

PART SEVEN

The German Campaign—15 March-8 May 1945

CHAPTER I

Preparation and Plans

Early 19 February 1945 the Seventh Infantry commenced movement by motor from the Rhine and to rest areas north of Nancy, France. The route followed was through Colmar, St. Die, Luneville and Nancy. The units closed in to their assigned areas during the night.

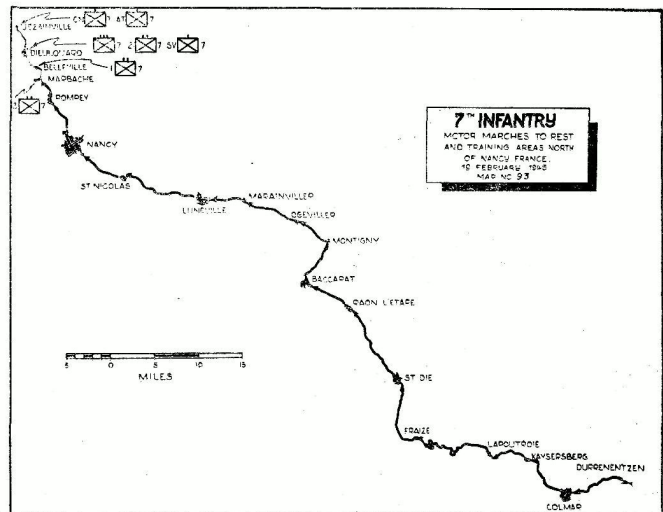
The Red Battalion closed into Belleville, the White Battalion into Dieulouard, the Blue Battalion into Marbach, Anti-Tank and Cannon Companies into Jezainville. Service Company set up in Dieulouard where the Regimental Command Post was also established. Company "A", 3rd Medical Battalion, was established in Pont-A-Mousson. Attachments were released from Seventh Infantry control.

The Regiment rested and rehabilitated its troops the first few days in the new area. "Cotton Balers" received a hearty welcome by the populace in the towns of the province of Lorraine, where they were billeted in the homes of the people and public buildings. Moving pictures and shows were provided for the men and each company held dances which were attended by the old and young "belles" of Lorraine, who quickly learned the American "jitterbug" steps and enjoyed the dances. Passes were given to the men to visit the historic city of Nancy. Sundays were devoted to religious services.

Commencing 26 February a limited training program was conducted which included inspections, disciplinary training and conditioning marches. The personal appearance of the men, care and cleaning of equipment took up part of the time. The Articles of War were re-read and lectures given on morality and sex. A "team spirit" was renewed within the squads, platoons and companies with the non-commissioned and commissioned officers learning the names of all the new men, being intent on becoming better acquainted.

On 2 March a more intensive program of training was initiated with eight hours per day devoted to weapons training and small unit problems in the attack and defense. One-third of the training was conducted during the hours of darkness. Emphasis was placed on "village and street fighting" which took place in Pournoy la Chetive, where a "typical" German village was set up. Demonstrations of street fighting by selected personnel preceded the use of the village by small unit formations of the battalions. Full use was made of demolitions, grenades, rocket launchers, flame throwers and other Infantry weapons. Tank destroyers were used in the exercises. Every measure was taken to make the problems as realistic as possible for the new members of the Regiment. During the night training "artificial

moonlight" was used. Anti-Tank Company was organized into tank destroyer sections and training was begun with the rocket launcher, better known as the "bazooka", as the primary weapon of the company rather than the anti-tank gun, though the gun was not neglected. Firing was conducted. Cannon Company fired its weapons on the artillery ranges. Numerous schools were held for the officers and non-commissioned officers which included classes for forward observers in the direction of artillery and mortar fire.



On 7 March an impressive ceremony was held on the historic plain of Lorraine, two miles west of Dieulouard, when the gallant Seventh Infantry was highly commended by Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, Commanding General of the American Seventh Army, Major General John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, Commanding General of the Third Infantry Division, and his assistant, Brigadier General Robert T. Young, for the prominent part it played in reducing the "Colmar Pocket" and in previous operations.

On a grey, cool, early afternoon, after preparing and practicing all morning, the splendid troops of the "Cotton Baler" Regiment were arrayed in battalion formations to the admiration of a large civilian gallery. The Regimental Colors with their numerous campaign streamers flapped in the breeze as one of the oldest and most decorated regiments in the United States Army stood at attention.

General Patch presented the nation's highest valor award to Sergeant James P. Connor of the Battle Patrol for the actions he performed at Cavallaire-sur-Mer, in Southern France, 15 August 1944. Company "E" received its well-deserved Presidential Unit Citation and the Regiment was officially awarded its "Combat Infantry Regiment" streamer, which was welcome, but unnecessary, as every combat soldier knows that the Seventh Infantry has always been and will always be a "Combat Infantry" Regiment. Numerous Purple Heart Medals, Silver Star Medals, Bronze Star Medals and Soldier's Medals were also awarded to Seventh Infantry personnel. The ceremony ended with the magnificent "7th Light Foot" Infantry, with her colors, streamers and banners flying, and her inimitable "dogfaces", passing in review before the commanding generals. It was a sight that would thrill the heart and bring tears to the eyes of those who know what the Seventh Infantry has been through, has meant and will always be to the United States of America. It is the Regiment that is always "willing and able" and has never failed in its assigned mission.

During the stay north of Nancy the Commanding Officer, John Arnold Heintges, became a full colonel of the United States Army. It was a promotion justly given and there was not a man in the entire Regiment who did not feel happy for the "old man," as he had proven his ability and many felt he should have had the promotion long before.

One change occurred on the Regimental Field and Staff during the Nancy interlude, when Lieutenant Colo-

nel Clayton C. Thobro departed for the United States on temporary duty. Not professionally trained to be a soldier, the man from Wyoming had shown great promise during his first days in the Army. He had landed with the Regiment at Fedala, French Morocco, that dark morning of 8 November 1942 as a second lieutenant. During the ensuing campaigns he had displayed unusual talents, coolness and bravery while under fire on the field of battle. A man of few words but bold and resolute of action he had become one of the Seventh Infantry's outstanding field commanders and had proven himself fully capable of handling a rifle battalion under the most trying conditions. He never asked an officer or enlisted man to perform a mission that he would not have done himself. He was greatly loved by the officers and men who served under him for he shared their every hardship. Many are the stories that are told by the firesides of his great scorn for personal danger or welfare. One of the most dangerous assignments for a soldier in his battalion was to become his orderly, jeep driver or body guard. In the thick of battle he was always up front and once during the bitter fighting of the Vosges Mountains every member of his staff had been killed or wounded and he stood alone. When he himself was wounded and Colonel Harrell sent an officer to relieve him, he stubbornly refused to relinquish command. A man of high ideals he was never known to curse or blaspheme as he held great control over himself in the most trying of circumstances. Holder of the Distinguished Service Cross, Legion of Merit Award, Silver Star Medal, Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal he was one of the Seventh Infantry's most decorated members.

Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd B. Ramsey moved up to assume the Regimental Executive Officer's position while the South Carolinian, Major Ralph T. Flynn, assumed command of the Third Battalion. Jack M. Duncan received promotion to the grade of lieutenant colonel.

On 9 March a new phase of instruction was initiated with the technique of river crossings as the subject. The battalions organized boat teams and waves. The next day actual river crossings by boat teams were conducted over the Moselle River in the vicinity of Belleville. On 11 March the Regimental Combat Team, less Service Company and the administrative elements, moved by motor to the vicinity of Lake Parroy where first the Regiment was to conduct a crossing problem of its own then take part in an exercise by the entire Third Infantry Division.

During the amphibious training that was conducted on 12 March one of the boats capsized. Private First Class Donald F. Dunham and Private Michael M. Gerhart, Jr., both of Company "A", were drowned in Lake Parroy.

The training was cut short on the 12th by order of higher headquarters. The tactical situation on the 7th Army front was such that the Commanding General ordered the Third Infantry Division to be committed without delay.

Before crossing the Rhine River the Seventh Infantry was to crack the Siegfried Line. The troops of the Regiment were trucked back to the billeting areas north of Nancy. At 2130 on 12 March Colonel Heintges received orders from higher authority regarding the new offensive action. The Regimental Staff then worked night and day in making plans and reconnaissance for the new operation.

The American 7th Army under its great leader, planned to resume the offensive on D-Day, which was set for 15 March 1945. Objectives of the 7th Army were to destroy the enemy in its zone; penetrate the Siegfried



Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, commanding U. S. 7th Army, congratulates Sgt. James P. Connor and awards him the Congressional Medal of Honor. Maj. Gen. O'Daniel looks on.

Line, seize the west bank of the Rhine River and cross the great river between Mannheim and Mainz to establish a bridgehead in preparation for a subsequent advance to the northeast. The three corps of the 7th Army, the VI, XV and XXI Corps, were all to attack at D-Day, H-Hour, but the XV Corps employing the veteran 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions and the 100th Infantry Division in the assault, was to make the main effort in the center on the axis of Rimling-Zwiebrücken:

Lt. Col. Clayton C. Thobro was one of the Seventh Infantry's ablest and best liked commanders of World War II. He temporarily commanded the Regiment from 4 to 5 December 1944. He commanded the Third Battalion from 4 to 13 March 1944, and commanded the Second Battalion from 16 July to 4 December 1944. He served as Regimental Executive Officer from 5 December 1944 to 26 February 1945. After spending a leave in the United States he returned to the Regiment after hostilities had ceased in Europe and again assumed command of the Third Battalion on 10 May 1945.



to penetrate the Siegfried Line in its zone; capture Zweibrücken, Hombourg and Kaiserlautern, and continue the attack to seize the west bank of the Rhine in its zone. On Army order the XV Corps was to cross the Rhine River north of Mannheim and secure a bridgehead for further operations to the northeast. Also on Army order the XV Corps was to pass one Infantry division to the VI Corps in the vicinity of Pirmasens.

The VI Corps attacking on the 7th Army's right was assigned the mission of seizing and securing the Bitche-Hagenau road and Maginot Line positions in its zone, to continue the attack on the general axis Hagenau-Pirmasens; penetrate the Siegfried Line; capture the high ground east and northeast of Pirmasens; and assist the advance of the XV Corps. Landau and Neustadt were to be captured by the VI Corps.

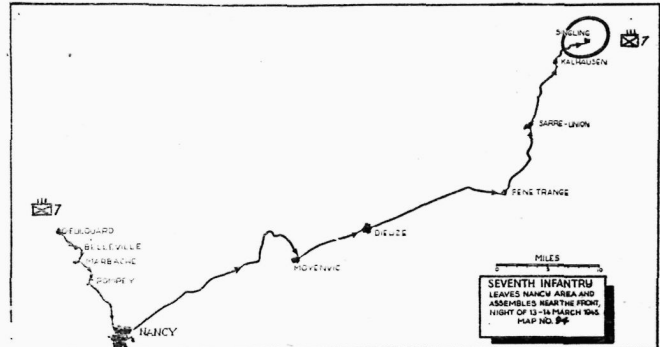
On the 7th Army's left the XXI Corps was to attack on D-Day, H-Hour, capture Saarbrücken, Neunkirchen and St. Wendel, then advance to the Rhine in its zone.

The 44th and 71st Infantry Divisions, having been on the defensive for quite some time, were to continue their missions of holding the XV Corps front line until passed through by the attacking 3rd, 45th and 100th Infantry Divisions and support the attack on D-Day, H-Hour, to the limit of range of all their available weapons. The 44th Infantry Division was to be passed through by both the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions whereupon it would assemble in Army reserve. The 71st Infantry Division was to be passed through by the 100th Infantry Division, then on Corps order, after D-Day, relieve elements of the 100th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Bitche.

Plans called for the veteran 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions to make the main XV Corps attack. The "Rock of the Marne" Division was to make its main effort initially in the direction of Schweyen-Oberauebach, breach the Siegfried Line east of Rimschweiler, capture that part of Zweibrücken in its zone, the high ground in the area of Weisbach, Morsbach and Winterbach, then continue the attack in the direction of Kinds-

bach to capture Kaiserlautern. It was to then be prepared to assist in the exploitation with at least one motorized regimental combat team.

The main effort of the 45th, or "Thunderbird", Division was to be initially in the direction of Obergailbach, Seywiller, Wattweiler and Hombourg. The "Thunderbirds" were to breach the Siegfried Line east of the Blies River, capture that portion of Zweibrücken within its zone, capture Hombourg and the high ground in the area of Reiskirchen, Hombourg and Bechhofen.



Then it was to continue the attack in the direction of Weilerbach and assist the "Rock of the Marne" Division in the capture of Kaiserlautern by seizing the high ground in the vicinity of Morlautern, to protect the Corps' left, or west, flank and be prepared to assist in the exploitation with at least one motorized regimental combat team.

The 100th, or "Century", Division was to attack through left elements of the 71st Infantry Division, on the XV Corps right, to capture Bitche, the Camp de Bitche and the high ground in zone north and south thereof. Thereafter the "Centurymen" were to advance north with all or part of the division and protect the right or east flank of XV Corps.

The 6th Armored Division was to be prepared on XV Corps order after D-Day for prompt displacement to areas near Wittling, Sarre-Union and Butten. After H-Hour the tank division was to maintain suitable liaison and command personnel with necessary transportation and communication facilities at the command posts of the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions. It was to maintain active reconnaissance and up-to-the-minute plans for rapid movement to exploit a breakthrough by the regular, "dirt" Infantry, which, as usual, had the dirty work of removing the obstacles. The armored division was to be prepared on six hours notice to pass through either or both of the attacking 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions on XV Corps order and secure exits to the Rhine Plain at Baddurkheim, Grunstat and Driesen prepared to continue a rapid advance to the Rhine itself.

The 106th Cavalry Group, with one company of the 1109th Engineer Combat Group attached, was to be prepared to move on XV Corps order on three hours notice to cover the Corps' right, or east, flank from the vicinity of Walschbronn, until relieved by the 100th Infantry Division; to reconnoiter to the east and northeast. After a breach of the Siegfried Line was to be made the cavalymen were to cover the Corps' left, or west, flank, initially from the vicinity of Kusel and St. Wendell, and to reconnoiter to the north and northwest.

PLANS FOR THE THIRD INFANTRY DIVISION

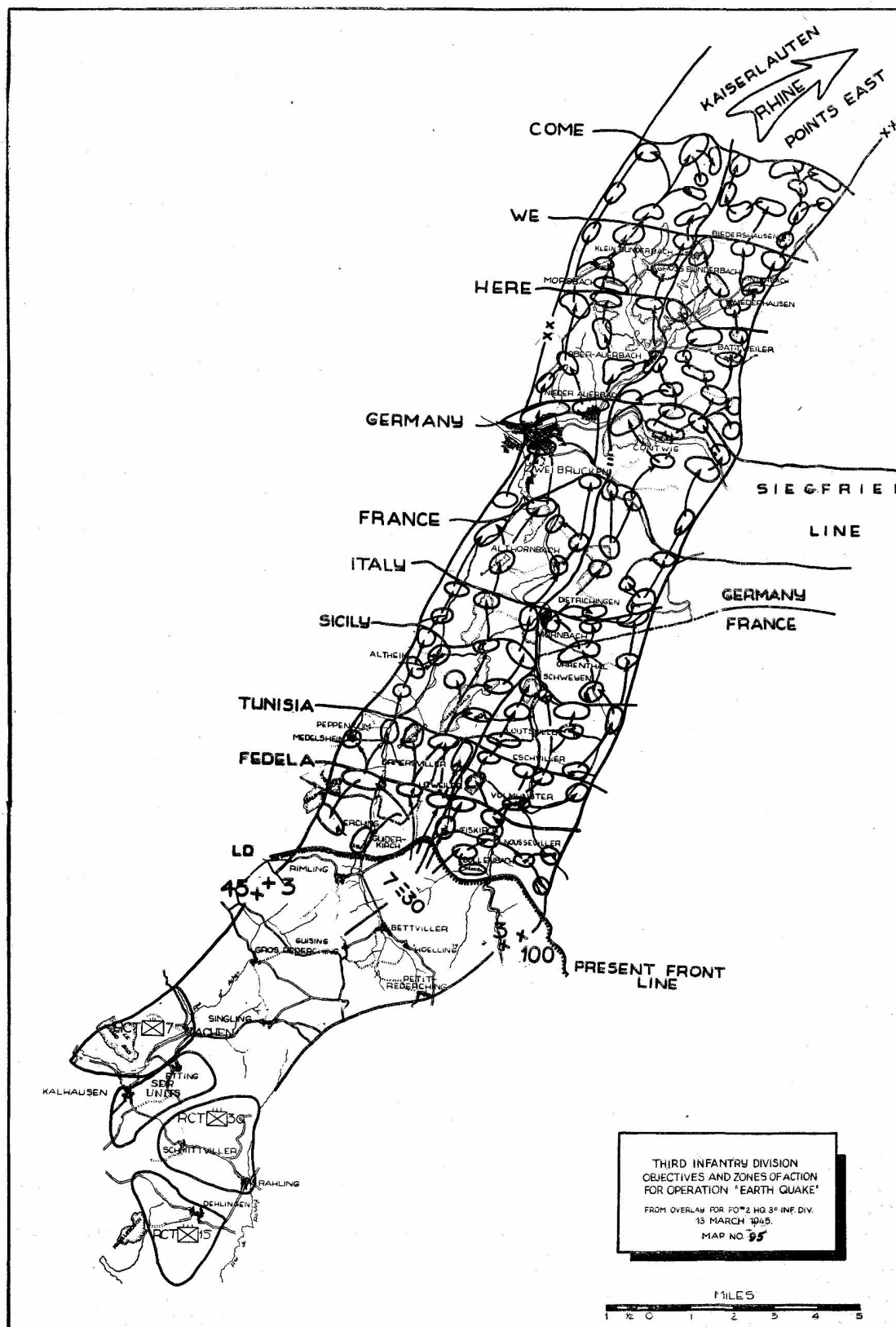
For the new offensive the Third Infantry or "Rock of the Marne" Division was to be supported by elements of XV Corps Artillery, the 1101st Engineer Combat Group, elements of Battery "A", 353 Searchlight Battalion, which was to provide "artificial moonlight" from

H plus 30 until daylight on D-Day and thereafter as requested, and the XII Tactical Air Command. A maximum of air effort was prepared to support the attack. During the morning of D-Day medium bombers were to operate continuously on Siegfried Line defenses in the division's zone.

For the new operation which was called "Earthquake", Major General O'Daniel selected the 30th Infantry Regiment to attack alongside of the "7th Light Foot" Infantry.¹ With the Seventh on the left, the two

regiments were to attack abreast in the Third Infantry Division zone of action with the utmost speed and aggressiveness on D-Day, H-Hour, through elements of the 44th Infantry Division which occupied an irregular line from the vicinity of Hottviller to the vicinity of Rimling, France. The attacking regiments were to seize Phase Line "FEDALA" and mop up their zones. Fol-

1. F. O. No. 2, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., Pont-A-Mousson, France, 13 Mar. '45.



lowing rapid coordination on Phase Line "FEDALA" they were to continue the advance with utmost speed to Phase Line "FRANCE". There the combat teams were to be prepared on division order to rapidly breach the Siegfried Line in their zones, capture Zweibrücken and then advance rapidly to seize objectives on Phase Line "COME". As in past operations the attacking regiments were directed to destroy all enemy encountered. The flanks were to be protected and contact maintained with adjacent units. Commencing at daylight the regiments were to be prepared to smoke the objectives.

The 15th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, initially to be held in reserve, was to be prepared to assume the mission of either assault combat team. On division order it was to be prepared to exploit the advance in the division zone by employing reinforced transportation to motorize itself. Close liaison was to be provided with the assault combat teams and up-to-the-minute plans, including route data, for rapid employment, were to be maintained. The "Dragon" Regiment was to be prepared to breach the Siegfried Line.

Major General O'Daniel wanted the attack "pressed with the ruthless vigor that has routed every enemy formation opposing the Third Division." The men were to be brought to the highest possible state of offensive spirit prior to the jump-off. Bayonets were ordered to be sharpened. The division commander directed that maximum effort be exercised at all times to seize and secure bridges; and that commanders exercise every measure to insure secrecy and tactical surprise. All combat vehicles operating north of the line of departure commencing at daylight, D-Day, were to display cerise, or orange, panels to identify themselves to friendly aircraft, and all units were to be prepared to mark the front lines with smoke or panels on call. By-passing technique was directed to be used to the maximum for the new operation and the regiments were to be prepared to initiate night actions of not less than reinforced company size each night. Ordinarily a darkness objective line would be established and the unit ear-marked for the night effort would pass through leading elements on that line. To the maximum extent possible, a battalion was to be used for the night action and be rested during the daytime. It was further directed that every effort be made to remove mines from main routes prior to daylight, D-Day. Gas masks were to be carried by all personnel. The use of the alternate code signs was to be discontinued effective at H-Hour. After that time the regular insignia, markings and signs, which were to be removed or covered before leaving the Nancy area, would be used.

7th INFANTRY MOVES TO THE FRONT ONCE MORE AND PREPARES TO ATTACK

Following his receipt of orders for the new operation, late during the night of 12 March, Colonel Heintges dispatched billeting and reconnaissance parties early the next morning for the initial areas to be occupied by the Regiment, about seven miles south of the international boundary line between France and Germany, in the vicinity of Kalhausen, southeast of Sarreguemines and east of the river Sarre.

Moving in three serials the Regiment motor-marched during the night of 13-14 March 1945 via Pompey, Nancy, Highway No. 74, Moyenvic, Dieuze, Fenetrange, Sarre-Union, Oermingen and Kalhausen to assembly areas in the vicinity of Singling, France. The Regiment made the seventy-five mile motor-march without incident and was closed into the new area at 0230. Reconnaissance was conducted and plans formulated for the

new offensive action. The Regimental Command Post moved on to Bettviller during the morning. As D-Day was the 15th of March and H-Hour was established as 0100 there was no time to waste, but the Regimental Field and Staff completed its preliminary work with time to spare. Colonel Heintges conferred with his battalion commanders and issued his instructions for the attack. He ordered that the battalions be moved at dusk to designated concentrations areas near the line of departure held by the 44th Infantry Division elements. Lieutenant Colonels Wallace and Duncan were ordered to attack with their battalions at H-Hour, 0100, on 15 March 1945.

As the zone of the Seventh Infantry was split by La Bickenalbe River the Commanding Officer outlined three plans for the attack.² Under Plan 1, the First Battalion, on the left, was to attack to the north and seize Objectives 5, 4, 3 and 2 in order and attack Objective 1 from the rear, at the same time, with at least one company, which, upon clearing of Objective 1 was to be prepared to assist the remainder of the battalion in reducing Objective 2. The Second Battalion on the right was to advance rapidly and seize Objectives 6, 8, 11, 10, 9 and 7. The bridge at Peppenkum, Objective 9, was to be seized and secured. During the seizure of Objective 7, Objectives 11, 10 and 9 were to be held with sufficient forces to protect the right flank. The Third Battalion, in reserve initially, was to be ready to attack rapidly to the northeast on Regimental order and seize Ormersviller, Objective 12; to protect the right flank and establish contact with the 30th Infantry on the right.

In the event La Bickenalbe River could not be crossed by the First Battalion between Objectives 5 and 4, Plan 2 would then be put into effect which called for Lieutenant Colonel Wallace's troops to continue the attack rapidly from Objective 5 to Objectives 8, 10, 9 and 7 with blocking elements left at Objectives 10 and 9 to secure the flank. Under Plan 2 the Second Battalion after taking Objective 6 was to move on 11 and 12 and forget Objectives 8, 10, 9 and 7. The Third Battalion was to be committed on the left under Plan 2, rather than on the right, to seize Objectives 1, 2, 4 and 3, which were the little towns of Guiderkirch and Erching, the southeast arm of Baumbusch woods and high ground in the vicinity of La Bickenalbe stream.

Plan 3 was to develop out of Plan 2 in the event the First Battalion could not cross La Bickenalbe stream at Objective 9. In that event the Red Troops were to seize and hold Objective 10 and the right half of Objective 9, be prepared to resume the advance to the north or northeast. The Second Battalion was not to be affected by execution of Plan 3, its mission was to remain the same as in Plan 2 but the Third Battalion was to continue its attack from Phase Line "FEDALA" and seize Objective 7 and the west half of Objective 9 prepared to continue the attack.

The Seventh Infantry Battle Patrol was to remain in Concentration Area "C" prepared to move on order as a "mopping up" or combat patrolling force.

Anti-Tank Company was to move from its initial assembly area, commencing at H-Hour, to Concentration Area "C" prepared to be employed as a tank destroyer or "bazooka" company. Its 57mm guns were to be held in the initial assembly area.

No artillery preparations were to be fired in advance of H-Hour but the 10th Field Artillery Battalion and Cannon Company were to support the attack from previously reconnoitered positions on call.

² Operations Instruction No. 19, HQ, 7th Infantry, 14 Mar '45.

Company "A", 10th Engineer Battalion, was to attach one mine sweeping detail to each of the First and Second Battalions then move the remainder of the company to Concentration Area "D", commencing at H-Hour, prepared to clear mines and obstacles and open roads in the Regimental zone, on order.

Company "A" and the First Platoon of Company "D", 756th Tank Battalion, Company "A", 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, a Detachment of Battery "B", 441st Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AW) Battalion, were to move from initial assembly areas to Concentration Areas "A" and "B", commencing at H-Hour. As soon as routes of advance were declared open the armor was to be promptly attached to the attacking rifle battalions.

Company "B", 87th Chemical Mortar Battalion, was to assemble initially in Area "E" prepared to reconnoiter and occupy firing positions on order.

The Third Reconnaissance Troop and Third Division Battle Patrol were attached to the Regiment and ordered to assemble in Concentration Area "C" commencing at H-Hour and be prepared to exploit any breakthrough by rapid advance in the Regimental zone.

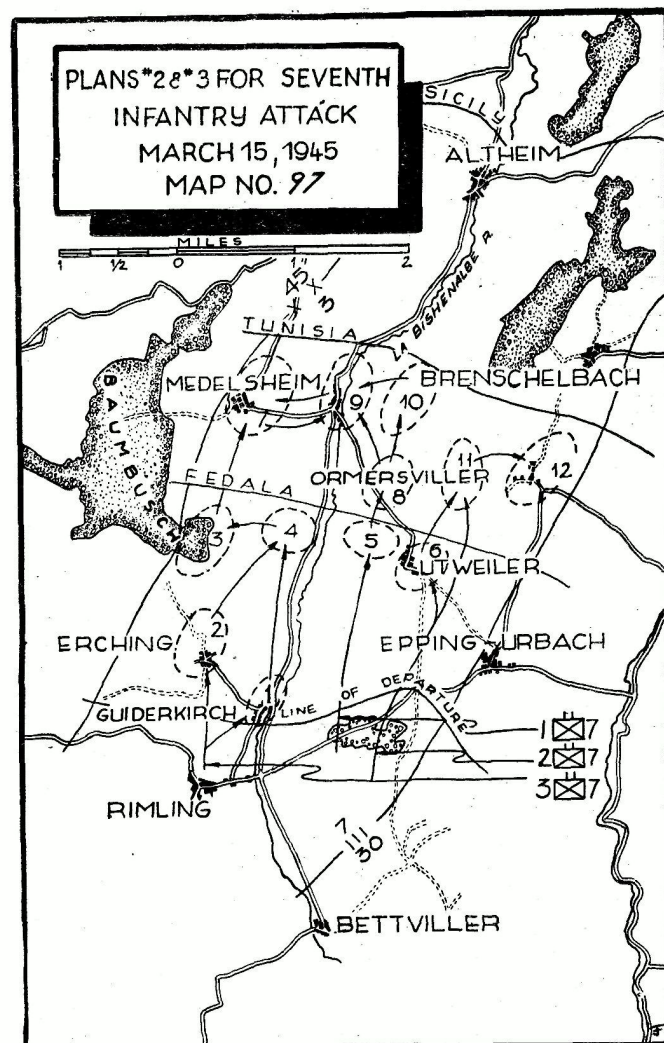
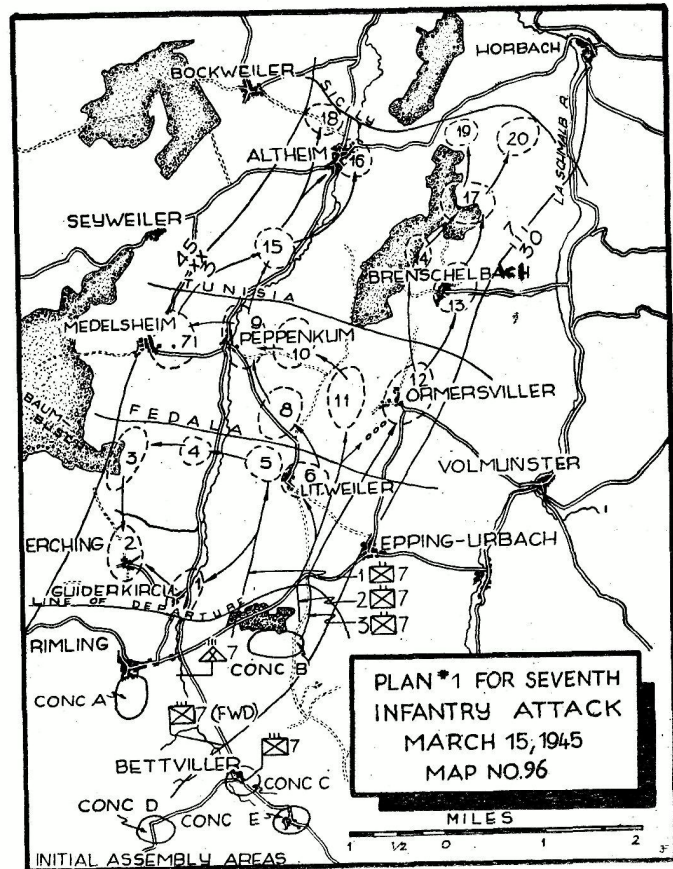
All attachments were to maintain constant liaison with the Regimental War Room or Command Post.

The estimate made of the enemy situation was that the attack by the Seventh Infantry would initially encounter elements of the 17 SS Panzer Grenadier Division which included the 37th and 38th SS Regiments. Approximately 25 to 40 enemy were known to occupy the houses at Guiderkirch and conducted sniper action whenever American troops approached. Frequently an assault gun from the 17 SS Tank Battalion, which consisted of from 18 to 20 assault 75mm guns, had fired on American troops from the vicinity of Le Mertzenwald and Baumbusch woods. Enemy troops were said to be mostly conscripted soldiers who often patrolled into the 44th Infantry Division lines and surrendered on the least provocation. Within the previous week the enemy had been replacing the conscripted personnel with whatever troops he could assemble from his baggage trains and rear echelon personnel which consisted of quartermaster and train personnel, reconnaissance, engineer and anti-aircraft artillery troops. An estimated 200 to 300 enemy troops were expected on the Regimental front.

The enemy defenses consisted initially of hasty field fortifications and thence the mighty Siegfried Line defenses. Although the enemy had prepared elaborate trenches, weapons pits and bunkers, patrols had established the fact that the Germans continued to maintain a "floating defense", probably due to the lack of personnel to man all the defensive positions. Two-man fighting holes covered with logs and earth formed small bunkers that would be encountered at tactical localities. From Eppenkirchen to Wiesskirchen the enemy regularly manned reverse slopes. However, positions had been prepared on crests and were expected to be occupied on alarm. South of Ormersviller the enemy was organizing small delaying positions which consisted of foxholes and machine gun emplacements.

The only enemy armor reported in the Seventh Infantry sector was that of the 17th SS Tank Battalion mentioned above as consisting of 18 to 20 self-propelled guns. Use of the armor would be limited due to terrain conditions. However the road net was complete and would assist greatly in armor employment.

Because American patrols had had very few casualties due to mines, and the 44th Infantry Division leaders had reported that the enemy mine fields were easily identified with the majority of the mines consisting of anti-



tank mines placed on top of the ground and booby trapped mines that were identified by stakes with red and white ribbons attached, it was not expected that too much trouble would be experienced from mines. There the estimate erred, as actually for the preceding month while the 44th and 71st Infantry Divisions had done nothing but hold, without aggressive defensive tactics being employed, the enemy had heavily increased his mine defenses. That was readily discovered once the night attack got underway and German Schu, Teller and anti-tank box mines began to explode.

Enemy air activity had been practically non-existent. Two weeks previous, with two captured American planes, the enemy had attacked the town of Bining. Only high altitude photographic planes had been identified during daylight hours. It therefore was not expected that the enemy would concentrate heavy air activities during the initial attacks.

Enemy artillery fire had been extremely light throughout the sector with small concentrations merging on one place at a time. The German artillery had been slow in

reacting to American patrol action and all enemy artillery observed had been of light calibre. After breaching his initial defenses it was expected the enemy artillery would become even lighter but it was known the enemy would employ all his available self-propelled assault guns to cover the artillery withdrawal.

The terrain in the Seventh Infantry sector began with rolling ground. The predominating hills were north of Utweiler. The valley of La Bickenalbe stream, which was in the left center and parallel to the axis of advance, constituted the Seventh Infantry zone of action. Little was known of the road conditions but it was expected that armor would be able to operate over the roads and trails along the ridgeline in the right sector of the zone. As the attack should advance the terrain would become increasingly rough with cross valleys such as was encountered in the Domfaing-Les Rouges Eaux areas in the Vosges campaign.

The enemy was expected to defend on his positions and maneuver local reserves to the Siegfried Line, then perform a delaying action under pressure of the attacks.

CHAPTER II

Seventh Infantry Leads the Third Infantry Division into Germany and Breaches the Siegfried Line

At dusk 14 March the Seventh Infantry troops moved from their assembly areas in the vicinity of Singling France. The First Battalion closed into Concentration Area "A" near Rimling while the Second and Third Battalions closed into Concentration Area "B" near Le Buchenbusch woods.

A revision of the plan in regard to the use of artillery was made. Though the original plan called for no artillery preparations before the jump-off at H-Hour, it was decided to lay heavy concentrations on the area above Phase Line "FEDALA" at the time of attack.

It was a cool, damp night with no snow on the ground. The rains of the previous days had made the ground gooey and sticky with mud.

While the artillery boomed, the First and Second Battalions passed through the 324th Infantry Regiment of the 44th Infantry Division and precisely at 0100 jumped off in the attack. A machine gun was encountered almost immediately by the First Battalion troops but overcome and the troops on the left moved rapidly to establish another first for the Regiment by being the first Third Infantry Division troops into Germany. First Scout, Private First Class Wayne T. Alderson, of "Baker" Company, was the first "Cotton Baler" to step across the international boundary line into Germany. The official time for the entry of "Baker" Company into the enemy's homeland was 0131, thirty-one minutes after H-Hour.

The First Battalion troops continued to advance rapidly and overcame small arms resistance. As the lead elements closed on Objective 5, Company "A" branched off to the left and attacked Guiderkirch from the rear.

Following clean-up of Objective 5, Companies "B" and "C" crossed La Bickenalbe stream with little trouble. At 0520 the First Battalion troops had seized Objective 4, Road Junction 304, and were moving for the Baum-

busch woods which were also seized. Company "C", under the command of First Lieutenant William T. Wright, was left in the woods and the high ground nearby, as Company "B", commanded by Captain James B. Rich, Jr., pushed south for Erching.

At 0530 when Company "B" was halted near Erching, France, by fire from two German Mark IV tanks, Private First Class Clarence Firestone advanced in a lone assault on the enemy armor. Carrying his "bazooka", he crawled and ran about 125 yards through tank and machine gun fire and ignored bullets which struck his entrenching tool. Fifty yards from the first tank he set it afire with a single rocket. Two Germans were killed and the second tank was forced to withdraw. Company "B" was then able to resume its advance. Private First Class Firestone was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his heroism.³

Company "A", commanded by First Lieutenant Abraham S. Jaffe, encountered strong enemy resistance in and around Guiderkirch. At 0430 Colonel Heintges ordered the Regimental Battle Patrol to move on the town from the south and help clear up the situation by contacting Company "A". The patrol encountered enemy on the southern edge of the town.

When Company "A" was halted in a narrow ditch under machine gun cross-fire and heavy mortar concentrations, Private William D. Avery voluntarily crawled out of the ditch in a singlehanded assault on the enemy automatic weapons. Advancing 15 yards over exposed terrain through enemy fire, he engaged two German machine guns in a duel at close range, emptied eight magazines from his Browning automatic rifle into the hostile emplacements, killed three Germans and silenced the weapons. His intrepid action enabled Company "A"

³ For authority see GO No. 342, HQ, 7th Army, 28 July '45.

to resume the attack and capture its objective. For the heroism he displayed Private Avery was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.⁴

Company "A" and the Battle Patrol continued to engage the enemy in and around Guiderkirch in a stiff battle but won the contest at 0900 when the town was declared clear of all resisting enemy and 53 Germans were held as prisoners of war.

Following the attack made by Private First Class Firestone on the enemy tanks, Company "B" seized Erching during the morning against moderate resistance.

For the First Battalion that early morning, Private Lawrence R. Rousseau and Private Edward J. Vilt of Company "A", Private Earl K. Stevenson of Company "B", Staff Sergeant Oakley Salisbury, Sergeant John F. Kreis, Private Cecil B. Coffin, who was killed in a subsequent action, and Technician Fifth Grade Herbert G. Johnson, all of Company "D", Private Albert E. Whittington and Private Robert R. Willbanks of First Battalion Headquarters Company displayed gallantry in action.⁵

In spite of the resistance encountered matters had gone quite smoothly for the First Battalion forces but not so for Lieutenant Colonel Duncan's charges. Shortly after crossing the line of departure with Companies "E" and "F" abreast and "G" following in reserve, the Second Battalion troops entered a field heavily strewn with mines which began to explode. The explosions of the German Schu mines notified the enemy of the Second Battalion's location and within a short time mortar and artillery fire commenced to fall on the hapless battalion. The inevitable result was that the command became badly disorganized with numerous casualties sustained. Most unfortunate from the standpoint of the welfare of the battalion as a whole was when the personnel carrying the radio equipment of the battalion and of the artillery forward observer, First Lieutenant Jack Ivester, were killed, wounded or dispersed and the radios lost or destroyed. Without communication the battalion commander could not immediately notify his commanding officer of the plight his troops were in or call for supporting artillery fire. Company "H" having its personnel distributed with the rifle companies lost three of its radios destroyed and two entire machine gun sections lost by casualties and dispersal.

In the darkness of the night and confusion while under fire it was exceedingly difficult to fully reorganize. Some there were who withdrew and straggled. The Second Battalion greatly reduced in strength, possibly fifty percent, moved on out of the field and drove on for Utweiler which was entered and captured against moderate resistance between 0530 and 0600. About sixty enemy were taken prisoners of war.

Through great leadership and gallantry displayed by men of all ranks the Second Battalion had overcome its first great obstacle and driven on to Utweiler with a fraction of its original strength. First Sergeant David M. Carroll of Company "E" lost his right foot when he stepped on a mine that morning. Though seriously wounded he refused immediate treatment, encouraged others to continue on to the objective and directed the evacuation of other wounded personnel. Private Clarence W. Mai of Company "G", who was severely wounded in the face by fragments; Private First Class Joseph P. Germershausen, an aid man of the Medical Detachment who was wounded in both legs and blinded by a detonated mine, and Technical Sergeant Aubrey D. Miller of Company "H" were three others who were gallant and sacrificing during the terrible experience. Captain George W. Yarnall, the Second Battalion Surgeon, moved for-

ward through the shell fire and exploding mines to aid the casualties. For hours he performed amputations, administered blood plasma, applied dressings and evacuated casualties. Technician Fifth Grade Joseph O. Kitchen of Second Battalion Headquarters Company, though wounded in action, voluntarily continued duty and was first to sight enemy tanks approaching on Utweiler and gave the alarm. Private Hobart E. Brown of the Medical Detachment performed many mercy missions.⁶

The Blue Battalion moving up behind the Second also experienced trouble. Its artillery radios were knocked out by enemy fire and casualties were sustained. Though the mine-sweeping squads of Company "A", 10th Engineers, and Anti-Tank Mine Platoon assisted by the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon of the 324th Infantry Regiment had been at work clearing mines, there were many, mostly plastic or wooden mines, that had not been detected or removed. This was soon discovered when the armor started to move to the support of the foot troops. Four tanks moving to the support of the Second Battalion were disabled by the exploding mines. Then counter-action by the enemy delayed a resumption of the attack until later in the day.

The Third Division Commander called the Regimental War Room for the situation at 0415 that morning and after receiving what was known, revealed that the 30th Infantry on the right had encountered strong resistance and was making little headway. He was told the "Cotton Baler" Third Battalion was moving up behind the Second Battalion ready to be committed. At 0615 he called back and directed that the Third Battalion be used to take Objectives 8, 10, 9 and 7 but the Commanding Officer could not comply as the flanks were too exposed due to the forward position of the troops. A series of setbacks occurred that prevented the Commanding Officer from carrying out "Iron Mike's" wishes.

At about 0730 that morning the enemy directed flak-wagon fire and fire from self-propelled guns at the Second Battalion forces in Utweiler and then at about 0800 closed in on the town with a combination of four flak-wagons and nine tanks and tank destroyers, which included two "Tigers". It was a tough situation to be in without support of any kind. Attached armor had not gotten through to the battalion and without communication, artillery could not be called into play. That was the fundamental reason for the almost complete destruction of Lieutenant Colonel Duncan's battalion that day. Communications personnel of the Regiment and Second Battalion had not laid telephonic lines of communication to the forward position and without radios there was no means of communication with the Regimental Commander, except by foot messenger. The situation grew worse in just a few minutes. The enemy armor closed in on the town from three sides and began shooting it up, then enemy Infantry of about 200 in number attacked. The houses one by one were lowered or badly damaged by the enemy fire. "Cotton Balers" fought back with "bazookas" and rifles and with what few machine guns

⁴ For authority see GO No. 625, HQ, 7th Army, W.M.D., 22 Oct. '45.

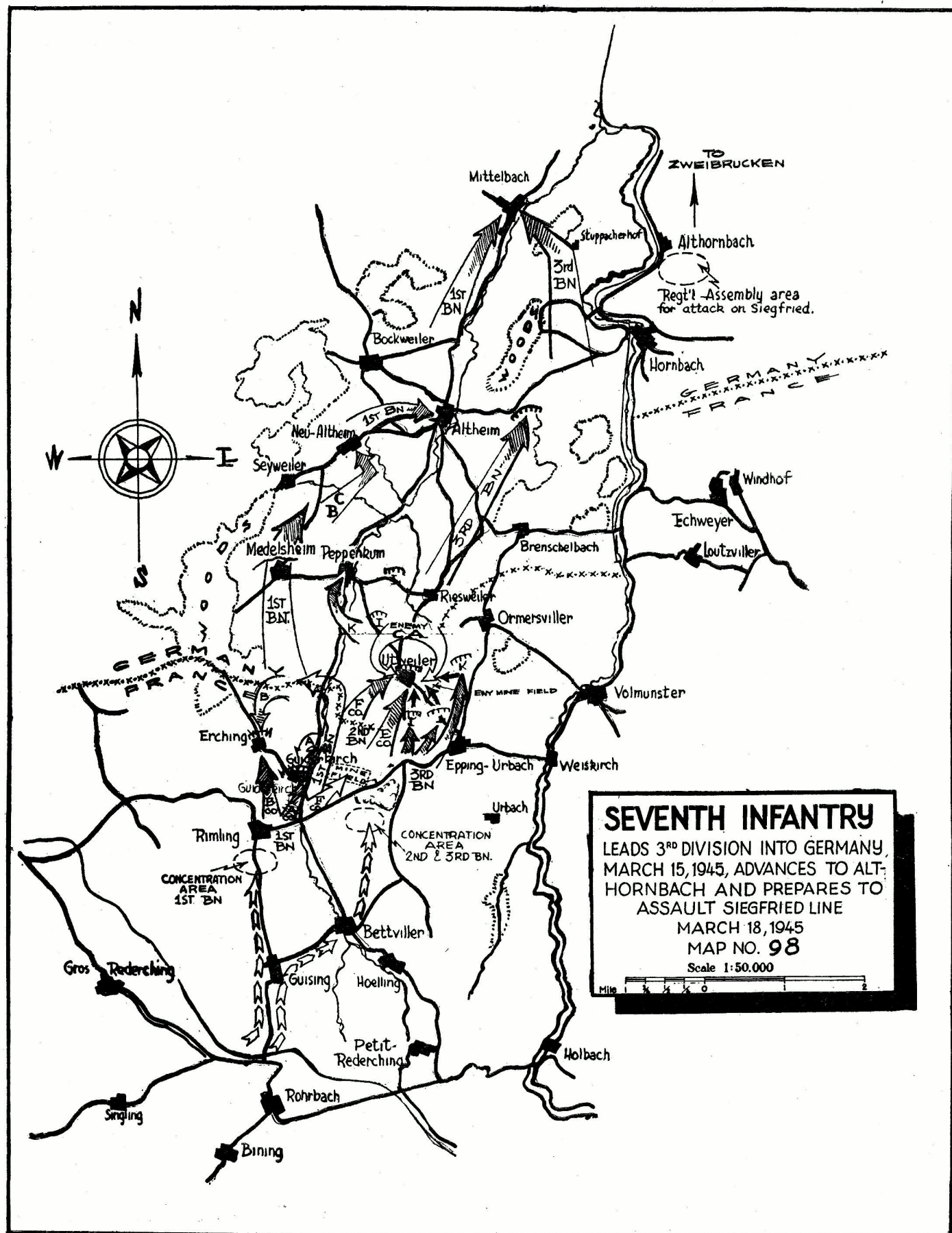
⁵ GOs No. 175, 177, 182, 187, 226, 262 & 313, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 24, 25, 28 & 30 May, 24 June, 18 July & 27 Aug. '45. Pvt. Coffin (posthumously), S/Sgt. Salisbury, Sgt. Kreis, T/5 Johnson, Pvts. Rousseau, Stevenson, Vilt, Whittington & Willbanks were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

⁶ GOs No. 187, 198, 208, 227, 249, 264 & 268, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 30 May, 7, 12 & 25 June, 10, 19 & 21 July '45. Capt. Yarnall, 1 Sgt. Carroll, T/Sgt. Miller, T/5 Kitchen, Pfc Germershausen, Pvts. Brown & Mai were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

were on hand until the ammunition was exhausted. Many officers and men were killed and wounded. Great confusion existed and command was lost. Groups were forced to surrender to the enemy, others tried to hide

themselves and a few made a run for it to escape. The Second Battalion, Seventh Infantry, for all intents and purposes, had been destroyed.

Though the Commanding Officer knew the Second



Battalion was in serious trouble he did not know that a catastrophe had befallen the White Battalion troops. The first definite information came at 0950 when a call from the 30th Infantry's Second Battalion Command Post was received and an officer stated that a sergeant from the Seventh Infantry's Company "H" had entered with word concerning the White Battalion. Staff Sergeant James R. Shipp was put on the phone and in a halting voice, tense with emotion and excitement, said: "Our forces—occupying the town of Utweiler—were surrounded—by six enemy tanks—and the tanks were closing in on the town—there was no enemy Infantry with the enemy tanks—most of the battalion—is still in town—enemy tanks blowing down all the buildings in the town—Battalion CO is still in the town—have no communication with the battalion."

The sergeant was told to remain where he was and that transportation would be sent for him.

At 1100 First Lieutenant John Ananich, Jr., of Company "H" who also had escaped, and Staff Sergeant Shipp entered the War Room. The lieutenant stated that to him at least five known enemy tanks and one other vehicle had surrounded Utweiler and shot it up. "We had the choice of giving up or making a go for it, which a few of us did. We did everything we could. Had the town captured and about 60 PWs taken. We used up all of our bazooka ammo. Outside the town I entered a pill box where there were 15 Company 'E' men. The First Sergeant of Company 'E' lay there with one leg shot off."

The lieutenant further stated that many troops in Utweiler surrendered to the enemy. When asked the size of the enemy tanks he stated he did not have time to determine their size.

It was a bad report to receive. It was hoped the situation was not so bad as reported by the sergeant and his lieutenant. The Commanding Officer alerted the Third Battalion, Anti-Tank Company and attached armor of Company "A", 756th Tank Battalion, and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion that they would make an attack with artillery support at 1405 to retake Utweiler and rescue the remnants of the Second Battalion.

Then the Commanding Officer himself went to the front to direct the attack. When four of the attached tanks struck mines on a road and then sustained direct hits from hostile shell fire, Colonel Heintges persuaded remaining tanks, which had withdrawn, to follow him back up the road. Despite intense enemy self-propelled shells that hit less than 50 yards from him and although flak fire swept the area, Colonel Heintges brought the armor 500 yards up the road and inspired the crews to launch the attack with the riflemen.⁷

When 1300 came around and no word was received from Lieutenant Colonel Duncan it was assumed he was killed, wounded or taken prisoner. By that time 150 personnel from the Second Battalion had been picked up. They were those who had been dispersed in the mine fields at the beginning of the operation.

At 1400 a terrific, revengeful, artillery preparation, was opened up by the 10th Field Artillery Battalion and other battalions in the form of a "box barrage" on Utweiler, with no fire in the fourth quadrant, as it was there that Colonel Heintges believed that the surviving Second Battalion forces in the town were located, which was correct. As the artillery roared vengeance on the Germans, Companies "I" and "L", and the "bazooka" teams of Anti-Tank Company, supported by 15 pieces of armor, launched their powerful attack to retake Utweiler. Air missions and artillery were fired on Pepenkum, Medelsheim and Ormersviller.

The enemy felt the fury and power of the assault and could not hold up for long under it, but the Germans put up a bitter fight and finally withdrew from Utweiler very reluctantly. Captain William D. Anthony vigorously led Company "I" in the assault and it was his company that first entered the town that afternoon for the rescuing forces. His men shattered the German Infantry defenses guarding the town. Advancing boldly through concentrated enemy artillery fire he brought his men to cover. Although severely wounded by German flak fire, Captain Anthony directed the assault on, and seizure of, Utweiler, Germany, and retained command with inflexible willpower until he lost consciousness. Captain Anthony was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions of that day.⁸

Company "I" was first reported in Utweiler at 1512. Company "L", under the command of Captain John E. DeLeon, entered shortly after that. The armor of the 756th Tank Battalion and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion and the bazooka-men of Anti-Tank Company did some good shooting that day. A total of seven enemy tanks and tank destroyers were destroyed by their fire. By 1830 the re-inforced Third Battalion forces and Anti-Tank Company had re-taken Utweiler.

Staff Sergeant James L. Clayton, Sergeant Robert B. Humbert and Private First Class Lorenzo Medina, all of Company "F", were among the personnel captured by the enemy in the morning. In the afternoon during the friendly artillery concentrations which scored many hits on enemy positions, including the building they occupied, the three "Fox" Company soldiers capitalized on enemy confusion to seize hostile weapons. When



1 Lt. Robert W. Rankin, Co. "F", was one of the 37 "Cotton Balers" who were killed during the action for Utweiler, Germany.

approximately 30 surprised German guards attempted to thwart their escape, the three "Cotton Balers" fired at the enemy, wounded one and caused the others to surrender over to them. One half hour later the friendly Third Battalion forces re-captured the town.⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Duncan, his S-2, Second Lieutenant Albert V. Becker, Jr., Private Jerome Schmuckler and one other soldier were found in a bomb crater which was partly filled with water and located south of Utweiler. The Second Battalion commander and his

⁷ GO No. 187, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 15 July '45. Col. Heintges was awarded the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star Medal.

⁸ For authority see GO No. 625, HQ, 7th Army, W.M.D., 22 Oct. '45.

⁹ GO No. 257, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 15 July '45. S/Sgt. Clayton, Sgt. Humbert & Pfc Medina were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

three companions had been in the hole with water to their arm pits for seven hours. Nineteen wounded members of the Second Battalion were found in the town as the Germans had not had time to evacuate all the wounded prisoners that they had taken, though it was learned that they did take with them First Lieutenant Harold W. Erhardt of Company "H", who had been seriously wounded.

Only a few members of the White Battalion other than those already named were found to have successfully hidden themselves from the Germans and escaped capture. Among the small number were First Lieutenant Eugene Bacon, the commanding officer of Company "H", and First Lieutenant Charles W. Webb of Second Battalion Headquarters Company. As the heavy weapons company had its sections divided among the rifle companies First Lieutenants Bacon and Webb had entered Utweiler with Company "E" and a command group of the Second Battalion.

From the few survivors a partial story of the tragic events of that dark morning were unfolded. In referring to the enemy tanks that attacked the White Battalion forces, First Lieutenant Bacon said: "They attacked in Indian fashion surrounding the town. Then they proceeded to lower the houses on us. They started on the north end of the town and fired on the stone houses lowering them, and firing on those men who were outside in foxholes. Many of the houses caught fire. The house my group was in caught fire and we moved back. Men in other houses were also forced to withdraw and it developed into sort of a rout. Much confusion existed. Thirty-five of us gathered in one house. When the enemy Infantry attacked and started throwing hand grenades in the windows some of the men started to surrender. The group fought it out for about 15 minutes until one man succeeded in running out and yelling "Kamarad" and gave up. Others followed suit and the situation was lost."¹⁰

First Lieutenants Bacon and Webb then fled themselves and escaped to the cellar where they hid in a potato bin and covered themselves over with boards, straw and potatoes. The Germans occupied the house and the two lieutenants had to remain in hiding. Frequently Germans would enter the cellar to look around. Once a German SS major sat on a board two feet from First Lieutenant Webb's head and ate some American rations that had been taken from the prisoners. The two officers reported that First Lieutenant Erhardt had been brought into the house by the Germans and for a time they could hear the Germans talking to him and recognized his voice when he replied, though he talked but little. The two officers said that the Germans did not mind the American artillery or planes but definitely did not like the Infantry-armor attack put on that afternoon. "We remained in the bin covered over for seven hours and were badly cramped when rescued at about five o'clock."¹⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Duncan entered the Regimental War Room at 1840. His clothes were soaked and muddy and he appeared slightly shocked. When he spoke his voice was weak but the old fire was there and he said: "It's the first time I fought a war without radio or armor and it will be the last time." He was unhurt except for two slight scratch wounds from flying mine fragments. He stated that some men were killed and buried in the rubble of Utweiler and also, with a tinge of sadness, that many had been forced to surrender to the enemy.

For the Third Battalion that afternoon during the counter-attack which re-captured Utweiler, Captain

John E. DeLeon. First Lieutenant Charles A. Brown, Private First Class Elias A. Hernandez and Private Charles A. Carothers, all of Company "L", and First Lieutenant Sam S. Fitzsimmons and Second Lieutenant Carl E. Retherford of Company "I" distinguished themselves.¹¹

On that dark day of 15 March 1945 while the Seventh Infantry had once more led the Third Infantry Division in its achievements by being first for the Division into Germany and had made the deepest penetration, it had suffered a grievous blow. For the first time in World War II and possibly for all time (though the writer has no detailed information regarding action prior to this war) the Seventh Infantry had had a battalion rendered almost totally ineffective. Once before, on the Anzio Beachhead during the bloody battles of 30 January 1944, a battalion had been greatly reduced, even to smaller numbers than the Second Battalion on 15 March 1945, but there had remained some semblance of command and its survivors were not dispersed and scattered. It remained, though woefully weak, a fighting unit. The Second Battalion on 15 March 1945 as a fighting unit was virtually destroyed. There was the task of gathering up the scattered remnants and reconstituting it.

First Lieutenant Joseph G. Lambert, Motor Officer of the Second Battalion, reported into the Regimental War Room during the evening and gave the following information in regard to the strength of the elements gathered up:

	Officers	Enlisted Men
Company "E"	1	10
Company "F"	0	2
Company "G"	1	39
Company "H"	3	68
Battalion Hqrs. Co.	4	56
Total	9	175

The Second Battalion had gone into the night attack with 640 officers and men¹² and in the space of several hours had been reduced to 184 scattered and ineffective personnel. Records compiled later showed that of the 456 personnel missing, 21 had been killed in the action, 72 wounded and evacuated, 17 missing and 222 had been taken prisoners by the enemy. The other 124 members were to be gathered up in the next two days.

"Fox" Company had sustained the greatest losses. Captain Earl E. Swanson, one of the ablest company commanders to lead a "Cotton Baler" rifle company during this war and who had risen from the grade of private, and First Lieutenant Robert W. Rankin, with thirteen of their men, gave their lives. The enlisted men of the company who were killed by the mines or exploding enemy shells were Master Sergeant Arthur C. Rose, Staff Sergeant Leonard Berg, Privates First Class Hubert

¹⁰ As told to the writer by Lt. Bacon on 18 Mar. '45.

¹¹ GOs No. 175, 177, 227, 228, 295 & 339, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 24 & 25 May, 25 & 26 June, 9 Aug. & 17 Sept. '45. Capt. De Leon, 1 Lt. Brown, 1 Lt. Fitzsimmons, 2 Lt. Rutherford, Pfc Hernandez & Pvt. Carothers were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

¹² Only on one or two occasions in World War II had the 7th Infantry gone into combat with her rifle battalions at full strength. The rifle companies and battalions operated with numbers far below the Table of Organization figures while Service and Headquarters Companies operated with as much as 20 per cent overstrength. Reinforcements were received only when the total figures for the Regiment fell below the figure established for a Rifle Regiment as a whole. Therefore the rifle elements of the Regiment were practically always under strength.

H. A. Kleibocker, Edward M. Kolodziej, John Mekruit and William T. Neal, and Privates Edward D. Clark, John T. Creegan, Cleborn S. Davis, Marie DeSiste, Kenneth L. Duncan, Paul D. Gibson and George C. Sallee. Their names rank with the immortals of the gallant Seventh Infantry.

The number from Company "F" who were wounded and evacuated was not so large as the number killed. Staff Sergeant Gilbert Susser, Privates First Class Hillary H. Medford, Robert A. Nast and Norman Snyder were seriously wounded while Privates First Class Matthew Bielski, Benjamin E. Loup, and Privates Daniel V. Donahue and John H. Rose were lightly wounded. Eighty-three members of Company "F" were taken prisoners by the enemy including Second Lieutenants William R. Telley, Donald H. McKibbin and Charles E. Segler, Jr.



Sgts. Shepherd and Crawford of the Second Battalion Medical Detachment are photographed in the main street of Utweiler the day after the "Battle of Utweiler".

Company "E" did not lose so many killed as did Company "F" but had many more wounded. The five from "Easy" Company who were killed were: Sergeant Robert H. Reynolds, Private First Class Andy Evanich, Privates Gordon C. Beader, William G. Forister and Selmer L. Pederson. On the company's seriously wounded list were First Sergeant David M. Carroll, Sergeant William V. Cattrell, Technician Fifth Grade William H. Carson, Privates First Class Odelle Coille, Floyd G. Danforth, Henry T. Flynn, John R. Lorden and Privates Arnold Cretelle, Bernard J. Flynn, Jr., Thomas L. Hrehs, Thomas P. Lyons, Dale L. Schumacher, Hoke L. Smith, Gordon H. Spiess and Joseph R. Vallero. Among the lightly wounded were the following from Company "E": Staff Sergeants Lawton J. Durrance and Shirley E. Stage, Sergeant Vernon M. Milburn, Technician Fifth Grade Walter F. Brown, Privates First Class Howard L. Bailey, Lester L. Baughman, Burland L. Bayless, Alfred L. Lukenbill, Warren S. Pearson, Harry H. Richard and Gilberto Vigil; Privates George Anderson, George B. Baker, Jr., Ben E. Banks, William D. Brown, Harold A. Bullock, Willard L. Dunlop, Herman H. Head, Harold I. Levine, T. G. Pearson, Wilbur H. Reekie, James P. Rinn, Jr., and James E. Ross. Company "E" had two officers, Second

Lieutenants Harold E. Coyle and James A. Crough, and 39 enlisted men taken prisoners of war.

Company "G", being the rifle company in reserve, Company "H" and Headquarters Company suffered badly but not like Companies "E" and "F". Sergeant Norvel C. Smith is the only man of Company "G" listed as killed on that day while "H" and Headquarters Companies do not have any men listed among the dead for the day the Regiment entered Germany. However, Technical Sergeant Frank Acker of "George" Company was so seriously wounded that he died of his wounds on the 20th and First Lieutenant Harold W. Erhardt of Company "H", who was seriously wounded and taken prisoner and evacuated by the Germans, died two weeks later in a German prisoner of war hospital, just after Americans were to capture the town in which it was located. First Lieutenant Weston S. McKane of Company "G" was missing in action while First Lieutenant Clarence J. Grant, Second Lieutenant William J. Davis and 61 enlisted men of the same company were taken prisoners of war by the enemy. "H" Company had 25 of its members taken prisoners while the Headquarters Company and Medical Detachment also had a few each. Eleven officers had been lost by the Second Battalion that morning, two killed, one missing and eight prisoners, one of whom, as mentioned, later died.

COMPANY "K" BECOMES INVOLVED IN ACTION OF ITS OWN

During the hours of darkness Company "K" had somehow avoided the mine fields and advanced to the draw northeast of Utweiler near St. Joseph's Church and not far from Ormersviller. During daylight enemy armor and riflemen took the company under fire, staged a counter-attack and kept the "King" Company "Cotton Balers" contained in the draw.

Company "K" fought for its life and succeeded in repulsing the enemy. Second Lieutenant Herbert E. Bothee, mortarmen Sergeant Richard B. Millman and Private First Class Robert H. Jurgensen, Private First Class Bruce F. Stutchbury, a Browning automatic rifleman, and Private First Class Bernard J. Ryan, a "bazooka-man", all of Company "K", and Private Hugh L. Tarrant of Company "M" were cited for actions performed.¹⁴

During the night of 15-16 March Company "K" rejoined the Third Battalion in Utweiler. Though the Regiment had sustained heavy losses on 15 March 1945, it nevertheless had accomplished a great deal, and by no means was its offensive spirit lost. Guiderkirch, Erching, Utweiler and the Baumbusch woods had been cleared, and over 200 Germans were made prisoners.

On the right the 30th Infantry had made less headway and the Third Division commander moved up the 15th Infantry to be committed through the 30th. At 2100 the First Battalion of the 15th Infantry started moving to Epping-Urbach where 30th Infantry elements were passed through and at 2210 the battalion attacked for Ormersviller, which in original plans had been a Seventh Infantry objective.¹⁵

¹⁴ GOs 175, 227, 257, 262 & 295, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 24 May, 25 June, 15 & 18 July & 9 Aug. '45. 2 Lt. Bothee, Sgt. Millman, Pfc Ryan, Stutchbury, Jurgensen & Pvt. Tarrant were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

¹⁵ G-3 Report No. 75, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., Etting, France, 16 Mar. '45.

SEVENTH INFANTRY CONTINUES THE ATTACK AT MIDNIGHT

Following artillery preparation the Seventh Infantry, with grim determination, pressed the attack at midnight 15-16 March. The First and Third Battalions attacked abreast while Anti-Tank Company constituted the Regimental Reserve in Guiderkirch. The Third Reconnaissance Troop occupied and held Erching and maintained contact with 45th Infantry Division elements on the left.

The Third Battalion attacked in a column of companies from Utweiler with "Item" Company, under First Lieutenant Eli Levy, in the lead. At 0030 the lead company was at the road junction just north of Utweiler and moving northeast for Objective 11. Company "L" moved up and turned to the left for Objective 10, the Dickerwald woods, which were entered at 0325 in the face of artillery fire.

Meanwhile the First Battalion, attacking from Objectives 3 and 4, encountered moderate resistance and infiltrated into Medelsheim. Private Lawrence V. Tucker of Company "A" eliminated a German machine gun emplacement by killing three enemy soldiers with grenade and rifle fire, then he singlehandedly cleaned out one of the buildings in the town and took four Germans prisoners of war. Private First Class Daniel V. Peterman of Company "D", who was wounded during the fighting for Medelsheim, also distinguished himself during the action.¹⁶ Medelsheim was completely cleared of enemy soldiers during the morning.



Pfc Thomas H. Dreher, Co. "K", and Pfc Robert H. Graham, Co. "C", gave their lives for the glory of the Regiment on 16 March 1945.

Between them, the First and Third Battalions captured 231 prisoners of war during the morning of 16 March. The number included six German officers.

The 10th Field Artillery Battalion placed a TOT on Peppenkum then the Battle Patrol moved north out of Guiderkirch and found Peppenkum abandoned. Anti Tank Company moved up and occupied the town during the morning. Engineers under the protection of the Third Division Battle Patrol swept the road from Guiderkirch to Peppenkum.

Meanwhile the First Battalion of the 15th Infantry had captured Ormersviller shortly after midnight and continued on. The Third Battalion of the "Dragon" Regiment followed to Ormersviller then swung southeast and seized Volmunster, originally a 30th Infantry objective, then moved north and northeast as its Second Battalion also moved up. The 30th Infantry assembled its battalions near Volmunster by noontime and constituted Division reserve.¹⁷

At 1410 the "Cotton Baler" First and Third Battalions continued their attacks. Major Flynn's Battalion seized the little village of Riesweiler in its advance and entered the Nasserwald and Grosserwald woods. Lieutenant Colonel Wallace's troops engaged enemy in a bitter small arms battle in Neu-Altheim at 1545. First Sergeant Herbert A. Dunn of Company "C" led an attack which killed seven Germans and captured 21 others.¹⁸

The Blue Battalion forces met only light opposition and at 1700 had passed through Objectives 14 and 17, and were on Objectives 19 and 20. By that time the First Battalion troops had cleared Neu-Altheim of all resistance. Task Force Smith, named after the Anti-Tank Company Commander and consisting of his company with a platoon of light tanks and the Division Battle Patrol, pushed up the road from Peppenkum. The Third Reconnaissance Troop continued its screening and contact mission on the left flank.

FOR THE THIRD NIGHT IN SUCCESSION THE 7th INFANTRY CONTINUES THE ATTACK

As the searchlights shone into the heavens, the Third Battalion sent out aggressive patrols and the First Battalion continued the attack at 0020 on 17 March for the third night in succession. Snipers and scattered resistance were encountered in Altheim but quickly overcome. At 0445 Altheim and Road Junction 310, at Muhlberg, Objectives 16 and 18, were taken.

Task Force Smith coming up from the south bypassed a mine field and entered Altheim. At 0630 the Third Division commander attached the Second Battalion of the 30th Infantry to the Seventh Infantry and the "Friscan" Battalion began moving for Objective 20.

At 1115 Companies "L" and "K" jumped off for the woods southeast of Mittelbach while a task force consisting of one rifle platoon from the First Battalion, a "bazooka" platoon of Anti-Tank Company and five light tanks moved from Alheim up the Mittelbach road. With little opposition the Third Battalion companies reached their objective and sent patrols into Mittelbach which was found unoccupied but heavily booby-trapped. The task force reached its objective south of the town.

The attached "Friscan" Battalion jumped off in the attack to the northeast at 1400 on the 17th. Company "F" with armor moved through Hornbach, through the Schmalscheidehenwald, to the vicinity of Auf'm Lohn. The other two rifle companies of the battalion moved up through Althornbach and at 2000 that night the "Friscan" Battalion was in position on the high ground north of the town.

7th INFANTRY BREACHES THE SIEGFRIED LINE 18-20 MARCH 1945

At about 1730 hours 17 March 1945 Major Richard T. Young, the Regimental S-3, who was located in Alheim at the time, received orders from Third Division Headquarters for the Seventh Infantry to make a complete shift to the east of more than 3,000 yards and to attack the Siegfried Line defenses northeast of Rimschweiler at 0545 the next morning. At the time Colonel Heintges was up front visiting Major Ralph M. Flynn of the Third Battalion. The Commanding Officer and his Third Battalion leader were located in a pill box on the outer fringes of the Siegfried Line, north of Mittelbach. They were studying the German Westwall defenses in that sector, as the Regimental Commander

¹⁶ GOsNo. 326 & 345, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 5 & 25 Sept. '45. Pfc Peterman & Pvt. Tucker were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

¹⁷ G-3 Report No. 75, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., Etting, France, 16 Mar. '45.

¹⁸ GO No. 256, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 15 July '45. 1 Sgt. Dunn was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

expected to have the Seventh Infantry called upon to penetrate the defenses in that zone, where he had good information to believe, and later events proved him to be correct, the defenses were thinner than those northeast of Rimschweiler and greatly undermanned. By interrogating prisoners of war captured in the Mittelbach area he had learned of the defensive strength there.

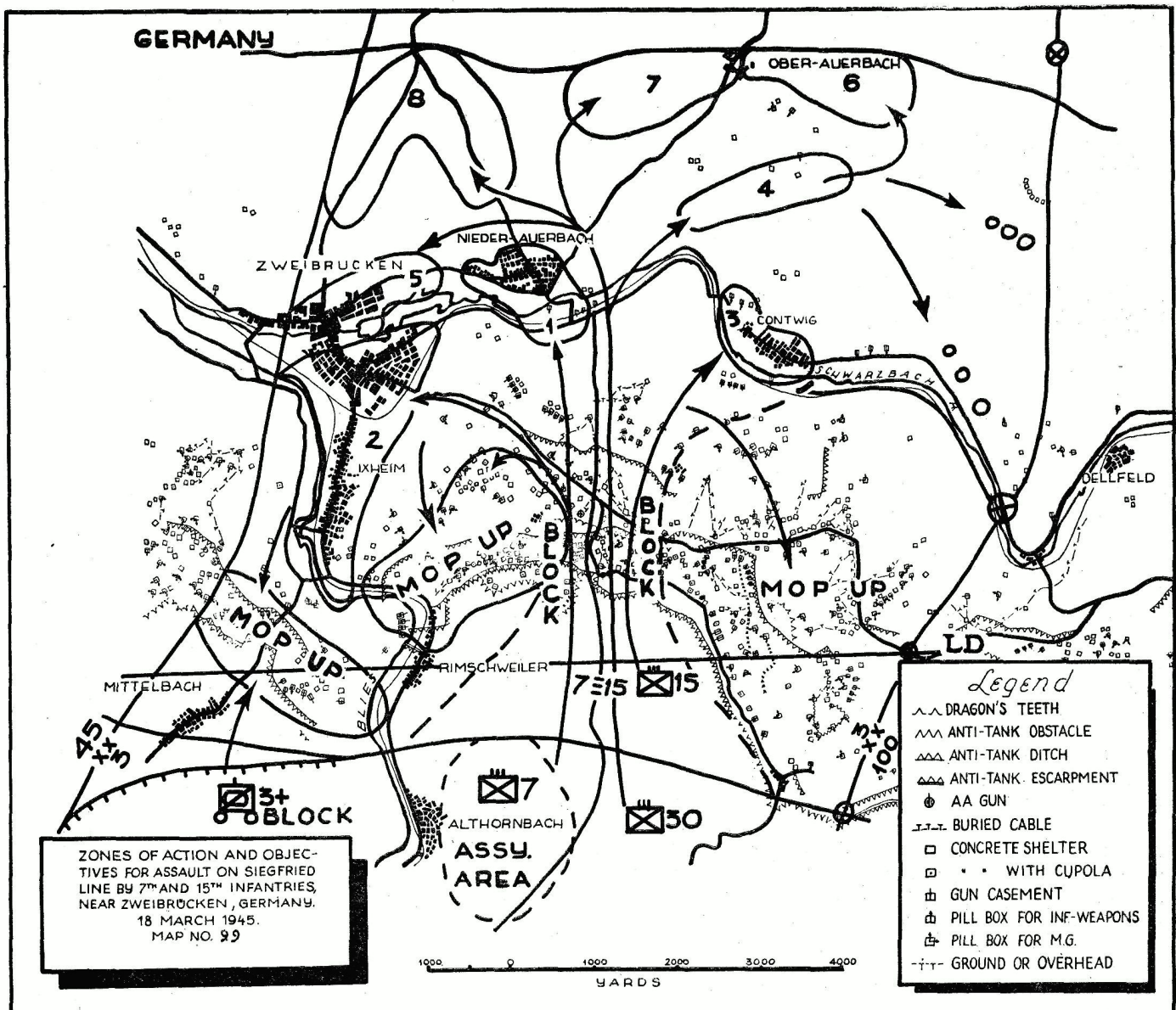
When informed of the orders from Third Division Headquarters Colonel Heintges was surprised to receive them, as they necessitated a withdrawal of all forces of the Regiment from their tactical positions and an assembly of them in the vicinity of Alt-Hornbach during the night, then an attack with them before daylight. Furthermore, in the short time allowed it was impossible even for the commander, himself, to make the vitally important study and reconnaissance of the new sector prior to the attack. The daylight hours of 17 March were rapidly slipping away. At the time the orders were received not a single map of the new area had come down from higher headquarters, which showed the Siegfried Line defenses in the new zone.

The attack on the Siegfried Line required the fullest co-operation from supporting engineers, who in the short time allowed were unable to make all necessary preparations and study, which probably was the reason for their failure to properly 'blow' the 'Dragon Teeth'

during the operation. As all roads in the area were mined and bridges blown, engineers had to busy themselves in clearing the routes of communication and supply. It was a most difficult task to assemble the entire Regiment in the vicinity of Alt-Hornbach in the time allowed.

Never before in World War II had the Seventh Infantry been called on to make a major attack with such little preparation and study. In less than twelve hours the "Cotton Baler" Regiment was called on to disengage itself, though it is true it was not heavily engaged at the time, to shift to the east and assemble, then go into the attack on the mighty Siegfried Line itself, the vaunted German Westwall, which the high command from the United States Chief of Staff down to army commanders had been studying for years.

Despite the great demands made upon the Regiment, Colonel Heintges, with full confidence that the "Cotton Balers" could carry out the difficult mission, issued the necessary orders to his subordinate commanders. Of the battalions, the Second moved first at 1930. At 0300 on 18 March the entire Regimental Combat Team had closed into areas around Alt-Hornbach. While the troops were moving Colonel Heintges and his entire staff were unusually busy formulating plans. Major General O'Daniel ordered the 15th Infantry to attack on the right of the Seventh Infantry. Once again the



30th Infantry was to be held in reserve. No finer tribute could the commanding general have paid to the fighting qualities of the "7th Light Foot" than to select it for this assault against Germany's vaunted Westwall, which ran from Switzerland to the North Sea.

Plans of attack called for the two rifle regiments to assault in columns of battalions. The 15th on the right planned to hit the line with its First, Second and Third Battalions in order while Colonel Heintges decided his order of battalions would be the First, Third and the Second, which was partially recovered from the Utweiler events.

Lieutenant Colonel Wallace's troops were given the tough assignment of making the "Cotton Baler" assault to penetrate the Siegfried Line, northeast of Rimschweiler, where it was most dense, and seize Objective 1, Nieder-Auerbach. Major Flynn's battalion was to follow the First Battalion, turn left and seize Objective 2, the southern half of Zweibrücken. Lieutenant Colonel Duncan's battalion, upon seizure of Objective 2 by the Third Battalion, and on order of the Regimental Commander was to block to the west and southwest and assist in mopping up.

Anti-Tank Company attached one "bazooka" platoon to each the First and Third Battalions, then assembled the remainder of the Company in Alt-Hornbach in Regimental reserve.

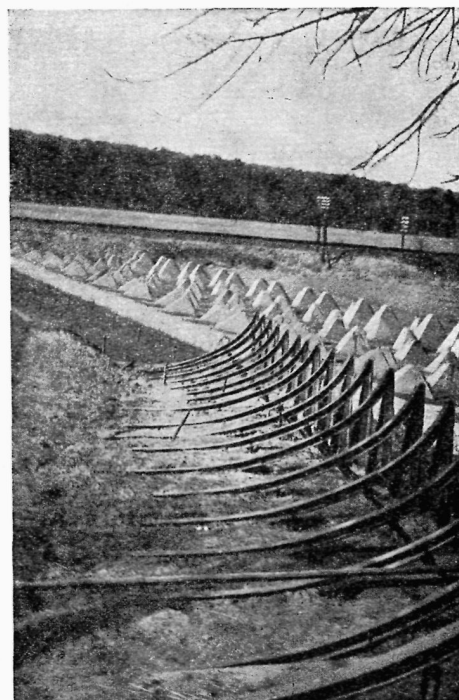
Company "A" of the 10th Engineer Battalion attached one combat platoon to the First and Third Battalions and held a third with the Regimental reserve.

The Third Reconnaissance Troop and Division Battle Patrol with the platoon of light tanks of Company "D", 756th Tank Battalion, protected the Regimental left front and flank by blocking action.

The Third Infantry Division Artillery was to fire harassing, counter-battery, and destructive fires from 0300 to H-60, then, from H-28 to H-Hour, fire heavy preparation fires in the zone of advance. The 10th Field Artillery Battalion and one battery of four M-12, 155mm assault guns for reduction of pill-boxes, were to be in direct support of the Regiment.

Maps of the area were finally received. Study of the Siegfried Line defenses showed that the Seventh Infantry faced the strongest section of the Siegfried Line in the Third Division area. Whereas the fortifications facing the flank units consisted of two rows of "Dragon's Teeth" with three rows of pill-boxes between, the defenses facing the Seventh Regiment comprised three rows of "Dragon's Teeth", with intervening pill-boxes spaced in great depth. The assault battalion had to penetrate a row of "Dragon's Teeth", movable blocks and concrete shelters with cupolas northeast of Rimschweiler before hitting a main dense line of "Dragon's Teeth" backed up by an anti-tank ditch. Another line of "Dragon's Teeth" followed the main line and in between the various lines were numerous obstacles consisting of concrete shelters, casements and overhead cables. Pill-boxes with automatic weapons were scattered everywhere and gun emplacements, both fixed and mobile, for heavy calibre weapons were placed throughout the area. Casements in the Zweibrücken defenses were of the "B-Werk" type—massive steel and concrete structures with two turrets, each of which was armed with two machine guns. The "Dragon's Teeth" were concrete tetrahedrons, four feet high and six feet apart. Areas between the "Dragon's Teeth" and the most advanced enemy command posts were obstructed by concertina barbed wire obstacles reinforced with spiral irons sunk into concrete casings. Accessible terrain in front of the "Dragon's Teeth", such as depressions, was

covered by the dreaded "S"-mines. Barbed wire between pill-boxes was strung in an ingenious fashion, covering every route of approach, with openings to lure the inexperienced soldier into death traps. Trip wires were laid in and around concertina obstacles. Leaders wondered how heavily manned the defenses would be. It was hoped lightly, but irregardless of how numerous were the defenders the Seventh Infantry planned to strike with all the power and determination possible.



A view of the "Dragon Teeth" and obstacles of the Siegfried Line.

Patrols probed the enemy defenses and brought back the information that the enemy had observation posts manned by three or four soldiers each along the line. Some pill-boxes had been located when the doors were opened and light shone out. The "Dragon Teeth" were covered with wire and mines and were defended by open trenches.

At 0300 the artillery opened its harassing fire. At 0310 the Seventh Infantry Commander reported to Division Headquarters by phone that his "Cotton Balers" were ready to assault, and simply waited for the appointed hour. The troops moved for the line of departure. Veteran "Cotton Balers", there were a few left, noticed nothing unusual to the approach to the jump-off line that night but they experienced a different feeling perhaps. Moving up in the darkness of the night, as the big guns spit red and roared out their thunder, was nothing new to them. They had done it more times than air pilots had flown missions.

During the previous dark nights they had gone to the line of departure on the oceans in small boats to assault hostile shores, they had moved up to assault across defended river lines, to attack so-called impregnable mountain fortresses, to lunge across flat lands covered by murderous fire, to attack old medieval forts, or to strike at the enemy in dense forests. But this was something new. They were to hit the Westwall, or the Siegfried Line, which the Germans repeatedly had said was impregnable, impossible to breach.

At 0545 as the artillery lifted and jumped 500 yards farther into the "Fatherland", the "Cotton Balers" of the First Battalion jumped off in the attack. The artillery completed its initial preparations at 0605, then fired smoke and intense screening missions on the flanks of the penetration that the First Battalion troops made.

A major effort had been made by B-26 medium bombers of the 1st Tactical Airforce (Prov.) in preparation of the Third Infantry Division's attack on the Siegfried Line near Zweibrücken. The United States 42nd Bomb Wing and the Second Brigade de Bombardement (French Air Force) B-26 Marauder made attacks on 15-16 March against the Siegfried Defense Line in the sector being attacked by the Seventh Infantry on the 18th. The 368th A/C had dropped 5009 bombs



1 Lt. Paul J. Delaney, Jr., 1 Bn. Hq. Co., and 1 Lt. Ernest K. Guard, A. T. Co., were two of 19 "Cotton Balers" killed in action in the Siegfried Line on 18 March 1945.

with a total weight of 628.075 tons consisting of 1164 x 100, 313 x 250 and 714 x 500 pound bombs. The 141st A/C had dropped 246.75 tons of bombs. No noticeable effect had been made however by these bombings on the pill-boxes or "Dragon Teeth" in the Seventh Infantry sector, but as the bombing continued it had great morale value to the troops.

Fortunately the enemy defenses were not fully manned but there were enough enemy on hand to render stiff resistance to the "Cotton Balers."

The First Battalion moved rapidly, as the attached "Friscan" battalion screened the line of departure and rendered support with its 81mm mortar sections. Com-

pany "A", the left assault element of the First Battalion, advanced across 800 yards of open terrain, by-passed several silent pill-boxes to the right and penetrated three belts of the "Dragon's Teeth", crossed the anti-tank ditch and reached a zig-zag trench in the vicinity of the Muhlthaderof Ferme at 0630. There the foremost company halted fifty yards from the crest of a hill and waited for Company "B" and the First Battalion Observation Post group, trailing behind, to catch up. As the OP group and "Baker" Company drew abreast of the pill-box installations previously by-passed by "Able" Company they came under the fire of six enemy machine guns firing from the positions. The fire was so intense and covered the intervening ground so thoroughly that some of the troops were unable to reach the cover of a trench running parallel to the row of "Dragon's Teeth". Private First Class Frank J. Colombo, of First Battalion Headquarters Company, jumped out of the trench drawing the enemy fire. While he engaged the hostile forces with his rifle at fifty yards range, his companions were able to reach positions of cover. Then, when five Germans moving down a connecting trench, approached the Americans he advanced to within thirty yards of them and fired two rifle grenades, killing one hostile soldier, wounding another, and forcing the others to withdraw.¹⁹

Company "C", the right assault element of the First Battalion, advanced but had to take cover into zig-zag communication trenches, because of devastating machine gun fire issuing from pillbox strong points located on the reverse slope of a small knoll.

The First Battalion forces then became subjected to devastating fire of all types, including extremely heavy concentrations of "88" and artillery fire. Company "B" was the target of withering cross-fire from machine guns and snipers emplaced in pill-boxes on both left and right fronts and distances ranging from 50 to 150 yards. Enemy mortar fire inflicted several casualties on Company "A". All movement immediately drew sheaves of machine gun fire from pill-boxes to the front and both flanks. The engineers did not blow the "Dragon Teeth". Due to the heavy fire deluging the area, they did not properly lay their charges and the resulting explosions failed to accomplish the desired result. Attached armor of the First Battalion could not function and reach the troops they were supposed to support. Communication did not exist between the assault companies of the First Battalion, "A" and "C", and Lieutenant Colonel Wallace and Company "B".

About half an hour after the First Battalion Observation Post group and Company "B" reached the trench, engineers made their way to the area and braved intense fire in order to blow apart several of the "Dragon's Teeth", enabling a friendly destroyer of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion to move up and fire into the nearest pill-box. Shortly thereafter, a second tank destroyer arrived and screened the movement of Second Lieutenant Will P. Barbour, Jr., a platoon leader of Company "B", and a squad of his men to attack another pill-box. Hurling smoke grenades into the pill-box, the platoon forced 33 Germans to emerge in surrender. As Second Lieutenant Barbour attempted to check the vicinity for the presence of other enemy, he was shot and killed by snipers. The capture of this bunker enabled the battalion commander to set up a relatively safe observation post

¹⁹ GOs No. 177, 299, 316 & 345, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 25 May, 15 Aug., 1 & 25 Sept. '45. Pfc Kovatch was awarded the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star Medal. 1 Lt Toney, T/5 Benda, Pfc Colombo & Elchlinger were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

and to re-establish contact between Company "B" and the assault units of the battalion, several hundred yards ahead.

All the companies of the First Battalion continued to receive intensive concentrations of mortar fire during daylight hours of 18 March in what was an evident



1 Lt. George J. Kyte, Jr., a forward observer from the 10th Field Artillery Battalion, was killed in action 18 March 1945 while with the forward elements of the 7th Infantry.

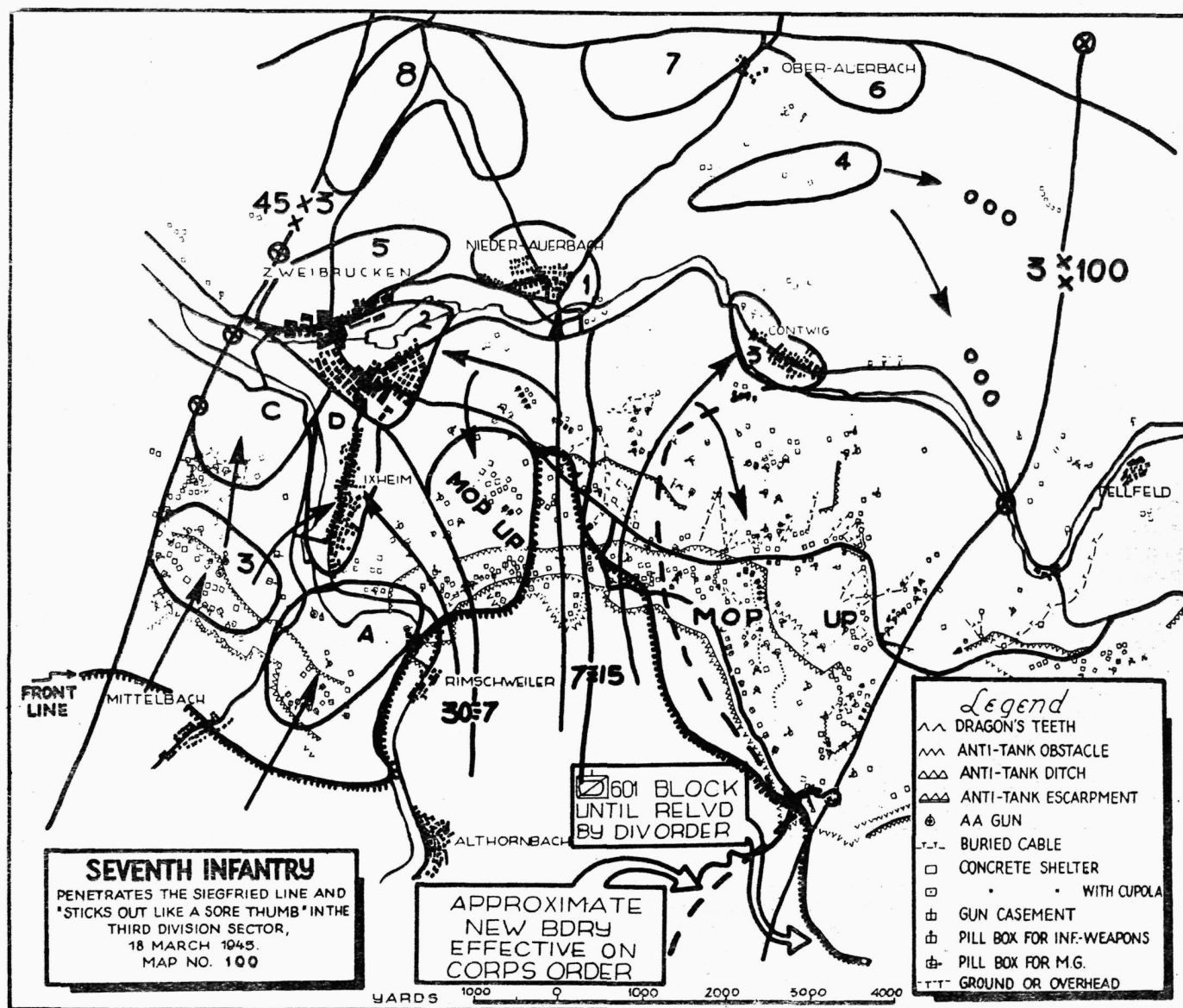
attempt by the Germans to drive them from their positions. Privates First Class John Elchlenger and Merle S. Kovatch, both wounded in action, and Technician Fifth

Grade Douglas P. Benda, all of Company "B" and First Lieutenant Malcolm B. Toney, First Battalion S-2, distinguished themselves during the action.¹⁹

The Third Battalion moved from the line of departure at 0700 on 18 March to follow in the wake of the First Battalion. No sooner had the leading elements of the Blue Battalion cleared the woods in which it had assembled then the enemy laid down an artillery concentration on the troops and wounded fourteen members of the battalion. When forward elements of Company "I", the lead company, were approximately 100 yards from the first row of "Dragon's Teeth", they were halted to await engineers coming up to blow a gap in the line. It took two hours for the engineers to arrive, during which time four members of the company were killed and eight others wounded by the mortar and artillery fire.

At about 0930 Company "I" moved forward with supporting armor, under continued enemy shell fire. Heavy artillery and direct "88" fire halted the friendly armor. Nevertheless, the company kept advancing until it reached two empty pill-boxes, where it was subjected to machine gun and sniper fire from by-passed positions to the rear, and was forced to hold up its forward movement.

After an all-day battle in the Siegfried Line, and as darkness fell, the enemy launched a series of slashing



counter-attacks against the narrow corridor blasted out by the rifle companies of the Regiment. At about 1900 hours, a re-inforced company of Germans struck at the First Battalion with Company "A" receiving the brunt of the blow. Enemy soldiers gained the trench occupied by the company and assaulted with point-blank small arms and hand grenade fire. Many members of Company "A" were wounded and seven were overrun and captured.

When his light machine gun crews abandoned their weapons in the face of the furious counter-attacks, Staff Sergeant Albert E. Haskell of Company "A" fought off the enemy at 35 yards range, ignoring bullets that killed a companion and missed him by inches. He burned out three M-1 rifles to hold the enemy at bay and then fought with hand grenades to kill 10 and wound 25 Germans. He remained at his post, despite a grave and painful wound, until the enemy was decisively beaten. For his extraordinary heroism Staff Sergeant Haskell was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²⁰

Private Jesse Jewell of Company "A", who was twice wounded in the ensuing action, but killed three Germans in a fire duel, and Private First Class David P. Jackson of Company "D" gallantly fought to stem the counter-attacks. For the Third Battalion, Sergeant Fred G. Anderson and Private First Class Sylvester Klish, both of Company "L" and both wounded during the action, gallantly fought the enemy. Technician Fifth Grade Arthur M. Sloan, Private First Class Joe A. Chewiwi and Private Dan N. Salley, all of the Medical Detachment, distinguished themselves during the action.²¹

Company "A" hurled the enemy back and out of the trench. Even the wounded, such as Private First Class Edward T. Winiarski, played a role in repulsing the attack. In spite of a bullet wound in his right arm suffered earlier in the day, he fired his carbine with his left hand. Later that night Company "A" was withdrawn to another trench about 100 yards to the rear to permit friendly artillery fire to pound the area. This shelling broke up what appeared to be another counter-attack, and before daybreak, the company returned to its former position.

During the morning hours of darkness on 18 March the attached Company "G" of the 30th Infantry entered Rimschweiler against light opposition and mine-sweeping engineers swept the road from Althornbach to Rimschweiler, but during the day enemy snipers prevented use of the road. Enemy self-propelled guns fired on the engineer bull-dozers and subjected the Regimental Command Post in Althornbach to severe poundings during the day. One direct hit on the Command Post building during the afternoon caused eight casualties. Private First Class Elisee A. Dutil of Regimental Headquarters Company, a veteran formerly of Company "K", was killed. He had joined the Regiment on 28 February 1943 in North Africa. As a leader of a "bazooka" squad in Sicily, South Italy, and on the Anzio Beachhead he had performed distinguished service. Though never officially decorated for bravery many there were who could testify to his gallant conduct. Twice he had been wounded during the early campaigns of the Regiment. Private First Class Salvatore J. Amato had a leg shot off by the same shell which killed Private First Class Dutil. Private First Class Frank G. Pirozzi of the S-3 section was severely wounded.

In the first day's fighting in the Siegfried Line besides those already mentioned, the First Battalion and Anti-Tank Company each lost a fine officer when First Lieutenants Paul J. Delaney, Jr., and Ernest K. Guard were killed. Sergeant Urbano DiPasquale, Privates First Class Lewis R. DeLong, Dewey W. Dixon, Privates Harold

Karns and Corwin J. Smith, all of "Able" Company, gave their lives battling the enemy. Privates First Class Melford M. Horton, Harry R. Thorpe, Jr., Private Howard J. Higdon, all of "Charlie" Company; Private First Class William E. Rose of "Dog" Company, and Private Frank Worden, Jr., of First Battalion Headquarters Company were killed by the enemy gunners. Five Third Battalion men lost their lives, namely, Technician Fifth Grade Raymond E. Principe, Technician Fifth Grade William A. Rolke, Private First Class Bruce F. Stutchbury and Private Woodrow Campbell of "King" Company, and Private John F. Fink of "Item" Company. Three forward artillery observers of the 10th Field Artillery Battalion were lost from the fight when First Lieutenant George J. Kyte, Jr., was killed in the action and First Lieutenant Casimir J. Kedzior and Second Lieutenant Chester V. Franklin were seriously wounded.

Private First Class Albert G. Cartier of Company "A" was so seriously wounded that he died of his wounds two days later. A total of sixty men were wounded in action and evacuated.

The work of the First Battalion during the early morning darkness and throughout the day was particularly outstanding and was another great accomplishment of the battalion during this war. Its forward position as plotted on the map was like a big finger pointed into the enemy's lines. By its powerful drive it enabled the Seventh Infantry to once again "stick out like a sore thumb" on the point of the Third Infantry Division's "embarrassing bulge".

As the right boundary of the Third Infantry Division was to undergo a change on XV Corps order and Major General John W. O'Daniel issued orders for the commitment of the 30th Infantry on the left, his headquarters issued instructions for the movements.²² The overlay which accompanied the instructions, besides showing the usual number of goose eggs for objectives, also showed the front line on the Third Division's front at the end of 18 March 1945 and is the official Army document which shows the forward positions of the Seventh Infantry on that date.

The instructions from the commanding general's headquarters ordered a continuance of the attack by the 7th and 15th Regiments while the 30th was to attack at 0530 on 19 March in a zone on the left, through the Third Reconnaissance Troop and Division Battle Patrol which were detached from Seventh Infantry control as well as the "Friscan" Second Battalion. The "Frisicans" were to seize objectives "A", "B", "C", "D", then be prepared to attack Objectives 2 and 5 and assist the Seventh Infantry.

The matter of support for the riflemen became acute as the supplies ran low and the task of making passage-ways for the armor was exceedingly difficult. One tank became stuck in the first row of "Dragon Teeth", another tank and a bulldozer ran out of gasoline, while the enemy kept pouring in deadly fire. A task force consisting of Company "I" with a bulldozer, two retrievers and engineers, attached to both the First and Third Battalions, moved during the night of 18-19 March to effect the passage for the armor and vehicles, with rations

²⁰ For authority see GO No. 625, HQ, 7th Army, W.M.D., 22 Oct. '45.

²¹ GOs No. 175, 182, 256, 262, 264, 299 & 345, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 24 & 28 May, 15, 18 & 19 July, 15 Aug. & 25 Sept. '45. Sgt. Anderson, T/5 Sloan, Pfc's Chewiwi, Jackson & Klish, Pvts. Jewell & Salley were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

²² Operations Instruction No. 30, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., Brenschelbach, Germany, 18 Mar. '45.

and supply for the First Battalion. The enemy counter-attacked the task force but "Item" Company repulsed the enemy. Enemy-manned pillboxes to the right and left of the line of advance hampered the operation but at 0315 the task force reached Company "B" at the second row of "Dragon Teeth" and delivered the supplies.

In the morning an increased amount of enemy artillery was received. The supporting Air Corps carried out numerous bombing missions in front of the troops and the battle to destroy the enemy in the pill-boxes continued throughout the day.

When his platoon was halted by withering machine gun fire from Siegfried Line defenses on 19 March, Private First Class Rumaldo Medina of Company "L" armed himself with hand grenades and dashed forward alone to knock out an enemy pill-box. Hit in the chest and knocked down, he continued crawling forward through machine gun and rifle fire and dropped two



Three of 15 "Cotton Balers" killed during the Siegfried Line action of 19 March 1945 were: (1) 2 Lt. Will P. Barbour, Jr., Co. "B"; (2) 2 Lt. Jefferson W. Davis, Co. "A", and (3) 1 Lt. Robert E. McDonnell, Co. "B".

grenades through a vent in the pill-box and destroyed its crew. His intrepid action enabled his platoon to resume the attack, seize an enemy-held trench, kill three and capture twelve Germans. Private First Class Rumaldo was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²³

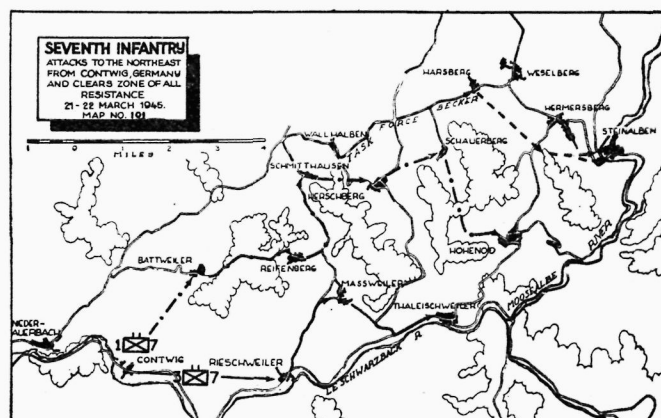
The First and Third Battalion forces fought throughout 19 March in the Siegfried Line defenses. Toward nightfall resistance began breaking. First Lieutenant Victor M. Morris, First Lieutenant William T. Wright, Second Lieutenant Frederick R. Drayton and Staff Sergeant George D. Moore, Jr., who was blinded in one eye by a mortar fragment, all of Company "C", were outstanding when their company repelled a counter-attack that day. Staff Sergeant Jesse B. Barnett of Company "B", Staff Sergeant Ralph M. Brown of First Battalion Headquarters Company, who was wounded in the action, Technician Fifth Grade Melvin H. Draben of Company "I", who was killed in the action, Staff Sergeant Robert A. Olson of Company "L" and Private First Class Kenneth L. Suman of Third Battalion Headquarters Company were a few whose actions were brave.²⁴

The zone of advance was cleared during the night of 19-20 March as the Third Battalion cleaned out six enemy pill-boxes and more supplies got through to the First Battalion. Between 50 and 60 of the seriously wounded were evacuated on half-tracks. In the early morning of the 20th the Regiment started taking prisoners. At 0820 the Blue forces had 21 prisoners of war and 10 conscripted Russians including four women. The Second Battalion mopping up behind the Third had 14 Germans in hand as prisoners. At 1050 the Siegfried Line was breached and the First and Third Battalions were advancing to the north. A total of 66 enemy including one officer had been taken prisoners, besides numerous enemy were killed. A task force consisting

of Company "E" and tank destroyers of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion contacted elements of the 30th Infantry northeast of Ixheim at 1100, then occupied Ixheim at 1305. The Red Battalion drove on to seize the southeastern section of Zweibrücken while the Third Battalion drove on to Nieder-Auerbach. The enemy was making a general withdrawal to the northeast.²⁵

The 30th Infantry on the left and the 15th on the right also advanced that day and the entire Siegfried Line in the Third Division sector had been breached. Then with the tough assignment completed, the Sixth Armored Division, unmolested, passed through the line held by the Third Infantry Division troops, to pursue the fleeing Germans. By courtesy of the regular Infantry in removing the obstacles the tanks of the Armored Infantry rolled again.

The First Battalion assembled in battered, totally destroyed Zweibrücken. The Third Battalion left Company "K" in Nieder-Auerbach then assembled the remainder of its troops in Rimschweiler at 1940, while the Second Battalion was assembled in Althornbach at 1830 on 20 March. During the early morning of 21 March a small force of riflemen were sent to the 30th Infantry sector to clean out enemy snipers who harassed the communication and supply route into Zweibrücken.



The Third Infantry Division had not been the only division of the American Seventh Army to penetrate the Siegfried Line. On the immediate left the "Thunderbirds" broke through, while farther to the left the 63rd Infantry Division, spearheaded by the 101st Cavalry Group, made a penetration. Saarbrücken, the principal city of the Saar Basin, was taken on the 20th by the 70th Infantry Division.

The American Third Army had combined with the Seventh Army to reduce the Rhine-Moselle-Saar pocket to one-third its original size. Against little resistance the 4th Armored Division reached Mainz also on the Rhine. The 80th Infantry Division and the 10th Armored Division fought their way into Kaiserlautern.

General Eisenhower's Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (Shaef) announced by bulletin early 21 March that the 6th Armored Division of the

²³ For authority see GO No. 625, HQ, 7th Army, W.M.D., 22 Oct. '45.

²⁴ GOs No. 177, 208, 226, 227, 235, 299 & 339, HQ, 3d Inf. Div., 25 May, 12, 24, 25 & 29 June, 15 Aug. & 17 Sept. '45. 2 Lt. Drayton was awarded the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star Medal. 1 Lt. Morris, 1 Lt. Wright, S/Sgts. Moore, Brown & Olson, Sgt. Barnett, T/5 Draben (posthumously) & Pfc Suman were each awarded the Silver Star Medal.

²⁵ For leading the 3d Div. into Germany and its superlative work in the Siegfried Line the 7th Inf. was recommended for a Presidential Unit citation.

Seventh Army, which had passed through the Siegfried Line by courtesy of the 7th, 15th and 30th Infantry Divisions of the Third Infantry Division, had made contact on the 20th with the 26th Infantry, or "Yankee", Division of the Third Army, about twelve miles west of Kaiserlautern. The two armies were linked up. The American First Army farther north held a twenty-five mile strip on the east bank of the Rhine.

NEW PLANS

Due to the rapid developments taking place with the enemy withdrawing to the east as rapidly as possible, leaving only delaying forces and scattered sniper resistance behind, the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions underwent a shift to the east.

For the Third Infantry Division, the 7th and 15th Infantry Divisions were to attack to the east and northeast and block on the Corps boundary line while the 30th Infantry Division was to follow the 6th Armored Division toward Kaiserlautern. The Cavalry's 106th Reconnaissance Squadron was to conduct screening operations.

7th INFANTRY ATTACKS TO NORTHEAST AND CLEARS ZONE OF ALL RESISTANCE 21-22 MARCH 1945

The Seventh Infantry moved its troops from Zweibrücken, Rimschweiler, Nieder-Auerbach and Althornbach to assembly areas in the vicinity of Contwig, Germany, late in the afternoon of 21 March 1945.

At 2100 the First and Third Battalions attacked to the northeast against little resistance. Then at 2350 Task Force Becker was sent to the front to seize the Steinalben bridges.

Without firing a shot the First Battalion (reinforced) cleared the six towns of Battweiler, Reifenberg, Schmittshausen, Herschberg, Schauerberg and Hoheinod, and assembled in the latter town during the morning. Over 100 prisoners of war were captured.

The Third Battalion in the right half of the Regimental zone cleared Rieschweiler and Massweiler without trouble but ran into resistance in Thaleischweiler where Companies "K" and "L" engaged enemy in a stiff fight.

At about 0500 hours on 22 March near Thaleischweiler, when his patrol was halted by a road block, Sergeant Anthony J. Balbaton, of Company "K", exposed himself to enemy automatic and sniper fire to knock out a 75mm anti-tank gun at ten yards range with rifle-launched grenades. Wounded in the cheek, he walked past the road-block through bullets fired from enemy-occupied houses. He fired his light machine gun into the windows, killed three, and captured three of the enemy. His assault shattered the German defensive position, secured an important road net and disintegrated enemy resistance in the town. Sergeant Balbaton was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²⁶

The Third Battalion captured fifty prisoners of war in the town, two anti-tank guns and one flakwagon. The battalion then blocked to the east and remained assembled in Thaleischweiler.

Task Force Becker, commanded by First Lieutenant Albert V. Becker, Jr., of Second Battalion Headquarters, consisted of one "bazooka" platoon from Anti-Tank Company, a reinforced rifle platoon from the Second Battalion, two demolition men from Company "A", 10th Engineers, and two radio operators from Cannon

Company. Mounted on vehicles the task force moved tactically with great speed at 23-50 that night through Battweiler, Schmittshausen, Wallhalben and Saalstadt to Harsberg where contact was made with the 106th Cavalry Group. From Harsberg the Task Force moved on foot on an azimuth of 131 degrees to a point southwest of Hermersberg and then changed its course on to an azimuth of 116 degrees to reach Steinalben where the bridges over the Moosealbe River were seized intact. The enemy demolitions were removed and a guard established at 0600. A brief skirmish was held with two enemy being killed and eight captured.

The Second Battalion followed the lead battalions in reserve to Massweiler. Anti-Tank, Cannon, Regimental Headquarters and Service Companies displaced forward. Anti-Tank and Cannon Companies picked up scattered enemy to swell the Regiment's total to about 200 for the operation. About 100 displaced persons of Russian, Polish, French and Italian extraction were liberated and evacuated. The Second Battalion went into Division reserve and moved to the vicinity of Weselberg.

7th INFANTRY MOTOR MARCHES TO VICINITY OF FRANKENTHAL, GERMANY, 23-25 MARCH 1945

As practically all resistance west of the Rhine had ended and the armor and cavalry units had a field day dashing here and there, the Infantry moved up to the next barrier, the Rhine River, and made preparations to assault it, so that engineers could then bridge it and the armor would then roll again.

The Seventh Infantry (reinforced) was ordered to march by motor to an assembly area east of Frankenstein. Accordingly the movement was started early 23 March by the Second Battalion, Anti-Tank Company, Company "A", 10th Engineers, and the platoon of light tanks belonging to Company "D", 756th Tank Battalion, which units constituted the first serial. The initial point for the movement was established in Hermersberg and the troops passed through Schopp, and Kaiserlautern.

While the movement was underway order was received from higher headquarters to assemble in the vicinity of Carlsberg to the northeast of the original area, and near the Reichsautobahn.

It was impossible at that time to notify the first serial which had turned east from Kaiserlautern, passed through Hochspeyer and Frankenstein to the wooded area. The other three serials made up of the remainder of the Regiment, 10th Field Artillery Battalion, 202nd Field Artillery Battalion (M-1 Howitzers), Company "A", 3rd Medical Battalion, Companies "A", 756th Tank Battalion and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, were notified in time to move through Kaiserlautern and onto the Reichsautobahn, then they proceeded northeast to the new area near Carlsberg.

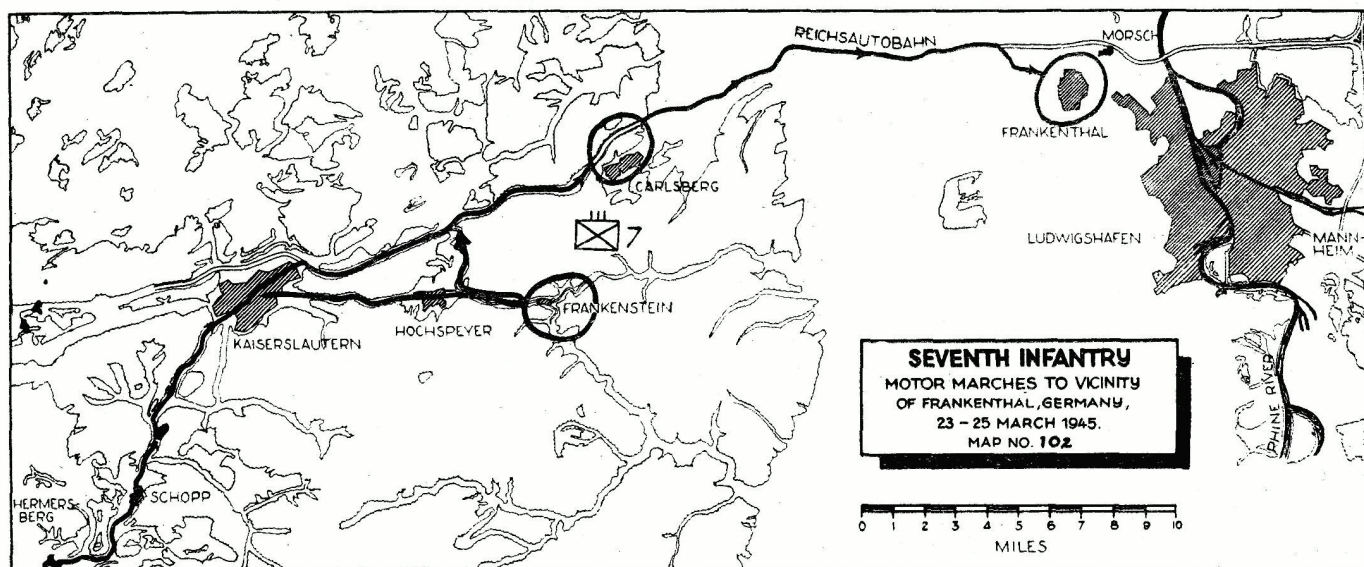
Units of the first serial were then notified of the change in area and moved a second time. When they closed in at 2030 the entire Regimental Combat Team was bivouaced around Carlsberg.

During the moves the Regimental Battle Patrol conducted screening operations between the routes of advance and the Division right boundary. Seventy-three prisoners of war were picked up.

²⁶ For authority see GO No. 192, HQ, 7th Army, 16 May '45.

The 24th was spent in attending religious services, the care and cleaning of equipment. Sixty-three more prisoners of war were gathered up. The Commanding Officer and his staff worked on plans for crossing the Rhine River.

The night of 24-25 March the Regimental Combat Team made another motor march along the Reichsautobahn to the vicinity of Frankenthal where during darkness the units assembled. The Command Post moved on to Morsch.



CHAPTER III

The Rhine River Crossing and Drive to the East

The enemy, in the XV Corps' zone and on the entire Seventh Army front, had made a disorganized withdrawal of his forces from the Siegfried Line across the Rhine River. Elements of twenty-one enemy divisions and numerous miscellaneous units had been encountered by the Corps in its advance to the Rhine and it was expected that only hastily reorganized remnants of those units would be available to oppose a crossing of the river south of Mainz. The Seventh Army pushed plans to complete destruction of the enemy in its zone, to cross the mighty Rhine and establish a bridgehead in preparation for a subsequent advance to the northeast.

The XV Corps of the Seventh Army planned to make a main effort in the direction of Molsheim-Bensheim and force a crossing of the Rhine River in a zone between a point on the north suburbs of Mannheim north to Gimbshheim. The two large patches of woods, namely Lorscher Wald and Jagersburger Wald, were to be captured and the attack continued to seize the high ground of Bensheim-Reichenbach-Eberstadt-Grumstadt, prepared to extend the bridgehead or exploit to the north or northeast on Army order. The XXI Corps on the right was to continue its mission of mopping up before the Rhine. On the left, XII Corps, having already forced a successful crossing of the Rhine with strong forces was to continue action to enlarge its bridgehead and exploit.²⁷

The XV Corps consisted of the 3rd, 44th, 45th, 63rd, and 100th Infantry Divisions and the 106th Cavalry Group. It planned to force the Rhine in its zone with its two old reliables, the experienced 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions. The other three Infantry Divisions, the 44th, 63rd and 100th, were to cross behind the two assault divisions, on Corps order and then attack in

conjunction with the assault divisions. The 106th Cavalry Group was to constitute Corps reserve in the vicinity of Gimbshheim and make a feint of crossing the river. The Third Infantry Division was assigned the mission of forcing a crossing between Mannheim and Worms while the 45th Infantry Division was assigned the area on the north between Worms and Gimbshheim.

The operations of the Third Infantry Division were to be supported by the XV Corps Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Artillery. The 1109th Engineer Combat Group was to support the action with its main effort concentrated on building a treadway bridge over the Rhine in the zone of the Seventh Infantry, which was to be in assault, as usual, on the right flank. Battery "B", 353rd Search-Light Battalion, was also to support the action with "artificial moonlight" on call. The XII Tactical Air Command was to be in support. Included in the planned air support for the operation would be the blocking of approaches to the south flank of the zone of action by a strong medium bomber effort.

Assault plans of the "Rock of the Marne" Division called for the 7th and 30th Infantries to force the Rhine on the XV Corps right, in Areas No. 1 and No. 2, respectively. Following rapid coordination on the far bank they were to continue the advance with "utmost speed and violence", seize Line "TOE HOLD", capture the objectives indicated, and clear the zone to Phase Line "ABLE". The assaulting regiments were to contact each other at Contact Points No. 3 and No. 4 with all possible

²⁷ Field Order No. 3, "Operation Rhineland", HQ, 3d Inf. Div., Alt-Leiningen, Germany, 24 Mar. '45.