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THE ENCIRCLEMENT AND REDUCTION OF THE
RUHR 28 MARCH - 18 APRIL 1945

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INTRODUCTION

The monograph which follows will depict the operations of the United States First and Ninth Armies consequent to the envelopment of the Ruhr region of Germany and the subsequent elimination of the trapped German forces, during the period 28 March 1945 to 18 April 1945. (1)

The Ruhr, more an economic and industrial unit than a geographic one, comprises an area approximately the size of Delaware.

Its location is generally along both banks of the Rhine between WESEL and COLOGNE, extending eastward about thirty five miles. Its importance is apparent when we consider, that two-fifths of the coal and coke and one third of the steel produced in continental Europe prior to 1939, came from this area. (2)

Here were the major portion of Germany's heavy industry. Without it the remainder of its industry was doomed to strangulation for lack of raw materials. ^{finished products} Truly it was the arsenal of the Third Reich.

PLAN OF ENVELOPMENT

General Eisenhower's basic plan for the complete submission of Germany had three principle elements. First, the destruction of German forces west of the Rhine; secondly, to secure bridgeheads across the Rhine; and lastly, a drive to the East and juncture with the Russians. (3)

(1) A-1, p. 7; (2) A-2, p. 18; (3) A-1 p. 81.

Upon gaining bridgeheads across the Rhine, it was planned to execute a double envelopment of the Ruhr.

As originally conceived, this plan called for the 21st Army Group to make the main effort in the north, crossing the Rhine in the vicinity of WESEL.

Sixth Army Group was to make a secondary thrust from the vicinity of MAINZ, both Army Groups to effect a juncture in the vicinity of KASSEL. 12th Army Group in the center, was to bolster both the 21st and 6th Army Groups with additional divisions and maintain pressure to its front. This double envelopment would deny to Germany the vital industrial material which the Ruhr produced. (4)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 28 March 1945, phase two of General Eisenhower's plan had been achieved. Victorious Allied Armies were firmly established on the east bank of the Rhine River. In the zone of the 12th Army Group, the United States Ninth Army and the British Second Army had extended their bridgehead to HALTERN. (5)

Further south the United States First and Third Armies under 12th Army Group had broken loose from bridgeheads in the vicinity of REMAGEN and OPPENHEIM. By 28 March, the First had entered MARBURG and the Third had captured the city of LAUTERBACH. (6) (7)

Sixth Army Group's Seventh Army had crossed in the vicinity of FORMS, and by the 28th had made contact with elements of the Third Army. The French First Army under Sixth Army Group was pushing eastward on a line approximately five miles west of the Rhine River. (8) See Map A. *(inserted improperly)*

(4) A-1, p. 98; (5) A-3 p. 262; (6) A-4, p. 47; (7) A-5, p. 38
(8) A-5, p. 39:

No description of the Allied situation, prior to the encirclement of the Ruhr would be complete without a brief picture of the devastation wrought in this area by the combined Allied Air Forces. Commencing on 21 February 1945, a determined effort was launched to destroy 18 railroad bridges vital to large scale movements into and out of the Ruhr. By 24 March, the objectives of this offensive were substantially achieved, resulting in ten of the bridges being destroyed, two seriously damaged, and two partially damaged, thus reducing movement in this area to a minimum. Concurrently heavy raids were carried out on targets within the projected pocket, cutting communications and inflicting serious damage to its industrial capacity.

The effect of this air bombardment on the morale of the soldier and civilian within the Ruhr surely influenced subsequent ground operations. The once mighty Third Reich was now tottering on the brink of destruction. (9)

OPERATION ORDERS PERTINENT TO THE ENCIRCLEMENT OF THE RUHR

The operations of the 12th Army Group during March caused the Supreme Commander to modify his original plan, switching the main effort from the north to the center. This decision was based on the rapid drives which both 1st and 3rd Armies had made in their drive to the East. The enemy on both of these Army fronts was disorganized, reeling from trip-hammer blows which had begun in March. In addition, it was hoped that this move would draw enemy strength from 12th Army Group in the north, where only modest gains had been made. (10)

Accordingly, on 28 March, SHAEF directed 21st Army Group (9) A-1, p. 98; (10) A-5, p. 41;

to drive to the east from its bridgehead north of the Ruhr with the objective of gaining contact on its right with 12th Army Group in the PADERBORN-KASSEL area. 12th Army Group was to advance to the northeast to make a junction with 21st Army Group in the above mentioned area. 6th Army Group was to advance from its bridgeheads and protect the right flank of 12th Army Group in its drive to the northeast. (11)

At this time, the 9th Army was holding the right flank of the 12th Army Group along the northern edge of the Ruhr. 1st Army on the left flank of the 12th Army Group had smashed 35 miles east along the southern portion of the Ruhr.

Logically then, these Armies were given the mission of a link-up which would encircle the Ruhr. 21st Army Group directed 9th Army to drive to the East, contacting 1st Army in the PADERBORN area. (12) Concurrently, the 12th Army Group instructed 1st Army to attack to the northeast to contact 9th Army in the PADERBORN area. (13)

ORGANIZATION OF UNITED STATES 1ST AND 9TH ARMIES 21 MARCH 1945

First Army at this time was composed of three Corps made up as follows:

7 CORPS

1st Infantry Division
104th Infantry Division
78th Infantry Division

(11) A-5, p. 41; (12) A-3, p. 264; (13) A-5, p. 42

8th Infantry Division - West of the Rhine

86th Infantry Division - West of the Rhine

3rd Armored Division

4th Cavalry Group

3 CORPS

9th Infantry Division

99th Infantry Division

7th Armored Division

14th Cavalry Group

5 CORPS

2nd Infantry Division

69th Infantry Division

28th Infantry Division - West of the Rhine

9th Armored Division

102nd Cavalry Group

The 9th ARMY at this time was composed of three Corps
as follows:

16 CORPS

30th Infantry Division

35th Infantry Division

75th Infantry Division

79th Infantry Division

8th Armored Division

19 CORPS - West of the Rhine

29th Infantry Division

83rd Infantry Division

2nd Armored Division

13 CORPS

84th Infantry Division

102nd Infantry Division

95th Infantry Division

5th Armored Division

All Corps had normal organic supporting units, and in addition were strongly supplemented with Quartermaster Truck Companies to lend mobility to the anticipated thrusts.

From this, it can be seen, that each of the Corps had one Armored Division operating with three Infantry Divisions. This made each Corp, and in fact, both Armies a huge Tank Infantry team.

9TH ARMY PLAN OF ATTACK

Operations in the 9th Army zone were still being conducted in the light of orders prescribing the attack across the Rhine. 16 CORPS had assaulted the Rhine and was slowly expanding its bridgehead. 19 CORPS detailed as a exploitation unit was anxiously awaiting an opportunity to cross the Rhine and begin its role. 13 CORPS defended the west bank of the Rhine, waiting for 15th Army to take over this mission.

It had not been possible at this time to bring 19 CORPS across the Rhine, principally due to two reasons. First, the restricted area of the bridgehead and the resulting large troop concentrations. Secondly, it was felt that bridging across the Rhine in the Army zone at this time was inadequate to support such a major troop movement and at the same time maintain logistical support for 16 CORPS.

The Army Commander, however, felt that the British Second Army to the north would soon breakthrough to the east, giving the 9th Army maneuver room along its northern boundry. Therefore, on 27 March, he ordered 19 CORPS to begin building up troops east of the Rhine feeling that he must risk overtaking his bridges. (14)

(14) A-3, p. 261

THE ENEMY SITUATION

German forces on the western front were still trying desperately to stem the Allied onslaught across the Rhine. His defeats west of the Rhine, where whole divisions were lost, had decimated his forces. As a consequence, he was forced to disperse his troops thinly across the whole of the western front.

Crushing Allied air blows had almost completely disrupted logistical support of front line troops. This, coupled with the successive defeats which German Armies had suffered, inflicted a severe blow to the morale of all but a minority of die-hards.(15)

German forces opposing the 1st and 9th Armies at this time, were under the command of Army Group "B", which was composed of elements of the 1st Parachute Army, Fifth Panzer Army and the Fifteenth Army. Of the three, only the 1st Parachute Army remained an effective fighting team, the others having been badly mauled in operations west of the Rhine and in vain attempts to retain the REMAGEN bridgehead. (16)

TOPOGRAPHY

9th Army at this time, faced two widely different types of terrain. North of the Lippe River, the North German plain was well suited for the employment of armor. Between the Lippe and the Ruhr Rivers, however, lay a highly built up industrial area, interlaced with waterways and marshland, all of which favored the defender.

not indicated by map
- To the south the First Army was confronted with a condition ^{similar} familiar to that of the 9th Army. Facing 1st Army in its drive to PADERBORN lay flat open country with a fine roadnet. Between the Ruhr and the Sieg Rivers however, the terrain was semi-mountainous, particularly well suited for the defense.

(15) A-1, p. 97; (16) A-9, p. 25, 26;

not Topography!

In General Montgomery's order of 28 March, provisions were included to give control of the WESEL bridges and routes therefrom to the Ninth Army. Also this order moved the British Second and Ninth Army boundary considerably to the north effective 30 March. This would provide space and necessary bridging for the employment of 19 and 13 CORPS. These provisions promised to eliminate the previous stumbling blocks of the Ninth Army.(17)

Accordingly, on 28 March, General Simpson directed that 19 CORPS cross the river without delay, attack to the east, and contact 1st Army in the PADERBORN area. 13 CORPS was to prepare to cross the Rhine, attack and sieze MUNSTER, 16 CORPS was to clear its zone to the RHINE-HERNE-DORTMUND EMS CANAL.(18)

OPERATIONS NINTH ARMY, 28 MARCH TO 2 APRIL

Operations of 16 CORPS on the 28th, consisted primarily in attacking to extend its bridgehead to the east and south. Strong enemy resistance was encountered in its zone particularly from the 116 Panzer Division, recently committed from the HOLLAND-GERMAN border. (19)

On 27 March, 19 CORPS acting on the oral orders of the Army Commander, commenced moving its units across the Rhine. By 23 March, Combat Command "A" of the 2nd Armored had assembled north of the Lippe River and the remaining elements of the division had crossed the Rhine. Remaining units of the Corps closed to the west bank of the Rhine. 19 CORPS would soon be ready to unleash its attack to the east. (20)

During 29 March, 16 CORPS continued its efforts to expand its bridgeheads clearing GLADBECK and DORSTEN, the latter being an important site for bridging the Lippe River.

(17) A-3, p. 264; (18) A-3, p. 265 (19) A-3, p. 262
(20) A-3, p. 267;

Patrols of the 79th Division attempted to probe the defenses of DUISBURG but were repulsed by heavy fire. (21)

On 30 March, the 79th and 35th Infantry Divisions drove south to the RHINE-HERNE CANAL. Little progress resulted from efforts to drive to the east. (22)

On 31 March, the 75th Infantry Division was committed passing through the 8th Armored Division for gains of 5 miles, completing entirely 16 CORPS Rhine River bridgehead. (23)

On 1 April, the 8th Armored Division passed to 19 CORPS control where better use might be made of its mobility and striking power. As an Armored unit, it had not enjoyed too much success in the densely built up area over which it had been operating. RECKLINGHAUSEN was taken by the 35th Infantry Division only after heavy fighting and use of close artillery support. (24) (See Map B)

Prisoners of war taken in this town, disclosed that the 116 Panzer Division which had been particularly troublesome to the 35th Infantry Division, had withdrawn to the east during the night. Remaining identified German units opposing the Corps, were the 180th and 190th Volksgrenadier Division and the 2nd Parachute Division. (25)

The strong resistance encountered by 16 CORPS thus far indicated that the enemy was fearful of a thrust directly south into the Ruhr. In strengthening his defenses along this front, he necessarily weakened those to the north, setting the stage for 19 CORPS drive to the east.

By 28 March, British Second Army had smashed east justifying General Simpsons earlier estimates. Due to his foresight, 19 CORPS was now in a position to be immediately employed in

(21) A-4, p. 267; (22) A-6, p. 54; (23) A-3, p. 267;
(24) A-6, p. 55; (25) A-6, p. 57;

its role as an exploitation force. On 29 March, it moved into British 2nd Army zone and advanced reconnaissance elements from HALTERN.(26)

On 30 March, its 2nd Armored Division reinforced by two Regimental Combat Teams of the 95th and 83rd Divisions, drove eastward from the HALTERN area. The remainder of the 83rd Infantry Division assembled near HALTERN preparing to follow the 2nd Armored drive.

On 31 March, blown bridges over the DORTMUND-EMS CANAL hindered only slightly the progress of the 2nd Armored as it drove to the east and a juncture with the 1st Army. By nightfall the Division had reached BECKUM 40 miles east of HALTERN. Its flanks particularly the northern face of the Ruhr, were protected by the attached Regimental Combat Teams. (See Map B)

On 1 April, Combat Command "B" swung to the south contacting the 3rd Armored Division at LIPPSTADT. The remainder of the 83rd Infantry Division was moving forward at this time to relieve the 2nd Armored from its present position, so that the momentum of the armored attack might be maintained to the east. (27) (See Map B)

Let us go back now to follow the operations of the 1st Army in its drive to the LIPPSTADT area.

1ST ARMY PLAN OF ATTACK

By 28 March, the 1st Army attacking to expand the REMAGEN bridgehead, advanced to the line SIEGEN-MARBURG-GIESSEN. 7 CORPS was on the left, 3 CORPS in the center and 5 CORPS on the right. Resistance encountered during the day was light, excepting on the northern flank. (28) (See Map B)

(26) A-3, p. 267; (27) A-4, p. 49; (28) A-4, p. 47:

At this time, General Hodge in accordance with instructions from higher headquarters, directed that the weight of the attack be turned to the north, with the objective of a link-up with the 9th Army in the FADERBORN area. Corps were to retain their relative positions on the Army front. 3 CORPS upon reaching the EDERSTAU-SEE, would be pinched out by 7 CORPS and 5 CORPS boundaries. This would enable 3 CORPS to be employed in the reduction of the eastern portion of the projected pocket. (29)

During the drive for contact we will primarily be concerned with the operations of 7 CORPS in its advance to the north.

OPERATIONS 1ST ARMY 28 MARCH TO 1ST APRIL

On 29 March, the 3rd Armored Division spearheading 7 CORPS drive to the north through favorable tank country, had driven 39 miles to GIERSHAGEN. At this time, the 8th Infantry Division had moved across the Rhine and was committed along the Corps left flank. The highly motorized 104th Infantry Division and the 1st Infantry Division followed the advancing Armor, protecting its flanks and keeping supply routes open. (See Map B)

By-passed enemy pockets caused considerable trouble during the day, hindering logistical support and communications between the forward and rear elements. However, this was to be cleared up shortly by the advancing Infantry Divisions mopping up in the zone of the spearheads. (30)

In the 3 CORPS zone, the 9th Armored Division advanced 8 miles to take KIRCHHEIM. Here heavy resistance was encountered, the enemy employing bazookas, small arms and mines. 5 CORPS from positions in WIELBURG advanced for 38 miles to reach SCHWEINSBURG by nightfall.

The 3rd Armored on 30 March, continued its drive in 7 CORPS (29) A-4, p. 48 (30) A-4, p. 49

zone advancing to within 3 miles of PADERBORN, where resistance was encountered from S.S. Westphalia, composed of elements from Germany's Panzer training center, located north of PADERBORN. This was the first coordinated defense the 3rd Armored had encountered since starting its drive from WARBURG on 29 March. (31)

The enemy at this time made a bid to break out of the rapidly forming pocket in the vicinity of MEDEBACH, but was repulsed by the 104th Infantry Division. (32) (See Map B)

On 31 March, little gain was made in the 7 CORPS zone, action being confined primarily to mopping-up and the strengthening of weak flanks.

By 31 March, 3 CORPS had reached the EDERSTAN-SEE, being pinched out at the 7 and 5 CORPS boundry. In the 5 CORPS zone, the 9th Armored had made contact with units of the 7 CORPS at AROUSEN and its forward elements captured WARBERG.

Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, saw the culmination of the 9th and 1st Armies drive to encircle the Ruhr. On this day, the 2nd Armored Combat Command B met Task Force Kane of the 3rd Armored Division in LIPPSTADT at 1400 hours. Task Force Kane had moved to the west from PADERBORN virtually unopposed to close the ring of steel.

Remaining elements of the 2nd Armored cleared PADERBORN, vital as a communication center for its further drive to the east. Again enemy attacks to break out of the pincers in the vicinity of MEDEBACH were repulsed. 5 CORPS continued its drive from WARBURG to reach BISSEN, thickening the encircling arm. (32) (See Map B)

(31) A-9, p. 25; (32) A-7, p. 307:

During this period, the 15th Army engaged in operations to simulate a crossing of the Rhine. This threat forced the enemy to employ large forces sorely needed elsewhere for the defense of the Rhine. (33)

RESULT OF OPERATIONS 28 MARCH-1 APRIL

In this period, the isolation of the Ruhr had been completed. German forces had elected to fight for the ground they held, regardless of the consequences, resulting in their complete encirclement.

Although the German High Command must have been aware of the peril which the ever closing pincers presented, no coordinated attempt was made to effect a withdrawal of the bulk of his forces. In this pocket the 1st and 9th Armies had trapped the major portion of Army Group B consisting of 17 Divisions, approximately 1/3 of the German troops on the western front. Prisoners of War poured into Army cages in ever-increasing number, presenting a serious problem in traffic control. The enemy now was showing signs of complete disintegration, his organization, communications, and morale had been shattered. Ahead lay the tremendous task of clearing ~~the~~ ^{his} gigantic pocket.

PLANS FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE RUHR POCKET

At this point both 1st and 9th Armies were faced with two major problems. First to continue the drive to the east, exploiting the large gap created by the encirclement of Army Group B. Secondly, to reduce the pocket, which remained a threat to the flanks of both Armies as long as it existed. By attacking this pocket immediately, it would be possible to keep the trapped Army Group B constantly off balance, unable to regroup for a coordinated thrust to break the wall of the pocket.

(33) A-5, p. 44;

A plan for eliminating this threat was formulated by 1st and 9th Armies, on 2 April, placing the Army boundary along the Ruhr River. This gave the 9th Army the densely built up area north of the river and the 1st Army the rugged hilly terrain to the south. The 9th Army employing 16 CORPS from present positions and 19 CORPS from the PADERBORN area was to attack to the south and southwest. The 1st Army planned to use 18 CORPS (Airborne) from the southern flank of the pocket in an attack to the north and the 3 CORPS on the southern shoulder attacking to the northwest. The remaining Corps of both 1st and 9th Armies were to prepare to continue the drive to the east. (34)

OPERATIONS OF 1ST ARMY-2 APRIL TO 10 APRIL

18 CORPS (Airborne) became operational in the 1st Army's zone, 2 April 45, assuming control of the 78th and 8th Infantry Divisions in place, and a sector on the Army left flank. (See Map C)

Its 8th Infantry Division in pushing into SIEGEN, encountered strong enemy opposition, staving off a total of six counter-attacks. Further north the enemy was particularly sensitive, resisting fiercely all attempts by the 7 CORPS to advance to the west, particularly in the WINTERBERG area, where Panzer Lehr, 3 Panzer Grenadier Division and 176th Infantry Division defended stubbornly. However, WINTERBERG was taken after an all day fight. (35) (See Map C)

On 3 April, 18 CORPS 8th Infantry Division cleared SIEGEN, and retained its position in the face of 6 determined counter-attacks launched by the enemy on 4 April. 3 CORPS relieved 7 CORPS from its responsibility for the eastern portion of the pocket on 4 April. The 9th Division of 7 CORPS was taken over (34)A-3, p. 272 : (35) A-4, p. 53

in place and the 99th Infantry Division committed on its left flank. Resistance remained strong along the Corps front, particularly in the WINTERBERG area. (36) (See Map C)

It was now evident that the enemy was determined to resist doggedly any attempt to reduce the pocket. Although the Ruhr was now useless to Germany, the enemy was aware of the large number of troops we had committed to its reduction and meant to pin them down as long as possible. Meanwhile, hoping for a miracle that was never to come. (37)

On 5 April, the newly assigned 97th Infantry Division, moved into position on the left flank of 13 CORPS line. Two enemy counterattacks supported by armor were repulsed in the Corps zone during the day.

On 6 April, 13 CORPS attacked across the SIEG and by 7 April, had three crossings over the river. Any attempt to push north from SIEGEN was met with stiff resistance, the enemy employing the favorable defensive terrain to maximum advantage. (38)

By 8 April, Infantry elements were threatening WALDBROL and HICOLPE on the Corps right flank had been secured. Small gains were made in the SIEGEN area against continued resistance. (39)

On 9 April, 13 CORPS added the 86th Infantry Division to its line-up, employing it on its right flank. This gave 13 CORPS a total of 4 Infantry Divisions to employ thru semi-mountainous terrain between the Sieg and Ruhr Rivers. Outstanding gains were made by the 8th Infantry Division on this day, its rapid advance culminating in the capture of OLPE.

On 10 April, SIEGEURG, a German strongpoint, on the extreme left of the Corps, was cleared by the 97th Infantry Division. To add armored punch to the attack, the newly arrived 13th Armored (36) A-4, p. 53 (37) A-4, p. 53; (38) A-4, p. 56; (39) A-4, p. 70;

Division passed through the left of the 97th Infantry Division to capture LOHMAR. Remaining elements of the Corps made substantial gains against moderate resistance. (40) (See Map C)

3 CORPS improved its positions on the line on 5 April, and repulsed counterattacks in the vicinity of OBERKIRCHEN. Combat Command B of the 7th Armored Division advanced to the vicinity of GRAFTSHAFT. (41)

On 6 April, the attack pushed forward slowly but relentlessly and small gains were made. The attack continued through increasingly rugged terrain on the 7th, the enemy defending stubbornly in towns and on key terrain features. On 8 April, the 9th Infantry Division advanced rapidly along the south bank of the Ruhr to MESCHEN, where contact was established with elements of the 9th Army. Still resistance from the 130th Panzer Lehr was encountered by the 7th Armored Division, attacking west from GLIEDORF. (42)

During 9 April, 3 CORPS made slow progress through the difficult terrain in its zone, surrounding BRACHT and clearing FREDENBURG. At this time, the 5th Infantry Division had been added to the Corps strength and was committed on its right flank. (43)

On 10 April, increasing progress was made. The 5th Infantry Division on the right, advancing to and crossing the Wenne River, while other units of the Corps advanced from 3 to 5 miles. (44) (See Map C)

OPERATIONS (THE 9TH ARMY) 2 APRIL TO 10 APRIL

During the period 2 to 4 April, 16 CORPS had made steady but slow progress in its drive to the south and east. WALTROP was cleared and crossings secured across the RHEIN-HERNE-DORTMUND-EMS CANALS. (45)

(40) A-4, p. 70; (41) A-4, p. 56; (42) A-4, p. 70; (43) A-4, p. 71
(44) A-4, p. 72; (45) A-3, p. 275;

In this area the enemy was stubbornly defending all built up areas, requiring bitter house to house fighting. Anti-aircraft guns once used to protect the Ruhr from air attack were employed extensively by the hard pressed Germans to supplement weaknesses in artillery fire. (See Map C)

Meanwhile in the zone of 19 CORPS, the 83rd Infantry Division on 1 April relieved elements of the 2nd Armored Division assuming responsibility for its zone. Thus enabling the 2nd Armored to continue its drive to the east at full strength.

On 2 April, the 8th Armored Division passed through the 83rd Infantry Division, taking over a portion of its zone, attacking on the same day the division encountered bitter resistance on its drive to SOEST. Principle opposition came from the 116 Panzer Division, which had moved from the vicinity of RECKLINGHAUSEN attempting to spearhead a breakthrough. (46)

On 3 and 4 April, the attack on SOEST was continued by the 8th Armored, however only slight gains were made over the difficult terrain. The 95th Infantry Division on the right of the 8th Armored Division had relieved the 83rd Infantry Division which had turned to support the Corps attack to the east. The 95th Infantry Division met strong resistance at HAMB, rail center which the 9th Army planned to use to support the drive to the ELBE. (47) (See Map C)

On 4 April, 9th Army came under the control of 12th Army Group thus bringing all forces engaged in squeezing the Ruhr pocket under centralized control. (48)

17th Airborne Division was transferred to 16 CORPS on 5 April, to lend additional weight to its attack to the south. This Division was committed on the west flank of the Corps, (46) A-3, p. 273 (47) A-3, p. 274; (48) A-3 p. 273

permitting the 79th Infantry Division to shorten its lines preparatory to launching an attack across the RHINE-HERNE CANAL. (49)

On 6 April, the 75th Infantry Division advanced to within two miles of DORTMUND against determined delaying action. In an attempt to strengthen his forces opposing the 75th Infantry Division, the enemy moved elements of the 2nd Parachute Division from the south bank of the RHINE-HERNE CANAL to a position opposite the 79th Infantry Division.

Consequently, when the 79th Infantry Division launched its attack across the Canal, on 7 April, resistance was light and a bridgehead quickly established.

The 75th Infantry Division continued its attack and moved into the outskirts of DORTMUND, where a strong counterattack was beaten off by the combined efforts of Infantry, Artillery and Tactical Air. (50) (See Map C)

By 6 April, 19 CORPS had cleared SOEST with converging attacks by the 95th Infantry Division and 8th Armored. HANNOVER had not yet fallen, however, the 95th Infantry Division had cleared two-thirds of the city in hard house to house fighting. (51) (See Map C.)

On 7 April, TASK FORCE TWADDLE was formed to place under one command forces of 19 CORPS operating on the western portion of its increasingly distant fronts. On the same day, HANNOVER was cleared by the 95th Infantry Division where large quantities of enemy equipment had been abandoned by the retreating Germans. (52)

By evening of 8 April, 16 CORPS had all of its divisions across the RHINE-HERNE CANAL and was steadily pushing south. (53)

(49) A-6, p. 60; (50) A-6, p. 61; (51) A-3, p. 275;
(52) A-3, p. 276; (53) A-3, p. 277:

Several counterattacks were launched by the enemy to beat back 16 CORPS advances, however, they were staved off by extensive use of artillery, the Corps firing a total of 1,005 missions during the day. (See Map C.)

9th Army's efforts to reduce the Ruhr pocket had progressed sufficiently now so that all operations could be efficiently controlled by one Corps. Accordingly, on 9 April, 19 CORPS units under TASK FORCE TRADDLE came under control of 16 CORPS. This gave 16 CORPS command over 4 Infantry Divisions, 1 Airborne Division and 1 Armored Division. (54)

On 9 April, 16 CORPS continuing its attack found that the enemy had withdrawn to the south, leaving only strongpoints to be cleared up or by-passed. On this day, the 79th Infantry Division drove to the Ruhr River splitting German forces north of the river into two rapidly diminishing pockets. Enemy forces supported by artillery, counterattacked in the DORTMUND area, but were driven back without loss of ground. (55)

ESSEN, home of the mammoth Krupp Plant was cleared by the 17th Airborne Division and the 79th Infantry Division on 10 April, with no opposition from enemy forces. (56)

Meanwhile, TASK FORCE TRADDLE steadily drove to the west, contacting 1st Army at MESCHENDE on 8 April. By 9 April, its 8th Armored Division had captured WERL meeting only strongpoints and roadblocks in its advance. After severe fighting on the 10th, UNNA and KAMM were added to the list of German cities captured by TASK FORCE TRADDLE. (57) (See Map C)

By 10 April 1945, it was evident that the Ruhr pocket would soon be eliminated. North of the Ruhr it had broken in two, the only remaining resistance being in the DORTMUND area.

(54) A-7, p. 62; (55) A-7, p. 63; (56) A-3, p. 278 (57) A-3, p. 279

To the south, the 1st Army had broken thru the crust of resistance on the south wall of the pocket and had begun the final phase of operations in its zone.

OPERATIONS 9TH ARMY 11 TO 14 APRIL

On 11 April, 16 CORPS 35th, 79th Infantry Divisions and 17th Airborne Division had reached the Ruhr, the 17th Airborne Division securing a small bridgehead at MULHEIM. The 75th Infantry Division maintained pressure against DORTMUND with one regiment and swung to the south to take WITTEN on the Ruhr River. To the east of DORTMUND, the 95th Infantry Division now within 3 miles of the city, made contact with the 75th Infantry Division.

The 95th Infantry Division entered the northern and eastern portion of the town on 12 April, against mines, artillery, mortars and a heavy volume of small arms fire from determined enemy forces. (58)

On 13 April, DORTMUND fell to the combined efforts of the 75th and 95th Infantry Divisions after severe fighting throughout the day.

DIUSEBERG was occupied by elements of the 17th Airborne Division the 13th of April, the city having been evacuated by the enemy. (59)

The only resistance in the 9th Army zone remaining was a small pocket five miles square, which was cleared up by the 79th Infantry Division on 14 April.

TASK FORCE TWADDLE was dissolved on 13 April, and the 8th Armored and 30th Infantry Divisions reverted to Army's 13 CORPS respectively, on 14 April. (60) (See Map D)

9th Army had completed its mission of eliminating all resistance in its portion of the Ruhr pocket. Prisoners taken (58) A-6, p. 67; (59) A-6, p. 68; (60) A-3, p. 230:

during the last few days of operations were comparatively light, indicating that the enemy had fallen across the Ruhr in a forlorn attempt to escape capture. Those captured by 16 CORPS were an ill-assorted lot, being poorly equipped and hastily organized. 16 CORPS now waited on the Ruhr River for the advancing troops of the 1st Army's 18 and 3 CORPS.

OPERATIONS 1ST ARMY 11 TO 17 APRIL

Major advances were made in 18 CORPS zone on 11 April, ATTENDOM, KILERSPE and DRABENDERHOFE falling to the Corps on-slaught.

The weight of the attack retained its momentum on 12 April, the 86th Infantry Division driving to FLETTENBURG, the 8th Infantry Division to FRINGHAUSEN and the 78th Infantry Division capturing THIER. The 13th Armored Division on the Corps left, had picked up speed and now had reached the vicinity of BURSCHIED. (61)

On 13 April, 18 CORPS had almost split the southern portion of the pocket in two. HAGEN, only 4,000 yards from the Ruhr River was taken after a drive of 16 miles by the 86th Infantry Division. (62) (See Map D)

Units of the Corps at this time, made extensive use of psychological warfare. Loudspeakers set up in front of towns demanded surrender, these efforts met with varied reaction. However, for the most part they were highly successful. Limited artillery support was received during this period due to the rapid advances of the Infantry. All available transport, particularly the artillery were pushed into service to aid in motorizing units of the Corps. The resistance which had been persistent along the Corps front, now melted away. Prisoners of war and displaced persons streaming to the rear presented a serious traffic

(61) A-4, p. 72; (62) A-4, p. 72

problem. (63)

Meanwhile in the 3 CORPS zone gains were limited due to the particularly rugged terrain and strong enemy resistance. Here gains measured in yards, were made against artillery, antitank fire and dug in artillery. The 9th Infantry Division was pinched out on 11 April by the action of the 7th Armored and 5th Infantry Divisions, and reverted to Corps reserve as required by 1st Army instructions. By 13 April, 3 CORPS forward elements had reached DEILING in the face of heavy artillery and anti-tank fire.(64)

(See Map D)

18 CORPS 8th Infantry Division established contact with 9th Army at WETTER on 14 April, splitting the remaining Ruhr pocket in two. Good progress was also made by the Corps on the left, here the 13th Armored Division succeeded in driving to the vicinity of SOLINGEN. (See Map D)

On 15 April progress continued, the corridor between the two pockets being materially widened by the 86th and 8th Infantry Divisions. These divisions driving to the Ruhr along a fourteen mile front stretching from WETTER to BOELE.

Meanwhile 18 CORPS attacking to the northwest to reduce the western pocket, encountered only token resistance, and by nightfall had taken the towns of SOLINGEN and WUPPERTAL.(65)

By the close of the 16th of April, elements of the Corps had occupied METTMAN and were three miles east of DUSSELDORF.(66)

(See Map E)

3 CORPS on 14 April, advanced to the Ruhr on its right flank against scattered strong points and cleared small towns in its zone of action. (67) (See Map E)

(63) A-8, p. 216; (64) A-4, p. 72; (65) A-4, p. 74;
(66) A-4, p. 76; (67) A-4, p. 74;

On 15 April, ALTENA was taken, here the remaining elements of 130th Panzer Lehr surrendered as a unit. ISERLOHN, the only remaining town of any size in the eastern pocket was captured after heavy fighting. On 16 April, 3 CORPS had completed its mission, the only remaining job being the collection of prisoners and equipment. (See Map E) On the 17th of April, the 7th Armored Division passed to V Corps control and the 99th Infantry Division began clearing the Corps zone enroute to Third Army.

On 18 April, 3 CORPS departed from 1st Army area. The 5th Infantry Division passed to Army control and assumed responsibility for the Corps zone on 18 April.

Scattered resistance was cleared up in 18 CORPS zone on 17 April, and DUSSELDORF captured with little opposition. Contact was made with 9th Army south of DIUSEBERG, leaving only small isolated pockets remaining to be cleared. On 18 April, all resistance in the Ruhr pocket ended. The 86th Infantry Division and the 78th Infantry Division cleared the Corps area while the remaining divisions assumed control of assigned zones in the Corps area. (68) (See Map E)

In only 18 days, the combined weight of the 1st and 9th Armies had completely swallowed the encircled German forces in the Ruhr.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

This operation, more than any other in the history of warfare, brings out the paralyzing effect of a large scale double envelopment. This type of maneuver keeps the enemy at cross purposes throughout the operation. On the one hand,

(63) A-4, p. 76

he must preserve his forces to his front, and on the other constantly look to his rear and flanks. As a result he is constantly off balance, unable to effectively counter the encircling arms. True, there have been other large envelopments, but none in which whole armies and a vital industrial area were completely surrounded at one time.

General Eisenhower's decision to modify his original plan for this operation was of far reaching consequences, and surely hastened the close of hostilities. This decision clearly demonstrated that plans if they are to be effective, must be flexible and simple so that they may be adapted to the current situation.

The loss of Army Group "B" created a funnel through which Allied Armies poured in a never ending stream. With its loss, all possibilities of continued German resistance vanished into thin air.

Army Group "B" committed a serious error when it elected to stand and fight on the ground as developed by the encirclement. More effective use could have been made of the trapped German forces, had a delaying action been initiated to shorten lines and thoroughly organize a firm defensive position.

The initial piece-meal attempts of German forces to effect a breakthrough were wasteful and abortive. Had a coordinated attempt at a breakthrough been made in the early stages of the envelopment it is possible that success might have been achieved. At this time, the walls of the pocket on the east were thinly held and only hastily organized. A coordinated attack at this point might have ruptured the encircling arm.

Allied Air Forces were highly successful in isolating the battlefield prior to the encirclement of the Ruhr. Because of its smashing attacks the Germans were unable to effectively re-enforce its troops in the Ruhr area. Railways had been damaged to such an extent that it was impossible to conduct large scale troop movements, thus preventing the encircled German forces to properly organize his troops into a coordinated defense.

Little fault can be found in the operations of the 1st and 9th Armies during this period. In the short space of three days they accomplished their initial mission of effecting a link-up to encircle the Ruhr. Only 15 days later the pocket for all practical purposes had been eliminated.

The use of psychological warfare can offer great assistance in the conduct of tactical operations. Much time and undoubtedly many lives were saved by the use of ultimatums broadcast from the front lines. In many cases this resulted in immediate surrender, allowing our troops to continue their drive uninterrupted.

15th Army played its part well in the encirclement and reduction of the Ruhr. While its role was a secondary one, it contributed greatly by holding German forces on the Rhine by the use of deception.

Inadequate logistical support certainly hastened the collapse of German forces trapped within the pocket. While there may have been plenty of supplies there was no way of getting them to the point where they were needed.

The decision to continue pushing the Germans in the trapped area was a sound one. This kept the German forces constantly off balance, unable to concentrate reserves for a coordinated attempt at a breakthrough or to establish a coordinated defense.

LESSONS

1. The double envelopment when properly executed is the most destructive and decisive of all military maneuvers.
2. Air power can effectively isolate the battlefield and in fact, complete industrial areas.
3. Plans must be flexible and simple.
4. Deception can play a vital role in support of an operation.
5. Psychological warfare when properly timed pays dividends in lives and time.
6. Adequate logistical support is vital to continued success in battle.
7. Bold and aggressive action is essential to success in battle.
8. Piece-meal use of reserves is wasteful and ineffective.