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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 343D INFANTRY
(86TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE REDUCTION
OF THE RUHR POCKET, GERMANY 12 - 15 April 1945

(CENTRAL EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of an Assistant
Regimental Executive Officer)

Type of operation described:

INFANTRY REGIMENT IN THE PURSUIT
IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 343D INFANTRY
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 343d Infantry, 86th U. S. Division, in the Reduction of the Ruhr Pocket, Germany, during the period 12 - 15 April 1945.

To enable the reader to better understand the operations involved in the reduction of the Ruhr Pocket, it is advisable to review briefly certain data and events preceding its formation.

In August 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff met in Quebec to complete and approve the broad strategic plan for the invasion of western Europe. It was foreseen during the planning phase that if the invasion was successful, the Ruhr industrial area in central Germany would of necessity become a major objective if the German Armies were to be defeated and destroyed. Accordingly, all subsequent plans were designed with this objective in the background. (1)

The Ruhr area acquires its name from the Ruhr River, which flows westward through the area to the Rhine. (See Map A) Topographically it is a triangle of rough hills, deep valleys and flat uplands. The base of the triangle lies along the upper Rhine from Cologne to Duisberg on the

(1) A-19, p. 1.

west. The peak is near Hamm, less than 60 miles to the east. (2)

The great importance of the Ruhr area lay in the ability of its industries to supply the essential weapons, ammunition and fuel on which the German war economy depended. Prior to the war, the Ruhr area produced approximately 86 per cent of Germany's steel; 66 per cent of her coal; and its industries produced more than half of her finished and semi-finished metal products, chemicals, textiles and machinery. (3)

On 6 June 1944, the first phase of the strategic plan was initiated when the Twelfth Army Group, composed of the First and Third U. S. Armies; and the Twenty-First Army Group, composed of the Canadian First and British Second Armies, landed on the Normandy beaches. (See Map A) (4)

By 7 March 1945, the First Army had reached the Rhine and seized the Remagen Bridge. (See Map A) Cologne fell on 8 March and Bonn on the 10th. Following the success of the First Army, enemy defenses west of the Rhine rapidly disintegrated and by 13 March the Twelfth and Twenty-First Army Groups had reached the Rhine along its entire length north of the Moselle. (5)

Final plans were now made for the crossing of the Rhine and encircling the Ruhr. The plan, in brief, was for the Twenty-First Army Group with the Ninth U. S. Army to make an assault crossing in the vicinity of Wesel and strike to the east and southeast. (See Map A) The Twelfth Army Group was

(2) (3) A-28, p. 132; (4) A-21, p. 23; (5) A-18, p. 47.

to push the First Army eastward from the Remagen bridgehead and link up with the Third Army in the Frankfurt - Kassel area after its crossing in the vicinity of Oppenheim.

The re-grouping completed, both army groups were poised for the assault. At 0200 on 22 March the Third Army made an assault crossing at Oppenheim. During the night of 23 - 24 March the Twenty-First Army Group, with the Ninth U. S. Army and the XVIII U. S. Airborne Corps under its operational control, forced three crossings of the Rhine north of the Ruhr. On 25 March the First Army launched its attack from the Remagen bridgehead and the drive to envelop the Ruhr was under way. (See Map B) (6)

The First and Third Armies made contact in the vicinity of Lauterbach on 28 April and were directed to continue the drive through the Frankfurt - Kassel corridor; the First Army to make contact with the Twenty-First Army Group in the Paderborn area. (See Map B) (7)

On 1 April, elements of the First and Ninth Armies made contact at Lippstadt. (See Map B) (8) German Army Group B, consisting of a major portion of the Fifth Panzer Army and elements of the First Parachute and Fifteenth Armies, with an estimated strength of 150,000 troops had been trapped within the pocket. (9) This action had completed the largest double envelopment in history. (10)

This enemy force presented a dangerous threat to the supply lines of the First and Ninth Armies if an attempt was made to break out of the lightly held pocket. Although all available troops were needed to continue the main attack

(6) A-18, p. 48; (7) A-19, p. 91; (8) A-20, p. 43;
(9) A-15, p. 52; (10) A-27, p. 134.

to the east, this dangerous situation could not be ignored. It was decided that instead of risking a severance of the vital supply lines of the main advance, the pocket would be eliminated as rapidly as possible.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The plan for the Reduction of the Ruhr Pocket called for the concurrent action of three U. S. Armies. The First Army would attack to the north and northwest to the Ruhr River from positions along the Sieg River; the Ninth Army would attack south from the Lippe River to the Ruhr River; while the Fifteenth Army, which had taken over the area west of the Rhine, would hold the west bank of the Rhine along the base of the triangle. (See Map C) (11)

The First Army assigned to the III and XVIII Airborne Corps the mission of clearing its zone. The XVIII Airborne Corps, initially consisting of the 8th and 78th Infantry Divisions, was assigned a zone of action from the army left boundary on the Rhine at the mouth of the Sieg River eastward along the river to Laasphe. (See Map C) The III Corps, composed of the 9th and 99th Infantry Divisions and the 7th Armored Division, had relieved elements of the VII Corps in the eastern sector and was to clear the area from the Lenne River to the Ruhr River. (See Map C) (12)

On 5 April, re-grouping of the XVIII Corps troops had been completed. The 86th and 97th Divisions had been at-

(11) A-13, p. 25; (12) A-15, p. 54.

tached at midnight 4-5 April. The 97th Division relieved two regiments of the 78th Division, which in turn relieved a regiment of the 8th Division, thereby effecting a sid-slip to the east to cover the corps zone. (See Map C) The 86th Division was placed in corps reserve and had assembled the 342d and 343d Infantry Regiments in the vicinity of Dillenberg. The 341st Infantry was attached to the 97th Division and was held in reserve in the vicinity of Kes-cheid. (13)

The corps resumed the offensive on the 6th, making steady progress against increasing enemy resistance. During 7-8 April, the enemy counterattacked against the 8th Division in the vicinity of Siegen. The counterattack was successfully repelled but the 8th Division had suffered heavy casualties. At this time the 86th Division was ordered to take over the right sector of the 8th Division zone, with the mission of destroying the enemy in its zone and protecting the corps right flank. (See Map D) (14)

The 86th Division, composed of the 341st, 342d and 343d Infantry Regiments, an inexperienced division, was being committed to its first offensive action. A late arrival in the European Theater, it had relieved the 8th Division at Cologne on 28 March and occupied defensive positions along the west bank of the Rhine. On 4-5 April it was relieved from the "Watch on the Rhine" by the 82d Airborne Division and assigned to the XVIII Airborne Corps for the Ruhr Pocket operation, and then closed into its present positions late on 5 April. (15)

(13) A-15, p. 56; (14) A-6, Report #15; (15) A-29.

The situation dictated the simplicity of the division attack plan. The absence of one regiment and the responsibility for the corps right flank prompted the division commander to attack in a column of regiments; the leading regiment with three battalions abreast, and the remaining regiment in reserve. (16)

At 0700 on 9 April the 342d Infantry, reinforced, passed through the 28th Infantry and elements of the 121st Infantry, and captured Hilchenbach, Heinberg, Hofolpe, Heidschadt and Silberg. (See Map D) Upon commitment of the division, the 341st Infantry had reverted to division control and started its move to the division area. (17)

On 10 April the division, advancing in a column of regiments, met increasing resistance. Late in the afternoon, the 1st Battalion of the 343d Infantry was attached to the 342d Infantry and relieved its 3d Battalion at Kirchundem. (See Map D) At the end of the day, the division had advanced 8,000 yards and was on the line: Mechlinghausen, Ober Veischede, Bilstein and Altenhunden.

The attack was continued at 0600 on 11 April on a three battalion front, and by 1900 had succeeded in crossing the Bigge River at Attendorn after a 7,000 yard advance. The 1st Battalion of the 343d was south of the Bigge River in the vicinity of Heggen. (See Map D) (18)

(16) A-9, p. 3; (17) A-12, p. 3; (18) A-9, p. 7.

THE REGIMENTAL SITUATION

Shortly after noon on 11 April, the 343d Infantry had received the division order to pass through the 342d Infantry during the hours of darkness and continue the attack at 0600 hours 12 April. The mission was to attack and destroy the enemy in the division zone.

The 1st Battalion was to revert to regimental control at 0400 on 12 April. The following regimental attachments were to become effective at 0001 hours 12 April: C Company, 311th Engineer Battalion; C Company, 311th Medical Battalion; A Company, 95th Chemical Battalion; B Company, 740th Tank Battalion; A Company, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion; and two platoons of the 86th Reconnaissance Troop. (19)

The 911th Field Artillery Battalion, reinforced by the 331st, 332d and 18th Field Artillery Battalions, was in direct support. General support was to be provided by two 155-mm Howitzer battalions, one 4.5-inch gun battalion, and one 155-mm rifle group. (20)

This combination of power constituted a strong striking force. However, as will be seen, the terrain over which it was to be employed would prevent the full exploitation of that power.

The area north of the Bigge River initially presented a series of northeast-southwest corridors terminating at the Lenne River on the northeast and extending out of the regimental zone on the southwest. (See Map E) The hill

(19) A-1, FO #2; (20) A-9, p. 4.

masses are rough and heavily wooded. Farther to the north the hills fall off to flatlands which continue down to the Ruhr valley. The main road net traverses the northeast-southwest corridors, terminating on the Lenne River to the northeast and on a north-south road along the west boundary. A limited number of secondary roads cross the hill masses. The entire area is heavily populated and many villages and towns are located along the road net.

Intelligence received by the regimental S-2 from division and the 342d Infantry indicated that this sector was defended by elements of the German 3d Panzer, 313th, 306th and 12th Infantry Divisions, supported by the 117 Flak Regiment and the 99th and 222d Flak Assault Battalions. Although disorganized and lacking adequate communications, they constituted a formidable force. (See Map F) (21)

The regimental commander had anticipated that the 343d Infantry would be committed when the Bigge River had been reached, and for the most part of 10 April and the morning of the 11th he had been observing the operations in the forward area of the 342d Infantry and those of the 1st Battalion.

Upon receiving the division order, the regimental commander returned to his own command post. From his observation and personal knowledge of the situation, he had his attack plan well formulated. After a brief study of the division order and short staff conference, the plan was completed.

(21) A-11, 12 April 1945.

The battalion commanders of the 2d and 3d Battalions were alerted and summoned to the command post for the order. Earlier in the day, the 1st Battalion commander had been given a brief outline of the proposed plan by the regimental commander. There were no changes in the plan for the 1st Battalion. (22)

THE REGIMENTAL PLAN OF ATTACK

To provide flexibility and facilitate control over the wide regimental zone, battalion combat teams were to be organized. Each combat team was to consist of one battalion of infantry, one platoon each of 105-mm cannons, medium tanks, tank destroyers, 4.2 mortars; and a medical platoon. The 1st and 2d Battalions were to have one platoon of the division reconnaissance troop, and the 3d Battalion would have the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon. All attachments were to become effective at 0001 hours 12 April. (23)

The plan was to attack with three battalion combat teams abreast. It was anticipated that the 1st Battalion would reach the Bigge River in the vicinity of Heggen before dark. From its position on the south bank of the river, it was to make an early crossing of the Bigge River, take Heggen and continue on to Plettenberg. (See Map F)

The 2d Battalion was to move from its present location at Repe after dark, cross the one remaining bridge in Atten-dorn, and move into the west sector of the city behind the

(22) A-29; (23) A-1, FO #2.

left battalion of the 342d Infantry. (See Map F) It was then to pass through the 342d Infantry at 0630, attack at 0700, and continue on to Herscheid to the northwest astride Highway #2.

The 3d Battalion was to move from its present position at Mecklinghausen to a forward assembly area south of the Attendorn Bridge. It was to cross the bridge at 0600, pass through the center battalion of the 342d Infantry, attack to the north astride Highway #3 and continue on to Kuckelheim and Huinghausen. (24)

The plan of operations and the use of combat teams presented a difficult supply problem. As has been seen, the combat teams were to operate on a wide front and if the initial attack was successful, it was anticipated that the rate of advance would exceed the ability of the regimental trains to provide the required close support.

To overcome this problem, the regimental S-4 recommended that the battalion trains be released to the battalions. The service company supply sections and the regimental trains were to be grouped and operated from a central train bivouac area. The daily ration was to be fixed with two hot meals and one emergency meal; and a supply of small arms ammunition and gasoline to be maintained in the regimental train area. The additional transportation required could be made available by using six of the anti-tank company's prime movers, as six of the 57-mm guns had been discarded and stored at Cologne and the gun crews had been converted into dismounted

(24) A-1, FO#2, 1700 11 April 1945.

tank hunter teams using panzerfausts and bazookas. The soundness and flexibility of this plan was quite apparent and received the immediate approval of the regimental commander. (25)

THE REGIMENTAL ATTACK

Shortly before 2000 hours on 11 April, the 1st Battalion commander reported that the battalion was on the south bank of the Bigge River. The bridge that he had planned to use to cross the river was badly damaged, and to complicate the situation, the north bank in the vicinity of the bridge was strongly defended. He requested that he be permitted to cross the river and establish a bridgehead under cover of darkness. By mutual agreement with the commander of the 342d Infantry, the 1st Battalion reverted to the control of the 343d Infantry. A request to division for engineer assault boats brought prompt results. By 2400 the engineer battalion brought up enough assault boats for one company to make a crossing. One company crossed the river east of the bridge, outflanked the enemy position and set up a bridgehead. (See Map F) (26)

At 2200 the regiment had received an annex overlay to the division operation order. The overlay designated a series of phase lines throughout the regimental zone. The regimental objective was to be the phase line running east-west through Plettenberg, Huinghausen and Herscheid. This did not affect the attack plans, but it did give the battalions

(25) A-10, p. 7; (26) A-7, p. 53.

a definite objective, and the information was sent down to the battalions immediately.

During the night 11-12 April, the engineer platoon attached to the 1st Battalion had made hasty repairs to the bridge at Heggen. At 0630 on 12 April, the remaining companies of the 1st Battalion crossed the river and launched their attack on Heggen. (See Map F) (27) The approach to the town was not strongly defended, but as the leading companies entered the town, they encountered increasing resistance. However, with the aid of the artillery, the town was taken by 0930. After a brief reorganization, the battalion was ready to move out for its next objective: Hulschott. (28)

The 2d Battalion passed through the 342d Infantry and by 0700 had started its advance to Reblin astride Highway #2 with its attached reconnaissance platoon out in front. The battalion made good progress and encountered only sporadic resistance consisting mainly of road blocks covered by automatic weapons. The road blocks were easily reduced by the infantry after an artillery concentration, and by 1030 the leading elements had reached Ebelinghausen. (29)

At 0600 the 3d Battalion had crossed the bridge into Attendorn, passed through the 342d Infantry and started its attack northwest along Highway #3 at 0700. It had proceeded only a short distance north of the town when it met resistance in the form of a series of heavily defended road blocks.

(See Map F)

A three battalion concentration of artillery fire was brought down on each successive road block in rapid order, and

(27) A-5, p. 1; (28) A-1, p. 52; (29) A-1, p. 50.

all resistance was dissolved. (30)

The 3d Battalion continued its advance, meeting only light resistance, until it was halted by a new type of road block. It had run head on into a milling mass of humanity. The enemy had released several thousand slave laborers and directed them to move south. The troops found they could not extricate themselves from the cheering, weeping mass, who hugged and embraced them in their happiness of new-won freedom. They were more effective than the deliberate road blocks that had been encountered previously, and the 3d Battalion advance was delayed almost an hour. (31)

The 3d Battalion, once clear, moved out for its next objective: the village of Windhausen. (See Map F) At Windhausen the battalion encountered only light resistance and the town surrendered by 0930. At this time the battalion was directed by regiment to secure the Oster-Talsperre Dam. (See Map F) The battalion commander assigned this mission to L Company, and reinforced it with the tank destroyer platoon. The remainder of the battalion continued toward Kuckelheim. (32)

The regimental command group had followed the 3d Battalion into Attendorn, and the regimental command post had been opened at 0650. The regimental commander, with his command group, had followed close behind the 3d Battalion and was on the high ground north of Attendorn. He had radio and wire communications with all three battalions and division headquarters. (33)

(30) A-4, p. 43; (31) A-7, p. 54; (32) A-29; (33) A-29.

Once through Heggen, the 1st Battalion commander put his reconnaissance platoon out in front and the battalion pushed forward. The reconnaissance troop was doing excellent work in routing small enemy delaying groups. Moving rapidly behind this screen the battalion had taken Sange and Hulschott by 1115. (See Map F) (34)

After leaving Hulschott, enemy roadblocks were found in increasing numbers and the enemy artillery fire increased. The artillery fire was sporadic and resulted in very few casualties. Nevertheless, the roadblocks had the desired effect. The light weapons of the reconnaissance vehicles were ineffective in knocking out the huge logs and emplaced weapons. This difficulty was soon overcome by moving a tank section forward. As soon as a roadblock was met, a tank-infantry team went to work and the roadblock was quickly removed.

By 1800 Landemer had been taken without difficulty and the 1st Battalion moved on to Plettenberg. As the leading elements approached the outskirts of the town, the battalion commander noticed that a wide stream ran along the southern edge of the town. He also noticed that the bridge over which the main road leading into the town crossed the stream was still intact. Remembering his experience of the preceding night, he immediately ordered the leading company to seize the bridge and secure a bridgehead in the town.

Apparently, the enemy had not expected an attack from this direction as the bridge was quickly captured against light resistance. By 2000 the attacking company had been re-

(34) A-1, p. 54.

inforced by tanks and tank destroyers, and the bridgehead had been expanded to approximately two small city blocks. The battalion, less the bridgehead elements, dug in for the night in supporting positions on the high ground south of the town. (35)

At 2030 as the battalion was settling down for a well-earned rest, the enemy opened up with rockets, artillery and mortar fire. The battalion area received heavy concentrations, but fortunately the men were dug in and the casualties were light. (36)

After moving out of Ebelinghausen, the 2d Battalion had continued its progress against light resistance until it arrived at the high ground south of Reblin about 1600. (See Map F) As the forward elements of the battalion approached the town, they received a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire.

A coordinated attack was launched with two companies and had advanced 600 yards when it was again stopped by artillery and heavy automatic weapons fire. By 1700 the battalion was unable to make any appreciable gain and the order was given to dig in for the night and prepare to continue the attack in the morning. (37)

After leaving Windhausen, the 3d Battalion began to receive an increasing amount of artillery and mortar fire. As the leading companies approached Lichtringhausen, they received particularly heavy concentrations resulting in a large number of casualties. (See Map F) This was their first heavy

(35) (36) A-1, p. 59; (37) A-8, pp. 11-12.

shelling and it slowed down their advance considerably. (38)

Lichtringhausen was taken by 1100 and the battalion pushed on toward Kuckelheim with two companies. (See Map F) L Company, after passing through Lichtringhausen, had turned northwest to secure the Oster-Talsperre Dam. After considerable difficulty in keeping the tank destroyers up with the infantry, L Company reached the dam about 1530. (39) With the aid of the tank destroyers, several concrete pill-boxes located on the north side of the dam were neutralized and the infantry rushed across on the dam itself, while the artillery effectively neutralized the enemy positions on the high ground overlooking the dam. Leaving a detachment to hold the dam, L Company continued to Himmelmert. (See Map F) (40)

While L Company was securing the dam, the remainder of the battalion had reached the outskirts of Kuckelheim. As it approached the town it came under heavy artillery fire. In some unexplained way, the artillery liaison officer had figured that the fire was coming from the vicinity of Dingringhausen, and after a 14-volley battalion concentration on the north edge of the town, the enemy artillery fire ceased abruptly. Without artillery support, the enemy resistance was quickly overrun and Kuckelheim was taken by 1700. There were 126 prisoners captured. (41)

After clearing the town, the battalion pushed forward rapidly, taking the towns of Himmelmert and Dingringhausen and by 2000 was disposed for the night approximately 1500

(38) A-1, p. 53; (39) A-1, p. 56; (40) A-4, p. 51;
(41) A-1, p. 56.

yards south of its objective. (42)

As the battalions dug in for the night, the regimental commander received a discouraging order from division. Division was taking the attached tanks, tank destroyer and 4.2 mortar platoons from the 2d Battalion. They were to be part of a task force that was to move around the left flank and attack the town of Ludenseid on the extreme left flank of the division zone. (43)

This news was particularly discouraging as all intelligence received during the day had indicated that the enemy intended to make a stand along the Herscheid-Plettenberg line. In addition, resistance had been increasing in front of the 1st and 3d Battalions and it was apparent that they would need their supporting weapons. (44)

After a brief telephone conversation with division, during which the detachment order was verified, the regimental commander issued the order to the 2d Battalion to release the tanks, tank destroyers and 4.2 mortar platoons and have them report to the 342d Infantry at Attendorn. .

The regimental order for the next day was then issued at 2000 hours. All battalions were to resume the attack at 0630. The 1st Battalion was to take Plettenberg, leave a security detachment, then swing to the west and take Holthausen; and then turn north again and continue to Kleinhammer. (See Map F) The 3d Battalion was to continue in zone, take Koblinghausen, Huinghausen and Evekling. The 2d Battalion, less its attachments, was to take Reblin and

(42) (43) A-1, p. 59; (44) A-29.

Herscheid, then move up Highway #2 to its junction with Highway #3, and continue north on Highway #3 to Barenstein.

There was to be no change in the supply plan. (45)

To support the operations plan, the 911th Field Artillery Battalion commander had planned interdictory and harassing fires throughout the night, using the supporting 155-mm guns and Howitzer battalions. For the attack, the 1st and 2d Battalions would have preparatory fires on Plettenberg and Reblin. Upon completion of the preparatory fires, there would be five battalions on call. (46)

Later, when the patrol reports were received, they verified the earlier intelligence reports. The 1st Battalion reported that the enemy was in Plettenberg in force. The 2d Battalion patrols reported that the enemy was withdrawing from Reblin and moving north toward Herscheid. Tank movement had been heard in the direction of Herscheid. The 3d Battalion reported the enemy in considerable force in both Koblinghausen and Huinghausen. It now appeared that the enemy was preparing to establish a definite defensive line. This information was sent up to division and passed down to the battalions. Nothing more could be done and the long wait for the dawn began. (47)

At 0530 the false calm before the attack was suddenly broken by the ringing of the telephone. Division G-3 reported that the tank platoon that had been attached to the 2d Battalion had not arrived at Attendorn, and the task force had gone on without them. There would be hell to pay.

(45) A-1, p. 59; (46) (47) A-29.

A hurried call to the 2d Battalion commander revealed that the tank platoon had departed for Attendorn shortly after he had received the order. Nothing could be done but send a staff officer out to locate them. (48)

Friday, 13 April, broke clear and cool. All three battalions attacked at 0630 as scheduled. The first battalion attacked from its bridgehead and met determined resistance, the enemy using all his weapons, including tanks. The attack settled down to a slugging match and house-to-house fighting. Progress was slow and casualties heavy, but the battalion doggedly pushed its way slowly into the town.

While the 1st Battalion was fighting it out in Plettenberg, the 3d Battalion, on a broad front, was advancing slowly under fire toward Koblinghausen, Huinghausen and Friedlin. (49)

The 2d Battalion launched its attack on Reblin at 0630 and by 0730 had passed through the town without resistance. The battalion commander became suspicious of ambush and issued the order to proceed with caution. (50) Although the staff officer who had been sent out earlier to locate the missing tanks had reported that they could not be found, they turned up in Reblin after the attack had started, and were welcomed by the 2d Battalion commander who immediately moved them forward with the battalion. No questions were asked at this time as to why they had not reported to Attendorn.

As the leading elements reached the high ground south of Herscheid, they were subjected to a new experience. The enemy had opened up with 20-mm flak guns, in addition to their

(48) A-1, p. 60; (49) A-7, p. 57; (50) A-8, p. 15.

automatic weapons fire. The flak shells were timed to burst over the heads of the troops, or were fired into the trees overhead, exploding on contact. The resulting confusion and casualties temporarily held up the advance of the battalion. (51)

Artillery fire was brought down on the town, but it was apparent that even with the help of the artillery a frontal attack would be time consuming and costly. A plan was soon developed to make a coordinated attack and envelop the town from the west. The attack was set for 1100. (52)

The regimental situation was becoming serious. The 1st Battalion was meeting stubborn resistance in Plettenberg. The 3d Battalion was under heavy fire and was making slow progress against heavy resistance. The 2d Battalion was stopped at Herscheid. At this time a message was received from division stating that the 341st Infantry, now in reserve, was to be committed on the left flank around the 342d Infantry, and start a drive for the city of Hagen on the Ruhr River. The 343d was to lose the 2d Platoon of the reconnaissance troop and the tank platoon now with the 1st Battalion, the 4.2 mortar platoon with the 3d Battalion and the support of the 332d and 404th Field Artillery Battalions. (53)

Under the circumstances, the loss of the reconnaissance troop would not be too serious, but the loss of the tanks, mortars and the support of two artillery battalions might affect the entire regimental situation. To offset the loss, the direct support artillery commander recommended that the

(51) A-8, p. 16; (52) A-8, p. 18; (53) A-1, p. 61.

911th Field Artillery Battalion be placed in direct support of the 1st and 3d Battalions, and the 18th Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of the 2d Battalion. The remainder of the attached corps artillery was to be in general support. This plan was approved by the division artillery commander and put into effect. (54)

Realizing there was nothing more that could be accomplished from the command post at the present time, the regimental commander decided to join the 2d Battalion at Herscheid. After arriving in the battalion rear area, the regimental commander proceeded on foot and joined the battalion commander on the high ground overlooking Herscheid. (55) From this position, two companies could be seen moving toward their attack positions under cover of artillery fire and a smoke screen being laid down by the 81-mm mortars. E Company was moving off to the west to its attack position. (56)

As the regimental commander was being given the details of the attack plan, he was informed that the chief of staff wanted to speak to him on the division command net. Upon answering the call, he was instructed to report to the division commander at once. (57)

When he arrived at division headquarters in Attendorn, he was directed to join the chief of staff in the war room. The chief of staff was given the situation and as it was being plotted, the division commander entered the war room. (58) After the regimental commander had given him a brief resume of the situation, the general said: "George, I want

(54) A-1, p. 62; (55) (56) A-29; (57) A-7, p. 56; (58) A-29.

you to motorize a battalion, reinforced, and put them on one of these roads leading north (indicating on the map a road leading out of Huinghausen) and tell them to keep going. There is nothing in front of you; nothing at all. Load the men on tanks and tank destroyers and go like the devil. You had better go with them yourself." (59) The regimental commander hesitated a moment while the effect of this order registered. Then turning to the general, he inquired if the general realized that all three battalions were already committed on a four and one-half-mile front with big gaps existing between them, and that he had no reserve. The general made no comment on the tactical situation, but stated that 17 $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton trucks would report to the regimental command post in an hour. With this, the general departed for corps headquarters. (60)

When the regimental commander returned to the command post about 1200 there had been little change in the situation. The 1st Battalion was well into Plettenberg but the enemy was continuing to fight it out. (See Map F) The 2d Battalion was attacking at Herscheid but the town had not been taken. The 3d Battalion had taken Koblinghausen and was now attacking Huinghausen. L Company had cut Highway #2 southeast of Friedlin and was preparing to move on to the town. (61)

In the meantime, an order had arrived from division at 1030 directing that the direction of attack be changed from northwest to north. (See Map F) A new boundary indicated

(59) (60) A-7, p. 57; (61) A-29.

that the 342d Infantry would be on the left flank. The regimental objective was to be the high ground west of Altena. (See Map F) (62)

After a study of the situation map, the regimental commander announced his plan. The 3d Battalion would converge on Huinghausen, and after the town was taken, the battalion would be motorized and strike north for Eveking. (See Map F) The 1st Battalion was to follow the present plan and after taking Plettenberg was to move west and then north closing on the right flank of the 3d Battalion. The 2d Battalion after taking Herscheid was to continue on to Barenstein. The regimental executive officer was instructed to issue the necessary orders to the battalions. (63)

About 1500 the regimental commander, with the truck column, proceeded to the road junction south of Friedlin where L Company had assembled. (See Map F) While L Company was entrucking, the 4.2 mortar platoon, which had again been attached to the regiment, arrived and fell in at the rear of the truck column. (64)

At this time a message was received from the 3d Battalion commander that K Company had taken Huinghausen and after mopping up would move to the hills north of the town and cover the entrucking of the rest of the battalion. (See Map F) I Company was pinned down by fire from the vicinity of Mulhof and their right flank. He would disengage I Company and bring them to Huinghausen. (65)

The truck column, led by the 3d Battalion messenger ve-

(62) A-1, p. 62; (63) A-7, p. 57; (64) A-29; (65) A-7, p. 58.

hicle, started west on Highway #2 for Huinghausen. (See Map F) When the head of the column reached a point about 800 yards from the west end of the town, it was possible to see K Company, supported by two tanks, moving up the hill to the north under cover of an artillery concentration.

Suddenly, the leading vehicle of the column was struck by a hail of machine gun fire and went over the bank on the left side of the road. About this time the regimental commander's vehicle was struck by a similar burst of machine gun fire and as the occupants tumbled out into the road, a 40-mm flak shell struck the left side of the vehicle. The drivers of the following vehicles, seeing what had happened, immediately came to a stop. (66)

The enemy, located in two houses, one on either side of the road, were so intent on killing the men of the first two vehicles that they had not seen the troop carrier.

In a matter of minutes the L Company commander had his men in action and both houses were cleared. Nine enemy were killed and 14 were taken prisoner. While this action was taking place, K Company had located and silenced the flak gun that had been firing from the hill north of the road.

(67) L Company was ordered to continue into the town on foot and clean out by-passed enemy. The trucks were to follow behind L Company. (68)

Although wounded by flak, the regimental commander continued into the town on foot. As the command group approached the center of the town, they observed a soldier at the corner of a house relaying fire orders to an M-7 that was parked be-

(66) (67) A-29; (68) A-29;

hind the house. The regimental commander entered the house and found another soldier at the foot of the stairs. The soldier stated that the battalion S-2 was on the top floor. When found, the S-2 was adjusting artillery fire on a group of enemy that was holding up I Company. He was relaying his commands through the men to the M-7, which in turn, radioed them to fire direction center. (69) He informed the regimental commander that the battalion command post was the last house in the block.

The command group then moved on to the battalion command post. The regimental commander immediately contacted the regimental executive officer and was informed that the 1st Battalion had taken Plettenberg at 1330 and was moving west to Holthausen. (See Map F) They had taken 800 prisoners and liberated 20 American enlisted men and four officers. The 2d Battalion had taken Herscheid and was now receiving a counterattack by infantry and six tanks. So far their casualties had not been heavy, but one of their tanks was out of action. The 342d had attacked Ludenscheid at 1100 and was still clearing the town. (70)

At this time a messenger arrived from I Company stating that the company commander had been wounded, but the enemy was withdrawing and the company was moving forward. It was now decided to send I Company forward on foot to close on K Company at Warbollen while I Company closed into Huinghausen. The trucks were to bring I Company forward and K and L Companies would be entrucked at Warbollen. (See Map F) (71)

(69) A-29; (70) A-1, p. 63; (71) A-29.

As the 1st Battalion moved west out of Holthausen, they found themselves on the flank of the enemy that was holding up I Company. The leading company moved in and took advantage of its position. A full artillery battalion was captured and the few Germans who escaped, withdrew to the north. (72) The battalion then continued on to Muhlhof and turned north to Frehlinghausen.

Word was now received that the 2d Battalion had repelled the third counterattack on Herscheid by destroying four of the German tanks. (See Map F) The battalion also reported that the enemy was withdrawing to the north. (73)

Although the mission of the task force had not been accomplished, the regimental situation had improved considerably. The regimental command group was moved forward to Warbollen. (74)

After arriving at Warbollen, the regimental commander decided that the regiment would push on another two miles to the next valley and cut the east-west highway. (See Map F) This would possibly prevent the enemy reorganizing another defensive line. The 1st Battalion was to take Kleinhammer; the 3d Battalion would push on to Eveking and the 2d Battalion would continue to Barenstein. (See Map F) (75)

The 3d Battalion commander stopped at the forward command post on his way forward to join L and K Companies. After a brief conference* with the regimental commander, it was decided to motorize K Company and send it forward to seize the high ground south of Eveking. L Company was to move to

(72) A-7, p. 67; (73) A-8, p. 24; (74) (75) A-7, p. 68;
(75) A-7, p. 68.

Rarin and cover K Company while it entrucked. I Company was to be moved forward later to join L Company and then both companies would follow.

At 2200 the K Company truck column, preceded by heavily armed intelligence and reconnaissance platoon jeeps, moved off. Shortly after the column moved out of Warbollen, a heavy fog descended. The motor column passed through L Company at Rarin without difficulty, but as the column advanced, the fog became so dense that visibility was limited to approximately 10 or 15 feet. The column was halted and men were put out in front to guide each vehicle. The distance between the trucks and intelligence and reconnaissance vehicles was increased to 200 yards. (76)

The column moved slowly through the heavy fog. Suddenly the ghost-like figure of a soldier appeared out of the fog and halted the leading truck. He informed the company commander that the enemy was just ahead. The intelligence and reconnaissance section proceeding on foot had discovered an enemy tank and a large group of enemy covering the road. (77)

K Company dismounted and went into position to wait for daylight without being discovered. Shortly after K Company had taken up their positions, the enemy sent out a four-man patrol that was captured without a round being fired. The company commander learned from the prisoners that the enemy had several heavy tanks and were digging in with orders to hold to the end. They thought K Company's trucks were some of their own withdrawing. (78)

(76) (77) A-7, p. 69; (78) A-7, p. 70.

A report of K Company's situation and the prisoners were sent back to battalion headquarters at Rarin by the intelligence and reconnaissance section with the information that the company would attack at daylight. About midnight the 1st Battalion reported they were being held up by roadblocks and fog. The 2d Battalion reported that they had met resistance and a roadblock about 1000 yards north of Herscheid. (79) When this information was received at regiment, the battalions were then notified to hold up for the night and be prepared to continue the attack in the morning. (80)

During the evening, information had been received from division that Ludenscheid had been captured; the 342d Infantry had advanced 1000 yards to the northeast; and the 341st Infantry was approaching Hagen. (See Map F) (81)

At 0600 14 April the attack was continued in a heavy ground mist. The 1st Battalion was moving slowly against numerous roadblocks. In many instances, these roadblocks were composed of wrecked and burned trucks and other discarded equipment. One enemy tank had been destroyed and by 0830 the battalion was north of Wichardt, moving toward Kleinhammer. (See Map F) (82)

The 3d Battalion, less K Company, moved out of Rarin at 0600 and advanced rapidly to Wasche and joined K Company. The battalion quickly moved into the town against light resistance. The attack took the defenders by surprise and a large number of prisoners was taken. (See Map F) (83)

(79) A-1, p. 67; (80) A-7, p. 69; (81) A-9, p. 8;
(82) A-1, p. 69; (83) A-29.

The 2d Battalion had moved out about 0500 and had made good progress against light resistance. By 0900 the battalion had taken Schonebecke and Vogelsang and was approaching Barenstein. (See Map F) When it was determined that the roadblock on Highway #2 could not be removed without heavy engineer equipment, the battalion vehicles, under command of the battalion executive officer, were re-routed through the 3d Battalion area to Rarin. From Rarin they were to turn west and rejoin the battalion south of Barenstein. (84)

About 0900 as the 2d Battalion motor column moved west out of Rarin, the leading vehicle was fired upon by two 88-mm guns from a position about 500 yards west of the town. (See Map F) Fortunately, the first rounds missed the leading vehicle and the occupants managed to escape. The motor column closed up and stopped. Soon mortar fire was brought down on the column along the road south of Rarin.

Machine guns mounted on the leading vehicles began firing on the 88-mm guns. While these guns held the attention of the enemy gunners, two 57-mm guns that were in the column south of the town opened fire on the 88's. The 88's immediately engaged the first 57-mm gun, wounding seven of the crew. However, the second 57-mm crew found the range and silenced one of the guns with a direct hit with a high explosive round. The crew of the remaining gun withdrew and abandoned the gun. Shortly afterwards the enemy mortar fire ceased. The motor column was hastily reorganized and moved on to join the battalion. (85)

(84) (85) A-29.

The regimental command group had been moving forward to Rarin and had arrived just in time to share the mortar fire. When the fires lifted, the command group moved into the town and established communications on the 3d Battalion wire line. (86)

The 1st Battalion had been pushing forward against small delaying forces and roadblocks and by 1130 they were attacking Kleinhammer. (See Map F) Here they encountered the first heavy resistance of the day. As they approached the town, they received heavy artillery and direct fire from 88-mm guns in addition to small arms fire.

The battalion commander sent two companies around to the west and attacked through the adjacent village of Vorth Heide. (See Map F) Only small arms and automatic weapons were met in Vorth Heide and Kleinhammer was taken by 1530. Shortly thereafter, contact was made on the left with the 3d Battalion. (87)

After reorganizing, one company was sent north to capture Osmecke and make contact with the 99th Division at Werdohl. The remainder of the battalion moved out for Brengel. (88)

After clearing Wasche, the 3d Battalion continued its advance to Evekling. (See Map F) The battalion made rapid progress against occasional small arms fire and roadblocks, and Ludemart was taken by 1200.

As the battalion moved out of Ludemart and started for Evekling, it received heavy direct 88-mm fire from both Evekling

(86) A-29; (87) A-1, p. 70; (88) A-1, p. 71.

and Dornwerth. All available artillery fire was placed on Eveking and the battalion was able to move into the town.

Once in the town, movement became more difficult and settled down to house-to-house fighting. The Germans were using 88-mm guns for direct fire through the streets which hampered movement considerably. However, Eveking was taken by 1500 and Dornwerth was cleared by 1530. (89) Contact was made with the 1st Battalion at Kleinhammer and elements of the 2d Battalion at Barenstein. (90)

The 2d Battalion had arrived at Barenstein about 0930 and the town was taken against light resistance. (See Map F) One company was left in Barenstein to clean up and the remainder of the battalion turned west to Augustenthal. Augustenthal offered only token resistance and the town was cleared by 1300. (91)

All battalions were now on their objectives. It was apparent that organized resistance was fast disintegrating. The defense of the roadblocks and towns had been disorganized and, unlike that of the 13th, was undetermined. It was clear now that with continued pressure there would be no opportunity for the Germans to reorganize.

The regimental commander immediately assigned new objectives to each battalion. The 1st Battalion was to take Brengen; the 3d Battalion was to take Eschen and Dosseln; and the 2d Battalion was to move on Ossenberg. The orders were given to the battalions and a coordinated drive was once again under way. (92)

(89) A-4, p. 59; (90) A-1, p. 70; (91) A-8, p. 27; (92) A-29.

The commanding general had arrived at the regimental command post about 1530. After looking over the situation map, he instructed the regimental commander to continue the attack to the north. He also stated that the 342d was making good progress in their zone on the north and the 341st Infantry was fighting in the city of Hagen and expected the city to be taken soon. He also stated that there would be new boundaries down later in the evening; and that the artillery commander had been captured. ^{Briq Gen. Gjelsteel} (93)

About 1730 the division order and boundaries for 15 April were received. The regiment was to continue in zone, seize the high ground west of Altena and clear out all enemy to the Lenne River. (See Map F) The mission would necessitate a change in battalion boundaries and a change in the direction of the attack. (94)

The regimental commander soon had his plan ready and the order was issued to the battalions at 1835. All three battalions would attack at 0600. The 1st Battalion was to follow the 3d Battalion through Dosseln and then attack north to Rentrop, then turn west to Brengel. (See Map F) (95) Upon reaching Brengel it was to go into reserve and protect the right flank of the 3d Battalion. After the 3d Battalion had completed its change in direction, the 1st Battalion would patrol to the north and northeast to the Lenne River and mop up any enemy found between its location and the river. The 3d Battalion was to turn west from Dosseln, take Brunscheid, then drive north through Rosmart to Muhlen.

(93) A-29; (94) A-1, p. 72; (95) There are two villages by this name. The second is approximately 4000 yards northwest of the one occupied by 1st Bn the night of 14 April.

Rahmede and Stadtische Rahmede and capture Hills 416 and 412. The 2d Battalion was to attack northwest to Altrogen Rahmede, then turn north to Paschelstelle, then northwest again to Sonnenscheid and north again to Sussenscheid and Hill 366 which overlooked the city of Altena. (96)

This plan would accomplish a dual mission. The change in direction of attack would be protected as well as give the 1st Battalion a much needed rest. The 1st Battalion had been attacking continuously for five successive days over difficult terrain and the strain was beginning to show on the men. (97)

All three battalions were moving forward rapidly against little or no resistance. By 2000 the 1st Battalion was in Brengel, and the 3d Battalion had taken Dosseln and the 2d Battalion had reached Ossenberg. The battalions were given the order to hold in place for the night and maintain contact throughout the night with strong patrols. (98)

Back at the regimental command post the prisoners that had been taken during the day were becoming a problem. Approximately 1600 had been taken and only 800 had been evacuated by division. At 1800 the G-1 had informed the S-1 that he could not evacuate those on hand during the night.

All vehicles in the regiment were engaged in feeding and re-supplying the battalions for the attack in the morning and evacuation by organic vehicles was out of the question. The S-1 finally solved his problem by requesting the anti-tank mine platoon for guards and placing the prisoners

(96) (97) (98) A-29.

in an open field covered by caliber .50 machine guns. (99)

At 0600 on 15 April all battalions were moving out on their assigned missions. The 1st Battalion following the 3d Battalion cleared Dosseln at 0855 and reached Brenge at 1135. (See Map F) They had encountered no organized resistance but received considerable small arms and occasional 88-mm fire from small delaying groups. These groups were quickly dispersed or captured. Near Brenge an 88-mm gun and crew were captured. The gun crew was armed with a new type of rifle. Several were collected and sent back through intelligence channels. (100)

The 3d Battalion moved out of Dosseln as scheduled in a column of companies and arrived at Brunscheid by 0915. (See Map F) Artillery had been placed on Brunscheid during the night and early morning and the leading company took the town without difficulty. Contact was made with elements of G Company who were protecting the flank and rear of the 2d Battalion. The 3d Battalion, still in a column of companies, turned north to Rosmart. (101)

As the leading company approached Rosmart, it received harassing artillery fire. The troops had now become seasoned to this type of fire and the company pushed forward rapidly. Only light resistance was encountered at Rosmart and by 1000 the two leading companies were moving north out of the town. The reserve company was assigned the mission of mopping up the town. (102)

The 2d Battalion had cleared Ossenberg at 0600 and

(99) A-7, p. 71; (100) A-1, p. 75; (101) A-1, p. 74;
(102) A-4, p. 64.

after reducing numerous roadblocks, it had launched its attack on Altroggen Rahmede at 0815. (See Map F) Initially, it received some heavy automatic weapons fire, but once the leading elements had gained a foothold in the southern edge of the town, all resistance crumbled and several hundred prisoners were taken. After a hasty reorganization, the battalion moved out for Paschelstelle.

The regimental command post had been moved to Augustenthal by 0900. The great number of prisoners being sent back from the battalions still created a problem. Except for specific individuals, interrogation and normal methods of handling prisoners were discarded. All available regimental troops and all available vehicles were utilized, but the prisoners were still coming in faster than they could be evacuated. (103)

The 1st Battalion had arrived at Brengel and gone into its reserve position. (See Map F) Motorized patrols were immediately organized and contact was made at the Lenne River with the 393d Infantry northwest of Werdohl by 0935. (104)

After clearing Rosmarth, the 3d Battalion proceeded north to Muhlen Rahmede. The town, stretching along the main road, did not constitute much of an objective. The leading company, supported by the tank platoon quickly discouraged the disorganized defenders by knocking out the first two machine guns and demolishing the houses they were in by direct fire. Except for a few fanatical individuals, all resistance ceased. More than 300 prisoners were taken.

(103) A-29; (104) A-1, p. 73.

Mopping up had been completed and the battalion was on its way north to Stadtische Rahmede. (105)

By 1625 Stadische Rahmede had surrendered 500 prisoners, and the leading elements of the battalion had reached the Lenne River. All bridges across the river to Altena had been demolished but voice contact was made with elements of the 393d Infantry when they reached the river at 1645. (106)

One company moved up on Hills 416 and 412 while the remaining companies organized patrols and began mopping up bypassed enemy groups. (107)

By 1410 the 2d Battalion had taken Paschelstelle without trouble. The poor roads and rough terrain were more of an obstacle than the enemy. The regimental commander decided to motorize the 2d Battalion and trucks were immediately sent forward by the S-4. Motorized and screened by the reconnaissance platoon, the 2d Battalion made rapid progress and reached its objective, Sussenscheid and Hill 366 by 1830. (108)

The regiment was on its objective and had reached the Lenne River throughout its zone. Patrolling was continued throughout the night and a great number of prisoners was taken. Information was received that the 341st Infantry had captured Hagen in the north and the 342d Infantry was in Hohenlimburg on the left; and that the artillery commander had been re-captured by the 99th Division.

Early on 16 April the regimental commander was informed that all attachments would revert to division control and the regiment was to prepare to move to the Third Army.

(105) A-1, p. 75; (106) (107) (108) A-1, p. 76.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing this operation there are several primary considerations that must be remembered. First, the regiment was inexperienced and untried under combat conditions. Second, this operation throughout constituted a pursuit, the most difficult of all operations to execute.

From the time the regiment was committed, the regimental commander was confronted with a dual mission that was further complicated by the assignment of a zone of action beyond the physical ability of a regiment to cover efficiently, even with supporting attachments.

The mission, as we have seen, was to execute a frontal attack, maintaining continual pressure on the enemy and at the same time protect the corps flank. Under normal conditions the maintaining of impetus and direction of the attack in the pursuit is difficult, but the added mission of flank protection imposed an unnecessary burden on the commander.

A close analysis of the commander's plan of operation will disclose that he employed the only alternative of maneuver left to him. Only by penetration with strong combat teams could he maintain the impetus of attack and still cover his assigned zone.

The existence of gaps between the attacking battalions exposed their vulnerable flanks. However, in addition to the attachment of reconnaissance elements, the commander was depending on the attack to keep the enemy so busy and disorganized that he would have no time or means to attack the

vulnerable flanks.

The regimental commander realized that communications could not always be effectively maintained in this type of operation and that control would depend upon communications. He decided to organize battalion combat teams and thereby effect a maximum of control and close support between the battalions and the supporting units.

In addition, it was apparent that normal supply operations could not provide the necessary close support required. The minor changes made in the supply organization provided the additional means whereby not only the organic units but the attached units were adequately supplied throughout the operation.

The ability of units of various arms to work together as a team is largely dependent on previous training prior to combat. Within a few hours after attachment, the battalion combat teams moved into the attack without delay or confusion and in close coordination with the attached units. This coordination and close support was maintained throughout the operation and most certainly was a major factor in the success of the operation.

Regardless of how well troops are trained prior to their entry into combat, their initial battle experience is by far the quickest and best training. As has been seen, the troops quickly learned that rapid movement through artillery fire is normally the best protection; and to place fire quickly and accurately on the enemy is the best protection against his small arms fire.

The failure of the 2d Battalion to maintain close contact at Reblin during the night of 12-13 April permitted the enemy to break contact and organize a strong defense at Herscheid. In all probability the losses at Herscheid could have been prevented if pressure against the enemy had been maintained.

The conflict of orders as to the attachment and detachment of supporting troops during the night of 12-13 April and the morning of 13 April could have been prevented and considerable fire power gained during this period if the division staff had been coordinated and abreast of the situation. This failure worked considerable hardship on the troops concerned.

In capturing Huinghausen, K Company failed to secure its flank. Fortunately, the motor convoy intervened and diverted the enemy's attention. The enemy could have done considerable damage to K Company's attack from his flanking position.

The order to motorize the 3d Battalion on 13 April was untimely, to say the least. Even in pursuit operations when the enemy cannot be dislodged quickly, the attack must be properly coordinated and supported by all available means. Higher commanders must realize that the situation on the ground may change quickly and that orders issued previously cannot always be executed after a change in the situation.

Fire support provided by the 4.2 mortar platoons and the various calibers of artillery was invaluable. Not only did the artillery provide neutralizing fires during the

attack, but long range harassing and interdictory fires of the 155-mm and 4.5 guns aided in keeping the enemy disorganized. Even when the infantry stopped, the artillery maintained pressure by its demoralizing and disorganizing fires.

Throughout the operation it was necessary for each commander to rely upon the initiative and ingenuity of his subordinate commanders. The commanders learned, and learned well, from their initial mistakes. This was particularly true in the case of the 1st Battalion commander in seizing the bridgehead at Plettenberg immediately upon discovering the available bridge, and again in the case of the 3d Battalion commander in refusing to allow himself to become tied up in small actions after his experience of 13 April at Huinghausen.

In almost every instance, the battalion commanders made excellent use of their attached reconnaissance units. Not only were they indispensable as a reconnaissance and security force, but in many instances, were able to overcome small delaying forces without interfering with their primary missions. In the use of the regimental intelligence and reconnaissance platoon it must be recognized that they cannot operate in the same manner as the division reconnaissance platoon. They have neither the vehicles nor fire power of the latter, and the missions assigned to them must be within their capabilities.

The entire operation discloses many instances when the

infantry would have been held up and seriously delayed if it had not been for the attached armored units. In many instances, the armor provided the necessary weight to maintain the attack impetus. The attachment of tanks and tank destroyer units to the battalion combat teams provided the battalion commander with the additional fire power and shock action that frequently meant the saving of lives and time.

From the over-all viewpoint, the operations of the 343d Infantry constituted more than the successful accomplishment of its assigned mission. An untried regiment had entered combat and although there had been many minor mistakes, it had learned its combat lessons well, as was later proved. It emerged from the operation a better and physically harder combat force with a minimum price paid in casualties for the invaluable lessons that are taught by fire and battle alone.

Although playing only a small part in the Reduction of the Ruhr Pocket Operation, the 343d Infantry had fought as a member of a larger team that had successfully defeated and captured more than 325,000 enemy in addition to capturing huge stores of supplies and equipment and his greatest industrial area.

LESSONS

Every operation or engagement provides many lessons to be learned by the participants. This operation, like many that preceded it, emphasized the following lessons.

1. A continuous estimate of the situation, supplemented by personal reconnaissance when possible, is essential for sound and intelligent planning.

2. In the attack no unit should be assigned a frontage greater than it can effectively cover.

3. Successful tactical plans must include sound logistical support, particularly in a pursuit operation as subordinate commanders must be relieved of all worries concerning supply and evacuation.

4. Pursuit of a defeated enemy must be pushed to the utmost limit of endurance of men and equipment.

5. The enemy attempts to organize his retreat under cover of darkness must be frustrated as he must not be allowed to break contact under any circumstances.

6. A properly trained and coordinated infantry-artillery-tank team is a valuable agency in creating destruction and in terrorizing the enemy.

7. When the enemy succeeds in establishing himself in a position from which he cannot be dislodged quickly, prompt measures must be taken to coordinate the attack again, supporting it with all available means.

8. In the pursuit, open flanks are highly vulnerable and are best secured by keeping the enemy so heavily engaged that he has no time or means available to threaten the flanks.

9. Security of attack forces is assured by timely search for information in all directions from which a hostile threat may come, and by the proper disposition of se-

curity forces of ample mobility and combat power.

10. In offensive operations the greatest need for security exists during critical phases of the battle and security is increased by meeting possible threats with heavy fire before they can develop.

11. Reorganization must be rapid and preparations must be made immediately for the defense of the objective against counterattack.

12. The pursuit requires extensive reliance upon radio for communications with the attacking troops with the construction of wire lines concentrated along the more important axes.

13. Commanders must not allow themselves to become involved in subordinate actions to the extent of neglecting the remainder of their command.

14. A unit should never halt on the near side of a river or other obstacle unless it has secured a bridgehead and even if it does not intend to exploit the bridgehead, it imposes a definite threat to the enemy.

15. Tanks, tank destroyers and other direct fire weapons are invaluable in reducing strong points.

16. Battles are won by fire and maneuver which provide the means to gain an advantageous position from which to accomplish the mission.

17. Obstacles and demolitions are of little value unless defended, and they are best defended from a distance as the enemy will place fire on the obstacle.

18. Anti-aircraft or other rapid fire large caliber weapons are extremely effective and demoralizing when employed against ground troops.

19. When troops are caught in artillery, rocket or mortar fire, the quickest way to get out of it is to move forward since there is a tendency to increase range rather than decrease it.

20. The two-way attack is the most rapid and least costly in men and equipment.

21. Flexibility of plans is essential to enable pre-arranged plans to be altered to meet the changing situation.

22. Orders to subordinate commanders should state the mission and then permit those commanders to exercise their own initiative and ability in the execution of the order.

23. Time of attack and type of preparation should not be standardized for every attack since variation is essential in gaining the element of surprise.

24. Realistic and comprehensive training is essential in preparation for combat.

25. Frequent visits of commanders and staff officers to the front lines with combat units builds troop morale and confidence in those officers.