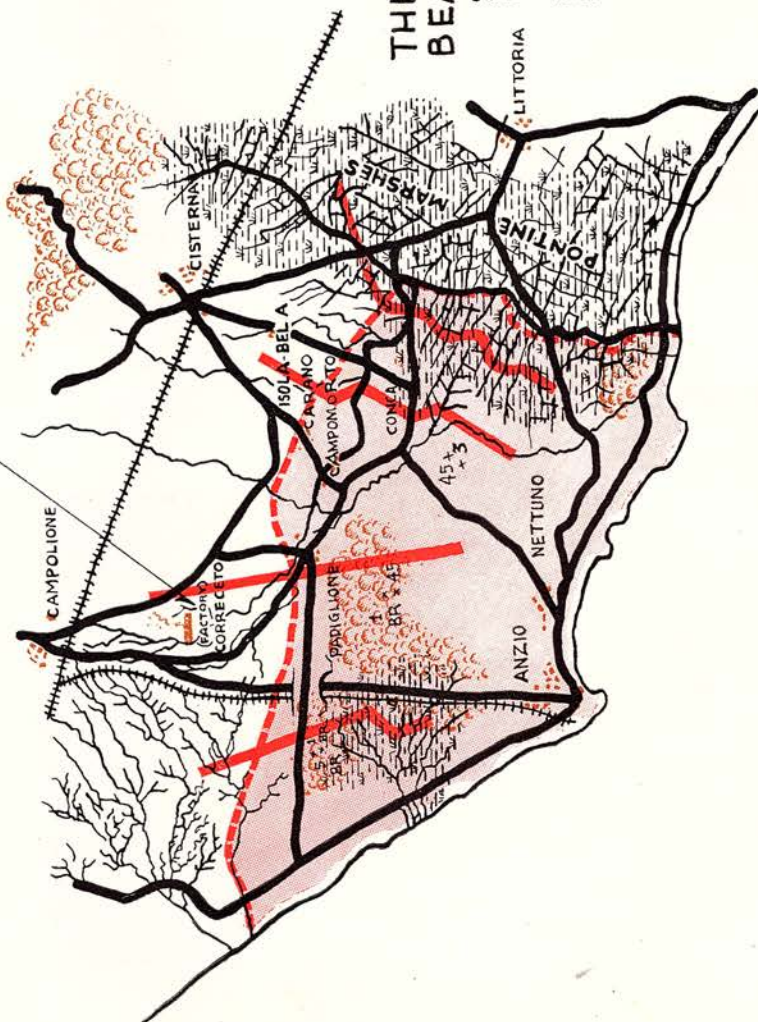


ON JAN. 22, 1944 THE 19th INFANTRY LANDS AT ANZIO. THE 45th DIVISION IS COMMITTED AT ANZIO. BEACHHEAD UNDER GOES FURIOUS GERMAN ASSAULT. ON FEB 16 TO FEB 19 GERMAN MAKE A SLIGHT GAIN BUT FAIL TO DISLodge THE BEACHHEAD. ANZIO BECOMES A STALEMATE. CONTINUING UNTIL MAY 23, 1944. BEACHHEAD SIEGE COMPLETELY LIFTS BY MAY 26 - AFTER 125 DAYS.

THE ANZIO BEACHHEAD



FEB 16 - 19. GERMAN LAUNCH FURIOUS FOUR DAY ASSAULT TO SPLIT BEACHHEAD FORCES ALONG "PUNTA" - ALBANO ROAD WITH "PUNTA AREA" AS FOCAL POINT. ELEMENTS OF SEVEN NAZI DIVISIONS ARE THROWN AGAINST THE 45th WITH LUTWAF SUPPORT AT ITS PEAK. ENEMY ARTILLERY SUPPORT IS HEAVIEST OF ITALIAN CAMPAIGN. BUT "PUNTA" AREA IS NOT TAKEN. GERMAN ATTEMPT TO FORCE BEACHHEAD BY FEB. 18 DEVELOPS INTO A MILITARY BLUNDER. CASUALTIES HEAVY ON BOTH SIDES. TENACITY OF 45th SAVES BEACHHEAD.



WorldWarTwoVeterans.org



The overpass.

ROME—ARNÓ

ANZIO

"The silence of the mist-shrouded morning was misleading. It gave no warning of the hell that was to be ANZIO. The lonely stretch of Italian coast looked gaunt and uninviting to the first Thunderbirdmen who hit the beach on the heels of the 3rd—the Marne Division."

The 179th Infantry landed at the ANZIO-NETTUNO harbor on January 22, 1944, within 24 hours after the assault troops had hit the beach. The initial landing was extremely successful, and the beachhead forces pushed their lines as far out as their small number would permit. The enemy had prepared few defenses in this sector—they had not progressed beyond hasty field fortifications, trenches, some barbed-wire road blocks, and a few mine fields.

By the last day of the month, the entire 45th Division had completed debarkation on this little point of sand some 30 miles south of ROME. Infantry troops took up defensive positions at once, for it was established by air reconnaissance that the Germans were rapidly bringing in reserves to oppose any advance in the direction of ROME.

The landing on the west coast of ITALY south of ROME was intended to cut the German communications and break the flank of the Gustav Line, the German main line of resistance south of ROME. The forces from the ANZIO Beachhead were to join the forces of the Fifth Army main front and the French, now trying to cut through at CASSINO, to converge upon ROME.

Three divisions had landed at NETTUNO and ANZIO on January 22 and thereafter were to set up the beachhead there. The Germans, this time, were taken unawares.

Unlike SALERNO, at ANZIO the Germans devoted the first two weeks of fighting to defensive measures, although it was evident that large numbers of reinforcements and quantities of supplies were being brought into the area. Preoccupied with the bitter fighting at CASSINO, they allowed the Allied landing behind the lines at ANZIO and the quick advance to APRILIA. Then, gathering their forces, the Germans halted the attack.

"After the unloading of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion on 29 January, Lieutenant Lindsey was dispatched to meet the 189th FA at the dock at ANZIO and guide their units to the area. Aircraft was heard overhead just after the march began and flares were dropped over the harbor. The column halted as the light from the flares bathed the area and vehicles in a faint glow. The order was given to abandon vehicles and disperse. A bomb struck near the exit road, falling among the parked and loaded vehicles of Battery B. Three more bombs fell in rapid succession—"

Although the German forces devoted the first days of the month chiefly to defensive measures, it became more and more evident that supplies and reinforcements were being brought in. Artillery fire became increasingly heavy, and enemy patrols began to probe the forward lines. The enemy made a weak attempt to enter our positions on February 2, and on February 7 increased the pressure with two attacks, preceded by heavy artillery fire and supported by tanks, against the 157th Infantry on the left flank of the Division sector.

A few minutes after midnight, the enemy attack penetrated the forward lines of the Regiment, but an imme-



BY EDWARD A. REEP

The Factory "Aprilia"

Courtesy War Department

diate counterattack restored the position. Enemy artillery was falling along the entire Division front, but was heaviest in this sector where an estimated 700 rounds fell within an hour. The German's second attempt developed between 3rd Bn. and the 2nd North Staffordshire Battalion. The concentrated fires of both American and British units, particularly mortar and machine-gun, brought the situation under control, and by 2250 hours, the front had quieted.

On February 11, the 1st Bn., 179th Infantry, moved to the line of departure, reorganized, and attacked at 0630A to seize the Factory area northeast of STAZIONE CASALE CARROCETO. The attack was coordinated with the attack of the 191st Tank Battalion, and was preceded by a 15-minute artillery preparation on the objective. The drive achieved good results against mines, anti-tank fire, and intense machine-gun fire from the German positions. The resistance increased as the troops advanced across the open fields to occupy the Factory itself. During the afternoon the enemy brought up tanks to assist the defending troops, and increased the fire against the attackers. The battle continued throughout the night, and there was no lull in the intense firing from enemy guns. At daylight February 12, the troops withdrew to the original positions.

There was little that was unusual about the enemy's activities on February 15. Some sectors showed a slight increase in troop movements. The German patrols continued to operate around the beachhead perimeter, but they were not unusually aggressive. Many of them were contacted and engaged in fire-fights during the night and early morning. Patrols from the Division front line units consistently brought in detailed and accurate information of the enemy movements.

An elaborate communication system had been set up throughout the forward area, and observers were able to bring fire on targets provided by enemy movements and gun locations. During this apparently "normal" day, less than 3,000 rounds of artillery ammunition was expended on enemy targets. The enemy felt the accuracy of the fire, and used harassing counterbattery fire to try to check it.

"On the swampy beachhead, the flat, open land was oppressive. Used to fighting in mountains, where one at least felt relatively secure behind a reverse slope, the 45th Division troops now looked at the open terrain with a feeling that, no matter where they went, they were in constant danger."



BY EDWARD A. KEEP

Anzio Harbor Under German Shelling

Courtesy War Department

With some relief, the 157th Infantry yielded the left coastal sector of the beachhead to the British on the night of February 14, and moved into the central sector astride the ALBANO-ANZIO Highway. But the feeling of relief was short lived, for here the Regiment engaged in the bitterest battle of its history.

It was the age-old struggle for survival, not glory or patriotic fervor, that spurred men into holding the bitterly-contested ground against the onslaught of German forces for nine bloody days.

The German airforce began its relentless two-day attack shortly after midnight, and bombed and strafed beachhead positions with over 270 planes. From the very beginning of the ground attack, close air support was given the enemy troops.

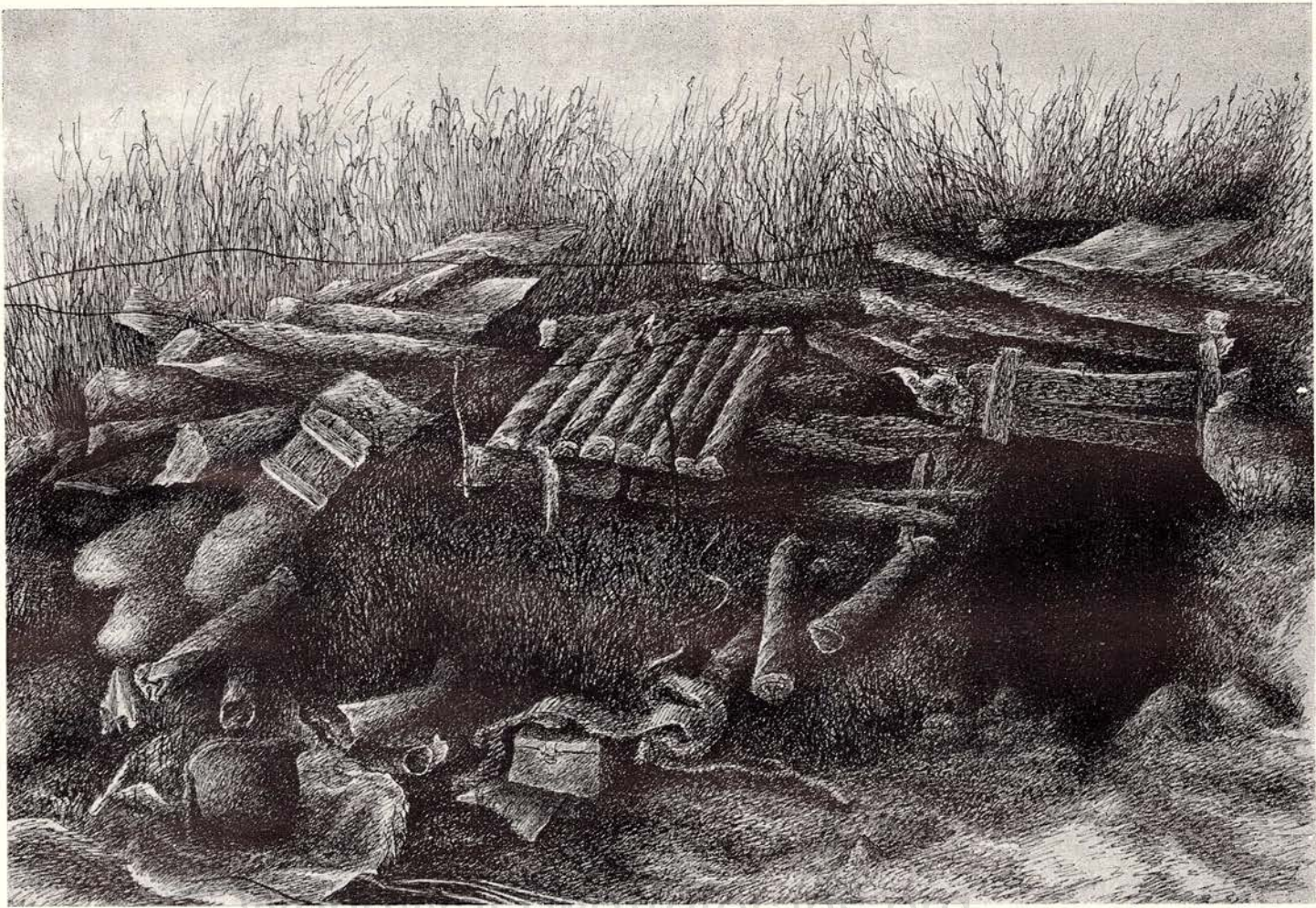
Following an intensive artillery preparation from 0630 to 0745, February 16, German infantry supported by tanks attacked from the Factory area down the ALBANO-ANZIO highway. Coordinated with this attack at daybreak were other efforts all along the north side of the beachhead circle.

Although the enemy had suffered greatly from the bombings and shellings of the Factory area, APRILIA remained the focal point of the action, from where tanks and troops were sent into a forceful drive against the defending forces. Enemy artillery on both front line and reserve positions was intense and continuous.

Before many hours had passed it was evident that the attacks toward CARANO and PADIGLIONE, and in the vicinity of FOSSE DELLE MOLE were secondary or diversionary. The main effort of the enemy was concentrated on the left flank of the central sector, where the highway afforded the shortest route to ANZIO harbor. The full force of the drive was converged on the overpass where Company E, 157th Infantry, had established their defense.

"On the moonlight night of February 15, the 2nd Bn. moved into position on the north-south highway, three kilometers in front of the huge railroad overpass. The Battalion that night relieved British and American units, taking over their fox-holes, slit-trenches, and dugouts. Company E on the right, Company G on the left, Company F between, Company H in reserve.

"Ahead of the battalion stretched miles of flat,



By MITCHELL SIPORIN

Soldier's Home Mussolini Canal

Courtesy War Department

open terrain, broken only by ditches barely deep enough to conceal a crawling soldier. Houses, occupied by enemy troops, and sparse wooded areas cast sharp outlines against the sky. To the right lay APRILIA, the so-called factory, where another unit (the 179th Infantry) had met bitter resistance a few days before, suffering heavy losses.

"Behind the front line companies in a labyrinth of man-made caves was the Battalion Command Post. The caves had been dug into a shale ridge and extended underground in all directions for thousands of yards. Almost impervious to enemy shellfire, the caves became headquarters for the staff, the medical aid men, and the field artillery radio crew. Trucks could drive within the tunnels, so the caves became a supply point as well. In the action that followed they became the Battalion's last point of defense.

"Tired from their night march and the constant stop and go that marks a frontline relief, the men settled into their shallow slit-trenches and relaxed as best they could. Dawn was approaching.

"There was silence for awhile and then suddenly from far away came the whine of approaching shells, then the screams, rumble and crash as the

projectiles hit. The men huddled in their holes and waited tensely as the shelling increased. Over the noise of the explosions came the distant sound of enemy guns. Shells blew men out of their shallow trenches. The cry of the wounded—"Medics, medics"—pierced the air. To the cramped, nervous men crouching to the ground, the barrage seemed endless, but suddenly the shelling ceased. Across the rocky flat from APRILIA rolled German light tanks and behind them charging infantrymen.

"The full brunt of the enemy assault struck Company E head on. Riflemen and machine gunners cut down the German infantry, but three German tanks completely overran the left platoon of the Company. One supporting Tank Destroyer from the 645th Battalion moved a few yards, then was knocked out by a direct hit.

"The second TD fared far better. Within a few moments it destroyed two enemy tanks with shellfire. The third tank withdrew, leaving the German infantry, which had broken into the company area, to fight the battle alone. At 25-yard range the TD then opened fire on the enemy foot troops with 50-caliber machine-guns and tommy guns, killing many of the attackers. To the TD crew went the

credit for breaking up the first assault, but their ammunition was expended and they were forced to withdraw.

"All morning long the German infantry moved across the open fields, into our interlocking fire. Hundreds died, but the assault waves never ceased.

"Company G, on the left above the caves, was also under attack by German tanks and infantry. Artillery fire stopped the tanks, but the enemy pushed on, crawling through draws and ravines despite the shellfire from Company G. Some 200 enemy soldiers closed in on the right flank and died. On the left, German infantry overran one platoon in the wake of an artillery barrage. 1st Lt. Joe Robertson, the company commander, ordered friendly artillery fire down on his own positions. Though it brought casualties to Company G, it slaughtered the exposed enemy. Assaulting Germans plunged into foxholes to engage the men of the Company in hand-to-hand combat. Under continued pressure, the hard-hit and weakened platoon was forced to withdraw. The Germans held the ground."

There was no longer any doubt that this was a determined effort to drive the Allied forces from the beachhead. The fury of the German assault was almost unbelievable. Prisoners and dead Germans from 16 different regiments were identified in the assault. Seven divisions were used, including Panzer and paratroops, fighting in the CAMPO di CARNE—which, ironically enough, translated means "Field of Meat."

"In the afternoon the Panzers attacked again, assaulting the right platoon, overrunning the position and knocking out two anti-tank guns. With these guns knocked out, the tanks moved directly to the foxholes of the valiantly fighting riflemen. At point blank range, they fired on the men. Dazed from the constant explosions—defenseless against the tanks—many of the men were forced to surrender."

At dark that first day, the attack slowed, but did not stop. There seemed to be a brief breathing spell for a renewed effort. Through the night the Germans slowly and methodically infiltrated into the disrupted positions of the front line, and engaged the handful of men who were holding the last hope of the defense.

In the sectors of the 179th and 180th Infantry Regiments, the enemy artillery had concentrated artillery fire and patrol efforts to give the appearance of a pending attack, in an attempt to appear even more powerful than they were. In the light of flares, the Luftwaffe scattered bombs on artillery batteries, supply and ammunition dumps, mortar and infantry positions. Communication lines were broken by artillery fire, and it was necessary to rely on

radio messages for contact between the units and their commanders.

Under cover of darkness patrols began extensive operations. The Germans brought in supplies and more troops to reinforce their drive. It was obvious that they were cheered by their initial assault, and would spare neither men nor material until the ANZIO beachhead no longer existed. Shortly after midnight the enemy began to move forward again. The new attack began from the vicinity of the railroad overpass. German infantry infiltrated in groups of 20 and 30, while the artillery fires of both sides continued throughout the night. Thirteen additional enemy tanks began operating along the main highway.

In the effort to stop the onslaught of German troops, the concentrated fires of the beachhead artillery was used many times on targets near the Division's lines. Requests were radioed for air support from every available air unit. Shortly after dawn on 17 February several squadrons of heavy bombers flew over ANZIO to bomb enemy areas. This began the succession of flights which continued for several days; involving the entire Mediterranean Allied Air Force in the strongest support ever given to ground forces.

Such stubborn resistance was not maintained without considerable losses in equipment and personnel; there were few, if any, replacements for those who became casualties, and the men who remained were forced to exert every force to fill the gap left by the fallen.

With only 18 men of Company E left, Captain Sparks began a withdrawal at daylight of February 17.

"... the Germans continued their offensive, this time with the full force striking Company G. The crossfire forced them to stop, leaving scattered groups of dead and wounded lying in the ravine. At one point, an odd-shaped X formed by dead Germans showed where machine gunners had laid down their fire.

"Contact patrols sent out battled their way through infiltrating Germans. Finding no friendly troops, they fought their way back to the Battalion sector. All day enemy soldiers, tanks, and self-propelled weapons advanced toward the overpass.

"The Germans pressed every advantage. Enemy artillery poured into the Battalion sector without let-up, and German foot troops appeared on all sides. Battalion medics moved about the area, carrying seriously wounded men to the aid station in the caves, where they were drugged to relieve their pain.

"Water was needed, but only occasionally could carriers work their way forward to the caves. In a nearby draw trickled a stream in which lay corpses of enemy dead. The water ran blood red, but many of the men filled their canteens, boiled it and drank.

"At dusk on February 18, Sergeant Garcia crawled through a draw to the Battalion Command Post and warned the Commander that a company of enemy was coming close. Infiltrating Germans were everywhere, moving singly or in pairs. The tunnels became a defensive position. Every man fired into the surrounding forces. Riflemen lobbed hand grenades over the bluff into the midst of the advancing enemy.

"Inside the caves, Captain Hubbert, artillery liaison officer, radioed back for fire on the Battalion position and the caves. For two hours Allied artillery batteries swept the draws and ditches."

Behind the lines, another great battle was going on, the battle to get supplies through. When the main supply route was cut off by infiltrating Germans, 1st Lt. Stanley Lemon, acting Battalion Adjutant, reconnoitered and laid out another route. Then he carefully protected his new route with other units. Under cover of darkness on February 18, drivers and carrying parties hauled ammunition up to the caves and the forward positions. That night, under the most intense fire, about 100 wounded were successfully evacuated. Then the Germans closed in once more. The two supply companies had to fight their way out. There was no let-up next day. The Germans continued to strengthen their positions. They spared neither men nor equipment.

On February 19, the enemy maintained close contact with the right sector of the Division front. The British Loyals began entering the line which had been held by the three regiments of the Division fighting abreast. A clash with small arms developed in the sector held by Task Force H, composed of elements of the 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, and the 1st Armored Division. Two companies of the 180th Infantry aided the advance of the task force in that sector until it withdrew under strong opposition.

On February 20, all positions received heavy intermittent shelling. Light local attacks were repulsed. Supplies got through to all positions despite the heavy enemy pressure on all sides of the beachhead perimeter defense. Germans who had infiltrated to the rear and set up strong-points in scattered houses were cleaned up. This condition of comparative quiet remained fairly static until 1700, February 21. At that time the enemy infiltrated through the positions and set up a defense point in a house. A fight developed, first with small arms, then a hand-to-hand struggle raging all the way into the 2nd Bn. CP. The situation quieted again to intermittent shelling on the front. The British 24th Guards Brigade accomplished relief of the 2nd Bn., 6th Armored Infantry, and the 3rd Bn., 157th Infantry. Attempted relief of the 2nd Bn. by the 56th British

Division could not be accomplished because the enemy, which had infiltrated past their positions, had successfully cut off the sector and cut the supply route and all connections with the Beachhead Line.

As the Germans struck again with fresh troops, the weary men in the caves area continued to hold on. They were outnumbered and outflanked, always low on ammunition and always under shelling, but now they fought with hope. Frontline rumor had said that the British were trying to relieve them.

After dark, a battalion of British infantry began its march into the sector. The men listened to the offbeat drone of enemy bombers and the sputter of the "butterfly" bombs and wondered if they would make it. An hour later, as fire fights broke out, the new battalion made its arrival known. They had fought their way in foot by foot, they had been bombed, they had suffered heavy casualties, they had lost their heavy weapons and ammunition, but they were there. The men in the caves welcomed them with heart-felt joy.

Because the British had lost so many heavy weapons, most of the Division's machine gun and mortar crews remained in action. Throughout the day the Germans continued to attack from the rear, closing in upon the British. The crowded sector was a maelstrom of activity. The exhausted troops inside the caves awaiting orders to move out were fully aware that they would have to fight their way back into friendly lines, but they were eager to go.

The Battalion had plotted the withdrawal over the route of supply, but the Germans kept a tenacious grasp upon that ground. A platoon was brought up, and they attacked to secure ground from which they might be able to cover the withdrawal with their fire. Also, they would attempt to establish contact with the British to secure, as much as possible, the 2nd Bn.'s avenue of escape.

Their attack succeeded, but when they reached the post supposedly maintained by the British, they found no British. Machine guns had been knocked over and carelessly kicked into the ditches. The Germans seemed to be in possession of all the ground except the caves.

Nevertheless, at midnight, the withdrawal began on schedule. The walking wounded and soldiers suffering from trench foot brought up the rear. Sheathed in small arms fire, the bedraggled and hard-pressed column moved out, following a ravine west to a small bridge, then taking a southward trail toward friendly lines. In the caves, Captain Graffagnino and his men stayed on with the wounded. They refused to leave until all could be evacuated.

From their organized positions, the German machine gunners savagely harassed the tragic column, laying down



BY MITCHELL SIPORIN

The Caves — Anzio Beachhead

Courtesy War Department

deadly and prolonged cross-fire. Fire from German-held strong-points in houses split the column across the middle and pinned down the rear elements. Those in the lead crawled safely through the ditches and made contact with the Beachhead Line.

One survivor of the group cut off to the rear was Capt. George Kessler, the Battalion Plans and Training Officer, who tells the story as follows:

"I was at the rear of the column," Captain Kessler said. "I started forward and found that Company H had lost contact with the forward elements. I sent Lt. John Stansell back to get them and continued my search for the forward troops. That was the last time I saw or heard from Company H.

"Because of the ghastly openness of this terrain, I decided to move the remainder of the column into a deep draw and work out through it. On reaching the draw, I found that only a few men had been able to follow me. I instructed 1st Sgt. Robert Santerli of Company F to send runners with instructions to bring up the remainder of the column. The runners did not return, nor were we able to locate any more of the men.

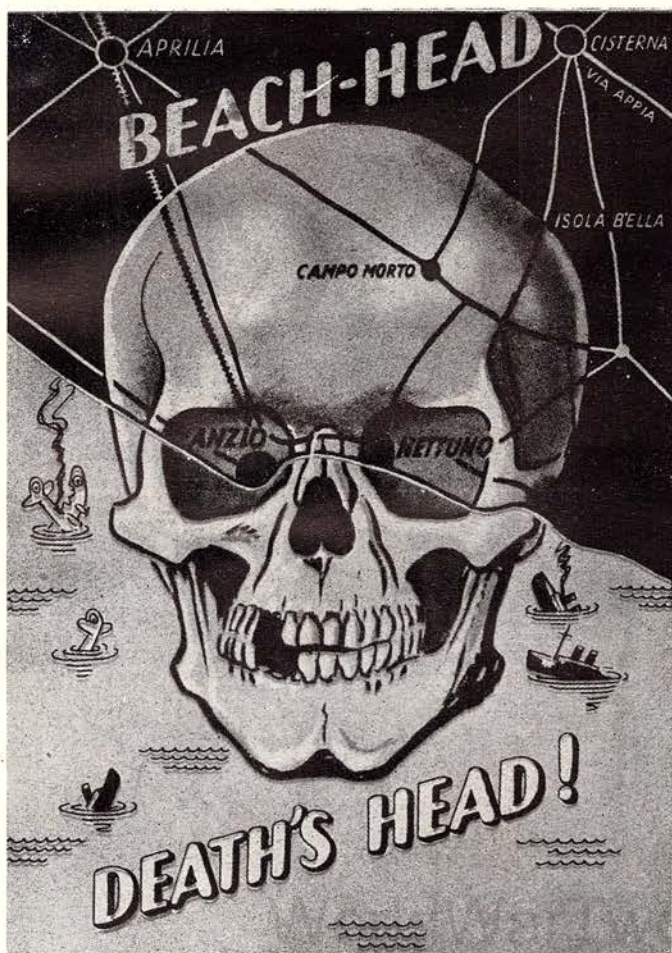
"Just before daylight, I decided to move out with the men in the draw. After daylight, the route would have been inaccessible. We started out with 15 men.

"Some 300 yards ahead we ran into Captain Sparks. He had about 15 men left with him.

"After daybreak, we reached friendly lines and continued on to the Battalion CP. We found that Colonel Brown, with G and F Companies, had reached the rear, but we had no report of E and H or of the platoon of Company L which had been sent to cover the withdrawal. The last I saw of them they were under extremely heavy fire at close range over open ground."

The only man from Company E—which had been farthest out on the ANZIO-ALBANO road when the attack broke—to accompany the Battalion back from the caves was its commanding officer, Captain Sparks. Two days later T/4 Leon "Doc" Siehr returned after fighting with the British for 48 hours after his Company was relieved.

"We were bringing up the rear of the column," Siehr said. Something happened. We were all pretty tired. Anyway, we lost contact. We got



Propaganda leaflets, one of many thousands dropped by Germans over the beachhead.

the order to stay where we were while officers moved forward and tried to reach the lead troops.

"We were catching a lot of fire from machine guns. Nobody came back, so Sergeant Garcia took off to try to find a way out. He disappeared, too, like the others.

"I stayed with the British a couple of days," Siehr added. "Then I told them I was going back to my battalion. I took off and joined the outfit in the bivouac area."

Of the 2nd Bn. which had entered the caves and slit trenches eight days before, less than one-fourth returned. Where they had been, the Germans were now entrenched.

THE BEACHHEAD

While the 2nd Bn. held out on the ANZIO-ALBANO Road, halting the German drive to split the beachhead, the iron perimeter defense around the beachhead was maintained with continuous patrolling and artillery duels. The following note from General McLain's personal collection illustrates the sort of fighting which took place:

"Another forward observer, Sherrick, believed killed or captured. By combining statements from Infantry and Artillery men, it is possible to reconstruct the story of Lieutenant Sherrick as follows:

THE BEACH-HEAD

**is going to be the big blow
against the Germans.**

Wasn't that the slogan of three months ago?

T O D A Y

it is still a beach-head and nothing else, but it is now paved with the skulls of thousands of British and American soldiers!

*The Beach-Head has
become a Death's Head!*

It is welcoming You with a grin, and also those who are coming after you across the sea for an appointment with death.

Do they know what they are in for?
Yes, they feel that they are landing on a

DEATH'S HEAD

AI-064a-5-44

"The 1st Bn., 179th, was ordered to occupy and prepare defensive positions on the main beachhead line by infiltration on the morning of February 18. Elements of the Company outposted the position on the dead-end road to the front.

"Lieutenant Sherrick overrode the advice of Captain Lane and established his forward OP on the outpost line. This involved the hazard of being cut off, but it afforded by far the best observation. During that night it became apparent that it was going to be extremely difficult for either the Company or the outpost to maintain their position.

"Shortly after daylight an attack by an enemy infantry force estimated at 300 men, supported by tanks, began. Lieutenant Sherrick moved his enlisted personnel and telephone communications back but he remained at the outpost with his radio, adjusting fire.

"As the enemy approached the building in which Lieutenant Sherrick was located, he moved his fires closer and closer to his own position. As the Germans closed in it was obvious that he had brought the fires of his Battalion down upon the building in which he was located. His last two statements were: 'I am destroying my code. Three hundred yards right.'"

The obvious importance attached by the enemy to APRILIA, "the Factory Area," exemplified by the quick counterattack and thrusting back of the 179th Infantry's breakthrough there, grew clearer on February 16 when that sector proved to be the focal point of the gathering German attack. Not only did the initial assault against the 157th Infantry begin from that point, but enemy tanks and replacements were brought up from the roadnet in that area.

Fire from the area around APRILIA continued to sweep the beachhead after the attack to split the beachhead had been quelled and stamped out with the aid of British tanks, naval gunfire from across the beaches, and the heaviest air bombardments of the war supplementing the desperate flank attacks of the Americans.

On February 20, the right sector received scattered artillery fire, with added nebelwerfers, after daylight. There was a bombing and strafing attack by 14 planes at 1240. At least 18 Mark VI and four Mark IV tanks moved into position and fired into the lines all day. An artillery preparation was laid down upon the forward lines at 1830, continuing intensely for 45 minutes. An artillery barrage laid down upon the central sector at 1800 continued throughout the day. Small arms fighting and artillery continued alternately until 2400. Location of some 80 tanks in the area was reported during the period, and the heavy pressure upon the Division front and flanks did not relax.

February 21, after enemy efforts to infiltrate along the right sector were unsuccessful, found small arms and tank fire heavy. The tanks, reinforcing the enemy artillery, would interdict, harass, and register on targets with high bursts as well as fire directly into observed targets. It was apparent that the enemy had reinforced strongpoints from which they could fire into the Division line, but they attempted no concerted assault except flare-ups with small arms and automatic fire, which were put down.

On this day, February 21, the enemy made an all-out effort to silence Division Artillery for the period. After the intense artillery preparations, the enemy kept the central sector under constant 105MM artillery and 210MM mortar fire during the entire period, while continuing infiltration tactics along the ANZIO-ALBANO Road. Infiltration continued around the new positions of the 2nd Bn., 157th Infantry, on February 22. Elsewhere attacks were pinned down or dispersed.

Harassing fires continued on February 23 while infiltrating groups continued to move up along the central sector. Artillery became extremely heavy in the afternoon, followed by small arms fire fights.

On February 24 the sector was generally quiet and ar-

tillery activity was limited to harassing and interdictory fire on forward elements and occasional counterbattery bursts. Movement of the enemy in the Factory Area continued, but diminished the following day as artillery fire increased and several heavy concentrations fell on rear areas. Heavy artillery and patrol activity continued through February and into March, falling sharply on forward elements and covering enemy reconnaissance and patrol action.

Distances were short on ANZIO, and spaces confined, so that all units became accustomed to the feeling of being in the "front line." There were even days when the "rear areas" were harder hit by enemy artillery than the front.

Through the last days of February and into March the enemy was held in check. The Allied forces did not break through, but set up their perimeter defense about the small triangle of the beachhead. The beachhead had a shore base of some 20 miles, and the foremost point extended some 15 miles inland. There, through March, the 45th Division remained, in what war correspondents described as "one of the hottest spots on earth."

A REPORT FROM ONE OF THE HOTTEST CORNERS OF THE EARTH, THE NARROW ALLIED BEACHHEAD FLANKING ANZIO AND NETTUNO, WHERE THERE ISN'T AN INCH OF TERRITORY PROTECTED FROM GERMAN BOMBS, SHELLS, MACHINEGUN AND SMALL-ARMS FIRE.

By a YANK Staff Writer

ANZIO BEACHHEAD.—Crammed with TNT, blood, and fighting men and women, this little Allied colony has become one of the hottest spots on earth.

An aerial view of the famous "Factory" which caused the troops of Anzio beachhead so much trouble.





From a unique observation post, shielded from view of the enemy behind an Italian straw house, an observer of the 45th Division watches tanks and infantry move toward their objective.

It measures only some 14 miles in length by about seven in depth, but its 90-odd square miles of flat and fertile farmlands have taken some of this war's greatest concentrations of fire and assault.

Every square inch of it is vulnerable to enemy fire. A ring of Kraut-held hills looks down on the fighting line and on these twin resort towns; German observers hidden on these heights place shells in the harbor, in the streets, and can place one in the living room of any residence you name. Kraut dive-bombers sneak through the air screen and lay their eggs on town and country.

The German High Command, seeing in the beachhead the only last-straw victory to hand its suffering public, has hit the area with everything it can spare from the main Italian front, but the Fifth Army men have held every time.

The High Command has even unleashed two of the Wehrmacht's choicer secret weapons: one a radio-controlled bomb which our ack-ack gunners have brought down; the other a remote-controlled tank—already dubbed the Doodle-

bug—carrying 130 pounds of explosives, which our gunners have also knocked out.

Soon after the bulletless landing on January 22 the Germans formed and began their all-out attempts to push the little beachhead into the sea. They hit it with wave after wave of tank-supported infantry, which one man said "Came at us like packs of wolves."

Air attacks by the full weight of the MAAF, however, aided the ground forces in repulsing those assaults.

From the beginning the fighting see-sawed back and forth so much that strange situations resulted. A German medical unit, surrounded by an American outfit, was allowed to pick up its casualties and go back into its own lines. One strategic crossroads called FEMINA MORTA (Dead Woman) had Germans in farm houses on one side of the road and GIs in houses on the other side.

Most people have lost count of the number of times the "Factory Building" near CARROCETO, scene of the heaviest fighting, has changed hands; a modern American Lost Battalion came back after standing against the enemy for nine days, during three of which it was surrounded.

Rear areas receive almost as much fire as the front lines. Early in the operation a hospital was bombed, killing 23, including two nurses, six patients, and one Red Cross worker, and wounding 68; later German long-range artillery shells screamed into the hospital area, killing two more nurses and wounding seven officers and men.

A field bakery well toward the rear is still turning out 13,000 loaves a day despite an all-day shelling of its vicinity. Already two of its bakers are wearing Purple Hearts. Shells have hit quartermaster dumps, spraying meat and vegetable hash, and one well-aimed 88 even struck a newly landed pile of cigarettes.

The few civilians left have moved into caverns and catacombs beneath the beachhead towns, venturing out only to sell what wine remains. At least one baby has been born since the landing, a girl, delivered a mile from the front line by a country doctor who did the job with 16 candles and a flashlight.

Now, with the beachhead nearly two months old, its defenders are faced with a semicircle of 10 German divisions—crack divisions from Northern ITALY and at least one from Southern FRANCE. With German forces in ITALY believed to total between 18 and 20 divisions, the beachhead can realize the importance it has assumed. It has drawn off half of von Kesselring's forces.

The chips are down; the hand is being played.

An indication of the severity of the fighting during the month of February is found in the comparison of statistics with those of the previous campaigns:

Rounds of Artillery Ammunition

SICILIAN CAMPAIGN, 23 days of combat:	14,697
NAPLES-FOGGIA, four months fighting:	167,153
ANZIO BEACHHEAD:	
158th FA Bn. Feb. 17, 18, 19:	20,961
Division Artillery, Feb. 17, 18, 19:	41,525
Total for 29 days of February:	129,732

Losses in equipment was estimated as one and one-third greater than the losses on the main Fifth Army Front during the Division's four months combat. Figures on the principal items lost were: 88 trucks, 16 trailers, 34 anti-tank guns, 159 machine-guns, 61 mortars, 101 automatic rifles, 364 rifles, 109 carbines, 219 pistols, 12 Tommy-guns, 674 bayonets, 398 trench-knives, 228 binoculars, and 122 wrist watches. Division Artillery lost four Piper Cubs, but no guns. The 191st Tank Battalion reported 21 tanks lost, and the 645th TD Battalion lost 17 tank-destroyers.

Losses in personnel were greater than any similar period. There were 5,709 casualties during the 29 days of February, as compared with a total of 13,129 for the 120 days including and following SALERNO.

Nothing approaching accuracy can be computed concern-

ing the losses sustained by the enemy. Private Carter, 158th Field Artillery driver, relates a story that was also told by several other men who witnessed the last days of the Germans' largest attack. When the 2nd Bn. was relieved, it was not possible for Private Carter to get his jeep through the lines, as the British had not yet secured the route. He stayed with the British, thinking it would be open later. The next morning, when stretcher-bearers came through for the wounded, the Germans let them through, but when they started back the Germans closed in and ordered them to move to the north—toward the enemy positions.

"As we came out of the area near the overpass, near CARROCETO, we saw a German bulldozer digging a trench for the German dead. There were several piles of bodies, with about 150 or more in each pile. There were also many hundreds dead along the route we marched—killed by our artillery."

"Patrols were active—Artillery duels continue"—came to be a daily report from the beachhead forces. The days dragged by with the same monotony, nerve-racking sounds and sights and smells—the repetitious tom-tom of big guns firing; the whine and boom and explosion of falling shells; the daily—and nightly—patrolling.

"During the night, there was some artillery fire on rear areas which caused one fire, but generally the enemy gunners were inactive. Patrols, however, were active and shots were exchanged; two more prisoners were taken. One party of our men demolished a knocked-out tank with PIAT bombs. The enemy continued his digging activities.

"Our own gunners, having started a fire in the factory area, continued to fire into it until it reached huge dimensions.

"During the day, apart from the scattered artillery fire and sporadic mortar concentrations, there was little enemy activity observed. A few SP guns and tanks approached our lines, but were chased away by our gunners before they had time to fire more than a few shots. Our guns engaged small parties of infantry. . . ."

The BEACHHEAD NEWS, daily newspaper of VI Corps, made its appearance and became the main—and sometimes only—source of news. Books and magazines were prizes, for they provided reading, which was the only form of recreation that many of the "foxhole bound" soldiers could use.

Daily, without fail, the enemy harassed both forward and rear elements, interdicted all highways and roads in the Division sector, fired considerable and varying numbers of counterbattery missions, and laid down heavy concentrations upon troop and motor areas. Lines were so close that the

enemy could reach far into the Division sector with their 88's, and no man on ANZIO who stayed for more than a day or two could say that he had not been within yards of bursting shells.

Enemy efforts at infiltration and attack, never very serious or intense, were generally dispersed by the Division's defensive fires, although innumerable sharp fights to the front and flanks took place. The enemy was alert to every movement of the Allied troops and became immediately active as if expecting an imminent attack at any time. Patrolling was heavy on both sides, and patrols did a large amount of bitter fighting. The Division's patrols, particularly protective forces for mine-laying details, wire details, and details for the removal of anti-tank hazards, were consistently under artillery and mortar fire.

With the 157th Infantry in VI Corps and Division reserve after its withdrawal from the ANZIO-ALBANO Road, the 179th and 180th Infantry Regiments held the Division front, with the British 1st Division on the left and the American 3rd Division on the right. Vigorous patrolling, with reinforced platoons engaging enemy outposts, was carried out on the night of March 1-2. The enemy patrolled energetically, and there was a sharp increase of artillery fire on forward elements.

Small groups of 30 to 50 Germans moved to the Division front. Tank and vehicular traffic increased, especially in the Factory Area. On the night of March 2-3 the enemy further increased his patrolling activities and stepped up the artillery fire on both forward and rear installations. On March 3, heavy caliber tank, mortar, and artillery fire was received, and the volume remained fairly steady throughout the next three days.

On March 5 the 2nd Bn. of the 157th Infantry relieved the 2nd Bn. of the 180th Infantry in line, while the 179th Infantry sector received an extremely heavy shelling with heavy caliber artillery fire. Prisoners indicated that the enemy was considering a plan to attack on March 6. Units were alerted and protective fires laid down, but the attack did not come off. The only notable change was an increase in harassing fire. A favored enemy target was the area around PADIGLIONE, where there was a crossroads, and he consistently shelled this point heavily day after day.

At 0450 on March 7 the 1st Bn., 179th Infantry, was relieved in position by the 3rd Bn., 6th Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division. Harassing and interdictory fire were increased throughout the day, and at 2325 an enemy force estimated at two platoons suddenly attacked in the 180th Infantry sector. They were repulsed in two hours of fighting with no change in the Division line. On March 8 the 2nd Bn. of the 179th Infantry was relieved in line by the

1st Bn., 6th Armored Regiment, narrowing the Division sector. Heavy concentrations fell in the 180th Infantry sector, but no attack developed. Later a strong attack was made on center and left flank positions, but a heavy concentration of artillery on the attackers forced the enemy to withdraw with heavy casualties. At night the 180th Infantry positions along the stream known as the SPAC-CASASSI CREEK were assaulted by strong combat patrols which were driven off, but large caliber artillery continued to fall in vast quantities.

During the night of March 8 the enemy bombed the Division rear areas, and throughout the following day continued to pour interdictory fire upon the positions. A patrol from the 180th Infantry became engaged in a night fire fight with a German patrol of 50 men lasting until daylight. The 157th Infantry had by now largely completed its reorganization, reequipment, and training of replacements, and the 179th in turn commenced a vigorous program of training of new men in the operation of weapons and in small unit tactics.

The Division sector was comparatively quiet on March 10 except for a heavy shelling in the 180th Infantry area. During the morning of March 11 the enemy intensified both artillery fire and infantry movements. In addition, there was considerable movement in the Factory Area, but movements in the direction of the Division front were dispersed with heavy casualties by artillery fire.

Enemy defenses around the entire beachhead appeared to be based on strong points surrounded by barbed wire and mutually protected by a strong ground system of defensive fires, including anti-tank weapons. The enemy had been laboring hard on these beachhead defenses since the failure of the great effort to split the beachhead. One such strong point taken on the western edge of SESSANO consisted of a pillbox with five machine guns and small arms surrounded by barbed wire equipped with grenade alarms. Units' reliefs and changes of position continued as reorganization and training was completed. On March 14 an increase in the amount of artillery fire and enemy activity was noted, together with a stepping up of the fire from tanks, which had continued steadily throughout this phase. On March 12, 16, and 17, the stepped-up fires continued steadily with PADIGLIONE and the crossroads still receiving special attention from the enemy's guns.

"It was reported that in the CASSINO action, the separate airforces missed CASSINO and bombed VENAFRO, which we captured last November 4—about 25 miles behind the lines. They also hit PRESENZANO, where our old command post was, where Army Headquarters is now located. I don't see how it could be possible—."

A projected effort scheduled for March 18 to force the enemy out of the salient, which was to have been carried out by elements of VI Corps, was cancelled due to insufficient air support as planned.

During the night the 179th Infantry observed considerable infantry and motor movement in front of its sector. On March 20 one platoon launched a limited objective attack to clear enemy resistance north of its position along the SPACCASASSI Creek. The attack jumped off after heavy preparation by artillery, tank destroyer, tank, and mortar weapons, then advanced to meet heavy fire of automatic weapons coming from entrenched positions in the draw. Close fighting with hand grenades, rifle grenades, and 60MM mortars followed. The platoon withdrew to its original position. Two heavy shellings followed on the crossroads.

Combat patrols were engaged in even stiffer fighting on March 21. A considerable amount of fire from tanks was encountered during the night, together with heavy concentrations of artillery fire.

The Division was ordered by VI Corps to relieve the 30th Infantry of the 3rd Division; the 157th Infantry completed the relief on March 24 and coordinated its defensive fires while enemy patrolling and artillery continued. Further reliefs and changes within the Division sector were accomplished under the same conditions, while enemy artillery continued to be heavy, concentrating on targets generally considered unprofitable for large-caliber weapons. The enemy was well-concealed throughout this period, but heavy traffic was observed near GENZANO.

The 180th Infantry, in Division reserve, was now undergoing intensive training in the reduction of pillboxes and the use of hand grenades in preparation for the breaking out of the beachhead. The amount of artillery ammunition per gun for harassing purposes had been limited in mid-March, and now each gun was allotted only 70 rounds per day.

Enemy patrols were extremely sensitive to any effort at night movement by the Division. Division patrols were usually engaged in fire-fights or dispersed by mortars and artillery. Enemy shelling slowed and added to the difficulty of reliefs within the lines. Several serious attempts were made to silence Division Artillery with large concentrations of counterbattery fire.

Through the remaining days of March, the enemy remained concealed, comparatively unaggressive, and defensive during daylight hours. The widespread activity which they engaged in after dark was attested by their extreme alertness to every movement and awareness of every change of position.

The enemy continued alert through April, evidently expecting a large-scale attack. His artillery fires and patrol actions were heavy and frequent, but not so effective as those of the Division. All roads were interdicted constantly, both forward and rear areas were repeatedly harassed, and some counterbattery concentrations were fired from time to time. The three battalions of the Lehr Regiment, three battalions of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 1028th Infantry Regiment were most frequently in contact.

April 1 found the opposing forces locked in the same conflict of patrols and artillery, with flare-ups here and there along the front, while tanks claimed direct hits on several houses fortified as strong points. In one case white phosphorus was used to silhouette the target. April 2 found normal artillery continuing to fall on forward positions while listening posts gave negative reports. Tanks continued to carry out their missions on designated enemy-held houses with spectacular success. The 45th Reconnaissance Patrol was active on the beaches against possible enemy attempts at a paratrooper and sea landing.

On April 4 and 5 a new railway gun supplemented the usual heavy artillery and mortar fire from the direction of ALBANO and was definitely believed to be a 280MM piece. Additional listening posts were established from time to time. One patrol encountered an enemy strong point in a cemetery, but was forced to withdraw without taking it, as the area was too heavily defended. Artillery fire was placed upon the cemetery later. Night patrolling continued on April 6 as enemy combat groups pushed closer in.

The sameness of each day brought about a habit of routine to both the German and American forces. Daylight activities were reduced to the bare essentials, for the German observers on the higher ground to the north could see almost every part of the area. Fortunately, through March and April the weather had been mostly fair, but even that added to the restlessness of the troops in their cramped positions.

ANZIO-NETTUNO became a favored topic of the German propagandists. Thousands of leaflets, designed to influence the Allied soldier to "give up the fight," were dropped from German planes at night. German radio programs, broadcast in English, tried every way to create homesickness, unrest, and distrust in the minds of both Americans and British. These broadcasts were favorites with those who had access to radios. The Germans began referring to the beachhead and their own "concentration camp for Allied soldiers," and on more than one broadcast "Sally," known as the "Berlin B——," asked sweetly: "Who has who surrounded?"

The weather continued to be sunny and warm, permitting the front line units to be supplied without too much difficulty. The one trail leading past the 179th Regimental CP toward the line was a one-way road nick-named "Burma Road." This trail was named by the Italians "Via Dolorosa," which more properly described its condition.

In addition to organizing the territory west of SPACCA-CASSI Creek and the CIMITATO di CARANO Point, the enemy pushed forward other outguards close to the Division line, apparently with the aim of frustrating raiding efforts by the Americans and British and of ambushing patrols. Some 1,035 rounds of 88-MM, 105MM, and heavier caliber fire fell on April 7 alone.

Enemy night bombers now carried a larger proportion of anti-personnel, incendiary, and small fragmentation bombs. Apparently the German Air Force realized the futility and ineffectiveness of night raids upon shipping routes as a means of stunning the beachhead. Now they made supply dump areas, troop concentrations, and beachhead airstrips their principal targets, obviously operating with these as their primary objectives.

Aerial photographs on April 8 indicated some shifting about of enemy artillery, but no additional strength. Night activity centered about the POSSO DEL LESCHIONE area and the strong point at CIMITATO di CARANO, which was vacated by the enemy and then reoccupied. A patrol moved out along the diagonal highway across the Division sector to the draw without encountering the Germans. A listening post heard an enemy patrol moving about in the wadi and fired with unknown effect. A daylight patrol then pushed along the stream-bed to a junction and found an enemy minefield, wire entanglements, and occupied positions at the fork of the stream-beds and to the south. Listening posts reported only vehicular movement on the diagonal road.

The Germans' defensive situation remained unchanged on April 10. The enemy remained concealed by daylight, but his vigorous night activity indicated continued improvement of his known positions. Harassing fire continued on the crossroads, counterbattery fire on artillery units, particularly on attached anti-aircraft batteries during the times when the German night raids were staged.

Relief began for the Division to move out to "The Pines" for rest and additional training after 79 consecutive long days of combat on ANZIO.

The patrolling done at ANZIO was a strenuous and hazardous form of combat. Usually done at night, in restricted space, and where a flare would light up a considerable portion of the narrow No Man's Land, with enemy outposts waiting grim and always alert beyond, and with mines, hidden strong points and outguards to look out for

while the enemy's night firing went on overhead, patrolling had the acrid taste of danger.

A resume of a typical "Patrol Experience," this one recorded by 2nd Lt. William C. Landgren, runs as follows:

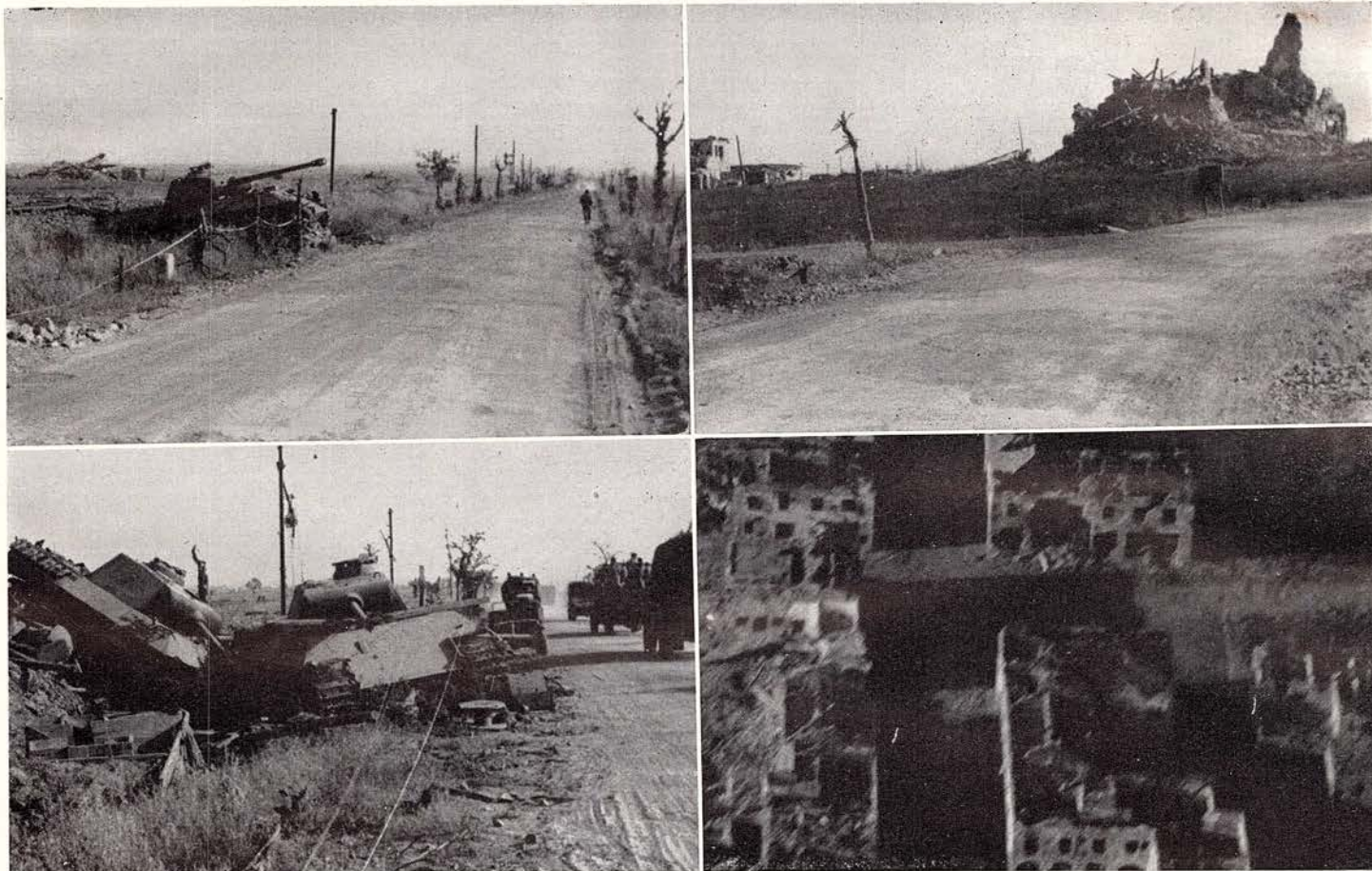
"During the afternoon of March 23 Company B of the 179th Infantry was ordered to organize a combat patrol which was to approach the enemy lines and procure a prisoner. Lieutenant Landgren was selected to command the group, which included an assisting officer, 2nd Lt. Willard F. Peters, and 16 enlisted men.

"Throughout the daylight hours Lieutenant Landgren had observed enemy activity in the vicinity of an abandoned ambulance some distance to the right front. After dark the patrol moved out, following an azimuth approximately that of the deserted vehicle. The enemy's artillery had quieted, but Allied shelling maintained an even intensity to the left and right of the patrol's avenue of approach.

"A few hundred yards in front of the Company's line, Lieutenant Peters and five men were dropped from the group to set up a listening post which maintained contact with the Company Command Post by telephone. Lieutenant Landgren and the remaining men moved out toward the enemy line, with the officer in the lead with his runner and a squad sergeant. The other men were deployed to protect the flanks and rear. The enemy, always wary of the darkness, began to discharge the usual flares, forcing the patrol to cover the ground by crawling from hole to hole, pausing now and then to listen.

"The lead group had got well in front of the main body of the patrol when a heavy thudding sound was heard. The three men lay quiet as the enemy drew near. When the approaching group of Germans was clearly discernible, the lead men opened fire. Finding themselves outnumbered, they called for the main body of the patrol to move up. The enemy, after a sharp exchange of fire, during which they had thrown a number of concussion grenades, broke off the engagement and attempted to withdraw. The leader of the German patrol was cornered in a small hole and promptly surrendered. He revealed that his group of eight men had been sent out to maintain a listening post and to serve as rifle protection for a detail of men designated to work on German minefields. He informed Lieutenant Landgren, through an interpreter, that he would personally conduct his captors back through the German minefields through which the Americans had unknowingly crawled during their forward movement.

"On the return trip the enemy, now aware of the patrol, attempted to cut it off by a flanking maneuver from the left, but were thwarted by the quick action of the main body of the patrol, which had



Showing the destruction of houses and enemy material along the Anzio-Rome path of advance.

been instructed to be alert for just such an attempt. It was also ascertained through the prisoner that at least two of his patrol had been wounded. Throughout the remainder of the return trip toward the lines, the patrol was unmolested and encountered no one until halted by the guards."

This was patrolling on ANZIO Beachhead.

PREPARATION

When the 45th Division went out of line for the first real break since the landing, artillery, tank destroyer, and chemical mortar detachments remained on the line to maintain the strength of the defense of the beachhead.

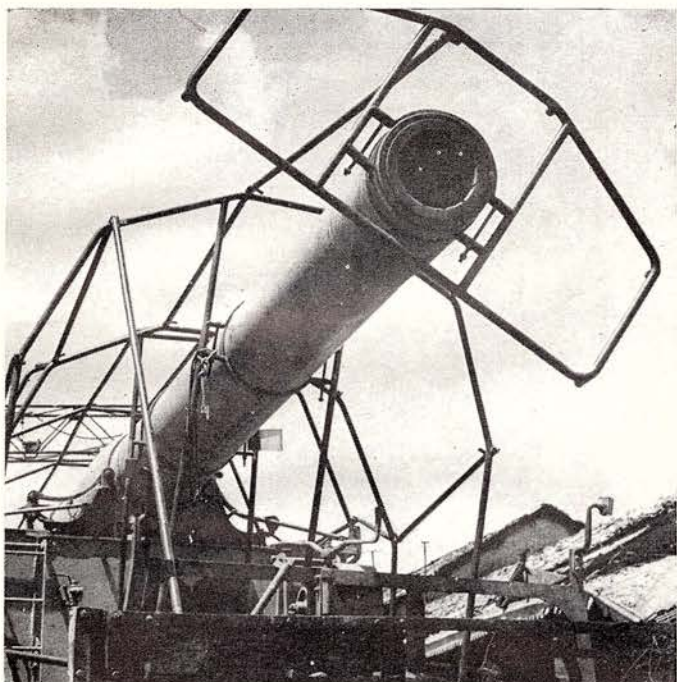
Men of the 45th Division watched the news from the CASSINO front with greatest interest. A breakthrough there, or other developments, would immediately affect their plan of operation, and the two fronts remained inextricably linked together in a common fate. CASSINO, some 50 miles to the south, had seen some of the most fanatical fighting of the war by crack German units, including the notoriously efficient 1st Parachute Division. The 34th Division had managed to breach the north end of the Gustav Line, while the French Expeditionary Corps took the key hills around MOUNT CAIRO where the 45th Division had been during the winter.

Field Marshal Kesselring, with an estimated 100,000 men at his disposal in ITALY, had fortified CASSINO well and reinforced its natural strength of position with innumerable strong points and minefields on all approaches. Though Allied bombing raids destroyed many of the defenses and even part of the ancient Benedictine monastery where the enemy had taken refuge and held out stubbornly, the defenders of CASSINO drove off all attempts to capture it.

On April 15 the 180th Infantry Regiment began preparing for attachment to the 1st Armored Division to form the VI Corps counterattack force. As the Division initiated a period of vigorous rehabilitation and training on April 17, continuing through April 26, special emphasis was placed on offensive combat tactics. Small units "schools" were dotted all about the beachhead as the men prepared for the new offensive ahead.

On April 27, the Division began its move back into the line, relieving the 3rd Division. The relief was complete on May 1 and the men returned to the defense of the beachhead, back on the line and in the foxholes to the front.

The build-up for the drive to break out of the beachhead and reach ROME occupied the first 23 days of May for the



A close-up portrait of "ANZIO ANNIE," also known as The Anzio Express, which fired huge shells onto every acre of the beachhead.

Division. Coordinated Corps and Division "shoots" became daily events as the men brought down their fire with good results on enemy personnel, machine guns, mortars, observation posts, and strong points, and on known targets and installations inside the enemy lines. A favorite target was the number of modern houses of brick, stone, or stucco which the Italians had built when these marshes were drained for farmland. The enemy fortified these as strong-points. Due to their material, they seldom burned. In a like manner, the row of houses along the main street through ANZIO and NETTUNO on the beachhead was a favored enemy target.

Artillery, mortars, tanks, and tank destroyers became remarkably proficient in directing hits on designated points. The enemy was usually well dug in.

On May 6 one more assault was made against the Division line. Company B of the 179th Infantry was attacked in the sector along SPACCASASSI Creek, and the enemy penetrated a considerable distance to the south in an assault supported by tank, mortar, and artillery fire. Platoons from Companies B and C attacked to regain the lost ground, and no change in the Division front was accomplished by the penetration.

An extract from the battle diary of the 171st Field Artillery Battalion:

"EAME (European, African, Middle Eastern) Service Ribbons were issued. They are to be worn on the blouse or cotton shirts, and we have no blouses or cotton shirts."

By the middle of May, the preparations for a new offensive were complete. The stock-piles of ammunition and supplies had grown gradually until they were counted in the hundreds and thousands of tons. In spite of the success of German gun fire in destroying portions of these supplies, the daily unloadings from ships in the busy harbor increased the allotments until every needed size and caliber was almost unlimited.

Patrol action and artillery fire grew in a crescendo toward the day of attack. Every gun on the beachhead was coordinated in intensive fires which poured thousands of shells into the German defenses to pave the way for the assault by the infantry. Artillery guns were placed far forward to gain the maximum "reach" in their range. In the 45th Division sector, the 191st Tank Battalion, and the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion moved their weapons forward into the infantry positions, in readiness to support the drive.

On the evening of the 22nd the final detail had been checked. All troops were in position—waiting for the time for jump-off.

ROAD TO ROME

At 0600, 23 May, the artillery preparation began on enemy positions; continuous fire lasted for 30 minutes, then the infantrymen moved forward from their positions. Fire plans for all weapons had been so closely coordinated, and worked out in such detail that all enemy positions, houses, fences, ditches, and any other obstacle which might be used for the enemy in his defense were thoroughly and completely pounded or destroyed. Even the battered remains of stone houses were further reduced to piles of dust and rubble.

It had been planned that bombers and fighter planes from bases in ITALY and on the Islands would also support the attack. The morning of May 23rd was cool and cloudy; the effectiveness of bombers, particularly those flying at high altitude, was somewhat less than it would have been on a cloudless day. Nevertheless, the raids of the airforces were powerful and destructive, not only on close-in targets of enemy, but on the cities of ALBANO, CISTERNA, VELLETRI, ROME, GENZANO, ROCCA di PAPA, and on roads and railroads that were used for German troops and supplies.

The fury of the assault has seldom been equaled. The enemy was hit hard, but managed to counter the blow with several small counterattacks even that first day. Small arms and mortar fire met the first thrust forward.

The 2nd Bn., 180th Infantry, encountered some of the strongest resistance, and requested tank fire to clear certain fortified points in its path of advance, then made progress

to clear its first objectives before the German tanks could be moved in. Company L was forced back to the vicinity of CARNAO, and 15-20 tanks came down close to their position. Three battalions of artillery from the beachhead laid down heavy fire upon the tanks, and ten were later found knocked out.

The 3rd Bn. reported that it was on its first objective and in contact with the 157th and 180th Infantry Regiments, but three of its tanks had hit mines, four bogged down in the marshy terrain, and two were out for maintenance.

On May 24 at 2100, a reinforced enemy battalion supported by tanks struck at the sector held by the 2nd Bn., 180th Infantry. The attack came down upon Company G, which repulsed the enemy, inflicting serious casualties. At the same time Company E was assaulted by a reinforced company and pushed backward from its positions. The Battalion promptly instituted a counterattack, with the 3rd Bn. as a secondary line of defense.

When the ground where this counterattack took place was later cleared, over 100 unburied enemy dead were found in the fields and ditches, and others were where they had fallen in the strong-points and houses.

Enemy attacks in the vicinity of SPACCASASSI Creek in the 179th Infantry sector were repulsed by the protective fires of the Division. Elements of the 83rd Chemical Battalion reinforced the counterattack with heavy concentrations of high explosive on the roads in that area. During the night, the gap in the Division front was closed. Some 143 prisoners were captured that day and 186 the day before. The attack had come as a surprise to the enemy. The 30-minute artillery barrage which preceded the beginning of the drive did not give away the element of secrecy, as the enemy had become accustomed to a barrage at daybreak each day, according to a plan initiated early in the month.

On May 25, an enemy attack in the sector occupied by the 2nd Bn., 180th Infantry, was repulsed with loss of ground, but the territory was quickly regained. The 179th improved its positions for attack and the 157th held to the defensive line assumed after breaking up the enemy counterattack of May 23. All units were in contact with the enemy. The 106th AAA Battalion fired 2,560 rounds on ground targets and reported surprisingly good results.

On May 26, after repelling several forceful German thrusts, the 180th and 157th Infantry Regiments attacked forward against strong resistance from enemy artillery, machine gun, and tank fire as the Anzio forces contacted and joined forces with the main Fifth Army front, driving upward from CASSINO, at a point between ANZIO and

TERRACINA, thus initiating the rejoining of troops which would spell the doom of the Roman defenses within the next month.

A chemical and a tank battalion were attached to the 180th Infantry on May 26. Next day the Regiment continued its attack, encountering isolated machine gun nests, numerous personnel mines, and booby traps, all that remained of the enemy defenses after the excellent job of clearing by Division Artillery and the various attached units and tanks. But bitter fighting lay ahead before the final objective of the attack was won. Pfc. Lloyd C. Greer, 180th Infantry, returned to the Regiment to relate the following story of the fighting in February:

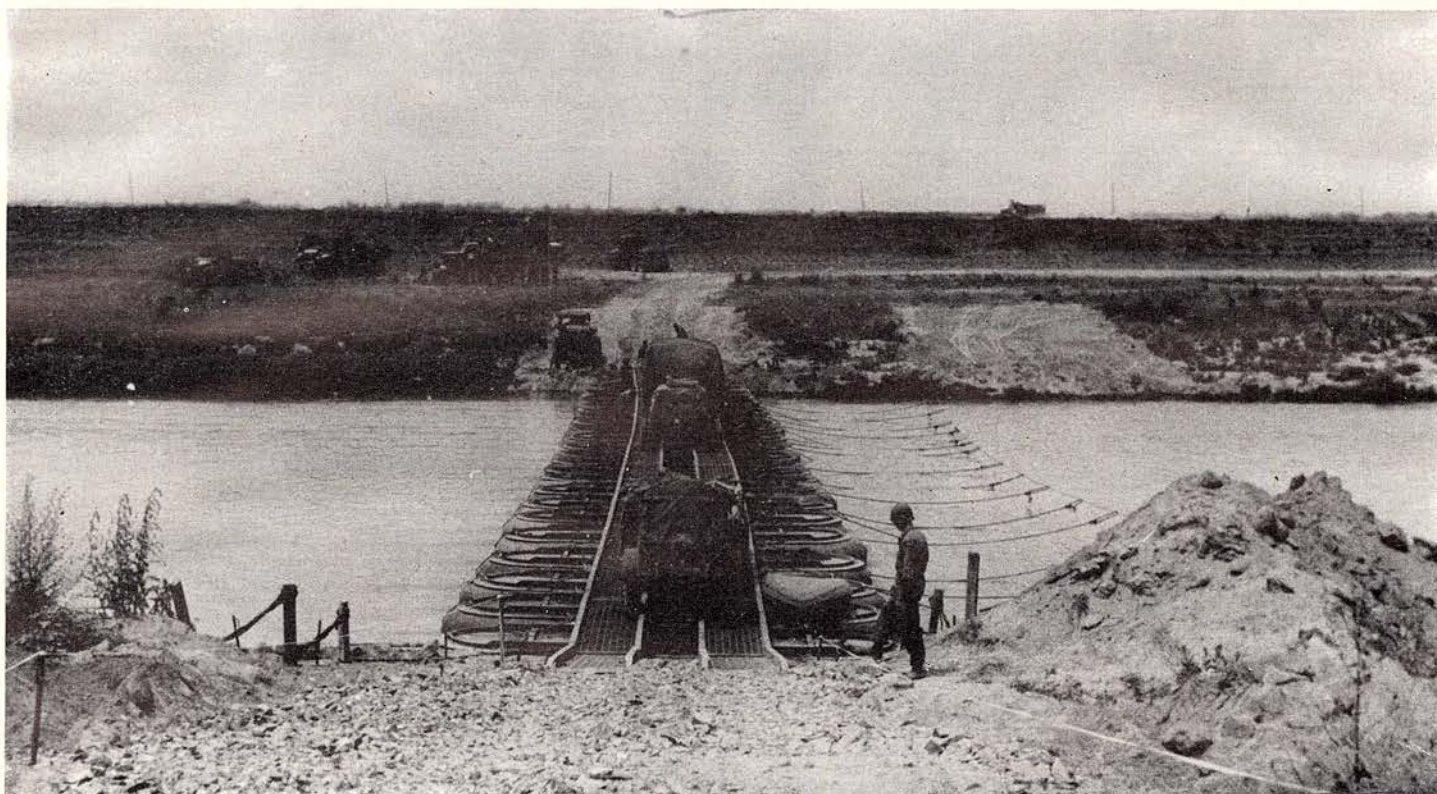
"There were only five of the 22 men left in our heavy weapons section. I was manning a light machine gun, and had fired a good portion of my ammunition. Technical Sergeant Polk, platoon leader, ordered me to move back to a ditch a little to the rear of my position. I sent Private Adams forward to a rock pile to get some ammunition.

"When he did not return, I went up after him, thinking he might have been wounded. I ran into three German soldiers who had captured Adams. They took me prisoner. A house 50 yards ahead had also been taken. About 13 of our soldiers were captured there. They took me behind the house where there were about 35 German soldiers, including two officers.

"On the way to the house we passed two other German soldiers standing over two bodies on the ground. One of the men on the ground was an American. I think the other was too. The former was groaning and had apparently been badly wounded. The latter may have been dead. While I watched, one of the German soldiers pulled out

A full length view of the EXPRESS. The size of the huge gun can be gaged by the men standing on the car.





Crossing the Tiber River on the drive for Rome.

a pistol and shot the wounded man on the ground. I understood that the unit which captured us was part of the famous Hermann Goering Panzer Division which had been rushed to ANZIO, and which was then fresh from FRANCE.

"I escaped from the German prisoner enclosure and got away, but was recaptured ten days later at GORGIA. I had broken into a house and stolen clothes and food. I was wearing civilian clothes over part of my uniform. They stood me at attention for 24 hours in the cold without food or water. During the night, a Polish guard let me and others with me lean against the building for a couple of hours. The next day they gave three of us a loaf of bread and water, and let us rest.

"They moved me to another prison 30 kilometers north of ROME. They put me, along with Tony Valdez and Ray Norris, to work on the roads. On April 25, we were working near a wheat field, with four guards over 20 of us. One guard took a prisoner to get water. While the attention of the other three was distracted by some Italian women nearby, I made a break for it and dived into the tall wheat. I crawled up a ditch a ways, then back under the highway through a culvert, then up the side of a hill. Tony said he would follow me but I never saw him after that.

"An Italian gave me shelter for the night, and later guided me into ROME, where I hid out until I could get back to our own troops."

Inside ROME, non-Fascist elements of the populace awaited the arrival of the Americans and the liberation

from the German domination and oppression which had crushed them for four long years. Each move from ANZIO was hailed with joy well concealed from the ever more oppressive Germans whose persecutions extended up to the walls of the Vatican itself. The Americans and British issued proclamations asking the people of ROME to cooperate, to watch for mines and demolitions, to keep the streets cleared for the advancing troops.

The following message was delivered by General Truscott, commanding VI Corps, to the beachhead forces on May 30:

HEADQUARTERS VI CORPS

Office of the Commanding General
APO-306

22 May 1944.

TO: The Officers and Men of the Allied Beachhead Force.

For more than four months you have occupied the most dangerous and important post of any Allied force. You have stopped and defeated more than ten divisions which Hitler had ordered to drive us into the sea. You have contained on your front, divisions which the enemy sorely needed elsewhere. You have neglected no opportunity to harass and injure the enemy. Arduous conditions you have accepted willingly and cheerfully, and you have not failed to improve in discipline and training and in condition. You have set a standard that has won the admiration and respect of our United Nations. For your services during these trying days, I congratulate you.



Full view of the city of Rome. Dome of St. Peter's in center.

Now, after four months, we attack. Our comrades of the Fifth and Eighth Armies—Britons, Poles, French, Americans, Italians—have achieved a great victory on the southern front. They are driving the enemy to the north. They have set the trap—it is for us to spring that trap and complete the destruction of the right wing of the German Tenth Army.

I need not tell you that the battle will be hard and difficult. But we are superior in strength. Our pilots control the skies under which we fight. Our equipment, our weapons are the best the world has ever seen. Our plans have been carefully prepared and in great detail. Every officer and man knows the part he is to play. No preparation has been neglected. You are free men, against whom no slaves of a tyrant nation can ever stand.

Our comrades in the south are fighting their way toward us. The eyes of the world will be upon us. Be alert—be vicious—destroy the hated enemy. Victory will be ours.

L. K. TRUSCOTT, JR.,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding

After bursting from the beachhead at ANZIO in wild fighting, the Fifth Army repelled counterattack after counterattack to push on through the ALBAN Hills, broke the highway-railway net which was the last German fortifications belt defending the city of ROME. As they thrust

northeastward, other units poured into ANZIO from the south. A victory of the French Corps in the LIRI Valley precipitated a general withdrawal of the Germans to the north of ROME. The American and British forces, including some newly activated American divisions, began the final drive on ROME.

ROME

June 3 began the "great migration" of British and American troops toward ROME as the last barrier of the German defenses before the city were smashed, and all units were able to begin advancing rapidly. By the end

"The City Gate."





Court yard of St. Peter's Cathedral, Rome. This was an important objective for every GI "sight-seer" in Rome.

WorldWarTwoVeterans.org

of the day it became apparent that enemy forces in the high ground to the front of the 45th Division sector were breaking up. The defenders of ROME were withdrawing. Only delaying actions and the enemy's use of demolitions impeded the Division's advance to the TIBER River.

The Division continued its attack on June 1, against varying resistance from strongpoints on the approaches to ROME after forward lines and roads were bombed and strafed by the enemy during the night. The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry advanced against stiff resistance, until an exposed right flank halted their progress. An enemy counterattack heavily supported by tanks was broken up by the Battalion without loss of ground.

At 0530, following preparatory artillery fire, the 179th Infantry resumed the attack, moving slowly because of heavy caliber artillery fire and numerous enemy strongpoints which offered brisk resistance for delaying purposes.

The 2nd Bn. of the 179th Infantry received heavy and accurate artillery fire which inflicted many casualties. An enemy counterattack struck at the Division line in the 179th Infantry sector at 1900, but was pushed back by heavy fire from artillery and infantry weapons before it gained physical contact.

At 2100, the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 157th Infantry moved by motor to be attached to the 36th Infantry Di-

vision with the mission of threatening the enemy's grasp upon the high ground in the vicinity of ALBANO, where the men were dug in beneath the enemy snipers, machine guns, and the German 88's firing from the hills above.

On June 2, heavy mortar, artillery, and automatic weapons fire delayed the tired and dirty men attempting to advance on the right, while the left sector moved slowly under small arms and mortar fire. At the end of the day they were able to consolidate their gains to form a new line. The 179th made good progress. Elements of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 753rd Tank Battalion, attached to the Division, moved to the area north-east of CISTERNA to support the attack of the 157th Infantry.

Early on June 3 the 179th and 180th Infantry Regiments attacked in the face of continued heavy machine gun fire from strongpoints which were later overrun by American tanks. As the enemy's general withdrawal along the line before the city of ROME began, the Division troops moved up rapidly, encountering heavy sniper fire, more tank traps, German mines and demolitions, and rubble. The 157th Infantry was advancing swiftly on its objective.

All along the Allied front, the forces were now moving upon ROME, some units encountering heavy fighting on the approaches to the city. The race toward ROME was on and the fall of that city imminent.



The Italian Unknown Soldier's Tomb is large, beautiful and impressive. Army trucks and men pass through the heart of Rome to continue the drive to the north.

The 45th Division, racing to the south bank of the TIBER River, outflanked the city. The pursuit began at 0900 with the 180th Infantry, the 45th Reconnaissance Troop, the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 753rd Tank Battalion, moving up rapidly to the south of the TIBER, cleared enemy resistance on the approaches without difficulty. The 2nd Bn. of the 180th Infantry reached its objective south of the river at 1640, and at 1700 the 1st Bn., moving by motors, passed through the 2nd Bn. to occupy positions along the south bank of that historic river.

From the north side of the river the enemy offered resistance with 40MM guns. The infantry's supporting weapons silenced these. A terrific explosion during the afternoon meant that the bridge across the river had been blown. However, the bridge was so constructed that foot troops could still cross, and the Division sent patrols across to reconnoiter the area for a bridgehead.

Company A of the 120th Engineer Battalion sent a platoon to support the 16th Armored Engineers in the construction of a treadway on the damaged bridge over the river. At 2030 the Battalion Headquarters of the 120th Engineers was notified that the 180th Infantry had reached the river, wiped out resistance, and intended to attempt a crossing that same night. Due to the fact that the advance to the river had been amazingly rapid and that the action leading to the crossing of the TIBER had proceeded at an unexpected rate, there had been formulated no co-

ordinated plan for crossing the river. The role of the Engineers in the crossing operation was therefore left directly to liaison with the commanding officer of the 180th Infantry.

The 179th and the 157th, which reverted to Division control after the 36th Division reached its objectives, closed into new areas on the south bank of the TIBER and sent patrols across to establish contact with the 180th Infantry.

The city of ROME fell to the Fifth Army on June 4. ROME, first great Axis capital to fall into the hands of the Allied armies, was not demolished in the fighting as were many other European capitals which the Germans refused to relinquish until blasted out. Defeat upon the outskirts of ROME put the Germans in a highly vulnerable position. They drew back rapidly, but in order, to the ARNO River, then their Gothic Line.

On June 5 the 180th Infantry had as its objective the area south of Highway 1 eight kilometers west of the city of ROME. A strong-point at an important railway center north of the river was neutralized, and several prisoners were taken after stubborn resistance was encountered there. Defeated at every turn in the fighting on the outskirts of the city, the Germans were now drawing back rapidly to their next line of defense, some 150 miles to the north along the ARNO River. Long columns of them were interdicted on the highways leading out of ROME.



A typical beach installation for defense, found along the Ostia Lido near Rome.

The 180th Infantry encountered a particularly heavy field of mines around the railway station, the crude and deadly sort which were described as the simplest and the most dangerous weapon in use in ITALY. They solved the problem by forcing their prisoners to remove them.

Moving up during the day and throughout the following night, the 45th Division completed its flanking movement and secured its last objective in the Italian campaign. The enemy had been energetically pursued out of ROME and to the north. The 45th Division would now be withdrawn from the fighting in ITALY to prepare for the invasion of SOUTHERN FRANCE. On June 6 the 157th Infantry remained in its assembly area and the 180th and 179th Infantry Regiments established new areas, then on June 7 all elements closed into their final positions around ROME.

Meanwhile plans for OPERATION ANVIL, the invasion of SOUTHERN FRANCE, were under way, and between mid-June and the end of July a division a week would be withdrawn from the fighting in ITALY to prepare for this great operation. The first was the 45th Division, withdrawn from the fighting line in ITALY on June 14, followed by the 3rd and 36th Divisions.

On June 16 the Division, detached from VI Corps, reverted to Fifth Army control. The move by motor convoy, plus water transportation, was begun on June 17, and by June 23 all units of the Division were in the vicinity of BATTIPAGLIA, ITALY, on the west coast. There the Division was relieved of assignment to the Fifth Army and Allied Forces Headquarters. Attached to Services of Supply for supply purposes and to the Seventh Army for administration, planning, and training, the Division went into a period of intensive training operations on June 24, in conjunction with the Invasion Training Center at SA-

LERNO BEACH. Training was conducted by the Regimental Combat Teams, and included amphibious and invasion technique, exercises in loading and unloading, and the landing of personnel and equipment.

From July 1 to July 17, the Division and its attached units remained in the vicinity of BATTIPAGLIA and PAESTUM, ITALY. The amphibious phase of the training program, begun June 24, was completed, and exercises in offensive action began on a broad scale to weld replacements into efficient teams for fighting. The Division Planning Board set up its headquarters in NAPLES on June 26 for the amphibious operation which would take the Division to the shores of FRANCE.

Preparations for this new operation, OPERATION ANVIL, constituted a continued threat to the Germans while the battles continued to rage in Northern ITALY and in NORMANDY. On July 17 the Division and its attached units moved by motor convoy to an area north of NAPLES in the vicinity of QUALIANO. The last units closed into the area on July 20. Intensive training in offensive tactics was resumed at once and preparations were made for an exercise assault landing, The Thunderbird Exercise, on the beach near SALERNO. Preparations for this operation, conducted under conditions similar to the invasion beach for FRANCE, which the Division would undertake shortly.

Through August 7, the Division continued to prepare for re-entry into combat. The assault landing for practice on the beaches near SALERNO was accomplished successfully. Then from August 7 through 12, movement was made from staging areas in the NAPLES area. Loading of men and vehicles aboard the ships of the invasion fleet was completed. The 45th Division was ready to move on.



SWITZERLAND

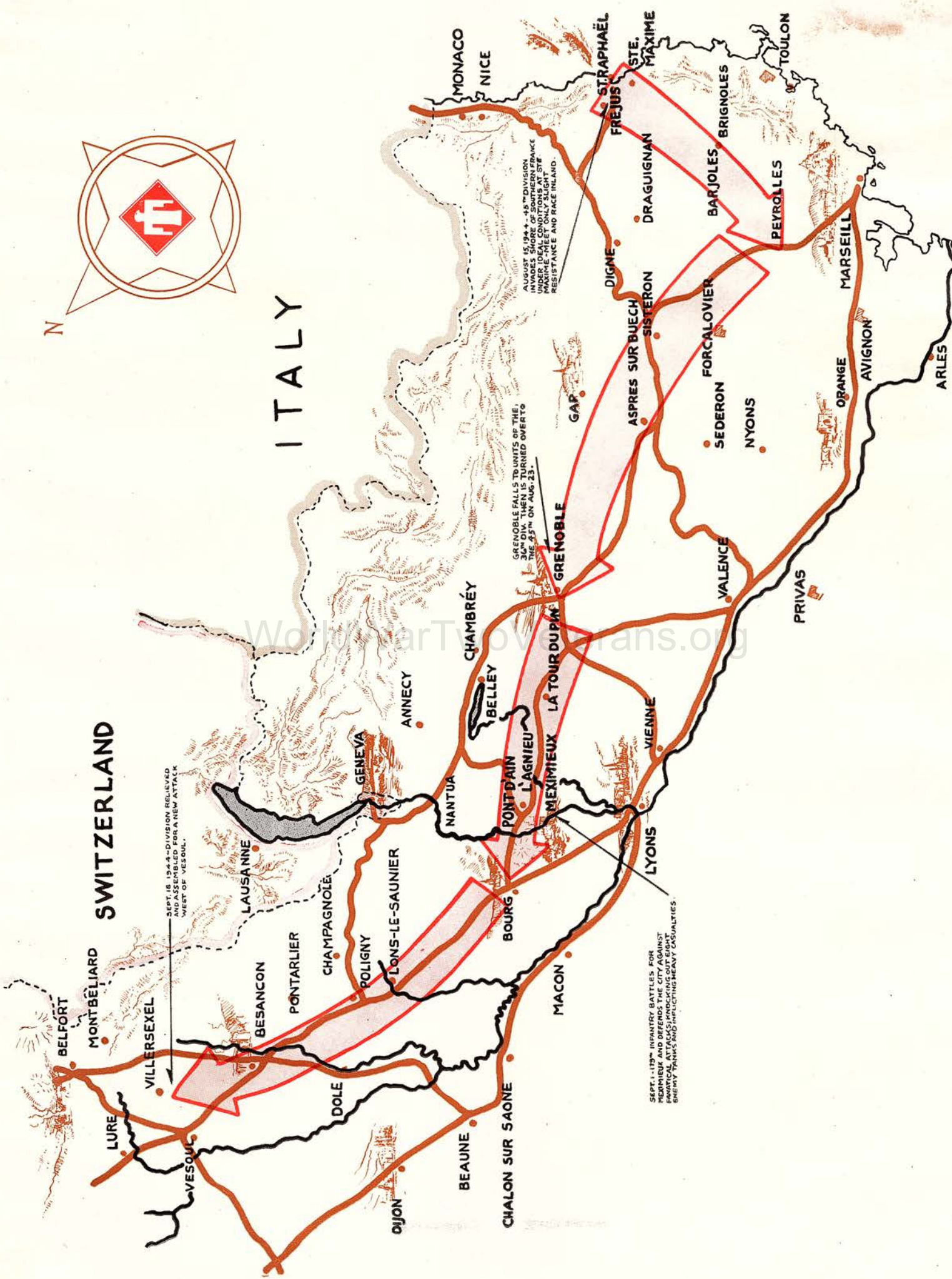
ITALY

SEPT. 18, 1944-DIVISION RELIEVED
AND ASSEMBLED FOR A NEW ATTACK
WEST OF VESOUX.

AUGUST 15, 1944-45TH DIVISION
INVADES SHORE OF SOUTHERN FRANCE
UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS AT STE
REINFORCED BY AIR AND SEA
RESISTANCE AND RACE INLAND.

GRENOBLE FALLS TO UNITS OF THE
36TH DIV. THEN IS TURNED OVER TO
THE 95TH ON AUG. 23.

SEPT. 1-17TH INFANTRY BATTLES FOR
MEXIMIEUX AND DEFENDS THE CITY AGAINST
PARATROOPER ATTACKS PROCKING OUT OF
BERRY TANKS AND INFANTRY CASUALTIES.



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SOUTHERN FRANCE

INVASION

On August 15, 1944, the United States Seventh Army under the command of Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch landed on the southern coast of FRANCE. By this time, the German resistance in the NORMANDY and CHERBOURG PENINSULAS and NORTHERN FRANCE was fast deteriorating under the pressure of American and British troops. The invasion of SOUTHERN FRANCE by the Seventh Army was timed to crush the German Army in FRANCE. While the Germans were busy trying to extricate their battered Panzer and infantry divisions from NORTHERN FRANCE and the PARIS area, the Seventh

Army swept upward from the Mediterranean Coast to effect a juncture with the Allied troops to the north.

Throughout the first two weeks of August the bombers based in ITALY and CORSICA hammered away at the German positions and fortifications on the RIVIERA coastline. On the night preceding August 15 and throughout the early morning hours came a staggering bombardment to destroy the German installations on the coast. This bombardment was supplemented by a naval shelling from the great invasion fleet lying offshore in the MEDITERRANEAN. The landing was "the war's worst-kept secret," but the knowledge served to throw the Germans into panic rather than to aid them in preparing adequate resistance.

Ragged and hungry Italians try to beg food from the soldiers at the loading area in Naples.





Day and night, without letup, men and equipment are loaded aboard waiting craft for the big invasion of France. Here men of the Division with 155 Howitzers and jeeps form an endless procession as they board LSTs.

From August 7 through 12 the 45th Division was moved to staging areas around NAPLES and loaded its men and vehicles once more upon an invasion fleet, for the fourth amphibious operation and the fourth invasion landing in the Division's history.

The Division Sub-Task Force was allocated 22 LST's, 34 LCT's, 38 LCI's, four APS's, two AK's, and the loading space for vehicles provided by nine Liberty ships. The limited shipping allotment resulted in a cut in the number of vehicles each unit could take ashore in the first lift. It

eliminated some units entirely from the D-Day landing.

Orders were received aboard the Division Flagship USS BISCAYNE to put into effect OPERATION DRAGOON. This assault on the coast of FRANCE in the ST. TROPEZ-FREJUS area, by sea and air, would be conducted by the Seventh Army supported by Naval Western Task Force and the XII Tactical Air Command. The 45th Division with its attached units and reinforcements, to become a part of VI Corps at D-Day H-Hour, was to attack three designated beaches, clear them of all resistance, and secure them.

Then their mission was to capture the town of STE. MAXIME, advance rapidly and seize high ground south of the ARGENS River, capture VILLEPEY, advance to contact Paratroop Forces to the front and seize the designated "Blue Line" in their zone of action.

The Seventh Army's landing place southwest of CANNES was considered most favorable for an approach to the RHONE VALLEY and its thickly settled area. The landing force included elements of General Truscott's VI Corps, the 1st Special Service Force, and French troops. A British-American Airborne Task Force jumped astride the ARGENS River west of ST. RAPHAEL and seized a pass through which the troops could debouch into the RHONE Valley. They also seized roads and bridges and helped throw the enemy's countermeasures into confusion.

H-Hour for the Division was to be 0800 on D-Day, August 15. Under ideal conditions for an amphibious operation, the Division landed with all units taking up their places on the beaches on schedule. The invasion of FRANCE was described as "the perfect and successful amphibious invasion." Every phase of the operation moved like clockwork. Every circumstance was in the favor of the invading troops.

"0400B. At that hour it was too dark to see anything. For a while we listened to the noises of the crew and watched the dim shadows of the other ships go by. Cloudy and cool. Bad for the bombers. As the light broke in the sky behind us, we could see the destroyers close to shore, firing point-blank into the enemy's known defenses. The coast itself, as far as we could see, was quiet. No answering gun flashes, only one or two fires. Certain the surprise of the actual time and place of the invasion was complete. Slowly the picture unfolded as the sky became lighter, until we could see the hills and the buildings that dotted the coast."

Striking at German gun positions and troop and vehicle concentrations, the bombers neutralized somewhat the shore defenses and paved the way for the invading infantry. From 0700 to 0730, heavy bombers dropped their loads upon the sector which the Infantry was to assault. At the same time the Navy's great invasion fleet loosed a 40-minute bombardment on the beaches.

At 0749, while the assault boats filled with infantrymen hovered offshore in their rendezvous, the Navy pounded that beach with short- and long-range rocket fire. The barrage lasted until 0759. One minute later the first wave of assaulting infantry hit the beach. Experience gained in previous amphibious operations was put to fullest use. Although opposition was lighter than anticipated, the miraculous precision with which men, supplies, vehicles, and equipment swept ashore indicated that much more determined resistance could have been almost as easily overcome.

Units, landing on schedule and on their assigned beaches, met initial opposition varying from light to sporadic. Assault units pushed through the gaping barbed wire of the



Waiting for time to load at Naples for the invasion of France.

beach defenses and crossed the six-foot seawall without encountering the fire which had cost them casualties in landings at SCOGLITTI, SALERNO, and ANZIO.

"0930B. Orders from Naval commander for all ships to close into the shore. We headed for Red Beach on CAP SARDINEAUX. As we approached the shoreline we could see smoke from brush fires, blackened places, sites of bomb bursts, and some buildings slightly damaged. Then, as the details of the scene came into view, we could see the breaches in the seawall where the demolition crews had made openings for the assault platoons. In the water off GREEN BEACH, we could see a tank with only the turret showing. One damaged landing craft was the only injured ship we could see. How different from SICILY, SALERNO!"

Initial objectives were quickly taken. Beyond the beaches the enemy's resistance was found to consist largely of covered roadblocks, sniper fire, and scattered uncoordinated pockets of resistance.

The 157th and 180th Infantry Regiments hit their respective assigned beaches at 0800. The 157th fanned out and rapidly advanced inland and along the coast toward STE. MAXIME. Troop B of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron reconnoitered roads in the area. At 1900 the 1st Bn. had taken two objectives and was northwest of PLAN DE LA TOUR with a motorized patrol on its way toward VIDAUBAN. The 2nd Bn. seized and secured its objectives, the 3rd encountered no resistance on the beaches but was held up for a short time before taking STE. MAXIME.

The 180th, overcoming light resistance on the beach line, moved inland against increasing resistance eastward along the coastal road toward ST. AYGULF and the high ground south of the ARGENS River, with the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop exploring roads in the Regimental zone of advance. The coastal road in the area was cleared by

ing. The grim faces of the hard-slugging 45th had become familiar to the world as a sort of symbol of the war.

Consequently, the smoothness of the invasion of SOUTHERN FRANCE, with all events moving like a well-oiled machine toward the fall of one objective after another, gave the Thunderbirds a remarkable feeling of exhilaration as they swept aside resistance and raced on from one goal to the next.

Ordered to move on August 16 to VIDAUBAN and thence to LORGUES by the fastest means available, the 1st Bn. of the 157th resumed its attack at 0600, clearing resistance from the high ground north of VIDAUBAN.

Taking up positions north of VIDAUBAN, the Battalion set up road blocks and sent motor patrols on to LORGUES. The 2nd Bn. moved toward LeLUC by motor, encountering a stubborn enemy strongpoint, then only light resistance as the enemy withdrew the rest of the way. The 3rd Bn. reported ST. TROPEZ and GRIMAUD occupied by 3rd Division troops and moved by motor into an assembly area near PLAN DE LA TOUR.

The 179th, in Division reserve, marched to an assembly area near PLAN DE LA TOUR.

The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry was still encountering stiff resistance from prepared machine gun and anti-tank positions and from uncoordinated strongpoints in that sector. ST. AYGULF was occupied at 0945 and VILLEPEY was captured from the enemy at 1258. The 2nd Bn., moving on carriers, reached the vicinity of VIDAUBAN at 0920 and continued to attack that town from the northeast. Clearing tank and infantry resistance from a string of loosely coordinated strongpoints in its sector, the Battalion organized positions for the night.

LeLUC fell after a stubborn fight on August 17.

The 179th Infantry moved, to LeLUC and through the 157th, to attack along the CABASSE-CARCES axis, all units advancing considerably during the day. The 180th Infantry continued the advance in its sector toward ROQUEBRUNE.

On August 18 the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry advanced toward SALERNES and moved on into VARGES, overcoming all resistance without great difficulty. Fairly stiff opposition was encountered in the late afternoon at BARJOLS and in the vicinity of TAVERNES. The enemy continued to operate in isolated groups, strongest at COTIGNAC.

These scattered pockets, hopelessly cut off from the main enemy troops and with no chance of success, were flung over an area from the RHONE VALLEY to the Italian border. They caused a wide dispersing of the Division's troops which complicated supply and transportation, and caused a threatened gasoline shortage because of the vast amount of territory which had to be covered, transporting troops and supply.

The supply of artillery ammunition was not complicated by heavy firing, fortunately, due to the wide dispersal of enemy targets.

Only 943 rounds of artillery were fired at LeLUC on August 17 and 1,195 in the vicinity of BARJOLS and



The chain of LSTs sail a smooth sea on route to France.

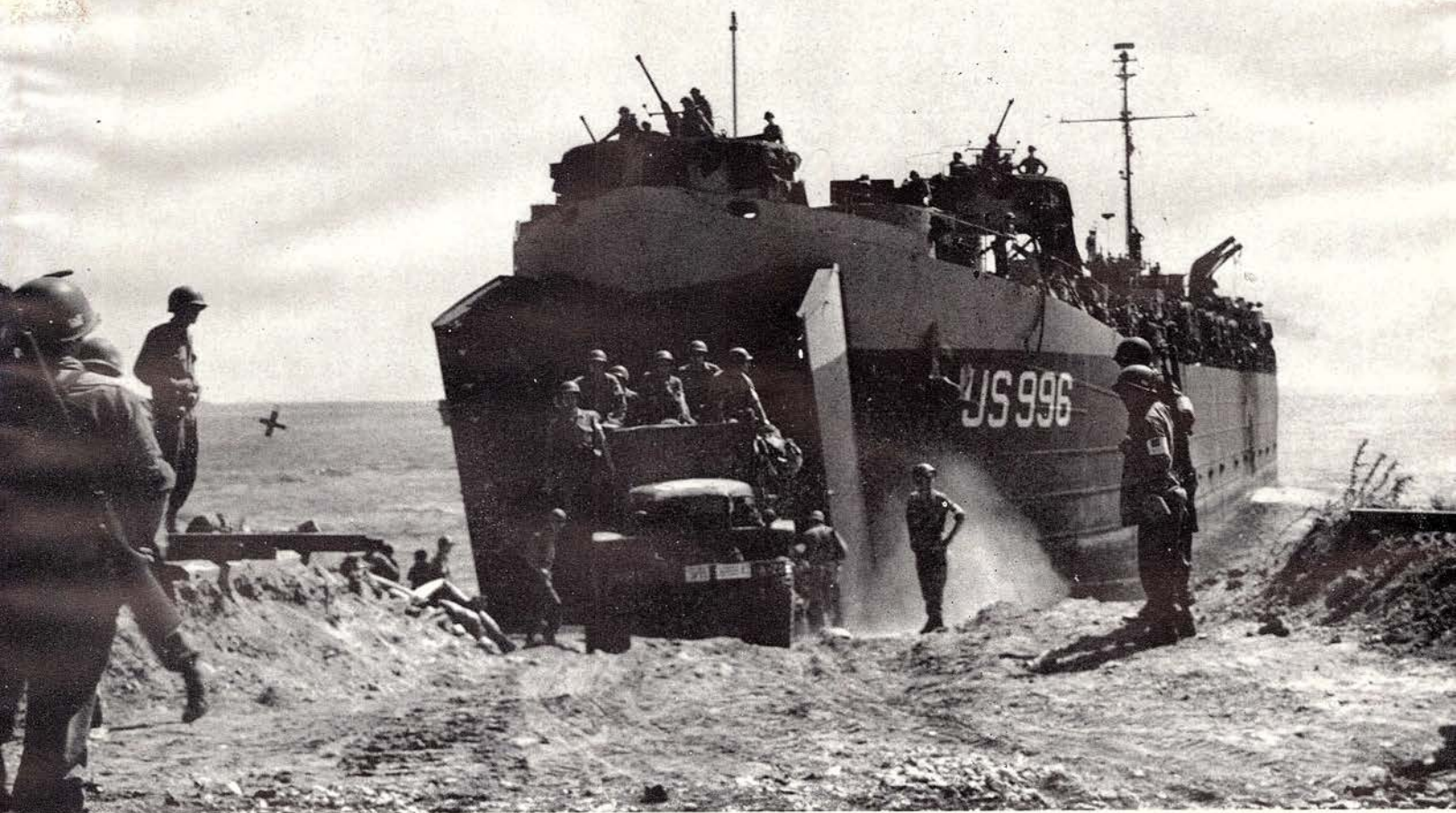
SALERNES on August 19. These were small amounts in comparison to the recent firing done by the units of Division Artillery. In fact, the 6,648 rounds fired from the start of the invasion through the end of August would have been only a fair-sized day's supply on ANZIO Beachhead.

In previous campaigns the Signal Corps had sometimes been called upon to string as much as 35 miles of wire per day. In SOUTHERN FRANCE, they sometimes strung as much as 160 miles of wire per day. Moreover, commercial French circuits were used for all calls of more than 20 miles. All command posts moved rapidly from the landing on the beach. Division CP moved 11 times in 17 days from ten to 75 miles each move, and regimental command posts more often than that.

Reconnaissance was made toward DRAGUIGNAN as reconnaissance patrols continued to operate often well to the fore of the advancing infantry. Prisoners from scattered and by-passed groups were taken in large numbers. Because of the confusion into which the enemy forces were thrown by the rapidity of the advance, prisoners were taken from scores of German battalions and regiments during the first 15 days of the advance. Eight shattered German divisions were encountered on the march to BOURG. Rear elements took many prisoners from groups by-passed or scattered by the swift advance. Some showed little reluctance to be captured, and some fought bitterly even after they had no chance of escape.

On August 19 resistance at BARJOLS, which the 179th Infantry overcame during the morning, slowed the advance. Elsewhere opposition encountered was light, bolstered by road blocks. After the organized opposition at BARJOLS was overcome, SALERNES and COTIGNAC were quickly mopped up. Patrols were sent to LeVAL and elements advancing on RIANs reported only minor obstacles to their movements.

The DURANCE River, first large stream in the Division's path of advance, was crossed without opposition although cables to a large suspension bridge in the vicinity of ST.



*An army truck unloads from the first LST to reach the beach occupied by the 45th Division.
Infantry troops of the Division leave their LCI and wade in chest-deep water toward the beach near Ste. Maxime.*



PAUL had been cut. MIRABEAU was taken without resistance and the forces advanced on PEYROLLES, meeting only small arms fire at the edge of that town. PERTUIS was taken later in the day, but columns advancing toward MEYRARGUES developed rather strong resistance. At the close of day troops were mopping up southwest of MEYRARGUES and sending reconnaissance patrols toward CADENET from PERTUIS and toward SISTERON from MIRABEAU, through MANOSQUE.

On August 21 the enemy's major delaying effort continued to be road blocks supported by tanks and anti-tank guns. Armor was increasingly active and identification of the 11th Panzer Division in the vicinity of LePUY was secured, marking the first encounter with Panzer troops in FRANCE: MEYRARGUES fell, then LePUY, where an estimated 200 enemy infantrymen supported by mortars, tanks, and self-propelling guns fought stubbornly. A reconnaissance patrol at noon reported APT occupied by 200 to 300 of the enemy, with some armor. Division troops held a road block one mile east of CADENET, had a strong reconnaissance patrol moving toward APT from the east on the APT-CERESTE Road. The 179th Infantry, minus the 3rd Bn., had closed in near ST. AUBAN.

APT was occupied without opposition on August 22 and patrols were sent out toward ST. SATURNIN. The town of ROGNES was occupied and patrols entered LAMBESC, drawing tank fire north of the town, while PELISANNE was entered without opposition.

It had taken less than a week for the German commanders in SOUTHERN FRANCE to realize that their defenses were ineffectual and their force insufficient to hold the Seventh Army's drive. Unable to prevent the capture of the coastal region, they began to concentrate on the problem of withdrawing all they could salvage from the MARSEILLE area and the lower RHONE Valley. Already seriously threatened by the advance through the VAUCLUSE area, the efforts of the Germans were concentrated along their line of retreat, through AVIGNON toward LYON.

So the fighting lessened, and became a march, and the march soon became a race to catch the retreating enemy, to prevent his establishing any form of defense in the mountains to the north. Many of the Division's units were motorized and "sent out to keep going until stopped by enemy fire." From SISTERON north to GAP; east to BARCELONNETTE; north to BRIANCON; west to CREST. Throughout the region of the Bses ALPES, VAUCCUSE, DROME, Htes ALPES, and north to the ISERE, the Regiments and Battalions organized small "task forces" to continue the destruction of what remained of the German army.

The 180th Infantry, moving into the lower Alpine mountains, cleared ST. PAUL, GUILLESTRE, BRIANCON, and remained there in the steep mountain passes to prevent any German force from leaving ITALY across those rugged peaks from TORINO.

The city of GRENOBLE fell to units of the 36th Division on August 23. The 179th Infantry Regiment was ordered

to relieve them there, and to explore and clear—or block—the Alpine passes to the east. Road blocks were established on all roads out of GRENOBLE, and patrols were sent toward ST. JEAN DE MAURIENNE, CHAMBERY, LA TOUR-DU-PIN, and along the ISERE River toward VALENCE. Many groups of FFI were contacted by these patrols, and each local commander reported that the Boches had been destroyed or driven out of his region—or, if they had not yet been destroyed, they were "surrounded" and with the help of a force of Americans they could be easily overcome!

Reconnaissance units were dispatched to ALBERTVILLE, and towards ANNECY, and it was soon learned that roads leading into GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, were cleared of enemy troops. More than a thousand enemy soldiers were captured in the vicinity of GIERES, east of GRENOBLE, and many more were taken near VIF, BRIANCON and GUILLESTRE.

Motor patrols were still maintaining contact with the Airborne Task Force at DIGNE, and many clashes with scattered enemy troops were occurring throughout the division's sector extending over a hundred miles to the north.

On the left side of this sector the 157th Infantry moved to the vicinity of LYON to be attached to the 36th Division which had been assigned the mission of cutting off enemy troops now moving up the RHONE Valley. The 1st and 2nd Bns., under VI Corps control, moved to CREST on August 26, to assist in capturing LIVRON and the north-south highway there. The Germans' defense was well organized in the hills east of the RHONE, for this was the "life-line" to the German groups engaged in heavy fighting at MONTEILIMAR. After several hours of intense fighting at ALLEX and at LA COUCOURDE, the Regiment advanced to the high ground overlooking HIGHWAY 7, which TASK FORCE BUTLER had been assigned to cut and block.

It was evident that the Division's troops, now dispersed from the RHONE Valley to BRIANCON, were so widely scattered that it would require time to move to VOIRON on the main axis of advance. The temporary shortage of gasoline caused by the tremendous distance the Division had to cover in its operations, grounded many vehicles. Moreover, although Division troops had scattered from the RHONE to the edge of Northern ITALY enveloping the enemy's small pockets of resistance, it was evident that other enemy forces had necessarily been by-passed and might give trouble.

No contact was made on August 29 to the north, northwest, or west of BOURGOIN and GRENOBLE. Units advancing to BOURG DE PEAGE encountered fairly strong resistance and were held up one kilometer east of the town. Other elements of the Division made few changes as the pace slowed due to transportation difficulties in bringing scattered units back to the main axis of advance.

On August 31 the enemy was contacted in the vicinity of MONTLUEL, DAGNEUX, and CHALAMONT, with the German troops veering sharply away from road blocks of the Division and skirting Highway 83, their main line

of communication between LYON and BOURG. Heavy traffic had been reported moving north and northwest from BEAUREPAIRE toward LYON, and continuous traffic was reported throughout the period on all road networks in the triangular sector formed by BOURG, LYON, and HEYRIEUX.

To slow the Division's advance, the enemy began to demolish all bridges as he went, one at PONT D'AIN, one east of MEXIMIEUX. To strengthen his grasp on vital road centers, he added anti-tank guns, infantry, and armor.

By August 25, daily showers had turned to steady rain. Units operated in a continuous morass. Although the artillery was used comparatively lightly due to the absence of large concentrations of troops, their planes flew many missions for observation purposes.

By September 1 the 45th Division had completed mopping up operations around GRENOBLE. Troops were in MEXIMIEUX and AMBERIEU. Lead elements of one battalion were in CHALAMONT. A road block which had been twice unsuccessfully attacked by the Germans the day before was held southwest of Highway 84 near DAGNEUX. No active enemy main line of resistance had as yet been encountered, but the 11th Panzer Division patrolled aggressively to screen the vulnerable right flank of the long German columns moving upward out of LYON and that vicinity.

During the morning of September 1, a large force of enemy army penetrated to the south and southwest of MEXIMIEUX along Highway 84. Enemy forces which had attacked the DAGNEUX road block twice the day before

pushed back the company manning that defense and infiltrated into the town from the west and southwest. Fierce fighting was required to hold the Division positions there against a heavy force of enemy infantry and armor. Troops of the Division attempting to cut the enemy's escape routes to BOURG were hard pressed throughout most of the night. The 179th Infantry's regimental command post which had moved into the town was forced to clear the enemy troops which had infiltrated. The 2nd Bn., in position south of CHALAMONT, met strong enemy pressure at daylight and withdrew to better positions in the high ground northeast of MEXIMIEUX. A pocket of resistance in the PONT DE CHERUY area was cleared en route, and the Battalion secured a bridge across the AIN River.

The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry, in the vicinity of MORESTAL, moved by motor to AMBERIEU during the day and at night occupied PONT D'AIN without resistance. The 2nd Bn., in the vicinity of AMBERIEU, received long-range artillery fire at bridge crossings there. The 3rd Bn. crossed the AIN River and occupied high ground near NEUVILLE.

On September 2, the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry remained near MEXIMIEUX until 1000, then moved northeast to join the Regiment. After finishing the mission with the 36th Division, the Regiment had moved by motor from CREST to the new Division zone. The 2nd Bn. closed in at CHATEAU GAILLARD, then crossed the AIN, reached its assigned objectives on the river, and reached

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DUKW landing with 45th Division troops on the beach.



MONTBEGUE without encountering opposition. Pushing on at 1400, the Battalion entered DONASANNES, where it received bursts of long-range tank fire. LA TRAN-CLIERE was cleared during the night.

The 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry remained in MEXIMIEUX after the infantry and artillery units there, hit from all sides, had fought off the enemy and cleared the town once more, destroying eight or ten enemy tanks. The 2nd Bn. held its positions on the high ground northeast of the town while the 3rd Bn. held the bridge across the AIN River until the arrival of the 3rd Infantry Division.

The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry resumed the attack north to BOURG, with the mission of cutting the main highway in use by the retreating enemy. Lead elements attacking north met small arms fire, those attacking west received tank fire, but objectives were taken and JASSERON was occupied after the enemy was driven off by patrols in a sharp fire fight. The 3rd Bn. took ST. MARTIN without resistance and continued the attack. After a short fire fight, the enemy occupying RIGNAT withdrew to JOURNAN.

On September 3 the 157th Infantry, moving on toward BOURG, took the town of CERTINES after meeting opposition from strong positions on the edge of the town. MONTAGNAT was occupied without resistance. The 179th Infantry moved up after being relieved by elements of the 36th Infantry Division in MEXIMIEUX, while elements of the 2nd Bn. reverted to VI Corps control and moved by motor to assist the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in clearing a sector in the vicinity of MONTREVAL.

The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry advanced toward the east toward JOURNANS and TOSSIAT. Elements were ordered to support the attack of CEYZERIAT from the south and entered the town unopposed, after the 3rd Bn. had engaged in heavy fighting there. The enemy withdrew after dark and CEYZERIAT was occupied at 2230.

The advance on BOURG had been marked by widespread use of small arms, machine gun, and anti-tank gun fire by the enemy, plus the fire of self-propelled guns and tanks. A sudden increase in the amount of artillery fire apparently meant that the enemy was making an attempt to establish some form of organized defense at that point. A large number of enemy troops were concentrated in the woods south of BOURG, where Division Artillery set off an ammunition dump. The possession of CEYZERIAT was especially strongly contested by enemy troops well supported by tanks. The towns of LES RIPPEES, MONTAGNAT, JASSERON, MANGETTES, LIONNIERE and the road into BOURG were all occupied by the Division before American patrols were sent on into BOURG. The enemy, hopelessly outflanked, withdrew before troops entered the town, and sniper fire was cleared in the BOURG area by 1000 on September 4.

The 157th Regiment prepared to entruck and move to LONS LE SAUNIER. The 179th Infantry, assembled near ST. GERMAIN, began movement from ST. GERMAIN to LONS LE SAUNIER while the 2nd Bn., operating under VI Corps control, helped screen the left flank of the corps.

The 180th Infantry likewise moved to LONS LE SAUNIER after the clearing of BOURG.

General Patch's men had completed the first lap of their drive inland with amazing speed. The 45th Division, with the 3rd Infantry Division on the left and the 36th Division on the right, had blazed a wide trail inland to BOURG, a distance of roughly 318 miles as the Division Command Post moved, actually much greater for units which scattered out in flanking movements.

Careful pre-landing preparations had paid off in every phase of the advance. As the lead elements pushed inland rapidly, other units moved up to consolidate positions against the shaken enemy, exploiting every gain to the fullest. Movement was far ahead of schedule and supply personnel were doing a prodigious task successfully, in spite of a temporary shortage of gasoline and maps of the area.

As the Division's lead elements had pushed on through FREJUS, VIDAUBAN, LE LUC, and BARJOLS, truck drivers made the trip back and forth to the Seventh Army's supply point on the beaches over distances which averaged, one way, a total of 70 miles on August 21 through 23; 99 miles on August 24 through 27; 161 miles on August 28; 176 miles on August 29 and 30; 187 miles on August 31; and 190 miles on September 1.

Every effort was bent on maintaining the pace of the invasion, and drivers managed to keep their trucks rolling with a minimum of maintenance despite dust, rain, mud, and the dangers of mountain driving in blackout. Contact was maintained by the laying of hundreds of miles of wire per day.

At COTIGNAC, LE PUY, LOYETTES, MEXIMIEUX the enemy, already confused, was battered and destroyed. The German command never had a chance to reorganize or gain any part of the initiative. The pressure was relentless through the entire period of 17 days.

With the liberation of BOURG, the 45th Division had captured 4,781 prisoners representing eight German divisions, 12 Luftwaffe units, and 20 miscellaneous battalions which had to be written off by the Wehrmacht as "destroyed."

German Divisions encountered included the 198th, 189th Reserve, 11th Panzer, 242nd, 244th, 157th, 338th, and 148th, in addition to the Airforce units and miscellaneous battalions hastily thrown into the breach. Captured materiel was tremendous. Particularly heavy was the amount of vehicles and rolling stock seized. Due to the rapidity of the march and the quantity of German materiel taken, no accurate tally could be kept.

The operations had been substantially aided by the efforts of the French Underground. An annex to the Division's G-2 report dated August 20, 1944, reads as follows:

"Resistance Movement in France.

"In spite of difficulties, the Resistance movement has continued with undaunted courage its program of sabotage and cutting of communications. The break-down of German-controlled industry in FRANCE, the dislocation of the railway system,



Allied invasion of Southern France. The 45th Division moves up to the front north of Ste. Maxime.

the chronic shortage of essential Army supplies and petrol; the fact that divisions hurriedly sent as replacements to Normandy have arrived in the battle area after long delays, weary and dispirited, often separated from their equipment; the strain on the morale of occupation troops, are all tributes to its undoubted success.

"It is against the background of this unremitting activity that the intermittent clashes for the liberation of territory are taking place.

"The German efforts to crush the Resistance in strategically important areas have resulted in local setbacks for the Maquis. As was to be expected, these efforts have been concentrated in the important VERCORS PLATEAU, southwest of GRENOBLE, dominating the communications on the east bank of the RHONE, and on the AIN, while fighting has continued in the DORDOGNE and south of TOULOUSE. The Germans moved into the VERCORS area in considerable strength, estimated at about 11,000 men, using tanks, armored cars, and artillery. Besides anti-guerilla units, it is known that battle groups of the 9th Panzer Division and 157th Reserve Division took part in the operations. Before this formidable force, the Maquis, after fighting for two days with an almost total lack of heavy weapons, were forced to disperse, leaving considerable supplies and equipment. The majority live to fight another day in a neighboring area.

"The loss of territory is counterbalanced by a strengthening of the Resistance hold on other areas."

After a detailed description of the areas under almost whole or part control of the FFIs, the report on the Resistance Movement continues as follows:

"The Germans, thwarted in their efforts to reduce the wave of sabotage, have continued to indulge in sanguinary acts of terrorism against patriots and the civil population. Following an attack upon a convoy near CHATEAUROUX, in which 70 Osttruppen were killed, three villages were burned down as a reprisal. It is reported that in certain areas, Russian Hilfswilligen have been deprived of their pay and rations to encourage looting. Not the least of the difficulties of the FFI have been caused by independent bands of terrorists, posing as Maquis, who by petty acts of violence or looting have let loose a wave of savagery and reprisals in the area, and discredited the Maquis in the eyes of the local population."

The Division took over and operated a railroad in the vicinity of BOURGOIN, thereby saving many thousands of truck miles for the already overworked supply lines. Operating from the front to the rear until the Army made repairs and took over, the trains operated by the 83rd Chemical Battalion shuttled back and forth as far as undamaged rails permitted, from the coast to SISTERON—later to GRENOBLE.

While the 45th Division had been pushing on to BOURG



The Division moves forward in an area north of Ste. Maxime, past a knocked-out bus with sign "Toulon" above windshield.

the Seventh Army took the great French industrial city of LYON dominating the lower RHONE Valley. The mission of the 45th was to break through the back door into GERMANY by way of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS, but first there was the MOSELLE RIVER to cross and the German bastion of EPINAL to crack.

The people of BOURG gave the 45th Division one of its most gala welcomes. The liberated populace went wild as the Division's armor and doughboys made their way through the crowded streets. The hardened and battle-worn men of the 45th received their first joyous tribute from the French with customary good nature. Civilians and excited FFIs alike hailed the Americans as liberators.

Orders were received to assemble at once north of BOURG and push on to LONS LE SAUNIER, which they occupied with ORNANS and VERCEL. On September 6 they had no physical contact with the enemy, but received artillery fire on forward elements as they turned their attention on the DOUBS RIVER and the city of BAUME LES DAMES.

All bridges across the DOUBS RIVER southwest of BAUME LES DAMES had been destroyed by the enemy. The Germans chose this natural barrier to assist them in regaining part of their lost defenses for their route back into the mountains north of BELFORT and into the RHINELAND. From SEURRE on the SAONE RIVER, to DOLE and BESANCON, to MONTBELIARD and to the SWISS border, the mixture of German units available were placed to guard this short route into the homeland. The rapidity of movement of the units of Seventh Army

through the lower JURA Mountains to the DOUBS Valley was greater than the Germans expected. Some of the enemy troops south of the river did not have time to cross before the bridges were blown.

By improvising barges, utilizing a local ferry, and by footbridges, the first elements of the 180th Infantry crossed the stream southwest of ROULANS.

. . . they had as a guide, a little French girl. Her long dark-brown hair hung in heavy waves around her shoulders, and curled from beneath her little Basque beret around her forehead. She seemed timid, even a little shy, and the innocent expression of her dark eyes was as appealing as any pretty child. But she was not a child. She had witnessed the horrors of German occupation of her homeland, and their treatment of her father and mother. She knew the German army, and she knew well the countryside of the JURA, HAUTE SAONE and VOSGES. She had sworn to avenge, and she could help the Americans drive the Germans from FRANCE. Her name will be long remembered by many—as the Joan d'Arc of '44—Her name was Marie Anne. . . ."

Northeast of ROULANS the situation was more difficult. Enemy tanks, maneuvering inside the town of BAUME, forced the troops approaching from the west to remain on the high ground outside the city. An attack launched across the river to the southwest of the town enabled the troops to move into the hills on the north. The forces attacking BAUME itself were met by heavy fire from



German prisoners, taken by the 45th Division, await evacuation from a beach in southern France.

flak-wagons, tanks and mortars. The enemy force defending the town was estimated at 400 to 500, armed with rifles, machine-guns and mortars, supported by 10 to 20 tanks and at least two self-propelled 150MM guns. The town was ideally situated for defense, and the Germans held out the first day, until surrounded and attacked from all sides.

Northeast of BAUME les DAMES, road blocks and pockets of resistance were met, then by-passed by Division troops moving on toward CLERVAL. Other forces ferried the river; elements advanced on L'ISLE sur le DOUBS.

Considerable enemy movement was noted in the BAUME-AUTECHAUX area, involving both infantry and tanks. A tank assembly area was reported south of AUTECHAUX. The enemy's scattered forces were making their first genuine effort to delay the American forces in the sector as much as possible. Battle groups, enemy stragglers, and remnants of shattered elements from the whole of FRANCE, were being thrown into some semblance of a line to halt or delay the advance. German Air Force and naval units personnel were being organized into small defensive units. Systematic use of demolitions, extensive heavy minefields, and heavy rainfall which made the banks of the DOUBS River a slippery morass aided the enemy to delay the completion of the crossing for three days.

BAUME les DAMES fell to the Division on September 9 after the town was cut off. The enemy's defenses in BAUME collapsed, allowing the Division to move in after

a three-day siege, but opposition increased at once as the forward elements attempted to advance. The area in the vicinity of AUTECHAUX was strongly defended with mortars, tanks, and small arms. Densely wooded high ground, exceedingly easy to defend and firmly held by the enemy, made progress difficult and slow. The hostile elements had to be rooted out and mopped up along the line from VILLERSEXEL to L'ISLE. In addition, Germans in the SOYE and RANG area offered particularly strong opposition, using fairly large and strong forces of both infantry and tanks. Both towns were occupied, however, and contact was maintained with the enemy through the night at RANG.

On September 10 enemy resistance on the Division's left increased, both in intensity and in the degree of determination manifest to hold the ground, even after it was subjected to blasting fire by Division Artillery. At FONTE-NELLE, TROUYANS, HUANNE MONTMARTIN, MES-ANDANS, and ROMAIN the enemy offered resistance only with mortars and small arms fire. In the vicinity of BOURNOIS, however, and MANCENANS, to the center and right of the Division sector, stiffening opposition was met. Meanwhile a pocket of resistance, apparently with every intention of holding indefinitely, was building up at L'ISLE and in that area. Troop movements, including many vehicles, were observed throughout the day on the ROUGEMONT-VILLERSEXEL road nets.

The use of combat wire and the increased employment

of artillery fire on September 11 indicated that the enemy was striving for some form of organized defense south of VILLERSEXEL. To the center and left of the Division sector, hostile forces seemed reluctant to return the fire placed upon them. ROUGEMONT, ABBENANS, and BOURNOIS were cleared but pockets of resistance held out elsewhere, continuing to delay the advance of the Division's troops moving north. Small groups of the enemy offered slight resistance in the vicinity of GONDENANS les MOULINS and CUSE. Another group at CUBRIAL held out stubbornly.

A bitter battle was fought for PONT SUR L'OIGNAN on September 12. Attempts of the Germans to set up ground organizations south of VILLERSEXEL were frustrated by the infantry who pierced the defenses.

Artillery engaged enemy activity and gun locations in a triangle formed by PONT SUR L'OIGNAN, ABBENANS, and FALLON. Defensive organization on the Division's right became increasingly stronger, however, as small arms, machine guns, mortars, and artillery all reacted sharply and with great sensitivity to efforts of Division patrols.

Enemy troops supported by small arms and 20MM anti-aircraft guns depressed to ground level for use against infantry attempted to take BONNAL. They were driven off with heavy losses. Resistance to the advance on PONT SUR L'OIGNAN was stubborn, but that town fell to the 157th Infantry. Considerable enemy materiel and a large number of troops were captured there. Resistance in the high ground in the vicinity of CUBRIAL, and wooded areas near ABBENANS, held tenaciously by the enemy throughout the day and until artillery fire made the position untenable for the Germans.

Enemy troops in contact on the right flank established a fairly cohesive defensive line, supported by mortars, artillery, and tanks, along the L'ISLE-ACCOLANS-COURCHATON-MELACEY line. German soldiers dug in near VILLERSEXEL resisted the occupation of that point with the support of armor from the north side of the river. Division troops entered VILLERS LA VILLE during the morning without meeting opposition. In GRAMMONT, however, hostile forces surrendered only after the Division troops seized high ground looking down upon them from the west.

Strongest resistance of September 14 was concentrated along a line passing through COURCHATON, GENEY, and L'ISLE SUR DOUBS. German troops occupying HILL 533 and ACCOLANS were forced to yield their positions commanding the COURCHATON-GENEY road in an assault by infantry at 1415. Enemy forces in GRAMMONT, ST. FERJEUX, GEORFANS, ST. SULPICE, VILLAFANS, and BEVEUGE evacuated before the advancing Division front.

On September 15 hostile forces strongly opposed the Division's advance in the GENEY area and placed artillery concentrations on ACCOLANS and GRAMMONT. Innumerable enemy pockets flanked the road from GENEY to L'ISLE SUR DOUBS and were eliminated by the infantry.

Next day the Division was notified that it would be relieved, beginning on September 18, by French troops.

Upon relief, the Division was to assemble north of VESOUL. There, upon VI Corps order, attack was to be resumed on the ST. LOUP-BAINS-EPINAL axis. The Division was to protect the left flank of VI Corps and maintain contact with the 3rd Army on the left.

ETROITEFONTAINE was reported clear of the enemy by troops advancing against light resistance on September 16. Enemy activity continued progressively active from the central to the eastern portion of the Division sector. Though COURCHATON was reported clear by a patrol at 1350, numerous uncoordinated groups of infantry with vehicles remained to the northeast. Reinforced with tanks, the enemy in the GENEY area launched a strong counter-attack at 1650 to stem the Division's approach, which was threatening the town from the south and southwest. The attack was repulsed successfully, but by the close of the period all positions had not been restored. Sporadic contact continued in the L'ISLE area.

Enemy patrols around GENEY and L'ISLE displayed little activity on September 17, but were observed near COURCHATON, west of SENARGENT, and west of ATHESANS. Fire on the latter group forced their withdrawal. The Division's activity was confined to patrolling. Next day the enemy broke contact in the Division sector as L'ISLE, ETRAPPE, GENEY, COURCHATON, FORET DE COURCHATON, VELLECHEUREUX, MIGNAFANS, SENARGENT, and ATHESANS were reported clear and patrols found only scattered groups of infantry in MIGNAVILLERS and SECENANS. Armored activity next day caused an adjustment in the Division's positions southwest of MIGNAFANS as the advance toward EPINAL got under way.

The routing of the enemy from SOUTHERN FRANCE ended in September. The first confusion of the Germans and their subsequent unbalanced reaction to the fury of the 45th's advance was finally absorbed by the realization that they must now dig in and defend while they had fighting room—or be thrown back to their own SIEGFRIED LINE. Naturally, the German High Command chose the foothills of the VOSGES, and the rivers that formed natural barriers to an attacking force.

Every kilometer that the Division advanced toward the MOSELLE RIVER was won only after strong lunges against the determined Germans, and frequently the same kilometer was secured only after beating back a fierce counterattack.

Leading the shift of the entire Division to the north, the 179th Infantry left ROUGEMONT and moved to an area beyond NEUREY, with the mission to establish and secure a bridgehead across the MOSELLE RIVER south of the fortress city of EPINAL. With tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion, the 179th Regiment moved through BAINS-les-BAINS and pushed on toward the high ground north of XERTIGNY. By 2020 on September 20, the leading troops were consolidating positions at their initial objectives while the 157th Infantry shuttled toward DARMEULIE, and the

180th Infantry remained in an assembly area near ROUGE-MONT.

The city of EPINAL is built on both banks of the MOSELLE RIVER, and is the hub of a large network of roads and communications. It is the "county-seat" of the department of the VOSGES. It was also a strong-point of German military defense.

Three battalions of enemy infantry, reinforced by artillery, mortars and dual-purpose anti-aircraft guns were ordered to defend the city. Every bridge across the river was methodically blown, as usual, by the Germans. Approaches to possible crossing sites were heavily mined and booby-trapped, while strongly defended road-blocks on the outskirts of the city covered the streets with machine-gun and automatic rifle fire. The MOSELLE River itself was a formidable barrier—80 feet wide with 20-foot verticle banks on either side.

A Battle Patrol of the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was sent as a point for the 179th Infantry. At the same time a party of engineers from the 120th Engineer Battalion examined the ruins of the bridge across the river near ARCHES. Meanwhile, the 180th Infantry had left the assembly area at NAIMONT and headed toward EPINAL. The 21st of September was to be the beginning of the assault on the city.

By afternoon of that first day, the 180th Infantry had

run into severe enemy fire while clearing roadblocks, wire entanglements and mines at the western approaches to EPINAL. Held back by the obstacles and mines, the Battalions dug in. Concentrations of enemy artillery, tank and rocket fire rained down on them all night.

The 157th Infantry dispatched patrols—motorized and foot—to probe and reconnoiter for crossing site and test enemy positions. They worked at CHATEL, ONCOURT, IGNEY, UXEGNEY, and GALBY. Thus the defenses of the river line both south an north of EPINAL were attacked.

Typical of the fighting during this trial of the MOSELLE was the action at the little suburb THAON. An infantry company managed to harass enemy roadblocks on the outskirts of EPINAL for several hours from their positions at THAON. The company pulled out just in time to avoid an enemy artillery concentration there at nightfall. Then at 0400 on September 22, during the attempt to ford the river, this company met with a murderous mortar barrage which cut down 27 men of the advance group, and forced the company to pull back.

Within EPINAL itself the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 180th Infantry were battling to clear the west side of the city. The house-to-house fights were bitter. And repeated attempts by both battalions to cross the river were beaten back by German fire. Slowly, under continuous fire, the

A member of the 45th Division takes the controls of a 20-mm gun left behind in the Vidauban area by the retreating Germans.





Riding on tank destroyers, the Division pushes through north of Salernes in pursuit of the enemy.

units worked forward. All along the river banks, from ARCHES north to THAON, the assault troops moved forward a little at a time, clearing each point of steadily increasing resistance and fighting the swift current of the rain-swollen river.

The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry resumed the attack southward with two companies abreast, supported by tanks, early on September 23. One battalion gained the edge of a wooded area to the left of the sector. All battalions met stiff resistance which increased steadily during the day. By night the woods north of GIRMONT were cleared and many prisoners captured in that area. Company A, on the right, was meeting heavy resistance and reported heavy casualties.

The 2nd Bn. of the 157th advanced against heavy artillery fire through PALLIGNEY and reached the outskirts of DOMEVRE SUR DURBOIN.

Two battalions of the 179th Infantry attacked northward toward MOSSOUX, with the 155MM howitzers of the 189th Field Artillery Battalion giving them added fire power and support, particularly in counterbattery fire against the enemy's heavy artillery. Advancing through minefields, dismantling booby-traps and clearing road blocks as they went, the 3rd Bn. pushed its way up to the outskirts of MOSSOUX while the 2nd Bn. moved to the left to cut off the escape route by the road north of the town.

Still fighting in the town of EPINAL, the 180th Infantry finally crossed the MOSELLE and two companies fought their way into high ground one kilometer northeast of the

town. Another company forded the river and took up positions on the left flank.

The three companies which had crossed the river were in contact with the enemy throughout the night. Two companies encountered heavy fire from tanks and artillery at the river, and did not succeed in crossing until late evening. They, too, took up positions in the high ground on the other side. One company remained to conclude the mopping up operations in the portion of the town to the west of the river. By the next day the Division troops were securely in possession of the woods on the east bank of the river.

On September 24, the 157th Infantry continued to advance on GIRMONT, meeting well-emplaced enemy infantry with machine guns, mortars, and self-propelled weapons. At 1140 enemy troops attempting to escape from GIRMONT to the east were fired upon by a large concentration from all weapons and thrown into wild disorder, thoroughly routed. Enemy troops held HILL 375 and DOMEVRE SUR DURBOIN despite fire placed on them all day by infantry, artillery, and tanks. A group of 100 or more infantry flushed from a wooded area ran directly into the Division's fire and received heavy casualties east of DOMEVRE. Infantry supported by tanks forced their way into GIRMONT against artillery and small arms fire and cleared the town by 1800 hours.

During the early morning the 179th Infantry seized the town of MOSSOUX and advanced to the north over ground stubbornly defended all the way. Snipers in buildings

along the route had to be blasted from their cover by direct tank fire and with hand grenades. Two companies took LA BAFTE and the Regiment pushed on toward the town of AYDOILLES.

The 2nd Bn. of the 180th Infantry continued to hold the high ground to the northeast of EPINAL. By 1600 hours, the 120th Engineer Battalion had completed a Bailey bridge across the river, and tanks, tank destroyers, and vehicles bearing much-needed supplies and equipment began rolling across the MOSELLE. Another great stream crossing was accomplished.

TO THE MOUNTAINS

With the fall of EPINAL, the enemy's transportation system was dealt a severe crippling blow by the Division's capture of 15 locomotives, 11 coal cars, quantities of ammunition, maps, and other supplies. The Division's own supply system was still operating over vast distances as Army Supply Points were far behind the rapid advance of the lead elements. Captured materiel was put to use so far as possible. On September 23 the Division trucks were still traveling 105 to 465 miles, one way, for supplies, and on September 30, 118 to 260 miles.

Across the MOSELLE, the Division pushed on rapidly into the first foothills of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS. On September 25, the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry began mopping up operations in the high ground east of GIRMONT. Good progress was sustained against spasmodic resistance. The 2nd Bn. again attacked DOMEVRE SUR DURBOIN, which resisted strongly until finally cleared in mid-afternoon. Meeting comparatively little resistance,

the 3rd Bn. by-passed DOGNEVILLE and by nightfall was within striking distance of the town of SERCOEUR.

The 179th Infantry moved on toward AYDOILLES with the 1st Bn. leading the attack. Progress was impeded by increased dense forests in the uplands, from which the enemy operated in small fanatical groups with small arms and automatic weapons fire. One company occupied CHARMOIS in the late afternoon. Two others occupied the woods east of that town.

Following the eastward push of the Division, the 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry resumed its attack and took the towns of JEUXEY and LONGEHAMP. The 3rd Bn. advanced against tank and artillery fire, and after clearing numerous road blocks en route, cleared the town of DEYVILLERS. The enemy did not relinquish his positions until forced.

Another winter was approaching, and again, as the year before, the Division was beginning a drive into the mountains. The rolling hills of the MARNE-MOSELLE Valleys had been passed, and the steep, forest-covered mountains of the VOSGES were to the east. The country east of EPINAL is agricultural country, with fields alternately cultivated and meadowland, with many acres of wild, thick forests. The forests are mainly tall, straight pine, or heavy plots of leafy trees.

With the Germans holding—as always, it seemed—the higher hills with better observation, to cross the open fields was to come into their sight—and into the sights of their guns. In the forests, the ground was usually marshy, low and wet, a condition that was greatly increased by the steady downpour of rain. Among the trees the enemy had

Hot on the tracks of the retreating Germans, the infantry marches north thru Salernes.





Without waiting for a bridge to be built, tank destroyers cross the Durance River to Mira-beau in response to a call from Partisans in that area.

built a succession of delaying obstacles: minefields well hidden in the undergrowth; blocks of felled trees fixed with explosives that could blow up a man who touched a branch.

Fortunately, the Germans chose to withdraw their main force, after the defeat at the MOSELLE, to the next natural barrier—the MEURTHE RIVER. However, they needed time to prepare additional defenses there; to set up guns, dig in, lay more deadly mines. So forces were kept to the west of the MEURTHE, in the towns and forest areas to hold back the already slowed Seventh Army troops. The resistance by these delaying groups varied greatly. There was none in the BULT-VOMMECOURT area, a little in DOMPIERRE and GIRECOURT, moderate in the DESTORD sector, mounting to intense near GUGNECOURT and MEMENIL.

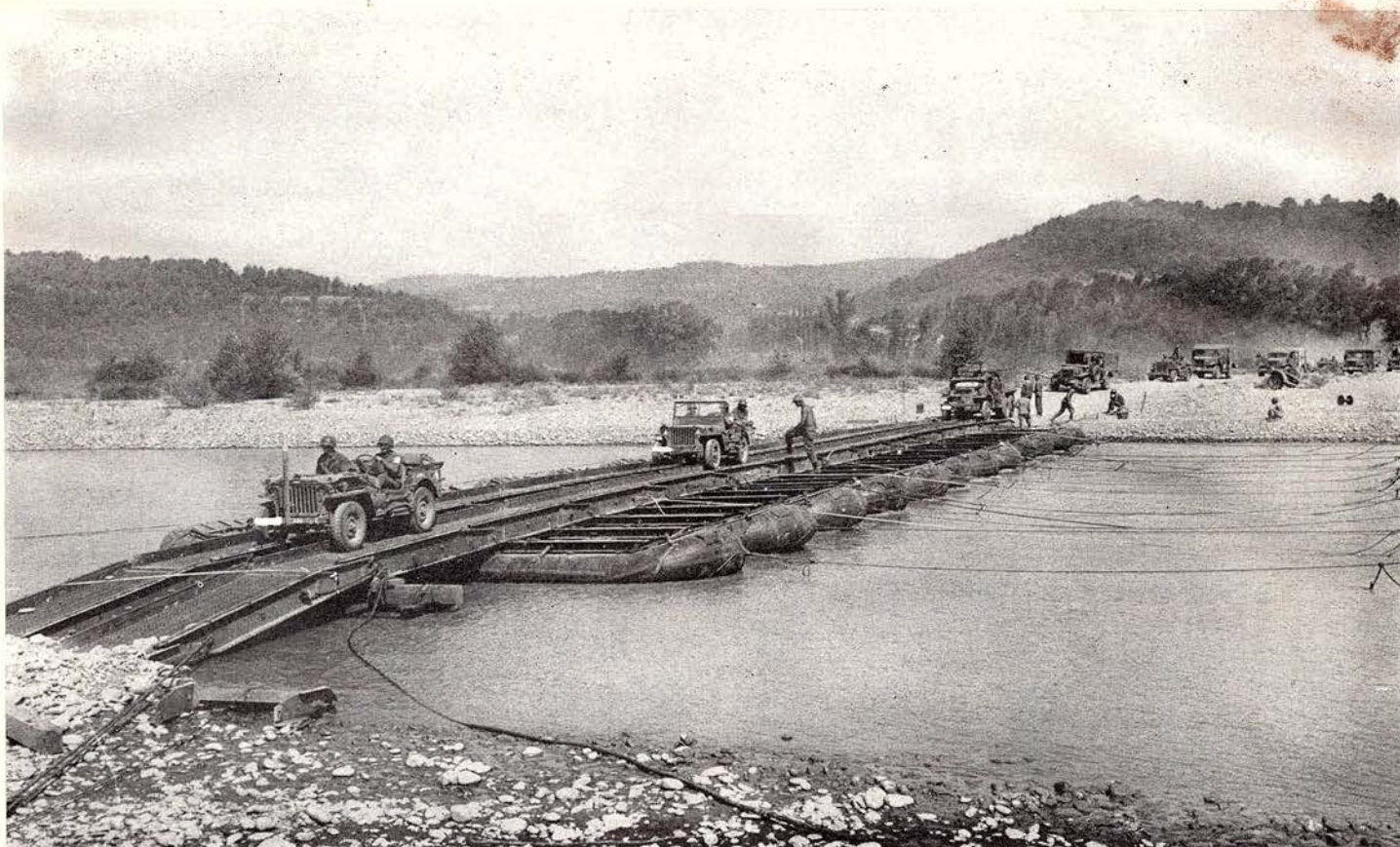
All these towns were cleared of the enemy with the exception of MEMENIL. However, a counterattack late in the day forced a withdrawal from GUGNECOURT. Roadblocks were established on the roads leading northwest into the FORET DE RAMBERVILLERS. The clearing of enemy roadblocks and felled trees continued to be a large-scale operation. The 179th Infantry was still encountering a great many mines as mopping up was concluded around AYDOILLES. Tanks were called for in preparation for an attack on FONTENAY.

The 180th Infantry captured DOMPIERRE and entered GIRECOURT without opposition, then DESTORD, which it

was forced to defend immediately against counterattack in force supported by increased artillery fire. The enemy opposed the entry into GUGNECOURT with heavy concentrations of small arms and mortar fire and a sudden crescendo of artillery fire, then counterattacked in force sufficient to cause elements in the town to withdraw for reorganization. At the end of the day, the 179th Infantry had entered FONTENAY but was meeting stiff resistance in the vicinity of MEMENIL.

At noon on September 28 the 157th Infantry pierced the enemy positions along the BULT-ST. GORGON line and frustrated coordinated efforts there to halt or delay the Division's progress toward RAMBERVILLERS. ST. GORGON was seized and cleared and high ground to the north of the town securely occupied. Then three patrols were sent into RAMBERVILLERS some 3,000 yards away on the main road through the Division sector. Two made contact with the enemy and reported the town to be well defended.

After reducing a covered road block, the 180th Infantry occupied ST. HELENE against light resistance coming from deep woods flanking the main road. A stubbornly defended road block southwest of NONZEVILLERS held up forward elements until 1134. Stiff small arms resistance was broken up before the town of PIERREPONT was seized at 1620. GUGNECOURT was reoccupied against the most determined resistance. Troops of the 180th pushing on toward GRANDVILLERS came under heavy mortar and artillery fire until late in the day.



This pontoon bridge was constructed across the Durance river, south of Mirabeau, by 120th Engineer Battalion.

mortars along the edges of the wooded areas stopped the Regiment short of the main road. A fierce house-to-house battle developed. By 0745 the western end of the town had been secured and by mid-afternoon the 1st Bn. command post had moved in. Nevertheless, fighting continued from building to building. Heavy concentrations of artillery and mortar fire fell upon the western part of GRANDVILLERS during the entire period.

The Division now faced a well-prepared and determined enemy. Beyond the hard-won town of RAMBERVILLERS lay heavy German fortifications manned by fresh troops, strategically placed with well-camouflaged positions and heavily mined approaches.

The Germans had anticipated the use of armor by the Americans and had prepared their defenses accordingly. The continuous day-by-day attacks on limited objectives, through difficult and densely wooded areas, became more and more an exceedingly slow and dangerous advance. Much of the actual fighting was done against the defenders of road blocks of felled trees, against well-coordinated strongpoints in the woods, approaches to which had been thoroughly mined and booby-trapped.

The enemy's use of artillery, mortar, and automatic weapons fire increased accordingly as the Division progressed toward the mountains. The Germans, as usual, fought to defend their positions, then swiftly counterattacked to gain lost ground when they were routed. Strong counterattacks by enemy forces became daily occurrences.

Villages and houses were fortified for use as strongpoints and defenses. Many of the French villages along the way were seized only after the heaviest and bitterest fighting, which virtually destroyed the towns.

The attack was pursued on October 1 in cold and rain with the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry guarding RAMBERVILLERS and maintaining contact with the French, the 2nd Bn. attacked eastward toward JEANMENIL until stopped by heavy enemy fire, and the 3rd Bn. progressing against road blocks and minefields, deflecting its attack toward BRU, north of JEANMENIL.

The 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry continued on GRANDVILLERS against strong resistance from within the town and from the high ground on the east. The infantry engaged by Company C in close fighting proved the most tenacious yet encountered. Machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire fell in extremely heavy concentrations.

The 3rd Bn. struck through dense woods on the Regimental right flank, and Company "K" by hard fighting and persistence took the high ground to the southeast of GRANDVILLERS, between that town and BRUYERES.

Midway between RAMBERVILLERS and GRANDVILLERS and slightly farther east, the village of AUTREY formed a pivot point in the Division's operations, with the 180th Infantry holding defensive positions. At 0530 the 2nd Bn., in the vicinity of PIERREPONT, attacked toward FREMIFONTAINE and gained a foothold on the edge of the town which it held despite heavy fire. An enemy coun-

terattack was driven off without changes of position. The 3rd Bn. passed through to continue the attack, advancing slowly throughout the day and Company L received heavy fire from artillery and self-propelled guns, then from machine guns and small arms, a half-mile east of PIERRE-PONT and south of FREMIFORTAINE.

Three companies formed a resistance line along a north-south axis below AUTREY, comprising the 180th Infantry's main front. The anticipated counterattack smashed into this line at 2000 hours, but at the end of an hour's sharp fighting was repelled by the firepower of the 3rd Bn. The 83rd Chemical Battalion gave support on call throughout the day, firing numerous missions in the area.

Monday, October 2, dawned cold and foggy as the contest for JEANMENIL was resumed in the northern part of the Division sector. The 2nd Bn. of the 157th Infantry attacked at 0900 and made good progress against the enemy's strong resistance, but the superior observation possessed by the enemy from the high ground east of JEANMENIL enabled the dug-in German troops to prevent an entry into the town itself.

At 0600 the 1st and 3rd Bn. of the 179th Infantry launched a coordinated attack on GRANDVILLERS as the Germans resisted at every point with their infantry strongly supported by machine guns, mortars, panzerfausts, and artillery, and protected by innumerable minefields on the wooded paths.

With close tank support, Company B cleared the town by the end of day. Fire fights with the entrenched Germans went on all day. The Division's mortars, rockets, and artillery pounded the positions with good effect in return for the fire poured upon the troops by German guns. By nightfall the gains on JEANMENIL could be measured in yards as the men dug in. Patrols probed during the hours of darkness and found the enemy alert and active, much in evidence both in the village and in the positions on the outskirts in the woods.

The 180th Infantry, in the center of the Division line, met equally stubborn and relentless resistance. Patrols in the woods north of AUTREY captured several of the enemy in fire fights. The 2nd Bn. held its positions near PIERRE-PONT. The 3rd Bn.'s attack on FREMIFONTAINE met determined opposition, but by noon one company had forced the enemy, strongly supported by small arms and mortar fire, from their positions in the town. Patrols were sent out to the southeast, and drew extremely heavy machine gun and tank fire from the enemy to the east of the town. The high ground there was attacked and taken despite a rain of small arms and artillery fire laid down by the enemy.

At 1700 the enemy struck back in a counterattack to regain the lost ground, assaulting with an estimated three companies to force Company L of the 180th back to its original positions. Thirty-five enemy dead were counted

Troops of the Division after a six-day trek trying to keep up with the retreating Germans, wash and rest in Pertuis, France.



in the field. The 171st Field Artillery supported the 180th Infantry Regiment with good effect. By the end of the day the Division held somewhat better positions along the wooded ridges.

On October 3 the 157th Infantry improved its positions around RAMBERVILLERS while the town itself received heavy concentrations of 150 millimeter gun fire. The weather was clear and cold with good visibility. To the north rear of the Division line, the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry improved its positions while the 2nd Bn. resumed the attack in the JEANMENIL area.

Patrols from the 180th Infantry ranged from the wooded areas east in the FREMIFONTAINE area to the MORTAGNE RIVER. The 3rd Bn. advanced, receiving mortar and artillery fire. One patrol, searching out a possible enemy command post, ran into a small German force and inflicted four casualties in a sharp firefight.

Strongest resistance continued in the area east and south-east of GRANDVILLERS. Heavy mining of the routes of approach which were more easily accessible forced the troops of the Division to fight their way through dense wooded areas. Progress was slowed by well-concealed gun positions and the necessity for extensive mopping up as the advance continued.

On October 4 the heavy pressure exerted by the 157th Infantry on the BRU-JEANMENIL area elicited a sharp reaction from the enemy. Reconnaissance patrols directed mortar and tank fire upon enemy installations in the JEANMENIL church and other buildings with good effect. Enemy patrols aggressively probed the 180th Infantry sector west of the MORTAGNE River toward FREMIFONTAINE. Two squads of Company C organized new forward defenses on high ground to their front at 1700. Forty minutes later, the enemy hit these positions from both front and rear, forcing the company to withdraw. Fighting in dense woods and heavy fog, the companies organized new positions. One company captured an enemy command post and several prisoners in the process.

The enemy counterattacked, but was easily repulsed. In the 179th Infantry sector, well camouflaged and dug-in positions in the forest east of GRANDVILLERS continued to delay the advance while German artillery and mortar fire continued to harass the infantry. The 1st Bn. attacked at 0630. Despite enemy small arms, artillery, and mortar fire in heavy volume, the Battalion gained new positions constituting an active imminent threat to the town of BROUVELIEURS.

Enemy artillery and mortar fire continued to cover the 157th Infantry's every action in the BRU-JEANMENIL area on October 5. The 83rd Chemical Battalion's supporting mortar fire on enemy movement in the JEANMENIL area started one large fire with many explosions. At 2100 a limited objective attack to gain high ground was driven off by enemy fire. Chemical mortars blasted the positions and a second attack proved successful.

Two battalions of the 179th Infantry advanced toward the BROUVELIEURS-BRUYERES area. The 1st Bn. smashed a road block before noon, then met stubborn re-

sistance in the afternoon, parrying two German counterattacks successfully. The 2nd Bn. pressed the attack on the right front with slow progress through the mined and close-set woods to new positions.

The 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion struck telling blows as it shelled the towns of BRU and JEANMENIL in support of the 157th Infantry attack, then shelled positions on Hill 385 in support of the 180th Infantry drive, and assisted the 179th Infantry to withstand and repulse strong counterattacks.

The 120th Combat Engineer Battalion worked consistently along the Division front removing the enemy's mines from fields, roads, and woodlands, then mining the defensive approaches against the enemy's counter-blows.

German troops on the BRU-JEANMENIL rear continued to exhibit strong defensive tactics on October 6 and remained extremely alert to actions of the 157th Infantry in that sector, covering every movement with their fire. Throughout the night, Cannon Company had placed interdiction fire along the most used road in this area, and at 2300 hours, Division Artillery sent a Time-on-Target concentration into the enemy-packed town of BRU.

The 180th Infantry had a difficult day in the central sector and repulsed a counterattack and maintaining close contact despite massive shellings by German artillery, dual purpose antiaircraft guns, and tank weapons. An attack was mounted to secure a crossroads to the south, but even though mortar and 75 millimeter gun fire paved the way for the attack, the enemy held out.

The 2nd Bn. renewed the attack at 0730, making contact quickly with enemy outposts and infantry supported by tanks. At 0930, enemy infantry and tanks counterattacked Company F and the outpost of Company G, the former clinging to their foothold on the line tenaciously despite efforts to break their hold in a viciously heavy fire fight. By noon the enemy had infiltrated around both flanks of the company and stabbed between E and G, cutting around to the rear of the latter.

The fighting which ensued was desperate. The enemy force included two battalions of the 111 Panzer Grenadiers, together with five batteries of self-propelled artillery and ten tanks, backed by well-placed mortar fire, striking both swiftly and with great force. Infiltrating behind the Regiment's positions after an initial repulse, the enemy cut off three companies engaged in heavy combat. Surrounded, Companies E and G battled for their lives. Another severe enemy attack wave from the northeast moved down a draw to cut off half of Company E from the main body of the two companies in positions on the south side of the draw.

The 2nd Bn. was ordered to withdraw at the end of day and form a defensive line. At 1612, the 3rd Bn., reinforced by two tank platoons, moved south from FREMIFONTAINE and attacked the Germans toward the east. Two companies penetrated to a point one mile west of BROUVELIEURS before enemy tanks and infantry halted the advance. Defensive positions were set up, and patrols operated to maintain contact through the night.

The 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion and a company of

the 601 Tank Destroyer Battalion were employed to good advantage in support of the attack.

The 179th Infantry set up and manned an important road block on the GRANDVILLERS-BRUYERES road and was hard hit by enemy counterattacks in its positions adjoining those of the embattled 180th Infantry. Close combat followed intermittently throughout the day while the 3rd Bn., thrust into German territory, held its line despite the direct pressure of the enemy. The dense woods enabled small groups to filter through, under cover of the fog, past forward positions where the trees grew thick and visibility was further limited by the weather.

Enemy artillery and mortars were active on October 7 in the BRU-JEANMENIL area and chemical mortar concentrations were poured into the latter town where heavy movement was reported. In the FREMIFONTAINE-BROUVELIEURES area the enemy consolidated the positions gained in the counterattack of the previous day and launched two localized attacks, both of which were repulsed. Efforts to probe and infiltrate through the line west of BROUVELIEURES were thwarted in sharp savage clashes. The situation was extremely tense.

The front west of BROUVELIEURS presented an irregular arrow-shaped appearance with the point against the German-held town. The 180th Regiment was on the left and the 179th on the right.

Clear and warm weather with good visibility on October 8 found aggressive combat patrols from the Division harassing and probing the German positions from BRU-JEANMENIL to BROUVELIEURS.

Fire fights were forced on the Germans at many points. The 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop on the extreme right flank of the Division sector cleared the enemy from its area and maintained strong contact through the day. Again on October 9 patrols were active all along the line and positions were solidified. The 179th Infantry captured new high ground to establish a better position on October 10 and patrols uncovered a cache of German wire, equipment, and mines during a routine forward mission.

Company B of the 180th Infantry detected a large enemy movement from the woods beyond HOUSSEAS, a village one and one-half miles northeast of AUTREY, at 1512. The troops were driven to take refuge in the houses by mortar fire. Then an hour's interdictory fire was laid upon the buildings. At 1717 the Company B outposts were attacked by the enemy from the northwest and after a short fire fight moved to the vicinity of AUTREY.

Numerous small but intense fire fights marked the day of October 11. Outposts of the 179th Infantry were attacked. One platoon which occupied a ridge to the fore of the Division line was forced to withdraw under heavy fire. Guns of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion threw 194 rounds of high explosive and seven of smoke at enemy troop concentrations. The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry Regiment was relieved in the line by the 36th Engineer Regiment and withdrew to the vicinity of STE. HELENE. Patrols probing the enemy's defenses withdrew under heavy fire.

The 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry pressed hard against

the enemy in the region a mile north of BRUYERES on October 12. At 1100 the Battalion mounted a limited objective attack, taking the high ground to the front and right flank against moderate resistance. An artillery saturation plus a counterattack supported by tanks forced Company C back, while a simultaneous and equally fierce attack hit the right flank of Company A and compelled it to withdraw to earlier positions.

On October 13 the 179th Infantry continued to consolidate and reorganize their positions. Artillery and mortar fire was placed upon an area where heavy tank movement was detected. An attack toward BRUYERES was met by small arms and artillery fire but high ground was occupied successfully. Artillery and mortar fire was received during the day and a strong force counterattacked in the Company G area but was repulsed without loss of ground.

On the 180th Infantry front, one company sent a strong patrol to HILL 385 at 1000, moving in upon that point from the northwest. A group of enemy troops was dispersed and the patrol became engaged with German infantry dug in on the hill's crest. Flanked by enemy patrols, the patrol withdrew, but other patrols directed fire upon the enemy.

Vigorous patrolling activities through thickly wooded terrain continued to harass the enemy in the BRU-JEANMENIL area, while farther south the 180th Infantry was in contact with the Germans northwest of BROUVELIERS. At 0900 Company A attacked HILL 385 from the northwest and made steady progress despite small arms fire, together with saturations of mortar and artillery shells. The objective was reached at 1255 and a defensive line was extended along the trail running southeast.

German artillery and mortars pounded this position all day. At 2200, a company of the 36th Engineers Regiment began relief of the embattled elements. Another company was attacked at 1334, but drove the Germans off in a brief fire fight. At 1832 the enemy struck again, and was repulsed again, in an adjoining sector.

The 179th Infantry was increasing its pressure on the BROUVELIEURS area, and on October 14, local advances toward BRUYERES and BROUVELIEURS were contested strongly.

A strong counterattack was met successfully but the pressure on the BRUYERES area was increased to keep the enemy off balance. The 157th Infantry maintained its close contact with the strong enemy defenses in the BRU-JEANMENIL area. Aggressive patrolling continued on October 15, with white phosphorus grenades strung on tripwire as a precaution against night attack. Patrols engaged in fire fights designed to harass the enemy and test his position for weak spots. Patrols called down mortar fire on houses held by German troops.

The determination of the Germans to hold the MORTAGNE and MEURTHE River lines was evident from their fierce fighting, but it was also evident from their treatment of the French civil population. The Germans had forced evacuation of many of the small villages, in order that they might use the stone buildings as fortifications. Many

of the French, driven from their homes, were moved into the higher VOSGES where the cold of winter was already setting in. In this rural woodland there had been only a token organization of the FFI, and the people—old people, and women and children—were almost helpless against the Nazis. However, many reports of the locations and strength of enemy positions came through the lines. The old farmers and woodsmen knew the by-trails of their land better than the Boche, and many of them traveled at night, risking their lives in minefields, artillery—or risked being shot by an American sentry—to relay what information they could of the German positions.

From these sources, with the assistance of the clever Marie-Anne and several agents of the OSS, the Division learned of a group of Frenchmen and American prisoners

of ST. DIE, for the Germans began a series of reprisals against the citizens which resulted in the burning and destroying of the entire city.

THE MORTAGNE RIVER

At 0800 on October 15 the three battalions of the 180th Infantry launched an attack to the east toward the MORTAGNE River. Stiff resistance on the right flank delayed the advance but good positions were achieved. Extremely heavy concentrations of mortar, artillery, and automatic weapons fire were placed upon the infantry by an enemy strongly organized and in considerable force, after which an unsuccessful counterattack was launched. The enemy in the BRU-JEANMENIL area continued to be on the defensive, but showed themselves to be extremely uneasy



Germans captured by 179th Infantry at Grenoble.

that were being held as hostages in the city jail of ST. DIE. After several "through-the-line" missions were completed to coordinate details, a plan was worked out to liberate these prisoners. Carefully plotting the jail's location on the map, the officers of Division Artillery agreed to fire a concentration near and around the jail at an agreed upon time and date. When this concentration of fire forced the German guards into shelter, a group of agents would overpower the keeper and secure the keys. They could then open the jail, notify the prisoners of the full plan, and assist them to return to friendly territory.

The plan was carried out successfully. The Germans learned of the escape almost immediately, but too late to prevent the prisoners from scattering into the wooded mountains. One later report stated that approximately 40 persons were freed. This operation, so fortunate for so few, was to prove much more disastrous for the city

and apprehensive of imminent attack. The 158th Field Artillery Battalion laid down a mock preparatory barrage which brought immediate response in the form of very heavy concentrations of defensive fire on forward positions of the 157th Infantry.

The 180th Infantry continued the attack toward the MORTAGNE River early on October 16 as the enemy resisted bitterly from his well-entrenched positions, protected by mortar and artillery fire. At 1405 the Germans counter-attacked between Companies K and L but the assault was thrown off after an hour's fire fight.

The 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry was in close contact with the enemy's positions on October 16. At 1300 one company reinforced with tanks and tank destroyers attacked the high ground to their north and made considerable progress. The 2nd Bn. continued to push forward under heavy artillery and mortar fire. At 1015 one com-



The populace of Bourg, France, cheer as troops march through their town.

pany, with tanks, struck HILL 513 and five hours later the attacking elements had taken it and made a short advance to the right to protect the flank.

The enemy counterattacked on HILL 523 and was thrown back. An effort was made to take HILL 505, but failed because the enemy's fire was so heavy as to make the position untenable. A second attempt also failed.

Forward slopes of HILL 513 were occupied next day and afforded an excellent observation point for artillery fire upon the enemy. Many wired-in enemy positions were found.

The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry attacked at 0800, again meeting strong resistance on the right flank, and advanced against increasing opposition. Later counterattacks and considerable wire entanglements added to the difficult and

slow progress necessitated by stubborn resistance and mortar barrages on front elements.

This cold and intermittently rainy day was marked by extensive patrol activity on the 157th Infantry's front. Patrols were confronted by concertinas of the enemy's protective wire at many points, and observed continued strengthening of the enemy's defensive positions. One fire fight was encountered in which three of the enemy were killed.

Under cover of darkness, the Germans had moved close in upon the 180th Infantry's forward elements. As daylight came, they moved on hard against Company C in a vicious bayonet charge. Bitter close-in fighting resulted in a repulsion of the enemy with no loss of ground for the company. By noon resistance in other parts of the line had

been overcome and the attack was pressing forward in the face of considerable fire, including that of self-propelled guns.

The 179th Infantry moved toward GRANDVILLERS-BRUYERES despite extremely heavy opposition from HILL 524. Tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion supported the 180th and 179th Infantry with their fire, but movements and maneuvering were greatly hampered and impeded by the rugged nature of the terrain.

The 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry was committed in the 179th Infantry sector on October 19, moving by motor to the vicinity of GRANDVILLERS. The 1st and 2nd Bns. of the 179th Infantry jumped off at 1100, with the 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry in support, and made steady progress despite the rain of small arms fire and fire from self-propelled guns which opposed every yard of the advance. The gains were consolidated and held.

In the 180th Infantry sector, aggressive patrolling was carried on, some units being relieved and others take up the continuous operations. At 1830 an enemy attack was launched against Companies G and F but was turned back in a 30-minute fire fight. A 3rd Bn. push to the east had met rigid opposition and retired after darkness set in.

The 157th Infantry continued to push forward patrols on October 20. They had to blast their way through German wire with bangalore torpedoes, then placed snipers to protect the gaps in the barbed wire thus made in preparation for the attack.

At 1900 the 180th and the 179th Infantry Regiments attacked. Two companies of the 180th Infantry went forward 300 yards by noon directly into intense machine gun fire, rifle, mortar, and artillery fire. Wire defenses plus the enemy's consistently fierce fighting finally halted the push. The 179th Infantry struck out toward BROUVELIEURS and met small arms, mortar, and light artillery fire in all sectors throughout the day. Steady advances were realized, but elements of the 3rd Bn. remained in the advantageous and hard-won positions on HILL 523. Enemy machine guns, bazookas, and rifle grenades all appeared in the defense of the areas west of BROUVELIEURS. It was one of the hardest days of closest and most bitter fighting encountered during this campaign.

The enemy in the town of BROUVELIEURS and to the west were driven out of their strong positions in the densely wooded stretches by an attack of the 179th Infantry on October 21. The Germans were overrun and driven from their strongpoints as the attack entered the town at 1540. At 1700, after sharp fire fights from house to house, the town was reported clear.

In taking BROUVELIEURS, the 179th Infantry had encountered scattered resistance at first. With this reduced, the town was entered with tanks and tank destroyers to engage in house-to-house fighting and rout the enemy. Road blocks and outposts were established.

The 180th Infantry encountered well-dug-in enemy positions and stiff fire fights at several points. A heavy exchange of small arms, mortar, and artillery fire took place at 1800 in the 36th Engineers sector. The enemy placed

accurate and well-observed mortar and machine gun fire on the positions in the 157th Infantry sector.

The enemy struck a blow at the left flank of the 180th Infantry and the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop at 1750, but withdrew after hard fighting.

Opposition to the advance on the MORTAGNE River in the south part of the Division line was scattered, but heavy small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire forced a withdrawal to the west bank after an initial trial at crossing. Resistance west of the river was mopped during the day, netting a large number of prisoners and quantities of materiel.

On October 23 the Division crossed the MORTAGNE River and gained a foothold on the enemy's positions in the VOSGES Mountains. The town of MORTAGNE was cleared of the enemy by night. Company A of the 120th Engineers Battalion supported the 157th Infantry in line as infantry while the Battalion constructed a 60-foot steel bridge across the river.

With their main defenses broken, uncoordinated groups of the enemy harassed and made progress difficult for the 179th and 180th Infantry Regiments on October 24. Stiff fire fights occurred in several places, and patrol contact was made in the WUILLAUME FONTAINE area. Reconnaissance was made for an advance and artillery fire was directed upon enemy personnel and vehicles as resistance was mopped up around MORTAGNE and the attack into the mountains got under way.

The 157th Infantry attacked to the northeast under the cover of a heavy smoke screen at 0630 on October 25. They drove forward 1,000 yards until they struck heavy machine gun fire along the edge of a strip of woods to the northeast and southeast as the infantry attempted to cross a clearing in that sector. A platoon from Company G reinforced by tanks cleared the settlement of WUILLAUME FONTAINE and continued into the woods to wipe out several machine gun installations. Two companies crossed a stream to occupy positions dominating the road beyond.

The 3rd Bn. began an attack on HOUSSEAS from AUTREY before dawn. Resistance was light until woods near the town were reached. Company I assaulted HOUSSEAS with tank support and ousted enemy troops from every house in the village before holding it secure at 1700. Companies L and K struck onward to the northeast and seized LES HAUTS PRES and the neighboring rise called HILL 449.

At 0800 a company of the 179th Infantry attacked across the HOUSSEAS road which it had reached the day before. The advance ground to a stop under heavy small arms and mortar fire, together with sporadic shelling by enemy tanks. Heavy small arms continued to be felt throughout the day.

At 0730 the 3rd Bn. of the 179th, with tanks, attacked to the north in company columns. Their objectives in the high ground were taken only after hard fighting and in the face of mortar fire. One company thrust back a stiff counterattack at 1300.

The 180th Infantry received mortar and artillery fire throughout the night, then launched extensive mopping-up operations. Elements of one company crossed the stream to the fore of the Division line and set up an outpost. Another crossed to take over a road block.

On October 26 the 157th Infantry continued the advance and found the enemy opposition to its front almost destroyed. Several objectives were taken without opposition. An attempt to cut the JEANMENIL-LaSALLE road, however, was frustrated at 1355 when the enemy loosed a concentration of small arms fire and artillery shells against the attackers. By moving north, one company achieved a position from which tank and tank destroyer fire could be directed on the road. Another company, by resuming the attack to the left of the sector, gained a position from which observation and fire direction on the important artery of traffic from JEANMENIL to LaSALLE could be placed.

The 1st Bn. of the 179th pressed forward against the enemy and exchanged small arms fire throughout the day. Virtually all elements were now advancing in a generally northeastern direction and attacked to wrest important key hill positions from the Germans. The defenders offered stubborn resistance to each local gain. The 180th Infantry, in reserve, conducted mopping-up operations along the stream which it dominated.

The enemy rallied considerably, with newly committed elements of the German 305th Air Signal Regiment, along the RUIS DE LA COLLINES DES EAUX, offering fairly strong opposition to patrols on October 27. In general, however, resistance was neither strong nor well-coordinated. Sporadic stronger opposition to the southeast was outflanked, despite the enemy's employment of all available weapons.

At 0700 the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry attacked to the east. Company A ran into heavy small arms fire, machine gun and mortar fire after advancing a short distance. Company C moved around their flank and pushed forward a combat patrol which took a German road block without fighting.

This road block, well supplied with automatic weapons, could have functioned with death-dealing defense fire as an enemy outpost, yet it was turned over without a struggle, indicating the disintegration and indecision within the enemy ranks. With the road thus opened, the 1st Bn. moved forward.

The 2nd Bn., having supported the advance of the 1st Bn. with antitank and tank fire, also advanced to establish a road block on the JEANMENIL-LaSALLE road and to take points in the vicinity. Two companies forced a short-range small arms duel on the enemy to the south of the road.

The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry moved off early on October 28, securing its objectives carefully and with excellent cooperation. When one company was held up by an enemy force entrenched in superior positions in the east slope of a hill, another company outflanked the position and the attack was resumed until the enemy installations were rendered untenable. The same sort of close support

maneuvering was conspicuous in all efforts of the Division troops. The attack was going well and with tremendous power.

Considerable small arms fire met the 2nd Bn. as it crossed the JEANMENIL-LaSALLE road. Maneuvering helped wipe out this resistance swiftly, and road blocks were established as the Regiment went forward.

The 179th Infantry, after mopping up in its sector and consolidating its secured positions, was reinforced by tanks and tank destroyers for a formidable thrust eastward. New hill positions were absorbed rapidly as the attack moved forward. One savage counterattack struck the 2nd Bn. in the late afternoon and forced one company to withdraw a little. After a brief consolidation of positions, the attack was resumed and the pockets of resistance tossed aside. The 180th Infantry established outposts in anticipation of its new attack and waited in reserve.

The 180th Infantry was now moving northward toward ST. BENOIT and the 157th Infantry en route across country toward ST. REMY on the northeast. The 179th Infantry, on the right, constituted a threat to the BROUVELIEURS-ST. REMY road and might be expected to follow that route northward into ST. REMY also.

On October 29, the bulk of the enemy forces in the JEANMENIL-BRU-FRAIPERTUIS area, largely in the 180th Infantry sector, had withdrawn from positions at best precariously held. Snipers and minor delaying and harassing groups made progress treacherous. The eastern part of the Division sector presented stronger and more concrete hazards.

The 157th Infantry attacked on October 29 to roll forward steadily and systematically, encountering light resistance at the southern slope of a rise designated HILL 520. At 1745 a German company supported by a tank struck out at Company I but was forced back with casualties.

The 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 180th Infantry moved northward. In the 2nd Bn. sector one platoon occupied the village of FRAIPERTUIS at 0820, and met small arms fire on the edge of the settlement. Reinforced quickly, the platoon succeeded in placing a road block in the village. A patrol to JEANMENIL reported no resistance and joined elements of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in the town at 1510.

The 180th Infantry continued its push to the north with the 3rd Bn. on the right and 2nd Bn. on the left, as small arms fights developed to the east and one company set up a road block as a precaution in that direction. One company pushed on to seize and secure the town of ST. BENOIT, which was cleared of the enemy and a defensive road block established there by 1510.

The last day of October brought elements of the German 192nd Panzer Grenadiers, now east and northwest of the town after withdrawing from ST. BENOIT, into violent contact throughout the day. A counterattack in company strength preceded by a mortar and artillery preparation forced units of the Division to withdraw.

The 180th Infantry resumed the attack forward. One company engaged the enemy to the front in brutal fighting

and drove them off. At 1240 the enemy assaulted left flank units but was driven back by small arms and tank fire. Progress was slow but quite methodical throughout the day. Enemy mortars and artillery hit at the forward elements repeatedly with stunning blows. Enemy patrols attempted infiltration again and again.

Two battalions of the 179th Infantry held defensive positions under heavy shelling. A patrol directed counter-artillery fire with excellent effect, after which the company attacked and successfully organized positions seized from the enemy.

At 0930 the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry moved forward in support of the 3rd Bn. At 1700 one company met an enemy road block defended by emplaced machine guns. The company called for tank fire to blast the emplacements. The 2nd Bn. thrust ahead to take the new positions, but at 1630 an enemy counterattack struck their right flank. The Germans were thrown off by small arms and mortar fire and during the day the enemy hammered away consistently at forward positions set up by the advancing infantry.

The 3rd Bn. had attacked at 0800 and made steady progress until well-fortified German positions blocked the way and held up the advance until, at 1350, they were overrun. At 1545 the Battalion was in position for the night. An hour later two companies were assaulted by the enemy before their defenses were completed. In bitter close-range fighting one company was forced to fall back a hard-gained 100 yards. A short time later, all positions were completely organized. The line, extending from a point north of ST. BENOIT southeastward to a point short of ST. REMY, thence straight to the south for approximately two miles, was held in readiness for attack.

On November 1 the 2nd Bn. of the 157th Infantry attacked with two companies abreast to cut the highway and seize a wedge of high ground to the front. The advance was temporarily halted by a road block as one company was hit by a severe concentration of fire from self-propelled guns and suffered casualties. Its objective reached, the Battalion halted to reorganize while the 3rd Bn. consolidated its positions and mopped up resistance.

A reinforced company of the 179th Infantry moved east to seize LaSALLE and was engaged at the western edge of that town. It was forced to withdraw slightly as the 1st Bn. extended its positions to the right to take over the sector of the 2nd Bn. at FRAIPERTUIS. Patrol fights took place in the 3rd Bn. sector.

The 180th Infantry attacked northeast, dispersing the enemy as they went, engaging in heavy patrol fire fights to the front of the main line and knocking out enemy positions. The French 2nd Armored Division's thrust at BACCARAT threatened the German positions west of the MEURTHE RIVER as the 45th Division moved up in its sector toward RAON L'ETAPE, forcing the Germans from their well-prepared positions in the thickly wooded hill terrain.

On November 2 the 1st and 2nd Bns. of the 157th Infantry pressed toward the ST. BENOIT-ETIVAL highway

against heavy opposition. A field of mines hampered the advance, yet by late afternoon one company had cut the highway and penetrated deep into the woods beyond. The 2nd Bn. attacked east, meeting small arms, mortar, and self-propelled gun fire, but gained ground steadily. A company attempting to capture HILL 467 met bitter and sustained resistance from well-camouflaged German infantry positions dug in along the reverse slope. A second assault supported by artillery and tanks overran the strong-point and took the hill.

Two battalions of the 180th Infantry attacked northeast at 0800. The weather was bad and visibility poor. The infantrymen pushed ahead in rain and mud, one battalion encountering stiff resistance and heavy fire, the other engaged in fire fights throughout the day.

On November 1, VI Corps had ordered the relief of the 45th Division in its sector by the 100th Infantry Division. On November 2 and 3 the Division had extended its left boundary to include the BACCARAT area which the 2nd French Armored Division had overrun with tanks. The reinforced 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and elements of the 179th Infantry had moved to BACCARAT to secure the town.

Relief of the 179th Infantry by corresponding units of the 399th Infantry Regiment of the 100th Division began on November 2, and the veterans of the 179th operated jointly in patrol combat with the relieving elements while they were new to the line.

With the 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry and the 45th Reconnaissance Troop attached, the 180th Infantry resumed the attack on November 3 while one company came under a withering barrage and then was engaged in a two-and-one-half-hour fight. By late afternoon the advance was resumed under a tremendous volume of artillery and tank fire.

By November 4, the Germans were being pushed back slowly but certainly in the S. REMY area. They offered considerable stubborn resistance, sporadic, from the northeast. The 157th Infantry moved north and northeast at dawn with the 1st Bn. making steady progress along the north side of the ST. BENOIT-ETIVAL road, which was heavily mined. The 2nd Bn. attacked and moved ahead smoothly. The 3rd struck east to seize high ground without opposition and then strike northeast. Patrols investigating ST. REMY found it occupied by two enemy units.

The 180th Infantry on the left pressed its northeasterly attack and won ground despite heavy small arms fire. A 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop patrol battered its way through the defending road block and entered the village of THIAVILLE. The Germans, waiting with set trap, opened up with small arms, machine guns, mortars, tank guns, self-propelled guns, artillery pieces, rifles, grenades, and antitank guns. With every weapon they possessed they turned upon the lead patrol and the cavalry troop. After exhausting fire fighting the troop withdrew at dusk.

To the south the relieving 399th Infantry entered ST. REMY and organized within the town, seizing roads to the east, north, and south. Fresh troops of the enemy's



Tanks and infantrymen of the Division find it difficult to make their way through the hilarious throng, while passing through Bourg, France.

951st Volksgrenadier Regiment were hurled into the defense lines south and southwest of RAON L'ETAPE.

The 157th Infantry reported that enemy mine layers were using new and treacherous tactics. Unarmed mines were buried, run over by a tracked vehicle, and then armed. The 1st Bn. of the 157th was still pressing the attack on November 5, running into strong automatic weapons fire. The 3rd Bn. continued a slugging battle with the enemy in houses and well-dug-in positions.

In a coordinated attack on THIAVILLE, a company of the 179th Infantry struck northeast while the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop hit southeast from LaCHAPELLE.

Capitalizing on the great advantages of terrain and position which he had in the northern part of the 45th Division sector, where the flat approaches to THIAVILLE are dominated by the towering heights on the east side of the MEURTHE RIVER, the enemy hit the 179th Infantry's 1st Bn. on November 6 with small arms, machine guns, mortars, artillery, and tank fire. Two tanks supporting the advance were hit and disabled. Small arms and machine gun fire raked the forward elements of the attackers. Hand grenades were rolled downhill onto the advancing infantrymen. The pressure upon the enemy remained relentless despite these advantages and these tactics, and the Germans fell back slightly.

Opposition continued to be heavy in the THIAVILLE sector on November 7 and the enemy contested the advance with small arms and machine gun fire. Fiercest resistance

came in the 157th Infantry's sector where small arms, automatic weapons, mortars, 88s, and antitank guns were employed by the enemy from strongly manned hostile positions near PAJILLE. At noon the 157th repulsed a counterattack, then engaged in mopping-up operations against German infantry attempting to infiltrate behind the lines. Units were being replaced by corresponding elements of the 100th Division as this action took place. The enemy staged a counterattack to the south in the PAJILLE area in an effort to restore their shattered line. The thrust was beaten back in a six-hour fight.

Relief of the remaining troops took place November 8, and the command of the sector and responsibility for it passed over to the 100th Division on November 9.

With the exception of Division Artillery and the 191st Tank Battalion, the Division moved into rest areas near BAINS LES BAINS and passed from VI Corps control to that of the Seventh Army. Division Artillery remained in support of the 100th Division, as did the 106th AAA Battalion, the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and elements of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion.

After 86 days of action in the main Seventh Army line in SOUTHERN FRANCE, the 45th Division moved into rest area to conduct rehabilitation and training. In 540 days in which it had been in EUROPE, the 45th Division had been at the front 352 days exclusive of the time its elements had served with other units.

Through the end of October the Division had taken a total of 10,788 prisoners during the operations in FRANCE. Units of the 21st Panzer Division, the 15th Panzer renardier Division, the 16th Infantry Division, and the 11th Panzer Division, many miscellaneous battalions and improvised battle groups, had figured in the lists of prisoners captured by the Division.

As the Division moved out of the front line to BAINS LES BAINS, Division Artillery remained behind, this time to support the 44th Infantry Division attacking in the vicinity of LUNEVILLE.

ALSACE THE MAGINOT LINE

The 45th Division was alerted for movement to a new part of the Seventh Army front on November 22. It was attached to XV Corps for operations on the left flank of the Corps line against the once-great Maginot Line defenses against Germany. The successful drive of the French troops through the SAVERNE GAP had opened up a new field of operations in the RHINELAND plains, and had opened a narrow back door to the western approach into southern GERMANY. The impregnable defenses of the VOSGES Mountains had been penetrated, but the Germans still held the high, snow-covered peaks, and formed a semi-circle from MULHOUSE to MUTZIG which became known as the COLMAR Pocket. A great part of this defense in the pocket was based on the huge concrete-and-steel forts of the Maginot Line. A part of the new mission of the Division was to crack the forts of MUTZIG, on the northern arc of the COLMAR sector, and thus assist the 3rd Division to open another narrow pass through the mountains from ST. DIE through SCHIRMECK.

Following in the wake of the 2nd French Armored Division's drive to STRASBOURG, the Division moved through BACCARAT, SARREBOURG, and SAVERNE. The 179th Infantry, with 160th Field Artillery Battalion and normal attachments, to ROMANSWILLER on November 23, and prepared for the attack.

The enemy had placed a conglomeration of miscellaneous units into the positions near the forts of MUTZIG, and prisoners stated that they would be strongly defended. A series of attacks by the infantry, designed to reduce each position systematically, broke these defenses after three days of intense combat.

During November 24, 25, and 26, the remainder of the Division was somewhat loosely organized, with the 157th Infantry attached to the 44th Division, attacking to seize RAUVILLER; the 180th Infantry moved to ZOEBERSDORF, placed outposts and maintained patrols to contact other units at HURTIGHEIM and STRASBOURG.

By November 26 the Division's positions had crystalized into a general front extending from northeast of BOUXWILLER to northeast of HOCHFELDEN, to which the Division CP moved. The 179th Infantry occupied a small sector on the left of the front line. The 180th Infantry occupied a long attenuated sector extending for two miles

on the right. The 179th Infantry patrolled during the night and the 3rd Bn. attacked the forts of Position de MUTZIG. The Regiment moved by motor to the vicinity of ITTLEHEIM and immediately resumed movement with BOUXWILLER as the objective. The 3rd Bn. arrived at noon and moved to high positions northeast of the town. An enemy detachment was cleared from OBERMODERN and positions were set up in the town. The 1st Bn. prepared defenses in the vicinity of UTTERWILLER.

Prisoner of war reports indicated that three German divisions were being sent to retake STRASBOURG and that 20,000 enemy troops were expected to pass through HAGUENAU. Heavy movement to the south indicated an imminent counterattack in the STRASBOURG area. Positions were taken to meet the attack with the 191st Tank Battalion set to fend off enemy thrusts.

Detached from the 44th Division, the 157th Infantry moved by motor into the Division area where the 2nd Bn. dismounted and attacked toward WEINBOURG. The 3rd Bn. joined the attack and by late afternoon one company held positions on the south edge of the town. Despite indications of an enemy build-up in WEINBOURG, the town was cleared after a brief engagement on November 27. In the remainder of the sector the enemy was moderately aggressive. The 179th Infantry attacked north toward enemy-held high ground, took its objective beyond the town of NIEDERSOULTZBACH and repulsed a light counterattack. Patrolling to the front and flanks was heavy.

The 180th Infantry improved its defenses and organized outposts as SCHAIKENDORF and RINGELDORF. The reinforced 397th Infantry was attached to the Division at 1900 and closed into the vicinity of DOSSENHEIM, reverting to reserve.

On November 28, the Division was attacking from the MODER River northeast in a sector which lay between the enemy-held towns of ZINSWILLER on the left and MERTZWILLER on the right. The 157th was on the left of the Division sector, the 179th in the center, and the 180th on the right.

Continuing the northeasterly attack, the 157th Infantry secured its first phase line by dusk. After driving off an enemy combat patrol from the north, the 1st Bn. tied in its defenses with a road block of the 106th Cavalry Group on the left of the 45th Division sector. After a stiff fire fight at a road block where the 2nd Bn. knocked out two 75MM antitank guns and took 11 prisoners, the Battalion entered INGWILLER and reported it clear. During the morning the 3rd Bn. attacked through heavy small arms and mortar fire toward ZINSWILLER.

The 179th Infantry's 1st Bn. crossed a stream under small arms fire to seize a road junction and occupy MENCHHOFFEN. In the late afternoon the 2nd Bn. attacked toward the northwest from OBERMODERN. After a sharp fight with small arms, one company captured SCHILLERSDORF.

After the 3rd Bn., supported by tanks, had attacked and cleared the towns of ZUTZENDORF and NIEFFERN,

one company attacked northwest from ZUTZENDORF and entered MUHLHAUSEN, supported by tanks and tank destroyers. A bitter fight against small arms, mortars, and the enemy's tanks ensued.

The 180th Infantry pushed forward, two battalions abreast, toward KINDWILLER and after a long initial march ran into withering fire, machine guns, small arms, mortars, and tanks, coming from near KINDWILLER. A patrol moved up to a point within 75 yards of the town and met vicious machine gun fire after observing considerable enemy activity in the town.

Dispatching a small patrol which met small arms fire from PFAFFENHOFFEN, the 2nd Bn. attacked and met strong machine gun fire covering all avenues of approach, then remained in contact with the enemy for the remainder of the day. Elements of one company moved into RINGELDORF. The 3rd Bn. protected the right flank of the Regiment and maintained contact with the 79th Infantry Division on the right of the sector held by the 45th Division.

Extremely stiff resistance was encountered by the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry early on November 29. Fire of many types rained down sporadically on the Battalion's positions while the enemy attempted several times to infiltrate through the line. Relieving the 1st Bn., the 2nd Bn. attacked northeast and cleared the town of BISCHOLZ by mid-morning. The 2nd Bn. continued northeast against powerful machine gun, mortar, and tank fire. The 3rd Bn., supported by tanks, met a company of enemy with light armor. While the supporting tanks engaged the enemy south of ROTHBACH, the Battalion swung around and entered the town from the north. ROTHBACH was cleared of all enemy resistance by early afternoon.

Two companies continued toward OFFWILLER and captured that town against light resistance three hours later. The 3rd Bn. beat off enemy patrols during the night and took several prisoners.

Continued strong resistance in the PFAFFENHOFFEN-UEBERACH area and stiffening resistance in the central sector developed four counterattacks that day. Thrusts met with varying success and strong enemy patrols continued to probe near OFFWILLER, but increased vehicular activity near PFAFFENHOFFEN indicated probable enemy withdrawal. The Division Command Post moved to BOUXWILLER.

November 29, a pre-dawn patrol of the 179th Infantry's 2nd Bn. drew a saturation response of heavy tank and mobile gun fire on the attacking echelon, and also on the 157th Infantry personnel in MUHLHAUSEN. The enemy struck back with an attempt to infiltrate behind the 2nd Bn. lines, but this move was quickly halted. Company B fought off an attack by the enemy trying to enter MUHLHAUSEN from the north and took a great many prisoners. After a 3rd Bn. patrol encountered brisk resistance at the town of UHRWILLER, Company K attacked and cleared the section of the enemy by dark.

At nightfall, severe enemy artillery barrages were battering the 3rd Bn. at UHRWILLER. On the Division's

right, the 130th Infantry had undergone a similar day's experiences. At dawn a platoon entered KINDWILLER and met violent resistance. By noon the entire assault company was committed in house-to-house fighting against snipers, abetted by machine gun fire and tanks. Several stiff counterattacks from the south were repulsed. By night the 1st Bn. had won most of the town.

The 2nd Bn. was in close contact with the enemy at NIEDERMODERN by daylight on that day. Supported by two tanks and tank destroyers, Company G struck west from NIEDERMODERN toward PFAFFENHOFFEN to encounter severe fire. Company F meanwhile cleared the north side of the town of NIEDERMODERN and attacked toward UEBERACH, meeting considerable machine gun and sniper fire there at 1345. Supported by three tanks, the company reached the town but collided with a tank-supported force of enemy infantry. Counterattacking from the east and west, the enemy engaged the company in a savage fire fight. By nightfall, two platoons were forced to withdraw from their positions, one platoon remaining in the southern part of UEBERACH and still in close contact with the enemy at the close of day.

On the following day, November 30, the enemy offered rigid opposition in most parts of the Division sector. Supported by armor, with at least 20 tanks active throughout the day, the Germans mustered their full resources in an effort to break the 45th Division drive.

The 2nd Bn. of the 157th Infantry had been pounded all night long near ROTHBACH by the enemy's mortar fire. At daylight, a Mark IV tank was firing directly into the positions of Company E from OFFWILLER. Probing patrols ran into withering fire from small arms, machine guns 22MM guns, and flak guns.

An enemy combat patrol working its way close to the 3rd Bn. positions was scattered by Company L and later remnants of the same force were dispersed by Company I. The two companies established outposts in the ZINSWILLER area and proceeded to harass the enemy's armor and infantry unmercifully. The 3rd Bn., laying mines, repulsed an enemy attack to dislodge an observation post.

Advancing at dawn from the vicinity of UHRWILLER toward ENGWILLER, a company of the 179th Infantry wiped out an enemy detachment, then proceeded to encounter armor. One platoon of medium tanks was rushed forward and a sharp tank battle ensued, after which the enemy counterattacked and was repulsed. The 2nd Bn., preceded by a heavy artillery preparation, attacked to the northeast toward high ground for the purpose of securing a road. Running a gamut of heavy fire, the Battalion secured its objective in the high ground in the afternoon. HILL 238 fell to one company after a four-hour siege. All positions were consolidated at nightfall.

The 180th Infantry meanwhile was engaged in house-to-house fighting in KINDWILLER, which continued all day. By nightfall the town was fairly clear. Other elements of the 1st Bn. pushed toward BITSCHHOFFEN against strong resistance. The 2nd Bn. continued its at-



A Division Military Policeman listens while the town crier of a village in southern France reads an announcement to the population.

tack on PFAFFENHOFFEN, one company striking from the south, another from the west.

By 0810 the two companies were in contact in PFAFFENHOFFEN. Company G then struck toward LA-WALCK, and by noon had reduced scattered positions in that town. The enemy withdrew in the direction of BITSCHOFFEN, leaving behind several prisoners and one tank destroyed by the attackers. That afternoon, Company E passed through the positions and continued the pursuit toward BITSCHOFFEN. Fire from self-propelled guns was received from the north, and at dusk the company became involved in a heavy fire fight at the south edge of the town. Company F resumed the attack on UEBER-BACH and after a sharp fire fight in the western outskirts of the town cleared it of the enemy by late afternoon. The 3rd Bn., protecting the regimental right flank, prepared to attack north on December 1.

The 2nd Bn. of the 397th Infantry which was still attached to the 45th Division reduced the town of SPARS-BACH.

The Division was now precariously close to German soil. During the month of November the 45th had slugged and plowed their way up through the VOSGES Mountains, the enemy's last great natural defensive barrier before the SIEGFRIED LINE.

During the month of November the 45th Division had taken 1,818 German prisoners. The heavy losses to the enemy included many dead and wounded.

The stage was now set for a great and bitter battle in the ALSATIAN HILLS. The enemy fought viciously and with fanatical courage and endurance, for he knew that just beyond the plain lay the SIEGFRIED LINE, and beyond that the soil of the Fatherland.

THE ALSATIAN PLAIN

December brought cloudy and cold weather as the dough-boys of the 45th Division moved up in a northwesterly direction out of the VOSGES Mountains and across the western rim of the ALSATIAN PLAIN. The Division front extended roughly from the town of MERTZWILLER westward through the last of the rugged mountain terrain of the VOSGES chain. The enemy defended this last natural barrier bitterly, although the German forces continued to withdraw steadily and methodically toward the old FRENCH MAGINOT LINE which had proved so ineffectual against the Germans when they entered FRANCE in 1940.

The 180th Infantry on the right adjoined the forces of the 79th Division. The 179th Infantry occupied a narrow corridor to the left of the 180th Infantry including the town of UHRWILLER. The 157th Infantry was spread out along the high ground overlooking ZINSWILLER, adjacent to the 397th Infantry on the Division left flank.

The general plan of the attack to break through the last of the VOSGES Mountains called for the occupation first of high ground overlooking ZINSWILLER on the west,



A first aid man of the Third Battalion, 180 Infantry, aid station, writes a tag for a wounded lieutenant, a casualty of German shelling north of Villersexel.

which would permit the Thunderbird troops to move along the wood line of the VOSGES heights and block all entrances to the ALSACE PLAIN from the west, making untenable the enemy's positions in the plain itself.

The enemy began exerting staggering pressure from his strong positions in the VOSGES pass northwest of ING-WILLER. At the same time the Germans engaged in active aggression by infiltration in the ROTHBACH-ZINSWILLER sector. Object of their pressure was to canal the Division's forces, with the aid of strong tank-infantry opposition to the advance between ZINSWILLER and ENG-WILLER.

The Division met and repulsed the counteraction and dispersed the enemy to enter the town of MIETESHEIM after a turbulent struggle. Later, a brutal counterattack forced a withdrawal to the western outskirts of the village.

Each regiment scored individual successes on that day. The 2nd Bn. of the 157th Infantry attacked toward a ridge southwest of ZINSWILLER during the morning. Elements reached the objective by 1530, after fighting their way through rocket, flak, and artillery fire.

The 3rd Bn. reached its hill objective northwest of the town at 1125 against much lighter opposition. The 179th Infantry found harder going from the start. The 1st Bn.

maintained its contact with the enemy all day, repulsing insistent counterattacks which limited its progress even though they did not seriously threaten the success of the advance. The 2nd Bn. attacked toward the northeast in a steady forward movement, in the face of direct fire from self-propelled guns and of mortar concentrations. The 3rd Bn. continued to hold road blocks in the vicinity of UHR-WILLER, sending one company from NIEFFERN to occupy new positions.

The 180th Infantry continued to attack. After the 1st Bn. had cleared KINDWILLER and BITSCHOFFEN, the 3rd Bn. moved up on MIETESHEIM. The western edge of the town was gained that morning, and bitter fighting followed. Half of the town was cleared in bloody street battles lasting until noon. A tank-supported counterattack then forced the Americans to withdraw to the southwestern outskirts, where several efforts to resume the attack were made, but proved unsuccessful.

Infantry resistance appeared to be crumbling through the Division sector on December 2. Enemy tanks continued to involve and delay the advancing elements, but the only formidable encounter was made at a defense point thrown up northwest of INGWILLER. Fighting went on in MIETESHEIM, which had been entered the day before.

A counterattack moving southwest from GUMBRECHTS-HOFFEN was easily repulsed. A Division patrol entered ZINSWILLER unopposed at the close of day.

The 157th Infantry engaged in sharp patrol clashes while attempting to secure the bridge to ZINSWILLER. The structure was destroyed before the town was reached by the advancing troops. The 1st Bn. of the 179th continued its attack on ENGWILLER and moved into the woods on the north against stiff resistance. After another day of continued stiff fighting the 3rd Bn. of the 180th Infantry cleared virtually all of the fortress of MIETESHEIM. Despite the opposition met and the cold, unpleasant winter weather, the Division was now in a position for new thrusts toward the borders of the Reich itself.

On December 3 the enemy began to slacken his tenacious and unrelenting grasp upon the towns the Thunderbirds had already entered or laid claim to—ZINSWILLER, GUMBRECHTS-HOFFEN, UTTENHOFFEN, and MIETESHEIM. The force opposing the Division's advance northwest of ROTHBACH was only moderate. However, it was becoming more apparent that the troops now charged with taking MERTZWILLER, GRIESBACH, and GUMBRECHTS-HOFFEN would be in for heavy struggle and grave fighting. Division thrusts into the densely wooded areas north of GUMBRECHTS-HOFFEN were being met by the most determined and consistent resistance.

The 179th Infantry reached GUMBRECHTS-HOFFEN, swinging their full supporting power to this sector. The 1st Bn., which had reached ENGWILLER with its patrols during the night, attacked from BITSCHHOFFEN and cleared the town without encountering any opposition. The 3rd Bn. completed mopping-up operations in MIETESHEIM and pushed on to seize and secure the town of UTTENHOFFEN.

Maj. Gen. Robert T. Frederick assumed command of the 45th Division. He replaced Maj. Gen. W. W. Eagles, commander of the Thunderbirds for more than a year, who had been injured by a German mine on November 30.

During December Col. Kenneth G. Wickham succeeded Col. George E. Martin as Division Chief of Staff, and Lt. Col. Emil P. Eschenburg succeeded Lt. Col. James A. Reynolds as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3.

The advance was pressed under unfavorable weather conditions on December 4. It became apparent that the enemy planned to make a more determined stand from his advantageous positions northwest of ROTHBACH.

Opposition was scattered northwest of INGWILLER. OBERBRONN was cleared with comparatively little fighting. Yet, where the enemy forces and resistance softened in one spot, they hardened in another. Aware of the Division's thrusts toward REICHSHOFFEN and GUNDERSHOFFEN, the Germans shifted their defenses and forced the Division to withdraw momentarily from the area.

On the road from OBERBRONN to NIEDERBRONN, the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry came under heavy fire, then ran into another barrage from REICHSHOFFEN. The 180th Infantry sent out a motor patrol which contacted elements of the 79th Division at UEBERBACH.

The 1st Bn. caught the weight of the counterattack and pulled back, knowing that GUNDERSHOFFEN was well defended. A patrol returning from the MERTZWILLER area reported considerable enemy activity in that vicinity. The 397th Infantry on the extreme left of the Division sector continued to block the INGWILLER-WIMMEANU PASS.

The three German strongpoints at NIEDERBRONN LES BAINS, REICHSHOFFEN-GUNDERSHOFFEN, and MERTZWILLER continued to afford a certain amount of resistance. Troops drawing nearer to these points were under constant harassing and interdictory fire from mortars, tanks, and light artillery, through December 5. A vicious house-to-house fight developed in the northeastern outskirts of MERTZWILLER.

Men of the 157th Infantry around NIEDERBRONN spent the day improving their positions for the observation of the enemy and the field of attack. The 179th Infantry, facing GUNDERSHOFFEN, occupied the village of LAUTERBACHERHOF and drew large volumes of fire over the area. Lead elements of the 180th ran into grave difficulties on the outskirts of MERTZWILLER, but fought their way through the south part of the town during the morning. The 2nd Bn. moved northeast from the center of the town and reached its railroad. They reported the town cleared by 1645.

Entering MERTZWILLER, the 180th Infantry had effectively established a bridgehead across the ZINTEL DU NORD River. Next day, the enemy's reaction in this area was extremely sharp. The Germans quickly organized a counterattack which forced the Division troops back into the southern outskirts of the town.

The drive began with active patrolling, then developed into two attacks. One force advanced northwest along the stream bank and was dispersed as it reached the bridge by Company E, which engaged it in a stiff fight. The other struck northwest along a road which lay parallel to the railroad and engaged a Division road block. At 1500 the bulk of the force, supported by four tanks, drove southwest into MERTZWILLER to overrun Company G positions and force a withdrawal.

In the 179th Infantry sector, on the west side of the FALKENSTEIN River, the enemy continued to throw in rounds of fire from REICHSHOFFEN and GUNDERSHOFFEN. Troops spent the day of December 7 preparing for an assault crossing of the river. At the same time, the 157th Infantry moved along the edge of the woods down a road toward NIEDERBRONN against scattered resistance. The 180th Infantry was in an assembly area preparing for an attack on the morning of December 10.

The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry jumped off at 0630 on December 9 and by 1530 had cleared the town of NIEDERBRONN. Elements of the German 245th Division strongly opposed the attack. In the REICHSHOFFEN area the enemy shifted the bulk of his forces to the east side of the FALKENSTEIN River, leaving strong outposts and scattered, well-manned strongpoints to execute delaying actions and impede the progress of the attack.

Early on the morning of December 10, the 180th Infantry passed through elements of the 179th and crossed the river south of GUNDERSHOFFEN, moving north to attack the town. By 1530, the objective was cleared of the enemy and lead elements pushed on. Meanwhile the attack on REICHSHOFFEN was in progress. The 3rd Bn. sent Company I to cross the river south of the city, then push in to the north. Company K moved south to stage its attack on the city, while Company L pressed in upon it from the west. Under this concerted assault, REICHSHOFFEN fell at 1600.

The 157th Infantry continued to push its advance from NIEDERBRONN, pausing only long enough to block one moderately strong counterattack which threatened to move in behind two companies and attack or cut them off from the rear.

The first ten days of December had been extremely difficult ones for the 45th Division, fighting against adverse weather conditions, and heavy, obstinate resistance. The fierce, striking attacks began to pay dividends now, however. Continued withdrawal by the enemy to the 45th Division's immediate front indicated clearly that the enemy was unable to reorganize his battered forces sufficiently to stem or even seriously delay the advance of the Thunderbird units.

The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry on the morning of December 11 moved on past NEHWILLER. The 2nd Bn. just outside JUDENBURG sent two companies to LANGENSOULTZBACH. They found the bridge there intact and made no contact with the enemy in the south part of the town.

The 180th Infantry's 1st Bn. reached the edge of the woods west of FROESCHWILLER unopposed. At 1415, Company B entered the town from the south, making contact with Company F attacking from the north. The village was completely cleared in a short time.

The Germans launched a counterattack in battalion strength on December 12 with the twofold purpose and mission of retaking LANGENSOULTZBACH and of relieving a German battalion cut off in that area. The attack was repulsed, but enemy positions in pillboxes considerably slowed down the 45th Division's advance.

LANGENSOULTZBACH was taken by the 2nd Bn. of the 157th Infantry. The 3rd Bn. started to move at daylight but ran into intense small arms fire. In the resulting combat, the enemy was routed from well-organized positions and was forced to withdraw to the emplacements and fortifications of the old MAGINOT LINE.

Patrol elements of the 179th Infantry, including one platoon from the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, moved

west to PHILLIPSBOURG where they removed road blocks and mines and cleared the town. The 1st Bn. of the 180th Infantry crossed a stream in the 103rd Division sector at WOERTH and attacked northeast until contact was established with a strong enemy force at the southern edge of GOERSDORF. During heavy fighting which followed, three enemy tanks were driven off.

The 45th Division continued its advance against strengthened resistance northeast through the western limits of the ALSACE PLAIN toward the town of LEMBACH, which controls one of the vital passes into German territory. By occupying the high ground west of ZINSWILLER and moving along the wood line of the VOSGES Mountains, the Division was able to block all entrances to the plain from the west and make the enemy's positions in the plain itself untenable. Demolitions, road blocks heavily covered by enemy's fire, minefields became more numerous as the enemy withdrew. Increased artillery and mortar fire, fire from machine guns and self-propelled guns with every advantage for superior observation made the entry into GERMANY and the advance toward the SIEGFRIED LINE difficult.

The next major obstacle in this advance was LEMBACH, strategically located and heavily fortified city in the heart of the MAGINOT LINE defenses, standing guard over the approaches to the German border. A coordinated assault was to be made upon the town from the south and southwest.

December 13 was the 365th day spent in battle by the 45th Division since its landing in SICILY. It found the 157th Infantry attacking north through mountainous terrain. The 3rd Bn., which had to be supplied by carrying parties once more as in the mountain fighting in SICILY and ITALY, cleared the town of DISTELDORF high in the VOSGES chain.

A major obstacle on the road to LEMBACH and the German border was the town of MATSTALL in the 180th Infantry Regiment's sector. The town was cleared by the 2nd Bn. against light resistance. The infantry was thereby enabled to sweep through into the heavily mined approaches to LEMBACH. By noon, lead elements had reached the wooded area south of the town. There they were pinned down by accurate and well-observed fire from several MAGINOT LINE pillboxes.

Knowing that LEMBACH could not be held against the Division's assault, the enemy on December 14 shifted the weight of their delaying forces into the rugged country on the north side of the LEMBACH-WINGEN valley, leaving only scattered but fanatically stubborn infantry to defend the cities, abetted by fields of mines, road blocks, and a limited amount of armor.

The 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 180th Infantry took the strongholds which were their immediate objectives without difficulty. Already poised at the outskirts of LEMBACH, Company K attacked from the south along the high ground on the left boundary, while Company I skirted the wooded area to enter the town from the road after finding the bridges there intact.

The 45th Division's unrelenting drive through northern ALSACE now began to reach its climax. The men were in high spirits, morale was good. On December 12, Lt. Col. Dwight Funk, commanding the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, telephoned to Col. Walter O'Brien, commanding the 157th Infantry:

"Colonel, from where we are we can put a barrage across the border. Say the word and we can toss a concentration into GERMANY."

Colonel O'Brien answered:

"What are you waiting for? Fire away!"

THE THUNDERBIRDS ENTER GERMANY

After the fall of LEMBACH and WINGEN in the MAGNOT LINE, the 45th Division's flanking movements had the

enemy confused and his defenses so disorganized that only isolated groups were able to muster the strength to seriously oppose the Division's entry into the REICH proper. The Thunderbirds would now break through to claim the honor of being the first unit of the Seventh Army to fight on German soil. For the 45th Division this was the first encounter in its history with the enemy in his own land, although he had been met and defeated on many battlefields.

Patrols of the 180th Infantry's 3rd Bn., first unit inside GERMANY, crossed the border into the REICH at 1245 on December 15. An hour later an entire company was across the border. Another company, advancing along the western edge of the woods northeast of WINGEN, reached the border at 1400.

The 45th Division had now pursued the Germans back behind the outer row of defenses along the vaunted SIEGFRIED LINE. The first positions which the Division seized in GERMANY were only lightly defended as the enemy raced to seek protection behind the steel and concrete fortifications and the bristling guns of the WESTWALL.

A wounded German prisoner is carried on a stretcher by other German captives and 45th Division medics.

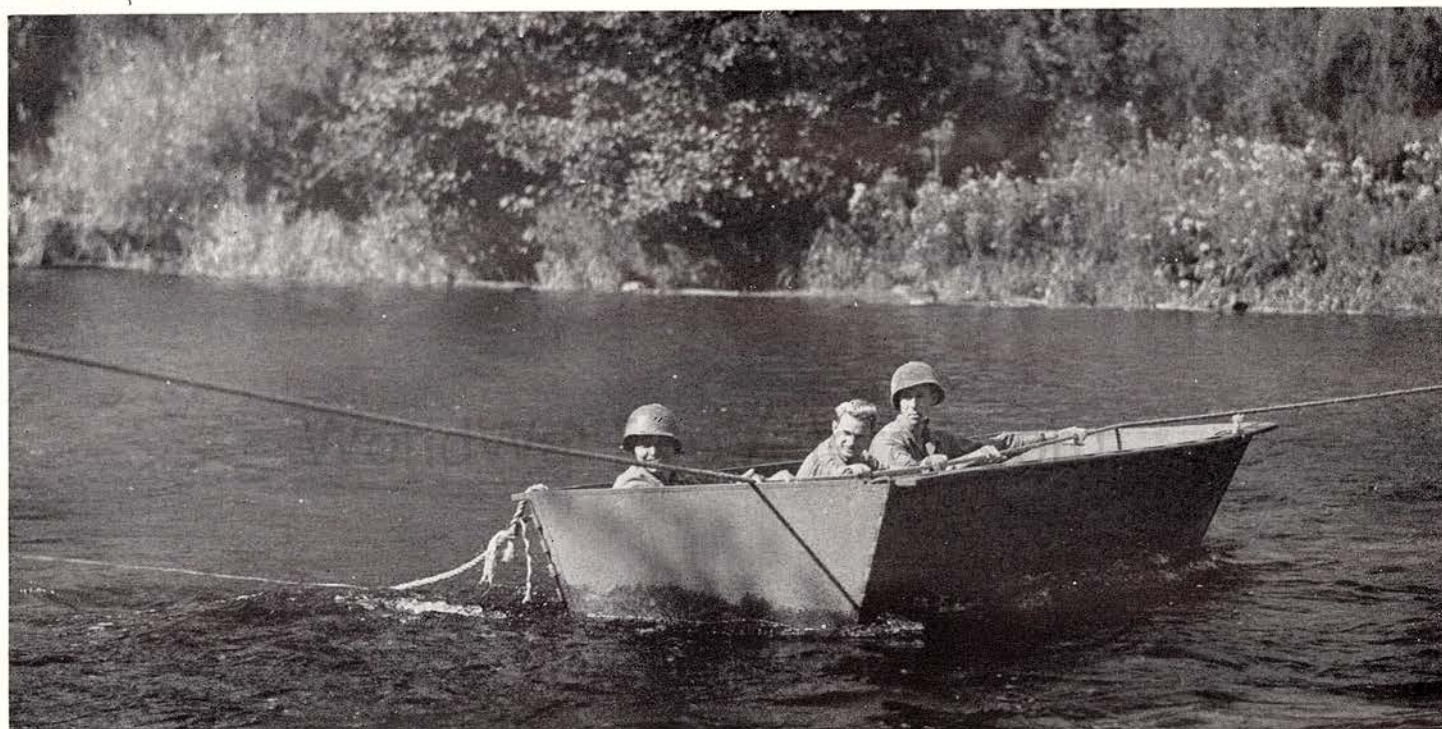


The 157th Infantry, moving north approximately one and one-half miles inside the German boundary, occupied the town of NOTHWEILER and crossed the German frontier. Patrols reported heavy movement by the enemy from NIEDERSCHLETTENBACH to BUNDENTHAL. The main bridge west of the former town was blown.

The 3rd Bn. of the 180th Infantry cleared BOBENTHAL, first German town to fall to the Division, on the afternoon of December 16. The ease with which the border was breached gave no indication of the bitter fighting which lay ahead.

It was observed that the enemy fought from the entrenchments and fortifications skirting the outside of the

The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry, moving across open terrain south of BUNDENTHAL, reached the edge of the town where a barrage of artillery and small arms fire made further progress impossible. The 2nd Bn. brought up assault boats and attempted to cross a valley which the Germans had effectively flooded by constructing a dam north of BUNDENTHAL. A ridge running east-west along the normal bank of the stream prevented surface passage half way across. The doughboys unloaded their equipment and started wading ashore in icy water waist deep. They ran into terrific machine gun crossfire from pillboxes and casements arranged so as to be mutually supporting from the flanks and front.



American engineers pull their way across the Moselle river in Arches. Other elements of the Division soon to follow.

SIEGFRIED LINE on December 17. Apparently they were saving the WESTWALL pillboxes and blockhouses as their main line of defense. The outer rim of the prepared entrenchments was defended stubbornly. The emplacements had to be battered down one by one. All three regiments hastened to send patrols to probe at the defensive zone. They found the enemy well prepared.

With increasing artillery and mortar support, the enemy not only resisted with determination on December 18, but continually counterattacked throughout the day to regain lost positions. An attempt to cross the LAUTER River during the preceding night had drawn intense fire. Only by infiltration and by constant, unrelenting pressure was the Division able to gain new ground.

Before dawn, three other attempts to cross the river at different points met similar resistance. Everywhere, with perfect observation and an open field of fire from their cleverly concealed hillside entrenchments, the Germans fired incessantly and at any object that moved. Late in the day, the 3rd Bn. drove the enemy from one hill in a fire fight. This position afforded observation for artillery fire on RUMBACH and on roads leading north of BARENBACH, heavily packed with German traffic. For most of the Division, however, December 18 was a day of murderous and accurate artillery fire and of close fire fights.

Units remained in their exposed positions all day long and received supplies only after dark. Two platoons of the 157th Infantry were trapped in BUNDENTHAL in buildings

which the enemy machine gunned and shelled sporadically throughout the period.

It was observed during the first few raids upon the pillboxes of the SIEGFRIED LINE that the enemy would remain within the concrete bunkers until notified by outposts of the approach of attacking troops. As hostile elements came into view, the outpost would sound a whistle and the enemy troops would leave the pillbox to man their posts in the elaborate series of communication and firing trenches attached to each strongpoint. Only the machine gun crews in the bunkers remained inside the fortifications themselves.

To attack these positions, it was necessary to first place artillery, mortar, tank, and tank destroyer fire upon both the pillbox and its trenches. This kept the enemy under cover in the pillbox until troops were within the range of rifle fire. At this point, mortar and rifle fire were placed on the communication trenches, preventing the enemy from making use of these prepared positions. While rifle fire was placed upon the aperture of the pillbox, thus pinning the enemy in their concrete hole, a soldier would work his way up to the top of the position and drop a white phosphorous grenade into the aperture for ventilation. In the positions encountered at first, there were no screens or grates to prevent the grenades from falling through into the boxes.

The effect of the grenades was to drive the enemy from the box into the trenches which by this time were well covered by mortar and automatic fire. When driven out of their protective steel and concrete shells, the Germans surrendered, or died.

December 19 brought little change in the Division's precarious situation. The world's greatest defensive line was being used to full advantage by the enemy, whose methods were well-coordinated in every respect. Small German combat groups launched five limited objective thrusts which were beaten back to the prepared positions.

Throughout the early morning hours, patrols from the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry attempted to establish contact with the platoons cut off in BUNDENTHAL. Unsuccessful, the patrols also tried to reach the remainder of one company trapped in a cemetery there, but small arms fire drove them back. Another company attempted to push forward at 0500 hours, but immediately drew fire from all sides and was forced to remain in position. Sporadic shell-fire fell upon the 1st Bn. troops throughout the day. At nightfall, the companies renewed their efforts to reach their trapped and cut-off men. A patrol contacted the platoon in the cemetery and that unit was able to withdraw to the Division lines.

In the 2nd Bn. sector, one company moved toward BUN-

DENTHAL at 0400 hours and in the vicinity of the cemetery encountered a heavy concentration of machine gun fire which split the column. The two forward platoons remained pinned to the ground while fire forced the withdrawal of the rear elements and their remaining in concealment throughout the remainder of the day. With the fall of darkness, patrols ventured forward in attempts to contact the platoons which were cut off, but without success. Toward midnight the battalion assembled and prepared to relieve the 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry in its dug-in position on the left flank of the Corps sector.

Patrols from the 1st and 2nd Bns. of the 157th Infantry attempted to penetrate the outer SIEGFRIED LINE defenses during the hours of darkness on December 21, searching for the four platoons now trapped within the town of BUNDENTHAL. Small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire from the German pillboxes prevented patrols from penetrating farther than the cemetery on the outskirts of the town. No trace was found of the missing elements holding out in a town surrounded by the enemy in well-fortified emplacements.

At daylight two companies of the 1st Bn. shifted to a defensive position to the southwest while the 2nd Bn. returned to NOTHWILLER, shuttled and marched to LEMBACH to relieve the 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry holding outpost positions on the north flank of the 45th Division sector.

During the five-day period from the time it entered German territory through December 20 the 180th Infantry had penetrated the outer defenses of the SIEGFRIED LINE in bitter fighting. The 3rd Bn. which had captured BOBENTHAL also reduced a trench line and seven concrete pillboxes covering a distance of 1,700 yards. It penetrated the GERMAN WESTWALL to a depth of 1,200 yards.

The Battalion jumped off from BOBENTHAL at 1700 on the afternoon of December 16 with the mission of taking NIEDERSCHLETTENBACH and the hill commanding it. The enemy's main line of defense extended down the valley from this city to a road junction, then up a draw along the slope of a hill. At the foot of the objective were anti-tank obstacles, trenches, and pillboxes. There was no information available as to the size of the force manning them.

The steep formations of the HARDT Mountains in this area made a frontal assault down the valley of the LAUTER River the only feasible means of approach. The general plan of action was for the Battalion to move out of BOBENTHAL in column of companies with Company I in the lead, to secure the road junction and set up a block,

followed by Company K charged with taking NIEDER-SCHLETTENBACH.

The infantry moved out, preceded by tanks and tank destroyers. In front of the road junction the advance was halted for the night by a strong enemy road block. Permission was secured from the 103rd Division for a flanking movement through its sector to the right by one company, while another would feel out the enemy strength and dispositions. Two patrols were stopped by fire from bunkers. One company retired to a holding position, the other climbed the hill in a flanking movement.

Below: On its way to lend support to a 45th Division Battalion, an American tank crosses the Moselle River north of Arches.

Bottom: The first jeep of the 45th Division starts to ford the Moselle River at Igney, France.



Artillery fire drove the enemy in from his outpost's trenches into the pillboxes and the company was able to advance within 100 yards of the hill fortifications without being detected. The first pillbox, all apertures closed, was taken when a lieutenant neatly dropped a phosphorus grenade into its open ventilator. The men slept that night in the second pillbox, which was undefended. The next morning they moved out toward their third objective from which Company L was coming through to stage the attack on NIEDERSCHLETTENBACH. They were strongly attacked by a force from the hilltop but managed to hold open the route toward their objective. Company L was also assaulted before halting for the night in an undefended bunker.

The situation was so serious next day that the men had to attack to get into a position where they could bring up rations and ammunition. At every turn there were more pillboxes which had to be reduced by sheer hard fighting or by trickery. At the end of five days of this gruelling warfare, the Battalion had wormed its way through several hundred yards of close-meshed SIEGFRIED LINE fortifications and was in a position to drive the opening wedge into the vaunted WESTWALL defenses. At this point, however, higher headquarters discontinued this attack and the Battalion was withdrawn to its original point of attack from which it would be withdrawn to take up new positions in another sector.

By this time troops in the southern battlefields of EUROPE were beginning to feel the effects of the German Winter Offensive in the ARDENNES. Divisions that were not shipped to reinforce the north were reshuffled along a thinly held defensive line in the more static sector of the Seventh Army. On December 21 the 103rd Division was withdrawn from the right flank of the 45th Division and dispatched to new positions farther north in the part of the Allied front which had been struck by Von Rundstedt's mighty breakthrough. The 45th Division began spreading out to occupy this territory to the east.

The enemy reacted slowly to the modified situation. It was several hours before the evacuated towns of NIEDER-SCHLETTENBACH, SCHONAU, and OBERSTEINBACH were reoccupied by German troops, late on December 22.

The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry made several unsuccessful attempts to reach the four platoons cut off in BUNDENTHAL, and were again unable to penetrate further than the cemetery. The enemy continued to pound the town with artillery and to machine gun the buildings, two of which were set aflame.

Through the hours of darkness December 22 patrols again attempted to reach the platoons in BUNDENTHAL. The patrols were unsuccessful, but at 0645, Sgt. William Alter

and Pvt. Al Guriel, members of one of the trapped platoons, made their way out of the town. Among the dead, Alter and Guriel reported, were two officers; a third officer, Lt. Glenn Terry, was seriously wounded, but was directing the defenses. Commanding the besieged group was 1st Lt. Carl Byas, who was also wounded. The two infantrymen expressed confidence that the men could hold for another day, and immediately plans were made to rescue the group.

According to the plan, to be carried out after dusk December 23, the artillery batteries registered on all known enemy locations around the town. Two men, attempting to carry medical supplies into the town, were driven back by machine gun fire. At 1800, a 12-man patrol from 1st Bn. started toward the outskirts of BUNDENTHAL. Supporting fire was poured on known enemy positions as the patrol advanced, and the artillery loosed a 1,000-round concentration on the German pillboxes. Moving through a path left clear in the swath of fire, the party hastily made their way into the edge of the town. Sgt. Warren Haynes contacted the weary troops holding the first house, and runners alerted the remainder of the town's defenders to the attempted withdrawal.

Shouldering some wounded, carrying others in blanket stretchers, the men made a dash for the anti-tank ditch near the cemetery. As they scrambled into the ditch barely 100 yards from the edge of town, the Germans loosed defensive fires which brought down literally tons of flying steel. Unshaven and worn, many of the soldiers who had withstood six days of sieze were evacuated to hospitals.

The four platoons had all been trapped in the same fashion. Entering the outskirts of BUNDENTHAL in the early morning darkness almost a week previously, the men had received machine gun fire from all sides as soon as dawn exposed them to enemy view. Seeking shelter in the first houses, one man was killed and another wounded. The remainder crept into surrounding buildings and discovered that other platoons were holding out in other houses scattered across a 200-yard square. Flanked on all sides by enemy-occupied pillboxes, the men saw the buildings ripped down around them by artillery and machine guns.

Each night small groups made their way about the besieged town, foraging for food and water. A stream was located at the northern edge, the water from which was stagnant. Usually the patrols had to fight their way back to their buildings. One group chanced upon several penned rabbits and some vegetables, stealing them out from under the guns of a nearby pillbox. The men cooked the food in a rusty bucket, but smoke from the fire drew heavy machine gun and artillery concentrations, so cooking had

to be discontinued. In the barn they located hog meal and some half-rotten apples. By mixing the hog meal with water the men developed a "cereal" and ate it. Water one day was furnished by a Russian forced laborer, but after he left the building he never returned.

Battling against heavy odds, the weary doughboys engaged enemy infantry in fire fights until the ammunition supply had been almost expended. They stood guard in the upper stories of the buildings, preventing the Germans from closing in. The only communication they had with their own battalion was a small walkie-talkie radio and on the third day it went dead.

Casualties mounted, and on the fourth day three men volunteered to attempt a break for the lines, to contact friendly troops and return with morphine. As they stepped from the building, a machine gun opened up on them and two of the three fell to the street.

No one knew how Sergeant Alter and Private Guriel had fared after they made their early morning attempt on December 22. None of the group knew what was taking place the night of December 23 when the American artillery began its 45-minute barrage and placed a ring of fire around the town.

When they were alerted to the attempt to rescue them, however, they readily followed Sergeant Haynes into the anti-tank ditch south of the town, evacuating the wounded as rapidly as possible.

Reaching the lines—to hospitals and rest camps—these men enjoyed a Christmas many of them had not expected to see.

Improving their positions and patrolling, maintaining close contact with the enemy, laying minefields, and engaging in sharp clashes with the enemy, the 45th Division built up entrenchments and emplacements along its main line of resistance and its secondary defenses. The doughboys, after long and constant exposure to chill December weather, improved and weatherproofed their dugouts, using what materials came to hand. Security patrols reported that the Germans were engaged in much the same sort of activity. Although action remained at a minimum, there was an acute sensitivity and alertness abroad. A general feeling of unrest pervaded the Division as the fighting in the north raged on and precautions were taken against repercussions in the south.

On December 27 there were several sharp clashes, brought about by small-scale enemy counterattacks and a limited objective drive by the 157th Infantry for the purpose of seizing and securing better positions. The 2nd Bn. progressed to a valley running through SCHONAU, where dug-in enemy positions halted the attack. The 3rd Bn.



First Artillery barrage into Germany. Photograph looking down into German-held town of Schonau, Germany, where 155-mm high explosive and white phosphorus shells are falling into town from 45th Division guns. 12 December 1944.

moved through NIEDERSTEINBACH against light resistance but ran into increasing opposition around OBERSTEINBACH which effectively prevented it from clearing that town. WENGELSBACH was taken easily.

On December 26 the following message from Headquarters Seventh Army was ordered to be read to all troops:

SOLDIERS OF THE 45TH INFANTRY DIVISION: You fought gallantly in Seventh Army's advance through SOUTHERN FRANCE. Crossing the MOSELLE, you wrested EPINAL from its stubborn defenders and pushed them into the foothills of the VOSGES. There the enemy made his stand, resisting fiercely from positions which gave him every terrain advantage. It took weeks of relentless pressure to crack his mountain line and force his retreat to the East.

Skilfully you exploited the initial breakthrough. By rapid motor movement, you secured SAVERNE GAP and drove South to join with forces of the 3rd U. S. Infantry Division northwest of MUTZIG. This completed the encirclement of the enemy in the middle VOSGES. You then struck north toward the important communications center of MAGUENAU. Seizing INGWILLER and making a firm bridgehead across the MODER River, you cut the main road from HAGUENAU to the west.

Your advance met determined resistance, but you crossed the ZINZEL River, skirted the HAGUENAU Forest, and outflanked the HAGUENAU defenses from the northwest. ZINSWILLER, MERZWILLER and NIEDERBRONN fell. You had thus won high ground dominating the German border itself—and were in a favorable position for an attack against the SIEGFRIED LINE.

As you confront the Germans' final bastion, I congratulate you on the perseverance and valor which has driven a stubborn foe to his own soil. Your deeds in the VOSGES campaign place another bright star in your division's combat record.

/s/ A. M. Patch

A. M. PATCH

Lieutenant General, U.S.A.

Commanding.

As the month of December drew to a close in this semistatic situation, the number of prisoners taken in the fighting in FRANCE and GERMANY had grown to 14,396. Some 1,752 of these were taken in December from the German 245th Division. One prisoner of war described the Division's method of reducing the SIEGFRIED LINE

pillboxes as follows, quoted from the PW reports:

"After the American patrol had approached from the hillside, the men in the connecting trench began to withdraw toward the bunker and finally four of the men were forced into the bunker. The entrance door was bolted. The HMG gunner had closed the shutter on the aperture in the meanwhile, after a 'handgrenade' had landed against the aperture without causing damage to the machine gun.

"Numerous 'handgrenades' fell against the aperture as well as 'rifle shots,' until finally a loud explosion on the side of the entrance door extinguished the candles in the bunker. Immediately thereafter the bunker was filled with phosphorus gasses. PW grabbed for his gas mask which he did not wear, but had his lungs filled and, like the others, was forced to open the door and surrender."

Division Artillery had fired 51,925 rounds of ammunition only since reaching the last mountain barrier to the ALSACE Plain, in break through the last chain of the hills into GERMANY and the SIEGFRIED LINE. This offensive campaign was completed successfully and the Division was ready for the advance which would take them to the RHINE when the tidal wave of the German Winter Offensive broke through in the north, creating "the Bulge" and starting a maelstrom which pulled the Seventh Army back into FRANCE for bitter defensive fighting in the snowy forests.

THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE

In another sector of the southern part of the Western Front the Germans staged their New Year's Eve breakthrough, but in the 45th Division sector all was comparatively quiet. The journal of the 157th Infantry for January notes:

"January 1, 1945, was a clear, cold day, the type of day Americans are apt to call 'perfect football weather.' An elusive sun appeared through the clouds occasionally and warmed the men huddled in their foxholes in the outer defenses of the SIEGFRIED LINE. To the men themselves it was more than just another day, it was separate and important, it was the time for taking stock, time for remembering.

"The memories were as varied as the men themselves. They were the personal memories of clerks, truck drivers, farmers, school boys. They were the memories of American soldiers far from home, who had seen much and done much in the past 12 months.

"Some thought of home and of the celebrations



A medic and guard of the Division help a wounded prisoner picked up in Archettes, France.

of previous years, the family dinners and the gathering of friends that are a part of such traditions of the holiday in America. They remembered the men who fought beside them in the cold and miserable weather at VENAFRO, they remembered bloody days on the VOLTURNO, the hell that was ANZIO, the weariness of the march on ROME.

"They remembered too the purple death wine of ITALY and the 'white lightning' of SOUTHERN FRANCE. A lighter note was struck occasionally, as when one doughboy suggested the replacement of the worn-out 'Win the War in '44' with the more realistic motto, 'Stay Alive in '45.'"

On the night of January 1-2, the 45th Division was ordered to leave the SIEGFRIED LINE for a new and active sector of the war to stem an enemy advance and penetration which had already overrun American troops with powerful and aggressive German divisions.

January was a time of bitter memories for the 45th Division. In this fateful month the enemy's best reserves were hurled against the Division in a desperate and fanatical attack by crack SS troops in the attempt to achieve another breakthrough as they had done already, during mid-December, in the ARDENNES FOREST to the north.

On January 1 the Division held defensive positions from DAMBACH to OBERSTEINBACH, a general line along

the high ground in the vicinity of NIEDERSTEINBACH, SCHCONAU, BUDENTHAL, and NIEDERSCHLETTENBACH, and east to OTTERBACH. The 157th Infantry directed fire from mortars on enemy troops and vehicles and successfully repulsed a strong enemy detachment which attacked one company in the DAMBACH area, then mopped up an attempted enemy infiltration. The 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 179th Infantry were relieved by the 36th Engineer Regiment and moved to the vicinity of LEMBACH, while the 1st Bn. moved from LEMBACH by motor to reconnoiter routes and new positions to counterattack any new threat developing in the 157th Infantry sector. The 180th Infantry patrolled and remained in contact with the enemy from their defensive positions.

Next day the lines were extended west to an axis south-east of FOURNEAU-NEUF, northeast of EGUELSHARDT, LAPETITE PIERRE, then to include the sectors of the 276th Infantry's 2nd and 3rd Bns., attached to the 45th Division as a task force.

The lines were extended even farther to include the sectors taken by the 179th Infantry and the attached 313th Infantry from the 79th Division. This line extended south-east of LEMBERG and southeast of BITCHE. The enemy was particularly aggressive and strong pressure thwarted a Division effort to take the town of BARRENTHAL. REIPERTSWILLER, WILDENGUTH, and PHILIPPSBOURG were subjected to enemy attacks. The 457th Regiment of the 257th Volks Grenadier Division seized MELSENTHAL and strongly resisted the Division's forces throughout the day in the northern part of SARREINSBERG.

The 157th Infantry began preparations to withdraw from inside Germany back to the MAGINOT LINE defenses. Many troops having been pulled out of the area for the sector of the BELGIAN BULGE in the ARDENNES, a general reshuffling of the Seventh Army front was under way. Undergoing constant artillery fire and the harassing of enemy combat patrols, the Regiment closed into the MAGINOT LINE defenses in record time by midnight of January 2. On the Division left flank the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 179th Infantry accomplished a similar feat in movement to the vicinity of WINGEN. The 2nd Bn. moved north and attacked SARREINSBERG and GOETZENBRUCK, and at the end of day was still engaged in fierce house-to-house fighting.

As a result of the enemy's penetrations south of PHILIPPSBOURG, BARRENTHAL, and the area to the west VI Corps had extended the Division sector to include these danger points. On January 3 it became apparent that the enemy's objectives in the western sector were the HARDT Mountain passes running northwest and southeast through

WIMMENAU and PHILIPPSBOURG. By flanking and enveloping PHILIPPSBOURG and REIPERTSWILLER, they evidently intended to use these towns as springboards for their offensive operations toward STRASBOURG. They attacked at the key road center of PHILIPPSBOURG early on January 3, but were repulsed with the loss of one of their tanks, a flak wagon, and many men. Afterward the 45th Division hurled a counterattack south from SARREINSBERG and north from KOLHUTTE. Progress was slow and labored against the enemy's heavy pressure.

During this period units of the Division were augmented by five additional regiments and other supporting units, giving Division Headquarters a total of 26 infantry battalions and ten artillery battalions under its command, spread over a sector running northeast from ROSTEIG to NIEDERSCHLETTENBACH. Unfortunately, four of the five regiments had no interrogator or CIC personnel. Three had no previous combat experience.

Meanwhile, as the 45th Division attacked to restore its MAGINOT LINE positions, the 1st and 3rd Bns. of the 12th SS Mountain Battalion, 6th SS Division had penetrated to WINGEN during the night of January 3-4. The 2nd Bn., 951st Regiment, attacking toward WIMMENAU, collided head-on with the 180th Infantry's attack in that sector. After a sharp skirmish, the enemy enveloped the 45th Division positions and fanned out in a three-column attack. With dogged determination the men of the 45th Division counterattacked and repulsed this three-pronged threat to the Seventh Army Line. In the fire fight which ensued, the 45th Division inflicted from 50 to 75 casualties and took 223 prisoners and quantities of materiel.

The enemy made every effort to keep the men of the 45th off-balance by continuously employing small mobile units in quickly shifting zones of action, but his activities were largely negated by the alertness and aggressiveness of the Division. By January 5 elements of the crack 12th SS Regiment were cut off in WINGEN.

By successful patrol action which never allowed the enemy to become completely disengaged, the Division was able to outmaneuver the elite SS troops. In a 48-hour period the SS men found their ranks thinned by more than 1,000 casualties, including 270 taken captive.

Later reports revealed that the enemy had assembled in MOUTERHOUSE, moved southwest across the front of the 313th Infantry sector, and infiltrated between the positions of the 179th Infantry and the 313th Infantry. Utilizing an old mountain trail, the 1st and 3rd Bns. of the 12th SS Regiment of the experienced mountain division had infiltrated during the shift of 45th Division troops from the LEMBACH area to WINGEN. Only a few hours before, the 180th Infantry had occupied the sector through which the infiltration took place.

Elsewhere along the line, the enemy was on the defensive on January 5. However, he was opposing the Division's advances with artillery, mortars, and extremely well dug-in positions in commanding terrain. The enemy attempted an attack toward LICHTENBERG, but was turned back by the men of the 45th Division, only to later infiltrate through and dig in on the high ground east of that city. No offensive action was reported in the BAERENTHAL-PHILIPPSBOURG area, but movement continued in the NEUNHOFFEN-DAMBACH area.

With the 45th Division line stretched thin and taut by the demands of its wide sector, it seemed inevitable that the enemy should attack the area along which the troops were deployed. As the second week of January began, there was still evidence that the enemy possessed capacity for attack. Troops withdrawn or deployed from the ARDENNES area could be used in an offensive action by the Germans.

Adjustments were made in the Division line to absorb some of the enemy pressure. The Germans moved into WINECKERTHAL, DISTELDORF, and CLIMBACH. At WINGEN, it appeared that the enemy would try to stage a withdrawal of his pocketed and besieged troops.

On January 7, just before dawn, an estimated 200 SS troops attempting to withdraw from WINGEN ran into Company C of the 180th Infantry. The Germans were repulsed by 0945—30 of them were dead, three captured, and the remainder completely routed.

In the 179th Infantry sector, a strong enemy force attempted to infiltrate through the Division lines but was engaged by Company C. The Germans were scattered with heavy casualties.

Limited counterattacks to keep the 45th Division off-balance became a large part of the enemy's activities. Patrols met an increased density in the mines and road blocks used against them. Enemy patrols were active in the eastern sector. Intelligence estimates indicated that the enemy was making preparations to build up his defenses in the area north of PHILIPPSBOURG and west of NEUNHOFFEN. The Germans gave every indication that they were ready to hold "to the last man." Determined resistance was already being shown in the area north and northeast of REIPERTSWILLER and north of WILDENGUTH. By the reinforcement of his troops in the central—western sector, the enemy established a firm defensive line across the entire Division front.

This resistance became even more manifest in the days to follow, notably so during the 45th Division's advance in ALTHORN and the attack north of WILDENGUTH and north and northeast of REIPERTSWILLER. There was stubborn resistance encountered on the nose of a hill northeast of PICARDIE. The Nazi troops staged another of their counterattacks at ALTHORN, but were thrown back.

Eastward in the BARRENTHAL - PHILIPPSBOURG - DAMBACH area, the enemy remained alert but unaggressive. As the division's observation posts were able to improve their positions for better observation, effective fire was brought on enemy infantry and gun positions. In the vicinity of WILDENGUTH and REIPERTSWILLER, the Germans began narrowing their unit sectors as if in spearheads for a new offensive action.

In the sector to which the 45th Division had withdrawn as part of the Seventh Army move back to permit the detachment of divisions for the ARDENNES fighting, the enemy struck on January 11.

The attack came at 0700 when the 2nd Bn., 12 SS Regiment and Engineers assaulted in the WILDENGUTH-SAEG-MUHL-REIPERTSMILLER sector to capture the high ground north of WILDENGUTH. A withdrawal of 600 yards was forced in the Division's positions, but such heavy casualties were inflicted on the Germans that they were forced to halt for regrouping.

As the first fierce wave of the assaulting SS troops struck the 45th Division lines, preceded by massive concentrations of artillery and mortar fire, the Thunderbirds yielded to the pressure, meanwhile taking heavy casualties of the enemy and 169 prisoners. The enemy attacked again and made additional gains, at great cost to the Germans, short of WILDENGUTH.

Stemming the tide of German troops the 45th Division, although badly mauled and battered, hurled themselves against the fanatical SS troops in a counterattack and regained the positions they had lost.

Forced to withdraw from the territory he had gained, the enemy dug in and prepared to offer strong resistance to the Division's efforts to advance. On January 12, battle patrols were employed by the Germans in the area of the previous day's attack to prevent infiltration by the Division. Elsewhere the enemy remained dug in and offered considerable opposition both to patrols and efforts to advance.

Repeatedly counterattacking to impede and delay the enemy remained strongly defensive in the western sector of the Division front. Heavy concentrations of 120 millimeter mortar fire dropped consistently on the Division's positions near ALTHORN. In the OBERMUHLTHAL-PHILIPPSBOURG zone the Germans offered opposition with small arms and mortar fire. No contact with the SS troops was made in the DAMBACH-CLIMBACH-LEMBACH sector despite extensive patrolling by the Division. In the town of WILDENGUTH, the Division's troops received a terrific barrage. Between 0900 and 2000 it was estimated that some fifty-five rounds of 75 and 105 millimeter and 1000 rounds of mixed caliber fire from self-propelled guns, mortars, and artillery fell in the 45th Division area.

As the Division continued to advance persistently, there were numerous attacks and counterattacks. Slow and exacting as its progress was, the Division declined to halt. The 157th Infantry relieved Task Force Herren including the 276th Infantry of the 70th Division, which had been

attached to the 45th, in the vicinity of ZINSWILLER. During the operation of effecting the relief, the 157th received considerable artillery and mortar fire in its sector. The 179th Infantry continued its advance against strong opposition. The 180th Infantry also encountered stubborn resistance as the 1st Bn. attacked to the north. Pressure upon the enemy's defensive front was maintained throughout January 13. Progress was bitterly slow under the relentless rain of automatic weapons fire from the high ground.

The 3rd Bn. fared somewhat better until, attacking along the road north of WILDENGUTH, it consolidated its positions. Then they received a counterattack on the right flank, which was repulsed by late afternoon and the positions secured.

In order to restore their main line of resistance as it originally stood, the Division resumed its attack on January 14, throwing the push against elements of the 256 Volksgrenadier Division in the east and the 257 Volksgrenadier Division on the west.

East of BARENTHAL, the Division found the enemy fairly quiet. SS troops in the enemy salient into the Division line at REIPERTSWILLER maintained stubborn, even fanatical, resistance. In the area astride the WILDENGUTH-MELCH road, they staged two separate vicious counterattacks which were repulsed by the Division. Then the enemy shifted his activity to the western sector.

With two companies, the Germans attempted infiltration in the draws as a measure designed to divert the 45th Division's power. As the lead elements attacked, the enemy placed an extremely heavy, well-zeroed barrage upon the advancing units. The 179th Infantry encountered vast fields of antipersonnel mines, plus fire from automatic weapons, mortar and artillery fire.

The 180th Infantry bore the brunt of this attack. After some units had been under heavy fire throughout the night, the lead elements struggled with the enemy in several heavy firefights before the effort got under way. Early in the day an enemy combat patrol infiltrated through the 1st Bn. area and captured two machine gun positions. In the fire fight that inevitably followed, an Ammunition and Pioneer platoon destroyed the enemy resistance and recaptured the positions. They later received a smashing counterattack preceded by a heavy artillery barrage, but the Germans were dispersed by well-aimed small arms, artillery, and mortar fire.

The 2nd Bn. attacked north that same morning against much the same sort of stiff opposition. The attack was held up temporarily, but by mid-afternoon the attackers had reached their objective and a stiff fire fight with the enemy was in progress. Even as they fought, Company E received a counterattack by an estimated 60 German soldiers on their right flank. The enemy was finally forced to withdraw.

During the night, the 3rd Bn. repulsed a small-scale counterattack and in the early morning, jumped off to seize objectives in the WILDENGUTH area, where they established their positions. Elements of the 313th, 314th, and



Somewhere in France, infantrymen ignore the dead body of a German and a knocked-out Nazi tank in the background to don their new issue of the new type combat jacket designed for warmth.

315th Infantry Regiments under the 45th Division's control, attacked to advance steadily across stubbornly contested ground.

The 257 Volksgrenadier Division in the SARRIENSBERG-SAEGMUHL sector remained passive after relieving the SS troops which had been fighting in the WILDENGUTH area. However, along the west slope of the L'EGSBERG hill, the 476 Volksgrenadier Regiment, 256 Volksgrenadier Division, was reported forming for a counterattack. Heavy artillery and mortar fire from the guns of Division Artillery disrupted the attack that struck at the right flank of Company K of the 157th Infantry. Infantrymen of the company supplied the finishing blow which forced the enemy to retire in utter confusion, his ranks disrupted with the loss of many killed and wounded and sixteen taken prisoner.

The next enemy counterattack came in the vicinity of PHILIPPSBOURG. Again the 45th Division beat back the attack, with a loss to the enemy of forty killed and twenty-two men taken prisoner. Artillery fire had become incessant throughout the Division area.

To reinforce the Division's positions against strong enemy pressure near REIPERTSWILLER, the 157th Infantry organized all available personnel in the Headquarters and Antitank companies into a composite company attached to the 3rd Bn. A platoon of the 45th Reconnaissance Troop was likewise attached to the Regiment, and patrolled the

mountain trails north from REIPERTSWILLER. In the late afternoon, Company C of the 157th Infantry reported infiltration behind its position. Elements of the 191st Tank Battalion, with two light tanks, attacked to the northeast and established contact with adjacent elements after clearing away the enemy.

All through the day, almost continuous counterattacks and countless efforts at infiltration were attempted by the enemy. At one time the Germans succeeded in cutting off Companies K and I but the battalion Antitank platoon got through the enemy lines and succeeded in establishing contact with the latter. When the attack was over, in the early evening, the Antitank and Ammunition and Pioneer platoons, the Composite Company, and Company B quietly mopped up the enemy behind the Division lines.

The 157th Infantry was now engaged in its bitterest battle in the forest south of MOUTERHOUSE, FRANCE, near REIPERTSWILLER. The story of that unit's bitter seven days of fighting in intense cold over an extremely difficult terrain of trees and forests, suffering severe and heart-breaking losses, must be told separately.

The Division's action in drawing back to the Maginot Line defenses during the first part of January and there holding the enemy offensive is best told in the words of the commendation of the Division by Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, Sixth Army Group commander:

"Ordered on the night of January 1-2 to shift your forces from the Siegfried Line to take over a sector from another unit, you completed the movement in considerably less time than could be expected. Arriving in the new sector, you found an exceedingly confused situation in the area being overrun by the enemy. With the steady coolness that has made the 45th Division famous, you immediately stemmed the main enemy advance and deepest penetration. The Germans employed the main parts of four powerful divisions against you. They reinforced these with a fresh SS Division on the fourth day of the attack. Rapidly shifting your defenses, you met each new thrust of the enemy. You repelled them, took the initiative from them, and forced them to take the defensive."

THE FOREST SOUTH OF MOUTERHOUSE

The 157th Infantry with its attached units and supporting units, the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, Companies A and D of the 191st Tank Battalion, the second platoon of Company C of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, and one platoon of the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troops, attacked north January 14 through 21 to capture the high ground between the towns of MOUTERHOUSE and BAER-ENTHAL.

Most of the Seventh Army's efforts were concentrated throughout the area south of the town of BITCHE, to regain territory lost to the Germans as a result of their New Year's Eve breakthrough.

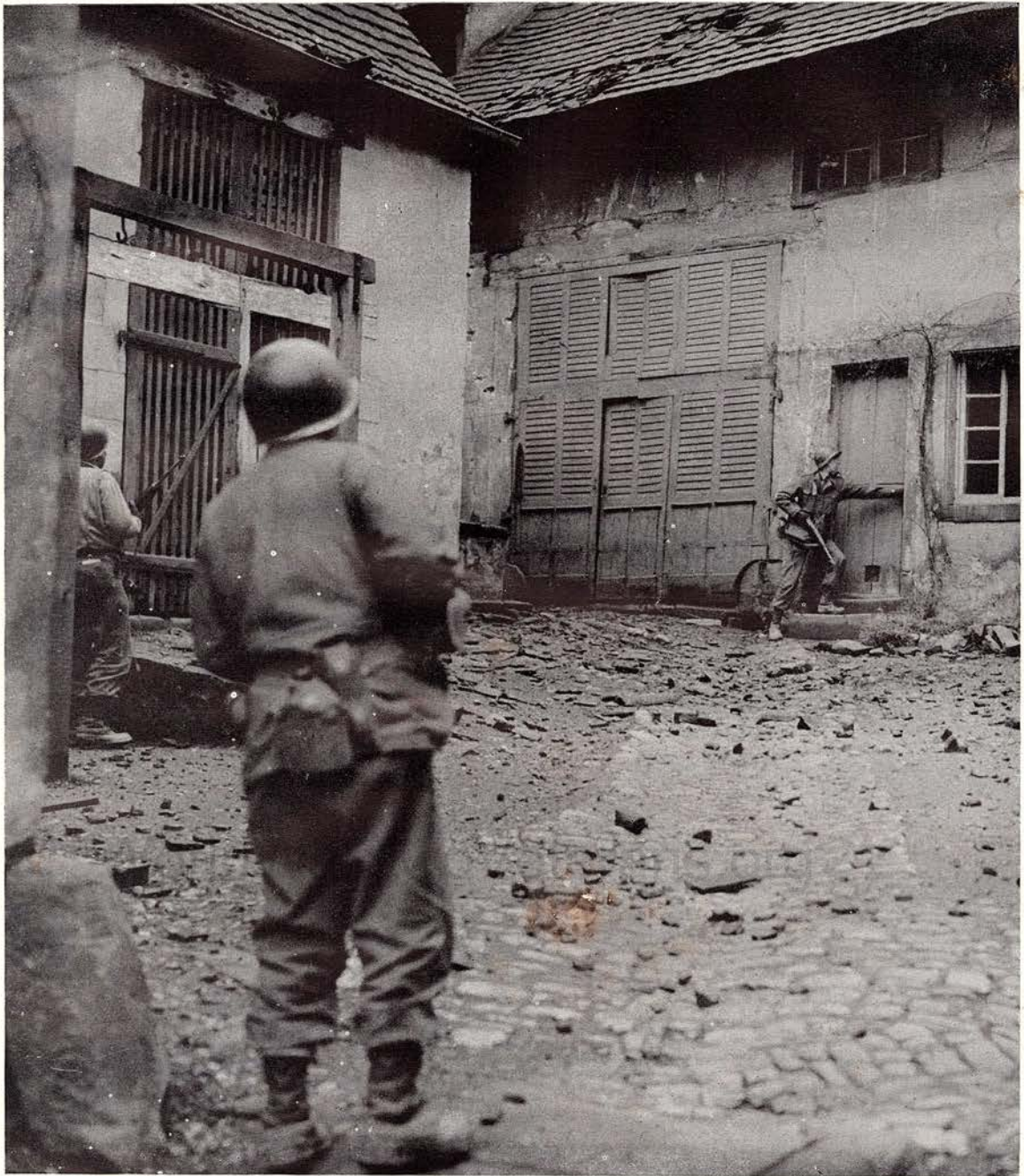
After all available American personnel and equipment had been rushed to the First Army zone to help stop Von Rundstedt's drive through the ARDENNES FOREST, the Germans suddenly changed their tactics to strike a blow on the weakened Seventh Army line before the units there could be regrouped and strengthened.

The 157th Infantry, on January 13, moved back from its assembly areas in NIEDERBRONN and ROTHBACH to positions in the LICHTENBERG FOREST northeast of REIPERTSWILLER. There they were to counterattack in order to prevent the Germans from breaking out of the forest and reaching the main highway toward the ALSATIAN PLAIN.

The enemy was later identified as the crack 11 Regiment of the 6th SS Mountain Division from FINLAND, a fresh, strong unit of fanatical belief in the Nazi cause and carefully trained fighters who were experts at this type of struggle over rugged, mountainous, snow-covered terrain in weather below freezing. They were equipped with the best the Germans had in winter clothing and materiel, with fur-lined boots and parkas. Lt. Col. Felix L. Sparks, commanding the 3rd Bn., summarized: "They were the best

Division infantrymen advance up a hill outside the newly captured town of Niederbronn, France. Machine gunners, mortarmen, and medics can be distinguished by the equipment they carry.





Tense moment during a sniper hunt in Niederbronn, newly taken by the 45th Division. One American infantryman is about to swing open a door while two other riflemen are ready for instant action.

these stated he had seen one hundred of his friends killed and only seven get away.

The 3rd Bn. had been set up and waiting, fortunately, when the Germans struck. Otherwise the enemy might have broken through and rolled on past the Division lines into the forest and southward into LICHENBERG in a major breakthrough of the Seventh Army line. Frontal attacks were continuously thrown at the battalion in an effort to take this particular position and reestablish their own line on this important ridge. They deemed this necessary because, with this advantage and these dominating hills, the Americans might break through to the north and come down into the MOUTERHOUSE VALLEY to destroy the

massed artillery, the mortar and rocket batteries, and all the massed defenses there, including an estimated 150 big guns. When attempts to take HILLS 420 and 400 failed, the enemy abandoned frontal assaults and chipped away at the battalion's flanks, except for occasional diversionary moves, and soon encircled the companies around their exposed sides.

As the 1st Bn. had been unable to make much headway on January 14, plans for the next day called for A and B Companies to move up on the 3rd Bn.'s right flank.

Company B jumped off at 0830 hours and when it came atop HILL 338, Captain Stough, its commanding officer, called for an artillery preparation of 41 rounds upon the