under observation of the encircled enemy on KLINGELSBURG. Lastly, in this phase, the regiment had no reserve when its 1st Battalion was sent to reinforce the attack of the 23rd Infantry in the Ondenval Defile (it only returned from that mission in time to be employed in Phase III). The commander can only be commended for delaying his assault on the western end of the HECK until covered by the blizzard of 19 January in order to gain surprise and to save casualties. When this finally took place it was carried out in the classic manner with a flank envelopment by the 3rd Battalion and a frontal assault by the 2nd Battalion.

### 26th Infantry

Inasmuch as this unit did not participate in the offensive until Phase III, which was essentially a coordinated division action which cannot be discussed on a regimental basis, the action of this regiment there is not separately

discussed. However, it must be remembered that the 26th Infantry had the critical mission of cracking the MORSCHHECK CROSSROADS defense, which was the key to the division action and upon which its success depended. The fact that it was accomplished so rapidly that it was hardly noticed should only enhance the contribution made by the regiment.

#### Supporting Troops

Artillery was used to inflict as much damage as possible and to harrass the enemy, particularly in the FAYMONVILLE area, for long periods before the beginning of the counteroffensive in the 1st Division sector. We have seen how it was used also as a means of gaining surprise in the initial attack by firing mock preparations several days in advance at unusual hours, followed by the absence of any preparation for the actual assault. This technique was so successful that it was used again in the capture of SCHOPPEN and at the beginning of Phase III. This, however, did not preclude its full use in close support of the infantry when enemy contact had been gained and on targets of opportunity at any time. Cessation of the latter type of firing would only have detracted from the surprise effect of the mock preparations. The medium and heavy battalions of the division and corps were assigned missions so as to obtain the maximum benefit of coordination and flexibility. The two artillery group headquarters were able to coordinate the fires of three battalions each; the Division Artillery Headquarters was authorized to call upon these direct, in addition to controlling the fires of its own six organic and attached battalions; each light battalion was reinforced by a medium unit, and finally the corps was able to bring down the fire of all battalions within range on a single target. Thus we have great flexibility in the combination of channels through which support could be obtained and the

variety of types, calibers and ranges of weapons represented.

The cooperation of the tanks and infantry in this action was extremely close. Although we noted that several tanks were damaged and temporarily lost in friendly minefields, that was caused more by the malfunctioning of the detectors in the extreme cold rather than because of any fault of the supported troops. In other cases the tanks were purposely left behind when it was known that the terrain was such as to not favor their employment. When possible and desirable, tanks and tank destroyers increased the mobility of the infantry by transporting them as in the capture of MODERSCHIED, MIRFELD and AMBLEVE where the cooperation between the two reached a very high point.

Although it has hardly been mentioned before, this mission could not have been accomplished by the 1st Division without the excellent support of the engineers in keeping open the supply routes under most unusual weather conditions and the various other tasks incident to this, in addition to their normal missions.

#### Summary

The measures taken to achieve surprise reflected a great deal of imagination and ingenuity. Artillery was definitely used as a means to gain this end as well as pursuing its normal mission and the disadvantageous weather was turned to our advantage in fooling the enemy.

Wherever possible maneuver and surprise were substituted for lack of mobility and when the combination of these two factors had succeeded in disorganizing the enemy, mobility was increased by mounting small infantry task forces on tanks and tank destroyers so as to maintain the effect of all three which would also retain the initiative.

In this operation the critical and commanding terrain features were secured even though it was necessary to attack



them frontally such as at the MORSCHHECK CROSSROADS. Owing to the fact that this sometimes involved attacks from unexpected directions, as in the assault crossing of the AMBLEVE RIVER by the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, this also helped surprise and demoralize the enemy.

Successful accomplishment of this mission would not have been possible without the ingenuity displayed at all levels of the division in the special measures taken to overcome the difficulties of the weather, such as the use of grenades and dynamite for digging foxholes, employment of captured halftracks and procurement of native sleds.

It is quite impossible to consider Phase III of the operation from the standpoint of any particular regiment since it was a highly coordinated division action. Although this point of coordination cannot be overstressed, the successful accomplishment of the plan would have been impossible without complete cooperation of all units involved. This includes the 2nd Division's assistance in facilitating the passage of the attacking units through their lines, units of the 1st Division doing the same for other assault forces, and all in rendering mutual support and support by fire wherever possible. If no other point is made here, it is hoped that this operation exemplifies what can be accomplished under extremely difficult conditions when cooperation and coordination are complete.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- ✓ 1. Higher commanders should not restrict the freedom of action of their subordinates by giving specific missions to component units of the latter's command.
- ✓ 2. When a commander has been restricted in his actions by higher authority, every effort should be exerted by him and intermediate commanders to have the restriction lifted when it has finished serving its original purpose.
- ✓ 3. When mobility is limited, other factors such as use of maneuver and surprise become relatively more important.
- ✓ 4. Achievement of surprise can be the most important single factor in the success of an attack.
- ✓ 5. Surprise in the attack should not be jeopardized by an artillery preparation when the latter would only alert the enemy but not impair his effectiveness.
- ✓ 6. A reserve is not essential to the successful accomplishment of an attack when the subordinate units maintain their normal reserves.
- ✓ 7. The commander must have a reserve, however, with which to maneuver in order to decisively influence the action.
- ✓ 8. Employment of maneuver in enveloping is entirely feasible even under conditions of limited mobility.
- ✓ 9. Every means must be used to gain and retain the initiative so as to disorganize and demoralize the enemy.
- ✓ 10. A thoroughly coordinated plan of attack helps gain surprise and the initiative hence minimizing casualties.
- ✓ 11. Complete cooperation between all participating units is essential in the successful execution of a highly coordinated plan.

✓12. Frontal attacks on critical terrain features can be inexpensively and successfully executed when they are not expected by the enemy.

✓13. Last ditch defense by the enemy can be turned to the attacker's advantage by encircling and capturing him rather than having him fall back to fight in another locality.

✓14. Winter weather may offer the attacker the advantages of gaining surprise more easily and also cause more casualties in the ranks of the defender.

✓15. Operations in winter give rise to unsuspected problems which can thoroughly endanger the success of the whole plan unless they have been anticipated in advance.

✓16. Special equipment to maintain mobility and minimize discomforts, hazards and casualties must be issued in advance in order to attack successfully during winter.

A P P E N D I X # 1

THE ARTILLERY CENTER  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
Fort Sill, Oklahoma

CA-rm

6 December 1948

Major Wilson V. Ledley  
3rd Company, STR  
Fort Benning, Georgia

Dear Wil:

Since you have access to the published accounts of V Corps and The Division, I will merely tell you my recollection of what happened at Butgenbach.

The 26th CT rushed down first on about a three-hour alert, and Van Sutherland selected his ground. Colonel Seitz was on leave at the time, and so were the officers and men of the quota allotted the troops.

The desperate defense of The Division from 20-24 December was dependent on the success of holding the hinge occupied by the 26th. You cannot make too strong a story about the heroic actions of the Regiment during the four critical days.

Now, here is where we get down to the answer as to why the 23rd was attached instead of having it relieve the 26th.

As soon as we came under control of Field Marshal Montgomery, he sent an aide down to report on the situation in the Division sector. The next day another aide appeared. Apparently what his two aides saw with their own eyes assured the Field Marshal that the hinge was in competent hands. Orders were issued that the 26th Infantry would not be moved except on his own approval. This may appear in written form some place in Division or Corps files. I do not know of that but I do know the contents of the order, and they were what I have stated.

Next, when the time came to close the gap, our scheme of maneuver was a swing pivoted on the position of the 26th. I recommended that the 26th be relieved by a regiment of the 2d Division so that we could move it to the right flank.

Perhaps "Monty's" order still stood---I do not know---but the 23rd was attached to The Division and took over the mission I had planned for the 26th.

If you have the situation overlays, you can see how the changes thereafter were logical and dictated by the progress of our attack.

If I can add anything to this phase, let me know.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sincerely,

/s/

CLIFT ANDRUS  
Major General, USA  
Commanding\*

A certified true extract  
copy of letter in my  
personal possession:

*Wilson V. Ledley*  
WILSON V. LEDLEY  
Major  
Infantry

\* Then Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division

A P P E N D I X # 2

DAILY REPORTS OF PLATOON LEADERS,  
COMPANY B, 745TH TANK BATTALION,  
JANUARY 1945

15 January

1st Platoon\*

Platoon continued in reserve position in NIDRUM (first section at 905-065, second at 904-063). Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Paxton

2nd Platoon

Platoon continued to occupy three positions in BUTGENBACH. Platoon CP with two tanks at 914-044, one tank on road guard outpost duty at 911-036, and two tanks on road guard outpost duty at 910-038. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Worthing

3rd Platoon

Platoon joined L Co at 0615 for attack to south. Proceeded down road declared cleared of mines by attached engineers to point so. of BUTGENBACH (909-030) where Plt struck American mines. Three tanks had tracks blown off. Fourth tank had bogie and connector blown but could still operate. This tank and remaining undamaged tank continued with L Co to 907-026. Ey fire forced withdrawal of infantry. Two tanks rejoined disabled tanks. Company maintenance began work 1100. Battalion maintenance began work at 1330. "C" Company maintenance assisted at 1530. At 1500 undamaged tank proceeded to "K" Co CP at 895-037. All tanks removed from exposed hill at 1600. All tanks operating again by 1730. Acting Plat Sgt Miksa injured by fall from tank in minefield, evacuated. Four repaired tanks joined fifth at "K" CP at 1745. Night attack with "K" Co launched at 1830 due south. Objective: woods vic 890-020. Infantry guides led tanks behind infantry company. Two tanks became mired in ditch and snow and mud at 893-027. One was extricated by platoon tanks. Four tanks proceeded with infantry into woods and after small arms fire fight occupied objective. Tanks held to rear of infantry positions until infantry could be dug in. Sgt. Gundberg became acting platoon Sgt. Ey fire moderate. Platoon occupied pos in woods with "K" and "I" companies at 892-023. Closed in position 2300.

Lt. Day

16 January

1st Platoon - (same as 15 January)

2nd Platoon - ( do. )

\* Throughout this operation the platoons remained attached to correspondingly numbered battalions of the 18th Infantry unless otherwise indicated in the text.

### 3rd Platoon

Co. Maint. began work 0500 on mired tank at 893-027, using T-5 and two Hq tanks, had it out by 0830. This tank remained at 3rd Bn CP at 895-037, pending darkness tonight to rejoin platoon. Four tanks with "K" Co in woods vic 892-023, moved at 1100 south to edge of woods at 890-018. Supported with MG and cannon fire infantry patrols operating to south and east. Ey infantry observed and fired on in woods to direct east. At 1700 ey tanks or SP gun fired on infantry positions in woods. Two or three ey guns participated. Tanks returned fire. No decisive results observed insofar as hits were concerned. Ey guns withdrew. Ey Artillery and mortar fire heavy during day. Approximately 130 rounds fired, plus 5000 MG. Fifth tank joined platoon at 1900, carrying load of ammo. No casualties.

Lt. Day

### 17 January

#### 1st Platoon

Platoon moved with 1st Bn at 0700 from reserve position in NIDRUM (first section at 905-065, second at 904-063) to new position supporting 23rd Inf in LIGNENVILLE (805-989), closing in area 0930. Ten miles. Ey fire very light. No casualties.

Lt. Paxton

#### 2nd Platoon

Platoon continued in BUTGENBACH with 2nd Bn, charged with defense of the town. Occupying three positions: Platoon CP with two tanks at 914-044, one tank on road guard outpost duty at 911-036, and two tanks on road guard outpost duty at 910-038. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Worthing

#### 3rd Platoon

Platoon continued in position with "K" and "I" Cos in woods south of BUTGENBACH (890-018). Continued 75, 76 and 105 mm fire at ey occupied buildings and other ey installations to east and south. Ey artillery and mortar fire continued very heavy. Weather cold. Living conditions miserable. No casualties.

Lt. Day

### 18 January

#### 1st Platoon

Platoon remained in position with 1st Bn in LIGNENVILLE (805-989). Infantry clearing wooded hill to east. Tanks awaiting road availability to join the operation. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Paxton

2nd Platoon - (same as 17 January)

3rd Platoon

Platoon continued fire missions with 3rd Bn. One section of two tanks remained in pos in woods at 890-018 with "I" and "K" companies. First section fired on ey pos in woods to south from fire positions vic Bn CP at 895-035. Ey fire light. Pvt Musetti slightly injured in head by gun recoil, evacuated. First section spent night at 896-037.

Lt. Day

19 January

1st Platoon

Platoon moved out of LIGNENVILLE (805-989) at 1700 on road around wooded hill to east. In vic of IVELDINGEN (852-976) engaged in fire fight with ey in houses along road to south. Return fire damaged track of one tank. Friendly TD 100 yds in rear firing over our heads scored direct hit in engine compartment S/Sgt Field's tank. Tank burned. Sgt Tippett slightly wounded by shrapnell, evacuated. At midnight in pos at 852-976.

Lt. Paxton

2nd Platoon

(Same as January 17 except for the following). At 0700 platoon took up fire pos at 908-029 and 905-032, firing 100 rds at ey occupied woods direct south. Ey fire light. No casualties. Returned from fire mission at 1100.

Lt. Worthing

3rd Platoon

Platoon continued in same pos in morning: first section vic Bn CP at 986-035, second in woods at 890-018. In morning first section went on harassing firing mission vic Bn CP. One tank disabled by American mine in field previously declared cleared. Tank repaired and restored to action by noon. Second section joined first at 1300. Platoon remained in pos at 896-037 balance of day, in readiness for midnight move to woods in south. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Day

20 January

1st Platoon

Platoon remained in pos vic IVELDINGEN (852-976), following action of last night. One tank stuck along roadside. Company maintenance in afternoon recovered stuck tank. S/Sgt Fields and crew, evacuated last night to company CP, manned another tank, remained on call at company CP pending our return to NIDRUM. Four tanks operating here, one waiting us at company CP. Ey fire light. No further casualties.

Lt. Paxton



2nd Platoon - (Same as 17 January)

3rd Platoon

At midnight platoon moved from pos at 896-037 to pos in woods so. of BUTGENBACH (902-017), remaining there from 0100 to noon. At noon moved to 904-015 for jump-off on attack clearing woods to east. Proceeded to pos behind crest of hill to cover objective with fire (914-23). At 1600 woods cleared, prisoners taken, and platoon moved into woods for night pos with infantry at 909-016. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Day

21 January

1st Platoon

Platoon moved by itself at 0800 from pos vic IVELDINGEN (852-976) to former reserve pos in NIDRUM (first section at 905-065)(second section at 904-063), closing in area at 1000. Ten miles. Pvt Johnston evacuated, sick. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Paxton

2nd Platoon

Platoon continued in three positions in BUTGENBACH (platoon CP with two tanks at 914-044, one tank at 911-036, and two tanks at 910-038). At 1100 three tanks went to fire pos at 915-020, fired 40 rounds into woods to southeast. On return Sgt Ireland's tank blasted by unexploded 500 lb bomb or 8 or 10 mines. Tank destroyed, but not burned. Driver Freitag seriously injured, evacuated. Sgt Ireland lightly wounded. Co Maint evacuated equipment, parts. No other casualties.

Lt. Worthing

3rd Platoon

Platoon continued fire missions in support "I" and "K" companies in woods south of BUTGENBACH (910-016). Fired about thirty 75, 76 and 105, plus MG fire. Sgt Gundberg's tank fired on by ey bazookas, was missed, tank MG fire destroyed bazooka man. Prisoners taken: 30. Lt. Quinn relieved Lt. Day at 1700. Platoon in pos for night at 908-017 and 908-015 in two sections. Ey fire heavier. No casualties.

Lt. Quinn

22, 23 January

(Omitted. All platoons occupied defensive positions.)

24 January

1st Platoon

Platoon moved at 0500 from NIDRUM (905-065) and (904-063) with 1st Bn to ass. pos vic BUTGENBACH (910-034). At 1130 moved to vic DOM BUTGENBACH (930-017), now being attached to

2nd Bn. Following 2nd Platoon. Column delayed by 2nd Platoon tank and TDs hitting mines on road. Artillery fire heavy on route. At 1800 reached position vic MORSCHHECK (120-004). 1st Section to support 2nd Platoon as base of fire. 2nd Section attached to 2nd Platoon for assault on MODERSCHHEID. No. 1 tank stuck in bomb crater while maneuvering for fire support position at 913-997. Co. Maint. worked until 0400 next day trying to extricate tank, broke cable on T-5. Platoon (minus second section) remained at 920-004 for balance of night. 1000 Rds MG fired as supporting fire 1900 to 2100. Ey fire moderate. No casualties.

Lt. Paxton

### 2nd Platoon

Platoon moved at 1130 from positions in BUTGENBACH (914-044, 911-036 and 910-038) with 2nd Bn in attack on MODERSCHHEID. Ey artillery fire heavy on road route used. Sgt Plovovich wounded by shell fragment and evacuated. At 1330 second tank struck mine at 930-012, other tanks pulled disabled tank and track back to vic DOM BUTGENBACH (929-023) to clear one way south road. Resumed road march at 1430. Contacted infantry at 927-007. Infantry mounted tanks for final assault on objective. Two tanks from 1st Platoon attached to our platoon, making six tanks in assault (one disabled previously by mine). At 1900 launched assault, moving in line of columns of two off the road, astride it, bearing directly upon the town. Fired 150 rds 75 and 76, 8000 .50 MG and 20,000 .30 MG. Cooperation between infantry and tanks excellent. At 2100 objective was overrun. Next two hours spent in mopping up houses, isolated groups of ey. Ey artillery fire heavy. No casualties to us. Infantry casualties light. Went into night pos at 906-992 in MODERSCHHEID.

Lt. Worthing

### 3rd Platoon

Platoon left in woods (909-016) with "L" Co, as rest of 3rd Bn relieved last night. Mission to support advance of 1st Bn Inf to objectives in woods. Fired 50 rds 75 and 5000 MG. Ey fire very light. At 1500 platoon relieved from the line and attachment to 1st Bn for rest. Platoon assembled with Company CP at BUTGENBACH (909-043). No casualties.

Lt. Day

## 25 January

### 1st Platoon

Dawn found platoon in two sections: three tanks at 920-004, two tanks with 2nd Platoon in MODERSCHHEID (906-922). In AM Bn Maint recovered tank stuck in bomb crater at 913-997. At noon platoon reverted to control of 1st Bn. Platoon assembled and proceeded to occupy Bn objectives in two sections: two tanks at 915-994, three at 909-980. Ey Fire light. No casualties. Closed in positions 2200.

Lt. Paxton

### 2nd Platoon

In morning platoon assisted Inf to mop up ey in nearby woods, assisting in capture of about 20. At noon platoon moved from pos at 906-992 to new pos at 907-995, both in MODERSCHEID. No casualties. Ey fire heavy in morning, light otherwise.

Lt. Worthing

### 3rd Platoon

Platoon remained with Villain Baker CP at BUTGENBACH (909-043). In morning two tanks dispatched in FAYMONVILLE to hold prospective/for Villain Baker. Ey fire light. No casualties. CP

Lt. Day

26 January

### 1st Platoon

Platoon remained in position in two sections vic MODERSCHEID: three tanks in woods at 909-980 on main road, two tanks in reserve at 915-994. Ey fire heavy in morning on forward section, light rest of day. T/4 McGrath drafted for duty in company headquarters. No casualties.

Lt. Paxton

### 2nd Platoon

Platoon remained in position in MODERSCHEID (907-995), reorganizing and resupplying. Ey fire light. No casualties.

Lt. Worthing

### 3rd Platoon

Platoon moved from pos in BUTGENBACH (909-043) with 3rd Bn to MODERSCHEID (918-994), comprising reserve force for regiment. Lt. Day and Sgt. Sam left for pass to Paris. Lt. Quinn assumed command. Ey fire light. No casualties. Two tanks at FAYMONVILLE rejoined platoon in MODERSCHEID at 2000.

Lt. Quinn

Note: The original copies of these reports are in the possession of Captain Wallace C. Wardner, The Academic Section, The Infantry School (then company commander, B Company, 745th Tank Battalion).