

Contents

(Click on a chapter title to jump to that chapter)

Introduction	5
Face to Face With Germans.....	7
Gems from German Prisoners	14
Playing Catch with 500 lb. Bombs	18
A German Soldier Sees His Fate	21
A Bluff Brings a Victory.....	28
A Belgian Village Has Mixed Allegiances.....	34
Oops, Wrong Army	37
Too Many Prisoners!.....	40
French Resistance Points the Way	43
A Rude Awakening	46
Friendly French Can Keep Weapons.....	49
How Many Miles to the Gallon?	52
Spies Coming Home	55
Was It a V-2?	58
U.S. Propaganda Is Effective	61
Germans Ride Buses Into Battle	64
U.S. Medic Gets a Close-Up View of the Enemy	67
German Superweapons on the Way.....	70
Inspecting World War I monuments	73
Germans Start Scavenging Supplies.....	82
Bugles for the Wehrmacht	85

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Pride of Canada	88
SS Guards Protect U.S. Prisoners.....	91
The Falaise Pocket Surprise	94
A German Officer Offers Information.....	97
German Soldiers' Morale: Slowly Declining.....	100
Germans Say U.S. Soldiers 'Violated Law'	104
Second Thoughts.....	107
The Surrender of Aachen	111
Aachen: 'As Dead As A Roman Ruin'	119
Allies 'Re-Establish Parental Authority' in Aachen	125
Nazis in Disguise	127
The Feeling Was Mutual.....	130
The 1944 U.S. Presidential Election.....	133
That's Quite a Resumé.....	136
Drone Tank Attack!	139
What's a Volksgrenadier Division?	143
Germans Run Short of Infantry	148
Food Crisis in Holland	153
Germans Down to 16- and 17-Year-Olds	158
The Toll That Mines Take	161
German Prisoner Praises U.S. Artillery	164
Tight Squeeze for the V-2	167
The Art of the Map	170
Choosing a Mayor for Stolberg.....	174
Preparing for the Battle of the Bulge?	179

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Some Secret!	184
Tips on Interrogating British And American Prisoners	187
A Joke with Consequences	193
What's the Password?	196
German Defensive and Anti-Tank Doctrine, 1943	199
How to Surrender to the Americans	211
Keep Your Heads Down	214
The Battle of the Bulge	217
The Battle of the Bulge: the Aftermath	236
Good Shooting	260
Germans Send Cologne Policemen into Battle	263
Collapse of the Rhineland	266
Black Soldiers Join 1st Infantry Division's Combat Units	269
The Enemy Toughens Up	272
The Terrible-Tempered Col. Becker	277
Interrogators Disgusted by SS Prisoners	281
Harz Mountains Offer a Refuge for Germans	284
A Tank Shooting Gallery	287
Another Version of the Assassination Attempt on Hitler	291
Concentration Camps Found	294
The War Is Over, the Exodus Begins	297
Catching 'Werewolves'	303
A Top Nazi Official Gives Up	308
Surrendering German Generals Cling to Rank	313
A South African POW's Agony	318
Acknowledgements	324

Introduction

If you're looking for a book that describes the grand sweep of armies across Europe in 1944 and 1945, this isn't the book for you.*

This is a collection of interesting stories culled from 10,000 pages of U.S. Army documents created in 1944 and 1945 after D-Day as the Allies raced across France and Germany. These stories put a human face on the anxiety and the suffering and (occasionally) the humor that war brings—on both sides.

When I started this project, I planned on creating a collection of vignettes that historians and students writing about that “grand sweep of armies” could use to bring some humanity to their accounts. As I found story after story of heroism, tragedy or humor that I had never read anywhere else, I realized that they had a broader appeal. In fact, I think many of these stories will fascinate anyone with an interest in how people behave under the greatest of stresses.

There are 71 chapters in this book. Each stands on its own; you can click on any chapter and start reading without needing to have read any other chapter.

Every chapter consists of an introduction summarizing a document and offering some background on its significance. When possible, I have included the document's author's name in the introduction in the hope that his descendants might discover “Grandpa's” (or “Great-Grandpa's”) work.

The introduction is followed by the actual document. (Tapping the document's image will give you a larger version.) Finally, at the end of each chapter is the source of the report as well as a link to the original document in the online database at the First Division Museum's Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center in Wheaton, Illinois. By tapping the link, you can read the items that appear before and after the

chapter's contents.

Many of these documents were created by the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division, which landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day; captured the first German city, Aachen, to be seized by the Allies; was involved in the Battle of the Bulge; and ended up in Czechoslovakia when the war ended. The stories start soon after D-Day and end with the chaos of the war's end, when it seemed that every German citizen and all its soldiers were racing west to surrender to the Western Allies and not to the Red Army.

The soldiers who wrote these reports never expected they would be read 70 years later; in many cases they were written immediately after a battle or incident and the writers had no idea what was coming next. As you read the actual reports in this book, remember that many were written on the fly in a French or German farmhouse or a tent in a muddy field, perhaps as artillery pounded away nearby.

What is immediately impressive in these reports is the clarity of the writing. The Army had some excellent writers, and their work is on display here.

This might be the last war whose reports are easily understandable by the layman. Acronyms and jargon dominate Vietnam-era and later reports. (I confess I have not read many Korean War documents, so I can't judge those.) And as electronic communication becomes more and more prevalent—and easy to delete—less and less information is being put on paper. Historians writing about our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan 70 years from now will probably have a difficult time gathering primary source material.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this book.

Mike Hanlon

August, 2017

*I'd suggest Rick Atkinson's spectacular Liberation Trilogy (<http://liberationtrilogy.com>) for that.

Face to Face With Germans

On July 9, 1944, eight German nurses who had been captured by the 1st Infantry Division near the town of Sept-Vents in Normandy, about 25 miles south of Omaha Beach, were returned across German lines.

It was a tense transaction. During the handover, American officers—led by 24-year-old Capt. Quentin Roosevelt II, grandson of former president Theodore Roosevelt and son of Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt Jr.—engaged in some verbal sparring with German officers.



Seven of the eight German nurses await return to the German lines.

From Roosevelt's report: "... The German claimed that his armies would throw the Allies from the [Normandy] beachhead, then finish off the Russians. The [American] interrogator pointed out that the Wehrmacht would have to hurry as the Russians were pretty close, to which the Hauptmann replied, "They have pushed us back before, and we stopped them and we will stop them again."

Note: Three days after this incident, Captain Roosevelt's father, who at the age of 56 earned the Medal of Honor for leading his troops onto Utah Beach on D-Day a few weeks earlier, died of a heart attack in Meautis, France.

Read Captain Roosevelt's full report of the nurses' return:

ANNEX #1
(Transfer of Nurses)

The following information was prepared by Capt Roosevelt and 1st Lt Erhardt Dabringhaus from material gathered during contact between these officers and 2d Lt Kenneth J. Calligan on the one hand and German officers on the other in the vicinity of SEPT VENTS, CALVADOS.

1. At 1640 hours, 8 July 1944, information was received from V Corps Hq that eight German nurses who had been captured at CHERBOURG were to be turned over to this Hq for return to German territory.

2. The eight PWs were to be at BALLEROY at 1500 hours, 9 July, where an officer from the G-2 Section would meet them. A German-speaking officer was to make contact by radio with the Germans between 1300 and 1430 hours making arrangements for a meeting between German and American officers south of CAUMONT at 1530 hours. There is no evidence that any radio contact was achieved.

3. The assistant S-2 of the 26th Inf Regt together with the PW interrogator attached to the 18th Inf Regt were to leave the Bn

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

position of the 2d Bn, 26th Inf, in CAUMONT at 1500 hours. They were then to proceed with a white flag from the "E" Co position, down through LE BOURG, to a point near SEPT VENTS. These officers left on schedule and proceeded down the road to a point about 300 yards from the center of SEPT VENTS. The officer from the 26th Inf had been shouting "Hello" in a loud voice in order to attract the enemy's attention. At this spot voices were heard in rear of the officers, who perceived on turning, a staff sergeant and two men of the German army running towards them from a point 100 yards to the north. The enemy personnel appeared completely flabbergasted and wanted to "get the score". Our officers explained the entire plan to them, requesting that officers be procured from the enemy position to perform the negotiations. The sergeant returned to his position behind a hedgerow in order to establish contact by phone with his commanding officer. After seven minutes he returned, notifying our officers that contact had been made and a Capt and a 1st Lt would be on the spot. The sergeant then insisted upon blindfolding our two officers, explaining it was his duty as a soldier. After ten minutes the American officers heard the German officers' footsteps coming down the road from SEPT VENTS. The Capt was heard to shout instructions to remove the blindfolds immediately, which was done. After an interchange of formal salutes and handshakes the plan was explained to the Hauptmann who had introduced himself as Hauptmann BRANNS. He was told that the nurses would arrive in about 45 minutes. The German Capt was anxious to have the transfer effected at a point considerably closer to our lines but this was denied him and the party remained where it was.

4. The officer from the 26th Inf then proceeded back to CAUMONT to the Bn Hq. Meanwhile, the officer from the G-2 Section had received the nurses in BALLEROY and brought them down to a point a few miles north of CAUMONT where he then left the convoy parked along the side of the road. He then proceeded to the Bn Hq where he met the aforementioned officer from the 26th Inf. The latter officer was not certain whether or not the correct point for the transfer had been reached and since the officer from Div had participated in the previous transfer and was familiar with the ground he proceeded on foot to the place where the officer interrogator from the 18th Inf had remained with the German personnel. Since it turned out that the correct place had been reached, the officer from the 26th Inf then proceeded back north of CAUMONT to dispatch the ambulances down to the appointed place. They arrived, bearing the eight nurses, in about 3/4 of an hour. The transfer was quickly effected after which a list was made of the nurses by name and signed in the form of a receipt by Hauptmann BRANNS.

5. In the discussion between the interrogator and Hauptmann BRANNS, the latter remarked on the fluency of the German spoken by the American officer and guessed that the former had been born in the Rhineland. This was correct, and the German officer then remarked "What a pity it is that Germans are fighting in the American Army?" The interrogator declared that the people to whom the Capt had reference were not Germans, but Americans and that they were

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

fighting Nazism. The Hauptmann replied that not all those fighting against us were Nazis but that they were fighting for their Fatherland. He also stated that this was the final war of survival for Germany. The interrogator suggested that, with things as they are now, it is indeed a war of survival, upon which the German claimed that his armies would throw the Allies from the beachhead, then finish off the Russians. The interrogator pointed out that the Wermacht would have to hurry as the Russians were pretty close, to which the Hauptmann replied, "They have pushed us back before, and we stopped them and we will stop them again." Hauptmann BRANNS then asked whether there were many Jews fighting in the front line to which the interrogator replied that there were indeed many. The German officer remarked that he was under the impression that the soft jobs were always "snared off" by the Jews. He then said that they had rid their country of them and that he was aware that we must have gotten most of them in America. The interrogator then told of the good treatment of German PWs in America to which the German Lt replied that many of his men would desert if they did not have the love of Fatherland and Furher in their heart. The impression received was that this feeling was the only thing between the Germans and desertion. The interrogator then asked how the Germans would accomplish all these mighty deeds with such an apparent shortage of equipment and material. The German officer replied that they would get some soon. The Hauptmann remarked that they had heard that the reprisal weapons, namely the flying bombs, had been extremely successful, and that LONDON was in flames as a result of their use.

6. It turned out that the Hauptmann came from COBLENZ and the Lt from COLOGNE. The interrogator asked the latter whether the famous cathedral had been damaged, and the German replied that it was in ruins. The German officer then asked why it was that we insisted upon destroying their cultural monuments and women and children.

7. When the ambulances arrived and the nurses dismounted two of them gave the greeting "Heil, Hitler" to the Capt which he did not return. After looking over the first group the German officer remarked, "There is not much of interest here", then proceeded rapidly to the last ambulance. He was disappointed here also, however, when the nurses turned out to be between the ages of 40 and 50. The ambulances were immediately dispatched to the rear and the nurses, aided by the German enlisted men, proceeded with their luggage towards SEPT VENTS. Hauptmann BRANNS, after saluting and giving a firm handshake, expressed his opinion that he and the interrogator should change places and that he should be going towards CAUMONT. The interrogator then pointed out that he would be only too glad to take him all the way into CAUMONT. Hauptmann BRANNS then said that he would be seeing the interrogator very soon.

8. When the question came up on the disposition of the white flag the German officer suggested that it be used next time and also expressed the hope that there would be more interchanges in the future.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

9. Hauptmann BRANNS was wearing German fatigue trousers but apparently had slipped on his best blouse in a hurry for the meeting. He was wearing a field cap, as were all the enlisted men in the group. The Lt who was with him appeared from his manner and dress to be from Bn Hq and was wearing a garrison cap. Another Lt who came up while the negotiations were in progress was wearing a raincoat, had his insignia covered, and also appeared to be from higher Hq. The S/Sgt had the Iron Cross, Second Class, and one of the men had on his sleeve the braid of the Africa Corps and said he had served with the 15th Pz Div in Africa. The enlisted men who had come from the German outpost position appeared unshaven and weary, while the officers appeared to be in good shape.

10. From the time it took for the Germans to make their necessary local arrangements it would appear that there is an outpost position at 698582; that there was a telephone from this position to the Co and Bn CP. From instructions given by the Hauptmann to one of his men it was clear that the Co CP was in SEPT VENTS and that they had only one piece of transportation available to transport the nurses. A messenger was therefore sent back to the CP with orders to call the doctor and have an ambulance sent down. It was also noted that there appeared to be no mines on the main road down to the point of transfer and that although there was evidence of military occupation along the adjacent hedgerows, that the positions were not actually occupied at the time.

11. The officer from G-2 asked the German Capt if Major HEEREN, the CO of the 2d Pz Rcn Bn contacted similarly last week, was still in the area. BRANNS replied that he had gone. This gives some support to the belief that this Bn has moved to the area of St. GERMAIN D' ECTAT, where the British recently identified the 3d Co. Information has been received from British sources to the effect that a certain Hauptmann "BRANDTS" was found to be the CO of the 1st Bn, 2d PGR, while the unit was on their front. The same source indicated through PW interrogation that the above Bn was pulled out recently, in all probability to join the other Bn. These points, considered together, show strong evidence that the Hauptmann who conducted the German side of the negotiations was Bn CO of the 1st Bn, 2d PGR, which may have moved into the area of SEPT VENTS, on the right of the 2d Bn, 2d PGR. This now locates both Pz Gren Regts of the 2d Pz Div in front of the 1st Div.

12. The point came up during conversation, that deals of this sort have always been allotted to lower echelons by higher Hq. The comment of one of the German officers was, "Is es nicht immer so" (Ain't it the truth).

13. Following the completion of the negotiations, the interrogator, the assistant S-2 of the 26th Inf, and the officer from G-2 proceeded back to 2d Bn, 26th Inf CP.

Source Material

From: "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944" to the Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division by Lt. Col. Robert F. Evans, P. 32.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Gems from German Prisoners

You never know what you'll learn from your prisoners. Besides learning about the Germans' morale problems, you might also learn how effective your air campaigns were: both the fighter-bombers over Normandy and the long-range bomber attacks on German ball-bearing plants. Here are some of the findings from interrogations of German soldiers on July 30, 1944, near Coutances in France:

- “... **A staff officer of the 243 Inf Div stated** that the entire personnel of the Div Hq. have become casualties. While moving south to escape the American advance, they were caught on the road by Allied aircraft. After suffering severe casualties from strafing, they decided to pull the convoy to the sides of the road. The shoulders of the road had been mined by retreating German engineers, which proved most unfortunate for the remaining personnel.”
- “... **[I]t was found that new German assault guns** have only a 30-degree traverse because of the difficulty in obtaining ball bearings. The earlier assault guns, stated the prisoner, had a 360-degree traverse.”
- “... **Numerous prisoners have accused officers** of deserting their commands. The average prisoner claims not to have eaten for 5 days and their personal appearance substantiates their claim that they have not been able to wash for the past two weeks.”

Also interesting is a captured German officer's critique of the U.S. Army's tactics and the quality of its soldiers (and their uniforms!).

Read the full report:

Continued from Previous Page

2. A staff officer of the 243 Inf Div stated that the entire personnel of the Div Hq have become casualties. While moving south to escape the American advance, they were caught on the road by Allied aircraft. After suffering severe casualties from strafing, they decided to pull the convoy to the sides of the road. The shoulders of the road had been mined by retreating German engineers which proved most unfortunate for the remaining personnel.

3. From the interrogation of a member of the 902 Assault Gun Bn, which was supporting the 243 Inf Div, it was found that new assault guns have only a 30 degree traverse because of the difficulty in obtaining ball bearings. The earlier assault guns, stated the prisoner, had a 360 degree traverse.

4. It was stated by an officer of the 6th Co, 6th Prcht Regt, that a new order from Hitler gives every company commander the right to execute any soldier who shows evidence of losing faith in the German cause. Reliability of this statement is questionable.

5. American infantry tactics were severely criticized by an officer of the 38 PGR. He claimed to have held in check two American Bns with approximately half a company. He stated that our soldiers do not make proper use of cover and concealment, that they talk too loudly in the front lines thus giving away their positions and that they rely too much upon their supporting weapons and not enough upon individual initiative. He further stated that the American infantry uniform does not blend with the terrain and that the American soldiers are easily picked out from their surroundings.

6. A prisoner from 37 PGR, SS Div "Goetz von Berlichingen", stated that many German officers who had been caught in our trap had donned civilian clothes, obtained French identity cards from the nearest mayor's office, and had passed through our lines. This ruse had been previously used by officers trapped at CHERBOURG. The prisoner was himself in possession of a French identity card.

7. Plans for the establishment of a new main line of

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

resistance were obtained from a prisoner of the 13th Prcht Regt. This line was to be anchored on the west by the pillboxes along the north shore of the Brest Peninsula and was to extend to the east south of Avranches. He stated that the 9 SS Div Hohenstauffen was expected any day to support the new defense line. This statement was substantiated by several other prisoners who mentioned 9 SS Div Hohenstauffen when questioned about possible reinforcements. This prisoner belonged to an "Alarm Company". This company had the task of plugging the line at any point of obvious weakness and was assigned the mission of rear guard for the withdrawal of his Regt. The Co is not an organic part of the Regt, but was formed as a matter of necessity. In view of the fact that the prisoner stated that his Regt suffered 80% casualties during the withdrawal, the value of such a Co is considered questionable.

8. A prisoner from the AA Bn of the 2d SS Div "Das Reich" stated that the ammunition dump which supplied this sector is located at Le Mans. This dump supplied ammunition of all calibers. For the last two weeks no 20mm ammunition was available, and the issue of 88mm ammunition was limited to 10 rounds per gun per day. Of these ten rounds, 5 were AP and 5 were HE. He further stated the ammunition trucks travel only during the hours of darkness.

9. It was stated by a prisoner of the 17 SS Rcn Bn that the Rcn and Engr Bns had been combined, and that of this combined group, approximately 350 men, minus all vehicles and heavy weapons, have escaped the encirclement.

10. In general, the prisoners captured during this operation reflect the complete disorganization of the enemy units facing us at the time of the break-through. The units which have suffered most heavily are the 353, 243, 275, 77, 91 Inf Divs, the 5 Prcht Div, 17 SS Div "Goetz von Berlichingen, and 2d SS Div "Das Reich". Numerous prisoners have accused officers of deserting their commands. The average prisoner claims not to have eaten for 5 days and their personal appearance substantiates their claim that they have not been able to wash for the past two weeks.

Source Material

From: "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944" to the Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division by Lt. Col. Robert F. Evans, PP. 37-38.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Playing Catch with 500 lb. Bombs

A report on August 8, 1944, gave this account of American fighter-bombers over France:

“A Thunderbolt pilot, bombing a railway recently, found on releasing his two 500 lb. bombs that the one under his right wing did not fall clear, and he tried unsuccessfully to shake it loose. Another pilot in the formation then edged his left wing close under the first Thunderbolt and dislodged the bomb, but it landed on his own wing and started to roll inboard. He dropped his wing and the bomb halted, rolled slowly back, and fell clear.”

Read the report:



A P-47 Thunderbolt with a 500-lb. bomb hanging from its wing.

A Thunderbolt pilot, bombing a railway recently, found on releasing his two 500 lb bombs that the one under his right wing did not fall clear, and he tried unsuccessfully to shake it loose. Another pilot in the formation then edged his left wing close under the first Thunderbolt and dislodged the bomb, but it landed on his own wing and started to roll inboard. He dropped his wing and the bomb halted, rolled slowly back, and fell clear.

Source Material

From “7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 59,” 8 Aug 44. P. 723.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum’s digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A German Soldier Sees His Fate

In August 1943, in an abandoned gun position near Troina, Sicily, American soldiers found an unfinished letter written by a German soldier to his family. More than 18 months before the war ended, it was clear to this soldier that he was on the losing side.

“... Such a terrific [artillery] barrage started that even an infantry sergeant while being pinned to the ground said that he never had experienced anything like it in France, Poland, or Russia,” wrote the soldier.

“For the moment it is still quiet here, but for how long? Then the whole thing will start over again. And what will come next? Today, we also found out that Mussolini had retired, this means that this is the end of Fascism, too. Won't Italy switch around now? Whatever will become of us is debatable. It can hardly be supposed that this thing will turn out for the good. ...”

Read the full letter:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

APPENDIX A TO INTELLIGENCE NOTES #8.

TRANSLATION OF GERMAN LETTER CAPTURED BY 1ST U.S. INF. DIV.
IN ABANDONED GUN POSITION VIC TROINA 7TH AUGUST 1943

23 July 1943

Dear All:

When I am sending you a report today about these last few days, I am only doing it to describe our battle to you, not to worry you indeed, but you will find out what we had to put up with down here in Sicily, in case I shouldn't come home anymore.

The day the enemy landed our fight started. We pushed forward that very day toward the enemy. Two days later, the Americans and English had gained so much ground and had landed so many troops, that one could not think at all about a battle with equal forces. On the 14th, we missed being captured by the enemy by one hour. The feeling "Will we be successful or not?" is a matter all its own. They were successful and we occupied a new position which the enemy just sprayed with artillery and which cost us the first two victims. From this position we retreated too--toward the flank. Again we occupied new positions, which nearly sealed our fate. I am with a vehicle near the commander as a trouble shooter. Whenever the line is damaged by arty fire, the order is: get out and repair. We are fighting in the central sector and are opposing crack Canadian and American troops. Such an order came at 9 PM on July 20th. Right after we had left our position, such a terrific barrage started that even an infantry sergeant while being pinned to the ground said that he never had experienced anything like it in France, Poland, or Russia. There were many dead, and myself and two more comrades were right in the midst of it. It is impossible to describe it. One grasps the earth with his hands, presses his face to the ground and waits for...the direct hit or fragments, which will take one's young life.....

One is thinking of everything then--home, several beautiful hours, parents, and one asks himself: Where is the Justice which is supposed to exist? Without scruple, hit after hit comes five metres in front - 10 behind, sideways - all over. Why not one just there where one lays? Afterward I was laying next to a crenel wall. I practically stuck to it and fragments bounced against the wall. Yes, and the girls back home have no idea what has to be suffered here. They go on vacations, to Cafes, movies, and have fun. At 4 o'clock in the morning we returned with "healthy bones". Then such things are not even mentioned, aside from "it wasn't too bad after all". In the vicinity, one could hear MG and rifle fire. We went to sleep anyway, although our commander had already ridden away. After half an hour a sudden awakening and an order to get ready. We have to leave at once--the enemy is in the immediate vicinity. I too got the car and my comrades ready to take off when the chef called. My car was to remain as the only one until further orders. I thought this was going to knock me down. All lines had to be disconnected while all around the bullets were still whizzing. We were 10 men. A large personnel carrier and a small one. Then I got the order to takeoff. On the dirt road slowly and on the main road at whatever speed the car could make. Even on the junction a car was lying turned over on the road. Passing was impossible. Acting quickly, I rode up the hill, which seemed impossible, but we made it. We

- 1 -

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

have nothing but 90 degree curves here. This way I rode around one curve. There it happened. As soon as the front of my vehicle reached the straight line after the curve, rat-a-tat-tat, and machine guns strafed firing as well as rifles, shot for shot. There was no way of getting through anymore. I yanked the hand brake and the car skidded across the street and I woundup in a swan dive beside it, myself as well as my comrade. Around me bullets were landing just as if one were emptying a sack of peas. I felt as if God had made a wall in front of me. I thought of you now,--you will never get home anymore. That's what continuously went through my head. We remained there for about five minutes when they began to take us under fire from a hill just beautifully. And I only had to travel a short distance more which was under this fire. Without the car it would have been a cinch to crawl on all fours into the ditch. But I wanted to get the car through. Lying on the road, I was able to get the car started with my hands, and when the motor was running, I winked to my comrad and with one jump we were in the car. And under fire, we went around the curve and were saved. White as chalk we looked at each other. We had lived through this night...May God always be with me, you and I are asking for it. A short distance away friends were waiting for us. They had observed everything through field glasses. We shook hands and brushed the dust off of our clothes. When we made the report that the other car could hardly be expected to come through, a 22 year old Lieut jumped on us by saying that he had expected more of us and that we should be ashamed to say such things, etc. I had to hold myself back in order not to jump at his throat. He didn't know anything about all that was going on since he had left an hour earlier. The other comrades actually came by foot. The driver remained with the car.

The little town which by now had been occupied by the enemy was finished by our artillery. In response the enemy artillery then fired on our positions which cost us several wounded, and caused us to change our position. Thirty kilometers back and one day's rest....rest means here - only aerial attacks - I have to remark here that as long as I have been fighting down here I haven't seen but two German airplanes at the beginning of the fight. The next day brought us back into the new position. Always remained close to the enemy. Here in this miserable hell, enemy aerial reconnaissance discovered us. This brought artillery barages and abandoning had to be made in the evening. We travel generally only at night without lights, pitch dark and never a main road. You can very well imagine what attention this requires and always chased by fire. At noon of this day I received the orders to look for our motorcycle runner who was missing up front. We searched for him until dark but without success. When I returned and wanted to get some sleep after two days, but everyone had moved out into a new position. Again traveling through night. We had a Corporal with us who had the route of march but directed us wrongly to our goal. A hundred times we had to lay on our faces because of enemy airplanes. At every airplane attack stop and run into the ditch. And airplanes are always around. Unfortunately only American and British ones. We rode through town and had to stop 500 meters beyond, since we did not know whether this road was still in German hands. Here we experienced a bombing attack by which one actually could hear the town cry and tumble. Every vehicle on the road was shot at by mortars. Nothing helped. We had to get through at the beginning of night fall. A road which was under constant enemy observation. With the greatest of fear we had to get through. Every bullet does not hit - it succeeded. They had posted us as missing already in our battery and the Lieut himself had gone out looking for us. This was swell - we were back again, and also our motorcycle runner had returned. Our infantry had repulsed two heavy attacks so that our light truck, which was all shot up, could be towed. Meanwhile the enemy was in all these positions. On one trip an accident occured to me. English planes were overhead and I looked up for only a moment and I went into a bomb crater. My assistant driver was thrown out of the car and remained lying on the road. I at once brought him to a hospital. After he was bandaged I was able to take him along.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Injures on head and face. He is with the QM. This fellow is Corporal and very close to me since he went through all these hard hours with me. He will soon be with us again.

We are always being chased. We actually don't know what date or day it is. I must say, I started this letter on a Sunday, but I didn't know it! This Sunday brought us into a new position! Again the enemy artillery covered us. At night we were under cover, ready for action. You have no idea how it feels to have shells whizz over your head - Ssst-boom-Ssst-boom - everlasting--all night long...Yes, imagine the sleep....At 5 o'clock in the morning out trouble shooting. The line was shot through in 7 places. In my car I passed by a first aid station 200 meters from the road -- a shell had exploded there. Many wounded who were there were torn to pieces. A horrible sight. I couldn't eat at all that morning. In our position we were again fired upon all day long. Always up and down and up and down - one runs - then flops down - under the car, this is artillery fire...Suddenly at 1900 hours a terrific barrage came at us which made us believe that an attack was in progress. We had to get out. My vehicle again had the trouble for one hour to dismount communication lines. When the others departed there was a brief wishing of luck and greetings. Two minutes later we departed. My God, one actually travels for his life. At such a moment one simply can not "give a damn". Several times we had to stop, jump out, and take cover. What a noise, whistling, etc., but luck must be with us. The shots went either one meter past or one meter in front. At two o'clock at night we were safe. Unfortunately I had a terrific boil on my right knee. This morning I had it lanced but it goes without saying that it brought tears to my eyes.

Again we have occupied new positions. For the moment it is still quiet here, but for how long? Then, the whole thing will start over again. And what will come next? Today, we also found out that Mussolini had retired, this means that this is the end of Fascism, too. Won't Italy switch around now? Whatever will become of us is debatable. It can hardly be supposed that this thing will turn out for the good. I shall report continuously and the next time that mail goes out, I shall post this letter too. Incidentally, Hans Maier and all the other of our acquaintances are all with the Services of Supplies, 30 to 40 kilometers behind the front. Certainly nothing will happen to them. My comrade Huebner is in Germany by now, and has probably visited you. He probably told you a small part of what is going on. He has had damn good luck. Do you know recently, we were awakened at three A.M. after a hard day? Mail had arrived. Then I received your two letters of the 7th and the 11th of July as well as a newspaper and two picture postal-cards from Schala from his vacation in Allgäu. "From a wonderful rest and furlough days, the heartiest greetings". Do you know what one feels like then? Hourly, one fights for his life and then one reads on a postal-card whether I am in action right now. I can't give him an answer to that.

Eventually, after the war, if I still have all of my bones, I only write to you, that is sufficient. In case that anything goes wrong, you can notify my dear acquaintances. From our headquarters battery, there are only about 20 men in direct employment. I couldn't stand the life in a Services of Supplies unit anyway.

28 July 1943

Yesterday it was remarkably quiet in our new position. In a distance one could hear occasional artillery hits or reports. A tremendous amount of planes was overhead but departed. Flak is constantly being fired; yet, I have never seen that a plane was shot down. Our "Luftwaffe" seems to be employed in different places, because I haven't seen a German airplane yet. Tonight was a

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

terrific lightning all over the sky and the comrades, who are further up front, must have been suffering terrifically. I can hardly stand listening to this noise any more and the lightning and whizzing pulls terrifically on one's nerves. Sleeping after such storms is almost impossible. One just slumbers a little at times and imagines the impossible. Yes, if I only had a roof over my head again, then I'll thank God, since this'll only be the case back in Germany... Always sleeping on the ground and every night somewhere, some place else. One has to go through this in order to understand. I certainly have gotten to that. The same goes for "employment".

29 July 1943

The last two days passed by exceptionally quiet. Last night we moved out without having been shot at before. Even on the way did we not encounter the so-called "magic fire", this was rare. Incidentally, "magic fire" (Feuerzauber) is the nickname for the mad artillery barrages which the enemy shoots over to us... At midnight we arrived at our new position. While sleeping on the ground, approximately 20 km back and on a hill, it felt as if one was sleeping in a basement with someone in the upper floor pounding a stick against the wall. So, even there the "magic fire" caught up with us....

The food is simply excellent. Aside from the food we receive every time, candy, $\frac{1}{2}$ a cake of chocolate and a box of cigarettes (Attikah), which most of the time are not sufficient though. You have no idea how much one smokes during an attack in a foxhole, just to distract one's thoughts. As to myself I have to report that I have much trouble with my ears. The artillery fire, the dust from the roads while travelling deprive me more and more of my hearing. I really hear very badly now, I can notice it myself. This gives one a very unsecure feeling and one does not at all feel well with it. Since I was in the hospital last I have not had any pus. To be hard of hearing is always a complaint. But, everything will be o.k., even that will be well again. The sense of hearing one can never regain though. As much as I need it to get along in life with, I shall always retain it though. One of course will be forced to live all by himself then. What do you think the diagnosis will be if I go to a doctor?...

Two of our men have remained too long under cover during an artillery barrage, meanwhile the unit had moved out. They only rejoined us the next day. They were threatened to be court-martialled. These fellows are not entirely without fault, but such a threat is too much and very depressing. In this respect one falls very easily into "a bad light". Everything is at once construed as being "prevention" of the soldier for duty" etc., and severe punishment is being given for that. One actually must carry his head under his arm in order to get an understanding.

1 August 1943

The last two days brought always the same. Artillery fire "on a moving band". After a while one becomes an "old warrior" and then some day everything will go wrong. I wished I could tell you, my beloved ones, only for a few hours what we all experience, so that you know later on what we had to go through in this campaign. Our infantry does even more. Respect for these boys and hats off. Yesterday again we lost a very good comrade and had to bury him. Today is Sunday and everything is against us. The artillery fires on our road for retreat like mad with heaviest caliber guns. Passing is impossible. Right in front of us the "Tommy" is attacking and it won't last long and we are encircled. The picture in front of us is a sad one... Burned up fields, burning woods and detonation after detonation into the town in front of us, through which our only way back leads. I only hope that today will pass well. So far

Continued on Next Page

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

Continued from Previous Page

God has always been with me and I entrust myself to Him who will lead me through the greatest of fires.

I shall write to you and my brothers and sisters when it becomes somewhat more quiet...../

TRANSLATION BY:

Siegmund Spiegel, T/4
G-2 Section, 1st US Inf Div.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division, Intelligence Notes No. 8, Appendix A, 12 Aug. 1943.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A Bluff Brings a Victory

On September 3, 1944, a few hundred men from the U.S. 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry marched into a forest outside Mons, Belgium. They had been told the woods were free of Germans.

“What was not known was that thousands more Germans were constantly filtering into the woods,” an intelligence report stated. “The battalion, however, had not penetrated more than a few hundred yards into the woods before it was engaged in a stiff fire fight. In the half-dark, and at quarters so close that nothing but small-arms fire could be used, the battalion fought Germans coming from every direction in disorganized groups.”

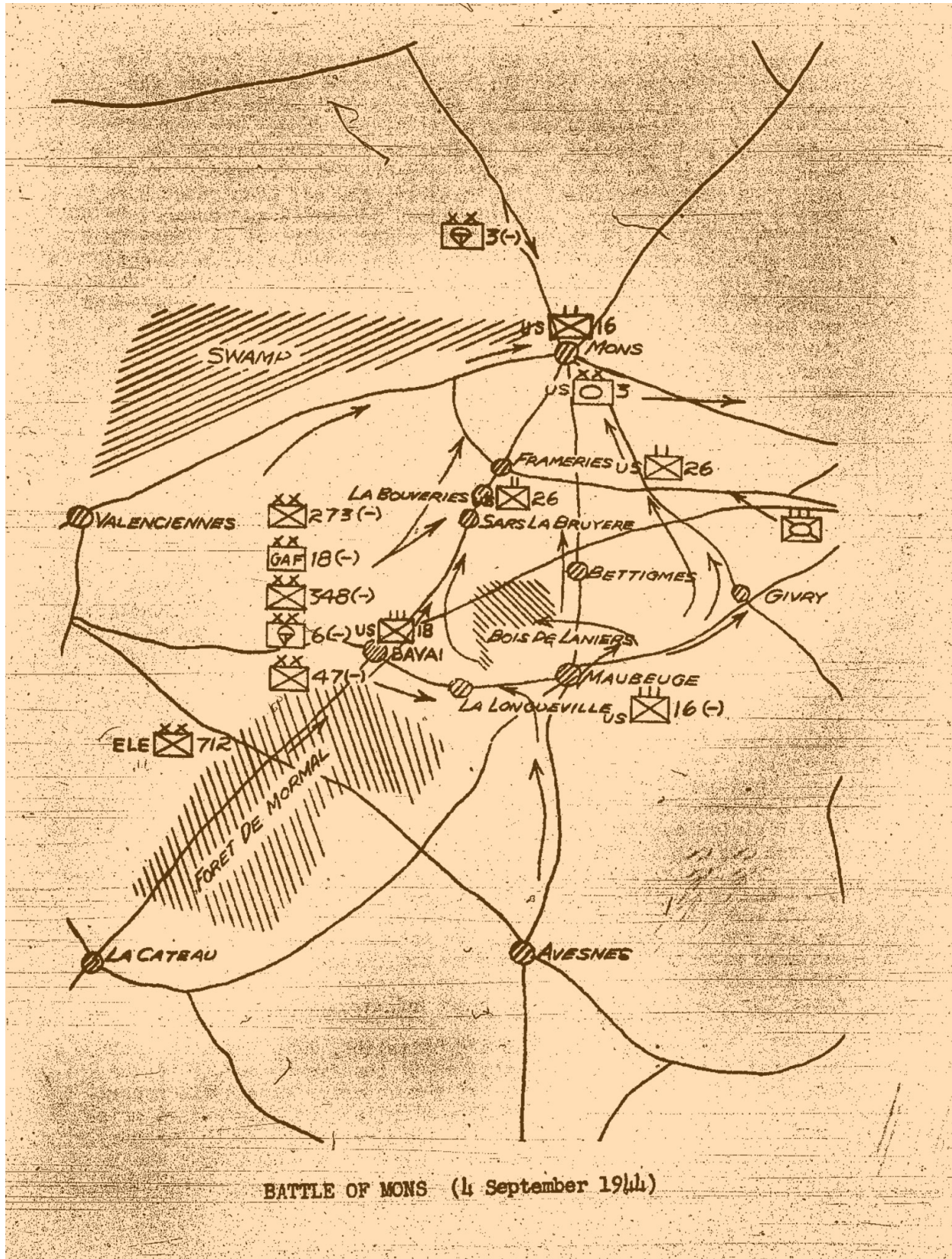
At 4 a.m. a German captain suggested that the two sides stop fighting so that he could evacuate his wounded. The vastly outnumbered Americans agreed—with one condition: German forces had to surrender. By noon, the few hundred Americans, who were almost out of ammunition, had 2,400 German prisoners; they ended up with 3,256. Total American casualties: 1 man shot in the leg and two minor injuries.

Read the full story:

9. The greatest single bag of prisoners in this operation was taken by the second battalion, 16th Infantry. As the battalion, at the time consisting of only two rifle companies and a heavy weapons company (the third rifle company had been sent north to the battalion objective in the vicinity of MONS) approached the BOIS DE LANIERE, west of the MAUBEUGE-MONS road, they were told that the woods had been cleaned out. It was true that hundreds of prisoners

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page



BATTLE OF MONS (11 September 1914)

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

had been taken there by the third battalion, 26th Infantry, but what was not known was that thousands of more Germans were constantly filtering into the woods from the shattering disaster inflicted by the air corps on the BAVAI-BINCHE road. The second battalion, 16th Infantry, was ordered to continue through the woods, cut east and join up with the rest of the regiment on the main MONS road. The battalion, however, had not penetrated more than a few hundred yards into the woods before it was engaged in a stiff fire fight. In the half-dark, and at quarters so close that nothing but small-arms fire could be used, the battalion fought Germans coming from every direction in disorganized groups. Mortar-men from the 4.2 chemical platoon went into action as riflemen; the battalion expended its full basic load of .45 caliber ammunition. Every man in the battalion was committed: the first prisoners, 16 of them, were taken by four cooks. The fight continued all night long. At 0400 hours a German captain came to the battalion command post with a request for an armistice to evacuate his wounded. The request was turned down; the battalion would only assist in the evacuation of the enemy wounded if the German forces in the woods surrendered unconditionally. The German captain, who spoke English and had no idea he was faced by no more than three companies, eventually agreed, and terms were drawn up: starting at 0630 hours the Germans in the forest would surrender in groups of fifty at fifteen-minute intervals. They were to march into the battalion area in columns of two with an officer with each group. At 0630 hours precisely the first group appeared. The processing was simple: shoulder weapons were thrown in a pile to the right and side-arms in a pile to the left. By noon, close to 2400 prisoners had come in. Ambulances and aid men were sent after more than 700 wounded Germans scattered through the woods. The strain on medical facilities was so great that German aid men were detailed to help out, and the battalion kitchen trucks were unloaded and turned into impromptu ambulances. The prisoner of war cage, an open field surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by one platoon, got so crowded that 1200 prisoners were sent to the big Third Armored Division cage at MAUBEUGE. They were taken in by two riflemen who led the column and a light tank which rode herd on the rear. The battalion stayed in the woods for 72 hours, taking prisoners and evacuating enemy wounded to the rear. The total for the period was 3256 prisoners; casualties to the second battalion were one man shot in the leg and two men wounded so slightly they were not even evacuated. On 6 September the battalion cut back to the MAUBEUGE-MONS road and took over the mission of keeping the road clear for the first battalion, 26th Infantry.

10. On 4 September the third battalion, 16th Infantry, pushed on directly north to a point past MONS; the French Forces of the Interior and the Belgian Forces of the Interior were still reporting the location of more dazed German units, and hundreds of prisoners were still being taken. The first battalion, 16th Infantry, continued its sweep around GIVRY to a point east of MONS. The second battalion remained in the vicinity of the BOIS DE LANIERE.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

had been taken there by the third battalion, 26th Infantry, but what was not known was that thousands of more Germans were constantly filtering into the woods from the shattering disaster inflicted by the air corps on the BAVAI-BINCHE road. The second battalion, 16th Infantry, was ordered to continue through the woods, cut east and join up with the rest of the regiment on the main MONS road. The battalion, however, had not penetrated more than a few hundred yards into the woods before it was engaged in a stiff fire fight. In the half-dark, and at quarters so close that nothing but small-arms fire could be used, the battalion fought Germans coming from every direction in disorganized groups. Mortar-men from the 4.2 chemical platoon went into action as riflemen; the battalion expended its full basic load of .45 caliber ammunition. Every man in the battalion was committed: the first prisoners, 16 of them, were taken by four cooks. The fight continued all night long. At 0400 hours a German captain came to the battalion command post with a request for an armistice to evacuate his wounded. The request was turned down; the battalion would only assist in the evacuation of the enemy wounded if the German forces in the woods surrendered unconditionally. The German captain, who spoke English and had no idea he was faced by no more than three companies, eventually agreed, and terms were drawn up: starting at 0630 hours the Germans in the forest would surrender in groups of fifty at fifteen-minute intervals. They were to march into the battalion area in columns of two with an officer with each group. At 0630 hours precisely the first group appeared. The processing was simple: shoulder weapons were thrown in a pile to the right and side-arms in a pile to the left. By noon, close to 2400 prisoners had come in. Ambulances and aid men were sent after more than 700 wounded Germans scattered through the woods. The strain on medical facilities was so great that German aid men were detailed to help out, and the battalion kitchen trucks were unloaded and turned into impromptu ambulances. The prisoner of war cage, an open field surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by one platoon, got so crowded that 1200 prisoners were sent to the big Third Armored Division cage at MAUBEUGE. They were taken in by two riflemen who led the column and a light tank which rode herd on the rear. The battalion stayed in the woods for 72 hours, taking prisoners and evacuating enemy wounded to the rear. The total for the period was 3256 prisoners; casualties to the second battalion were one man shot in the leg and two men wounded so slightly they were not even evacuated. On 6 September the battalion cut back to the MAUBEUGE-MONS road and took over the mission of keeping the road clear for the first battalion, 26th Infantry.

Source Material

From: "G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 – May 1945," Page 56, Item 9.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A Belgian Village Has Mixed Allegiances

In early September 1944, vehicles carrying clerks, cooks and drivers belonging to the 26th Infantry Regiment's field train approached a road intersection at the Belgian village of Sars la Bruyere to cries of "Vive l'Amerique!" ["Long live America!"] from the residents.

Suddenly the Americans heard cries of "Vive l'Allemagne!" ["Long live Germany!"] on the road approaching the intersection from the west. A German supply and medical column was approaching. The two sides fought in the village, and the clerks, cooks, and drivers took 145 German prisoners of war before moving back to a more fortified position.

Read the report:

6. Far behind, the 26th field train had left its bivouac area at AVESNES and was heading north. In the village of SARS LA BRUYERE the lead vehicles were approaching a road intersection to accompanying cries of "Vive l'Amerique!" from the local Belgians, when cries of "Vive l'Allemagne!" were heard in the road approaching the intersection from the west. A German supply and medical column was pulling out from the west and the points of both units met at the road crossing. The German medics were armed and disposed to fight, and in the resultant skirmish the clerks, cooks, and drivers of the 26th Infantry field train took 145 prisoners of war. More of the enemy kept piling into the fight, however, so the trucks of the train were turned around and proceeded back to the bivouac area of the 33d Field Artillery and the 103d Anti-aircraft Artillery battalions. Soon after their arrival there, the area was attacked by another strong force of the enemy. This attack was beaten off when the multiple .50 caliber machine guns of the anti-aircraft battalion were depressed and laid directly on the enemy. More than 900 prisoners were taken. Later it was learned that the enemy column which had taken part in the assault on the 33d Field Artillery battalion had moved up the same road that the main body of the 26th Infantry had taken in its push north and with a time lapse of only a few hours. The next day two reinforced platoons from the second battalion of the 26th Infantry were sent back to stabilize the situation; the area, when finally cleared of isolated enemy pockets, netted another 250 enemy troops killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. The evacuation of the prisoners back to MAUBEUGE was itself a delicate operation since uncaptured groups of Germans were ranging around the cage area. The prisoners were driven back to MAUBEUGE, fifty at a time, in a captured German truck. Just as the eight guards climbed aboard the last truck to leave, a group of German infantry, with more cohesion than most, launched an attack on the cage itself. The truck, with the guards firing over the sides and tail board, barely managed to clear the area before the enemy closed in on the cage.

Source Material

From: "G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 – May 1945," Page 54, Item 6.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Oops, Wrong Army

In the first days of September 1944, a German armored vehicle accidentally joined an American convoy in Belgium and paid for its mistake.

From the report: "...[U]nits in the high-speed chase after the retreating German army were using any transportation they could lay their hands on, including a considerable number of captured enemy [German] vehicles. These had been hastily repainted with a white star. ... [A German] half-track loaded with soldiers darted out of a side street and squeezed its way into the column between two of the captured vehicles."

To learn what happened next, read the report:

4. Meanwhile the second and third battalions of the 26th Infantry were moving north to meet an enemy situation that by now was almost fantastic. Both units in the high-speed chase after the retreating German army were using any transportation they could lay their hands on, including a considerable number of captured enemy vehicles. These had been hastily repainted with a white star. As the second battalion pushed northwards out of one small town a half-track, loaded with soldiers darted out of a side street and squeezed its way into the column between two of the captured vehicles. For a minute nobody paid particular attention. Then, as one man, every doughfoot in sight suddenly realized that the markings on the half-track were black crosses and not white stars. The interloper was liquidated on the spot for his temerity; apparently he had pulled into line with the captured German vehicles believing they were part of one of his own columns. The second battalion added the half-track to its train and moved on.

Source Material

From: "G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 – May 1945," Page 55, Item 4.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Too Many Prisoners!

By early September 1944 the 1st Infantry Division, then in Belgium, estimated it had taken 5,000 prisoners and killed 2,000 German soldiers. But Germans were surrendering so quickly it was impossible to get an accurate count.

From a report: “Hundreds of prisoners were taken outside of normal channels; liaison officers running between units took prisoners, cooks took prisoners, clerks took prisoners. 80 German anti-aircraft men, led by a major, mistakenly attempted to march through the Division command post in an effort to get out [of fighting].

“ ... [T]here were several wounded Germans on the outskirts of the battalion area who were willing to surrender, but only to medics, as they had been told that American riflemen shoot all prisoners. Two medics were dispatched. ... As they were working, a small group of the enemy approached, watched the proceedings and said that they, too, were interested in surrendering. Before they were through, the medics had taken 250 prisoners and enough German vehicles to transport the whole crew back to the battalion cage.”

Read more:

11. At 2400 hours, 3 September, the number of prisoners taken by the Division was set at 5,000, with an additional 2,000 Germans killed. These figures were not much better than estimates; so many prisoners were turning themselves in to small units--and even individuals--and the channels of evacuation were so clogged that it was impossible to keep an accurate tabulation on the spot. Hundreds of prisoners were taken outside of normal channels; liaison officers running between units took prisoners, cooks took prisoners, clerks took prisoners. 80 German anti-aircraft men, led by a major, mistakenly attempted to march through the Division command post in an effort to get out. Another case in point was an incident in the first battalion, 26th Infantry. Soldiers of the Belgian Forces of the Interior relayed a message to the battalion command post that there were several wounded Germans on the outskirts of the battalion area who were willing to surrender, but only to medics, as they had been told that American riflemen shoot all prisoners. Two medics were dispatched from the command post to attend to the wounded Germans. As they were working, a small group of the enemy approached, watched the proceedings and said that they, too, were interested in surrendering. Before they were through, the medics had taken 250 prisoners and enough German vehicles to transport the whole crew back to the battalion cage. It was not until 7 September that all reports could be correlated and a reasonably accurate total made. 17,149 prisoners passed through the Division cage, and even this figure is conservative. In addition, approximately 5,000 prisoners were taken by the Third Armored Division, and additional thousands were killed by both divisions. A true assessment of the disaster inflicted on the enemy, not counting the loss of materiel, which, from the enemy point of view was almost equally catastrophic, was difficult. It was plain, however, that a total of five divisions had been completely destroyed in the area south of MONS. These were the 6th Parachute, the 18th GAF, the 47th Infantry, the 275th Infantry and the 348th Infantry. Although the final repercussions of the debacle were inestimable, it was equally plain that with the loss of these troops, the German power to hold the Siegfried Line in strength around AACHEN had evaporated.

Source Material

From: "G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 – May 1945," Page 62, Item 11.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

French Resistance Points the Way

A captured German intelligence report dated July 25, 1944, illustrated the cleverness of the French Resistance in its efforts to help the Allies in Normandy: “Other [German] divisions reported wheat fields with places where the wheat had been cut down to form short stubble arrows pointing in the direction of our arty posns [artillery positions]. Similar acts of sabotage should be guarded against.”

Read the report (item h):

2. Special Points.

(a) The British and Americans have again proved to be pastmasters in the art of camouflage.

(b) In several places it was found that the enemy located the posns of our mortars accurately and quickly in spite of frequent changes and very careful camouflage. Possibly, the enemy possesses sound-ranging equipment even for hy inf weapons.

(c) In some instances we experienced delay action shells which exploded up to 14 hrs later (they included the heaviest calibre).

(d) Dummy Posns were often shelled heavily by the enemy.

(e) For the clearance of Minefields use is made of special tks which are said to be equipped in the front with a roller-shaped contraption which "whips" the ground with steel rods. The front part of the tk has additional armour plating. These special tks are in separate Tk Units which when required for action are apparently distributed individually. In some cases the elimination of mines was attempted by forcing cattle over them.

The enemy showed also great caution when dealing with Dummy Minefields. For the landing he used maps of the coastline with detailed markings of the wire and obstacles. Battle posns and actual Minefields. The dummy Minefields are not shown on these maps. Possibly, the actual minefields were discovered magnetically.

(f) In three instances we had reports of enemy attempts to come in on our frequency with false orders for the conduct of the battle and the direction of the fire of our hy arms.

(g) The enemy has several times effectively decoyed German soldiers by shouting in German: "Don't shoot, we are Germans".

(h) Other divisions reported wheat fields with places where the wheat had been cut down to form short stubble arrows pointing in the direction of our arty posns. Similar acts of sabotage should be guarded against.

(sd) For Div Commander. G1 MARCKS

(Source: 8 Corps I.S. No. 35)

Source Material

From “7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 56; Extracts from Intelligence Summary No. 1 of 326 Div Issued 25 Jul 44.” Pg. 609.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum’s digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A Rude Awakening

In early August 1944, civilians in Champ-du-Boult, about 40 miles south of Omaha Beach, reported that German soldiers heading to the front to face the Americans are very confident, but when they return, they're far less so.

From a report: "Coming back from the front, morale is extremely low. Several SS men who had gone N [north] in these high spirits a week ago ... came back to the same farm yesterday, burned their weapons in the courtyard and announced they would surrender today, which they did."

Read the full report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

MIL REPORT

East 9th Inf Div
6 August 1944

1. Enemy route of withdrawal. Civilians confirm today that there have been many indications, on the part of the Germans, that their route of withdrawal, at least until 2 days ago, and in this Div. sector, would be: ?

CHAMP DU BOUT - GATHEMO - VENGEONS - TINCHEBRAY.

They expect the Germans to make the same strong delaying stand at these 3 last localities as they made at CHAMP DU BOUT.

2. German tactics at CHAMP DU BOUT. According to civilians, Germans had left "very few men" in the village itself during yesterday; they speak of groups of patrol strength only holding it, but Germans came back in greater strength at nightfall. During daylight, several hundred men were at IA FORGE, 553274, a dominant, wooded height; others were along the CHAMP DU BOUT - VIRE road. Withdrawal began "as usual", at nightfall, between 2230 and 2300, and continued all night, only a screen being left to fight this morning.

Artillery. Up to night before last, about 10 arty pieces (hows-drawn by half-tracks) had been for 48 hours in position in the triangle 547270-546266-559267. They drew our counterbattery fire several times, but with no effect on the equipment; only 1 crewman was wounded. Camouflage was excellent, Germans using whole cut apple trees to simulate orchard pattern. Our fighters were over that arty several times, but did not seem to notice it. Guns left at 0100 yesterday morning, in direction of GATHEMO. Their emplacements were heavily shelled, but too late, at several times yesterday.

SP guns. It seems that the SP guns which fought at CHAMP DU BOUT had been previously kept at IA BLANCHARDIERE, 558255, and IA CHAPELLE 561267.

3. Withdrawal of main German forces and heavy equipment. Has been noticed by civilians, ever since the breakthrough at MARIGNY, and in direction of LE MANS.

4. Morale. Civilians say that fresh troops going up to the front are optimistic speak of pushing the "Tommys" (German soldiers themselves do not seem to know exactly whether they are going to oppose US or British forces) back to the sea within one week; others believe that their leader has a secret weapon which will win the war. Coming back from the front, morale is extremely low. Several SS men who had gone N in these high spirits, a week ago, through CHAMP DU BOUT, came back to the same farm yesterday, burned their weapons in the courtyard and announced they would surrender today, which they did.

5. Senegalese PWs. Of the many Senegalese PWs (captured by Germans in June '40) used by the Germans in the ammo. depot of FORET DE SEVER, about 60 are reported by civilians to have escaped during the last two days, and to hide until the battle passes over. They still have their French army uniforms. They had an unusual amount of freedom as the Germans, who were short on army rations, would tell them to forage for themselves in the farms, well knowing as they said themselves, that they could not disguise themselves as white civilians.

6. Use of civilian labor. The Germans requisition from the mayors of villages working parties of civilians to dig and cover the excellent foxholes and slit trenches seen along the roads and hedgerows.

7. Recent German orders to civilian population. The following recent orders to the civilian population have been issued by Capt (Dr.) NOEDING, head of the local military police through the French civilian authorities:

Source Material

From: Intelligence report from the 9th Infantry Division, 6 August 1944. P. 587.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Friendly French Can Keep Weapons

A report on August 6, 1944 shows that U.S. troops in Normandy were mistakenly disarming friendly French Resistance fighters. They were ordered to stop the practice.

“French Forces of the Interior (FFI) are allowed to retain American arms and equipment,” said the report. “This is a SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] directive. American troops must refrain from disarming these FFI people as they have had this equipment dropped to them by parachute by Allied forces. The only authorization to disarm them is given where they fire on American troops or other French resisters.”

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

c. French Forces of the Interior (FFI) are allowed to retain American arms and equipment. This is a SHAEF directive. American troops must refrain from disarming these FFI people as they have had this equipment dropped to them by parachute by Allied forces. The only authorization to disarm them is given where they fire on American troops or other French resisters.



French Resistance fighters guard a wrecked German supply train. Note machine gun and grenades at far left and rifle on man's shoulder at right.

Courtesy of the George C. Marshall Foundation, Lexington, Virginia.

Source Material

From a report by Lt. Col. James O. Boswell. G-2 Periodic Report, HQ 90th Infantry Division. 6 Aug. 1944. P. 599-600.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

How Many Miles to the Gallon?

On August 9, 1944, the 1st Infantry Division's Lt. Col. Robert F. Evans reported a German prisoner's account of sabotage against the Wehrmacht in Paris.

"When a large convoy with much-needed gasoline arrived on this front from Paris," Evans wrote, "it was learned that instead of gasoline they were hauling pure water all the way."

Read the report:

6. Other PWs gave accounts of sabotage that have happened in Paris. When a large
convoy with much needed gasoline arrived on this front from Paris, it was learned that
instead of gasoline they were hauling pure water all the way.

(Sorry for the poor image quality: these started on paper, were photographed to microfilm many years ago and then digitized. Quality isn't always perfect.)

The item reads:

"6. Other PWs gave accounts of sabotage that have happened in Paris. When a [unreadable] convoy with much needed gasoline arrived on this front from Paris, it was learned that instead of gasoline they were hauling pure water all the way."

Source Material

From “Consolidated Interrogation Report on PWs Passed Through Div Cage” 9 August 1944. P. 693.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum’s digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Spies Coming Home

A report from August 4, 1944, alerted U.S. units that OSS (Office of Strategic Services: the American spy agency) and French spies may be crossing into the American lines in France after finishing their missions. The spies would identify themselves with one of four special code words: “Biarritz,” “Limoges,” “Toulouse,” or “Angouleme.”

However, added the report, “It must be borne in mind that these passwords may be compromised and it is essential that agents be thoroughly identified before their tactical information is accepted.”

Read more:

Source Material

From "First U.S. Army: Code Words for Exfiltration Missions." 4 August 1944. P. 482

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Was It a V-2?

By the summer of 1944, Allied intelligence had received reports about a new German missile called the “V2,” and was extremely nervous about what kind of damage it could do. A report on August 9 made a guess: “TAC/R [aerial spotters] today saw a violent explosion covering 3-4 miles of the FORET D’ECOUVE NORTH of ALENÇON: if this is not ‘V2,’ it must represent the destruction of a large amn [ammunition] dump.”

It must have been the dump. The first operational V-2 was launched almost a month later, at Paris.

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

While all this is happening, American forces which this morning bypassed LE MANS were striking NORTH up the EAST bank of the R. SARTHE towards ALENCON. ALENCON is only about 15 m from LE MANS, and any sort of force that could offer organised opposition to our Allies already has "troubles enough of its own". TAC/R today saw a violent explosion covering 3-4 miles of the FORET D'ECOUVE NORTH of ALENCON: if this is not "V2", it must represent the destruction of a large amn dump. So Hitlerjugend's worries will be increased (if indeed they know what the situation really is) by armoured columns swanning into their maintenance areas.

Source Material

From: "7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 60." P. 895.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

U.S. Propaganda Is Effective

On August 5, 1944, a 1st Infantry Division intelligence officer reported that American propaganda efforts were working on German soldiers.

“PWs [Prisoners of War] stated that due to the lack of their (German) supplies, that our propaganda talks, via P.A. system, concerning food and medical care to be had in our Army for deserters, was most effective,” wrote Capt. Fred Gercke. “They believe that more such propaganda speeches should be made.”

Read the report:

5 August 1944

SUBJECT: Periodic Report.

TO : Danger G-2, Through Dagwood S-2.

1. During the period from 2000 4 August to 2000 5 August 1944, 7 PWs were processed by PWI, 16th Infantry Regiment.

2. Unit Identifications.

5th Company, 60th Infantry Regt. (116th Division)	1 PW
4th Company, 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment	6 PW

3. PW from 4th Company, 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment, stated that his unit was in support of the 1st Company.

4. PWs stated that due to the lack of their (German) supplies, that our propaganda talks, via P.A. system, concerning food and medical care to be had in our Army for deserters, was most effective. They believe that more such propaganda speeches should be made.


FRED GERCKE
Capt. C.A.C.
PWI, 16th Inf.

Source Material

From: A Periodic Report to 1st Infantry Division headquarters from 16th Infantry Regiment intelligence officer Capt. Fred Gercke. Pg. 370.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Germans Ride Buses Into Battle

An August 12, 1944, intelligence report describes the inventive way a German infantry division traveled from southwestern France to northern France to face the Allies:

“Their units lack organic transportation, but the inventiveness of the Germans seems to make up for this shortcoming. ... The 708 Infantry Division was moved from Southwestern France to the fighting area within a very short time, almost unnoticed, due to an excellently worked out plan revealed by documentary evidence. ... Various assembly points were used and the division moved up in small groups by rail and bus.”

In addition, the document makes a passing mention of the Germans’ “Free Indian Regiment,” also known as the Free India Legion: soldiers from India who fought with the Germans for the chance to free their country from British rule.

Read the report:

2. 708 Infantry Division

The 708 Infantry Division, being part of the 15th wave, was formed in the Spring of 1941. The 15th wave, which comprises the static defensive divisions of the 700 series, was originally organized on a 2 regiment x 3 battalion basis with a weak artillery element of from one to three battalions, and without reconnaissance or anti-tank battalions. The 15th wave divisions as formed mainly from older men and very young boys and they contain a rather large percentage of foreigners.

Their units lack organic transportation, but the inventiveness of the Germans seems to make up for this shortcoming. The 715 Infantry Division, for instance, was equipped with busses and moved within a very short time to the Italian front. The 708 Infantry Division was moved from Southwestern France to the fighting area within a very short time, almost unnoticed, due to an excellently worked out plan revealed by documentary evidence. The division was split into two "Marschgruppen" March Combat Teams which were supposed to travel independently - a precaution against air attack, sabotage and other unforeseen happenings enroute. The unit commanders were given independence of action to the largest extent. Various assembly points were used and the division moved up in small groups by rail and bus. Arrangements were made to march long distances and still be fit to go immediately into action. Another interesting point is that the area vacated by the 748 Infantry Regiment south of the GIRONDE ESTUARY was taken over immediately by the 950 Free Indian Regiment, which is part of the 159 Training Division. At one time this regiment was thought to be under the control of the 708 Division. Besides the 708 Infantry Division we find in France the following divisions of the 700 series:

710 Infantry Division in the Netherlands

712 Infantry Division in Belgium

716 Infantry Division, badly battered in the initial push against C&EN, believed to be reforming in the Mediterranean area.

709 Infantry Division, not existing any longer, having been wiped out by our push through the GEREBOURG PENINSULA.

Source Material

From: "G-2 Periodic Report, 12 October 1944." P. 949

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

U.S. Medic Gets a Close-Up View of the Enemy

An American army medic, who was captured by the Germans and worked at a Wehrmacht aid station before rejoining his own ranks, solved the mystery of why Germans were spotted wearing American uniforms: In an August 30, 1944, report by 30th Infantry Division 2nd Lt. Torger A. Gram, the medic said they wore captured U.S. field jackets and fatigues because their own clothes were in such bad shape.

He also said that “American artillery came in at the ratio of 104 American rounds to every 4 German rounds. To the Germans it almost seemed like automatic fire.”

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

4. An American medical aid man who was taken prisoner by the Germans, worked at a German aid station and later rejoined the American forces, made the following observations:

German doctors carry pistols, even asked him whether American doctors did the same. Enemy had captured American vehicles. He saw soldiers wearing our fatigues and field jackets, probably because their own clothes were in such bad shape. Medical supplies were low; bandages were not kept sterile. There were no cases of "combat exhaustion". Wounded German soldiers never whimpered. Military courtesy and discipline was strict; all non wounded reported and salute properly. Food supplies were taken from surrounding farmhouses. American artillery came in at the ratio of 104 American rounds to every 4 German rounds. To the Germans it almost seemed like automatic fire.

Gram (PWE)
TORGER A. GRAM
2nd Lt, Inf
O/B # 15

Source Material

From: "Order of Battle Notes for period ending 102200 August 1944." P. 854

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

**Tap or click here
to see this document in context**

German Superweapons on the Way

In France in August 1944, 1st Infantry Division prisoner of war interrogator Lt. Adam J. Eisenhower wrote that there were some wild rumors of soon-to-be-arriving super weapons coming from recently captured prisoners.

From his report: "End of our air superiority has been promised the German people by means of a new "Rammer" plane, which is so heavily armored that it is supposed to knock our bombers out of the sky by physical contact. ... Super Tanks, which are described as "Rolling Fortresses," are to appear soon on this front in conjunction with two SS Panzer Divisions."

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

d. The following rumors were again encountered in PW statements:

1. End of our air superiority has been promised the German people by means of a new "RAMMER" plane which is so heavily armored that it is supposed to knock our bombers out of the sky by physical contact. Other new developments in aircraft are said to be in progress.

2. Super Tanks, which are described as "Rolling Fortresses" are to appear soon on this front in conjunction with two SS Panzer Divisions.

Adam J. Eisenhower
ADAM J. EISENHAUER
1st Lt. CAC
OIC IPW TEAM # 44

Source Material

From: VII Corps HQ, Special Interrogation Report, 5 Aug. 1944

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Inspecting World War I monuments

As the 1st Infantry Division moved across France, it liberated areas where the division had fought in World War I, just 27 years earlier. In September 1944, the division's inspector general and a chaplain were sent to inspect monuments honoring the division's 1918 heroism in five places—Cantigny, Sedan, Soissons, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne—to see if they had survived the four-year German occupation.

They reported that they found most of the monuments in disrepair, but largely intact.

The officers also pointed out this interesting item: “In the annals of the history of the Division, the following fact is truly unique: As the Division drove northward in pursuit of the enemy during this war they took up identical positions—regiments and artillery battalions—as the Division had occupied over twenty-five years ago on the heights overlooking Soissons. The realization that the history of the Division was being repeated at Soissons created a deep impression upon those participating in the operation.”

Read their report:

HEADQUARTERS FIRST U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION
A.P.O. No. 1, U.S. Army

4 October 1944

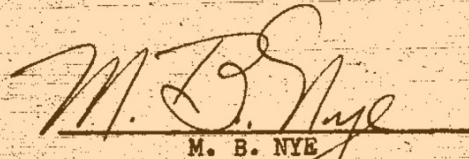
SUBJECT: Report of Inspection of Monuments Erected to Commemorate the
Participation of the 1st U.S. Infantry Division in World War I.

TO : Commanding General, 1st U.S. Infantry Division.

1. An inspection of the monuments erected to commemorate the participation of the 1st U.S. Infantry Division in the five major offensives, World War I at Cantigny, Sedan, Soissons, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne, was made by Lt. Col. M. B. Nye, Inspector General, and Lt. Col. F. Bernard Henry, Division Chaplain, in accordance with your orders of 19 September 1944, based on a letter of the First Division Memorial Association, dated 30 August 1944, and signed by the Executive Committee: P. Summerall, President; Adolphe Huguet, Chairman; and James A. Edgar, Secretary-Treasurer, and addressed to Major General Huebner, Commanding General, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, in which the writers requested that an inspection of the monuments be made and a report forwarded to them.

2. A Report of Inspection accompanies this letter. It is in three (III) parts:

- I. The written report.
- II. The photographs of the monuments.
- III. Compilation of defects noted and recommendations for repair.


M. B. NYE

Lt. Col., Inspector General
1st U.S. Infantry Division


F. BERNARD HENRY

Lt. Col., Division Chaplain
1st U.S. Infantry Division

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

REPORT OF INSPECTION OF WORLD WAR I MONUMENTS TO FIRST DIVISION

Using correct military form this report might be opened in these words - 'in compliance with basic communication, Headquarters First Division Memorial Association.' However, having trod on ground enshrined in the hearts of all civilized nations by the heroic deeds of our predecessors and hallowed by the years following the first conflict of nations, formality is impossible.

General Huebner, an officer of the Division during the first great war, and its present Commanding General, received the basic communication with the same enthusiasm as he displays in suggestions for the betterment of the command, and ordered the undersigned Inspector General and Division Chaplain, together with a staff photographer and a Master Sergeant, to make a thorough tour of inspection.

Proceeding from the bivouac area in northern Belgium a route was followed taking us through Liege, Marche, and through the beautiful stately forests of the Belgian Province of Luxembourg, across the French Frontier to Sedan. There was much evidence of the breakthrough by the German Army in 1940 at this famous town. Shells of many buildings still remained and grass was growing on the mounds of the rubble. The Civil Affairs Officer of the town directed us to the site of the first monument. It is located approximately two hundred feet above the level of the Moselle River on a bank fifteen feet above the right side of the Walindecourt-Pont Maugis Road. The town of Sedan, the river valley, and the heights beyond the town are seen from this good location. It was quite evident at first glance that no care had been taken of the grounds or monument for a long time. The concrete steps from the road leading upward to the monument were covered with much moss which had loosened them at the corners. There is also much brush on the banks alongside the steps. Berry bushes and weeds are growing profusely on the entire plot around the monument. The base of the monument is of poured cement. It is cracked at the upper corners and here the iron moldings are rusty and separated from the cement. Part of the iron corners have been removed. The shaft of the monument is in good condition and has been coated with calcimine or lime, but this has weathered and washed. The weather has long since removed the pointing surrounding the bronze plaques. The dome and the eagle on top of the shaft are in good condition and have not suffered greatly from natural elements. However, the casting of the dome and the eagle must have been done with too much sand and not enough cement for the whole of this section is porous. The four concrete fence pillars at the corners of the base of the monument are in good condition; the four metal "1's" on the pointed tops of these pillars are badly rusted and covered with moss. The plot of ground is approximately forty feet square inclosed by an irregular barbed wire fence which is unsightly. This was the condition of the grounds and monument as we found it.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

The bronze tablets containing the names of those killed in action is very impressive; Losses - Killed 80 - Wounded 503. To this is added these simple words: "Operation Against the Line of the Meuse. On the morning of November 6, 1918, the First Division A.E.F. attacked from the line Besage-Beaumont, and drove the enemy across the river between Autrecourt and Villemontry. The Division during the night of 6-7 November continued its attack and occupied the heights overlooking Sedan from Saint Aignan to this point. G.O. No. 201, GHQ, A.E.F., November 10, 1918. 'The Commander-in-Chief has noted in this Division a special pride of service and a high state of morale never broken by hardship nor battle.'"

Upon completion of this inspection, we drove on toward Sommerances, the location of the monument to the First Division for its part in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, passing through picturesque farm villages...many of which evidenced the 1940 breakthrough by the Germans...across countryside apparently untouched by the course of the recent Allied drive. Late in the afternoon we located this monument at the intersection of two roads, one kilometer south of St. Juvin on the east side of the Aire River, which was the first objective of the Division in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. This monument is very appropriately located and can easily be seen by all passers-by. The entire memorial plot is approximately forty feet square, and is located on the inside of a wide curve in the road. The sides adjacent to the road are not inclosed nor is there a curbing at the small ditch between the road and the grounds. There is an irregular and unsightly wire fence separating the monument from the adjacent pasture land on one side; a clump of trees on the other. The plot is level and is covered with a thick carpet of grass, which although not cut is matted beautifully. A four foot walk leads from the road to the steps. The steps are in good condition. The shaft is of concrete and is cracked in numerous places near the base, but it is believed that these cracks are not structurally harmful. At some time the monument has been painted with white calcimine or lime which has weathered poorly. The top of the shaft is cracked on all corners. The dome on which the eagle rests is also of concrete and rather porous. The right wing of the eagle is chipped evidently from a bullet...the left wing is also badly chipped likely from additional rifle fire. The upper right breast of the eagle also has two bullet holes. The entire center and right of the breast of the eagle also has been chipped away by these projectiles. The pointing around the plaques has been dissolved by weather conditions. One link is missing in the rear chain which surrounds the monument. It has been replaced by wire. The metal numeral "1's" on all four posts of the fence have been painted over. The wreaths inclosing the numeral "1's" on the balustrade on either side of the steps are embossed in cement and were originally painted in color. These have been painted over with calcimine or lime thus ruining the artistic effect. The pavement leading from the road to the stairs is on the same level as the road which is on a right angle curve and is constantly driven over by traffic. One corner of this pavement is badly broken. A German Bazooka Grenade is lying alongside one of the fence pillars at the base of the left front corner. It is very much 'alive' and should be removed by a demolition squad.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

The inscription at the base of the monument reads as follows: "Battle Between the Argonne and the Meuse. The First Division A.E.F. attacked from the crest of Baulny on the morning of October 4, 1918. In eight days of severe combat it forced the German Line back seven kilometers and assisted the First American Army to join the Fourth French Army at Grand-Pre, thus driving the enemy from the Argonne." Losses: Killed 1790 - Wounded 7126. G.O. No. 201, GHQ, A.E.F., November 10, 1918. 'The Commander-in-Chief has noted in this Division a special pride of service and a high state of morale never broken by hardship nor battle.'"

After inspecting this monument, and while looking for the American cemetery in the vicinity, we entered Varennes where we stopped to view the magnificent monument erected by the State of Pennsylvania in 1927 to the memory of her sons who died during the campaign of the Meuse-Argonne. In the setting sun the grandeur of the huge pillars, the deep valley, and wooded hills beyond was magnified tenfold; indeed we felt that we were treading on hallowed ground.

As darkness came upon us we drove on toward Verdun, through the battlefields of the Argonne. The old trenches and dugouts were covered with grass and smoothly rounded by erosion....silent monuments to the men who fought and died there. It was a real transformation from the war at hand to the war of years ago. The silent approaching night fixed us as intruders in the valley of death. The experiences of one day could not have closed more fittingly as we slowly wended our way through these most impressive of all monuments....sculptured in mother earth by that greatest healer 'Father Time.'

Famous Verdun was a beehive of activity. It is the great nerve center of operations against the Germans in World War II. We set out to find the monument erected to commemorate the heroic deeds of the 'Fighting First' at St. Mihiel....driving upon treacherous muddy macadam highways in the midst of heavy traffic of heavily loaded convoys moving toward the front near Metz and Nancy. True to French tradition, it rained all day.

About 800 meters from the small town of Vigneulles at the edge of a mountain ridge near a road intersection, we located the white shaft on a raised mound approximately forty feet square. It marks the primary objective of the Division at St. Mihiel. The location is good and the shaft may be seen from all approaches at a considerable distance. The plot of ground is barren of any foliage except patches of grass which grow through the gravel which covers the whole. There is no boundary fence other than the irregular wire maintained by the owner of the adjoining property. The entire monument is structurally sound, but requires some maintenance work - pointing of the bronze plaques, washing of the shaft in white cement, and minor repairs in the paving leading from the road to the steps. The steps are in good condition. A permanent inclosure of decorative design would add to the artistic effect.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

The inscription reads as follows: "Battle of St. Mihiel - September 12-13, 1918. Attacking from Seichprey-Marvoisin on September 12th, the First Division A.E.F. entered this town early on the morning of September 13, 1918, joining the 26th Division A.E.F. and cutting off the salient." Losses: - Killed 98 - Wounded and Missing 489. G.O. No. 201, GHQ, A.E.F., November 10, 1918. 'The Commander-in-Chief has noted in this Division a special pride of service and a high state of morale never broken by hardship nor battle.'

It was some distance from St. Mihiel to Cantigny. On the way we passed through the famous town of Compiègne near which the armistice was signed in a railroad car at the close of World War I. We learned that this famous carriage was removed to Germany as a prize trophy. The little town of Cantigny set on a gently sloping road approximately seven kilometers north of Montdidier is especially memorable in the military history of the First Division for it was here that the first attack by an American Division took place in late May of 1918.

The Division Monument is located on Highway GC 26 approximately 100 meters southeast of Cantigny. It stands at the edge of a field which skirts the gently rising road to the town upon the ground taken from the Germans in that first great offensive. The plot surrounding the monument is approximately forty feet square and is covered with gravel. The weather has washed much of the gravel away and there is evidence of erosion. The steps are badly chipped at the base and cracked in numerous places. The balustrades along the steps are also in need of resurfacing. All the angle irons on the steps are loose and should be repointed. The base of the monument is also cracked and the rear has been chipped away. The plaques need repointing but the brass tablets are in good condition. The casting on the dome and the eagle is exceedingly porous and indicates inferior material must have been used in its making. The chain fence surrounding the base is in good condition but the metal numerals on the four posts, as well as the wreaths on the balustrades, are moss covered and here and there obliterated by a rough job of painting over with white lime. The inscription on the tablet in the front of the base reads thus: "The First Division A.E.F. captured this town on the morning of May 28th, 1918." Losses: Killed 199 - Wounded 867. G.O. No. 201, GHQ, A.E.F., November 10, 1918. 'The Commander-in-Chief has noted in this Division a special pride of service and a high state of morale never broken by hardship nor battle.'

We next directed our attention to another monument erected to the memory of the First Division located in the center of the village of Cantigny. It was erected in 1930 by the American Battle Monuments Commission to commemorate the first attack by an American Division in World War I. The monument, a white stone shaft, is set in a large rounded basin of similar stone, and this centered in a park of an acre and a half, beautifully landscaped and immaculately kept. Each face of the shaft carries this inscription, one in French and one in English: "The First Division, United States Army, operating under the X French Corps, captured the town of Cantigny on May 28, 1918 and held it against numerous counter-attacks." It was gratifying to see the familiar insignia of the "1" surrounded by the olive wreath below the words inscribed. The monument, and the park in which it stands, is indeed beautiful. The people of the village are justifiably proud of it and all it stands for. It is evident that there is perpetual care of this memorial and grounds.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

We passed through the trim dense forest of Compiègne to Soissons. This town is also blessed in the memory of many First Division Veterans, for here the second great battle of the Marne was fought and the counter-offensive of July 1918 was very decisive. In the annals of the history of the Division, the following fact is truly unique. - As the Division drove northward in pursuit of the enemy during this war they took up identical positions - regiments and artillery battalions - as the Division had occupied over twenty-five years ago on the heights overlooking Soissons. The realization that the history of the Division was being repeated at Soissons created a deep impression upon those participating in the operation. It was also in this area surrounding Soissons that the first forceful reminders of sacrifices made by the Division in the first great war met the view of officers and men as they came upon this monument. Equally impressive was the American cemetery. The crosses row on row not only provoked the deepest reverence but also instilled renewed courage in the hearts of these men who are presently engaged in the present conflict.

The monument is located five kilometers southeast of Soissons along the Soissons-Chateau-Thierry Road. It is situated at the intersection of two highways and may be seen for a great distance on approaching from either direction. The plot of ground, on a level slightly lower than the adjacent highways, is unkempt and ragged-looking. We found it littered with all sorts of trash including German sausage casings. The base of the monument is chipped and broken on three sides and two of the corner posts supporting the chain fence are loose and require new foundations. The chains in front and on the right side are broken or damaged. The shaft of the monument evidences many settling cracks. The brass name plates no longer have any pointing around them. The white calcimine or lime covering the shaft is largely washed away by the weather. The eagle's wing is chipped slightly and the beak has been shot off. Other parts of the eagle have been slightly damaged by small arms fire. This monument and the grounds are in greater need of attention than the other four. The inscription on the brass plate at the base of the monument tells the story of a bloody heroic struggle of World War I: "Counter-Offensive of July 18, 1918. Second Battle of the Marne. In four days of continuous attack from the line Saint Pierre L'Aigle Cutry, the First Division A.E.F. penetrated eleven kilometers into the German lines at this point capturing by assault early on the morning of July 21st the Chateau and heights of Buzancy and the village of Berzy le Sec. Losses: Killed 2213 - Wounded 6347. G.O. No. 201, GHQ, A.E.F., November 10, 1918. 'The Commander-in-Chief has noted in this Division a special pride of service and a high state of morale never broken by hardship nor battle.'"

To those of us now serving with the Division, the history of its deeds of valor in World War I as recorded on these five white shafts overarched by the protecting eagle, is most inspiring. The sheer facts and figures recorded so simply on the bronze tablets humble us and provoke profound respect when we are prone to announce that we have suffered intensely in the present war - 'so much more than others have.' Facts speak louder than words. Impressive indeed

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

are the battle casualties - a total of 4181 killed, 14,445 wounded. With this ever present in our memory - when courage is needed; when valor is required; when only gallantry will suffice; we need only to look to the deeds of our 'blood-brothers' of the first war.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division, "Report of Inspection of Monuments Erected to Commemorate the Participation of the 1st U.S. Infantry Division in World War I," 4 October, 1944.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Germans Start Scavenging Supplies

On July 21, 1944, about 6 weeks after D-Day, German SS General Paul Hausser issued an order to his troops that illustrated their shortage of equipment. The order was captured by the Americans and translated.

Hausser wrote: “It must be completely clear to every soldier that strict saving is essential. It is irresponsible to leave behind or fail to evacuate weapons and equipment, binoculars, sighting devices, entrenching tools as well as all sorts of empty cartridge cases, ammunition boxes, and seemingly useless weapons and equipment.”

Between June 6 and August 3, the U.S. 1st Army captured 181 German tanks, 76 assault guns, and 58 armored cars.

Read the order:

ANNEX 1 to G-2 PERIODIC REPORT NO. 56.

GERMAN EQUIPMENT

The following is a translation of an order by General of the S.S. Hausser, commander of the Seventh German Army, giving further proof of the acute shortage the Germans are suffering in all types of equipment:

The Commander
Seventh Army

Army H.Q. 21 July 1944

The supply situation is extremely tense.

Despite the fact that production is running at high speed, new activations and regular replacement orders consume a big part of the finished products.

Therefore:

1.) Weapons and equipment that need repair will be speedily evacuated to the rear repair services of the army.

2.) Even salvage, weapons and equipment which are apparently beyond repair must be evacuated, because from two or three useless weapons of the same type, a new one can be built.

Besides, extra spare parts are frequently recovered in this way.

3.) It must be completely clear to every soldier that strict saving is essential. It is irresponsible to leave behind or fail to evacuate weapons and equipment, binoculars, sighting devices, entrenching tools as well as all sorts of empty cartridge cases, ammunition boxes, and seemingly useless weapons and equipment.

4.) I expect and request from commanding generals, division commanders and below that, from every officer, that the above principles will be preached to the troops again and again.

5.) Executive orders will come from the chief of the supply services.

signed HAUSSER

Obergruppenfuehrer and General of the Waffen S.S.

Source Material

From “Annex 1 to G-2 Periodic Report, No. 56,” 5 August, 1944.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum’s digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Bugles for the Wehrmacht

A captured report by the commanding general of the Germans' 2nd Panzer Division covering action in Normandy from June 17 to July 7 showed the immediate effect of the Allies' huge advantage in supplies.

"Our soldiers enter the battle in low spirits at the thought of the enemy's enormous material superiority," he wrote. "They are always asking, 'Where is the GAF [German Air Force]?' The feeling of helplessness against enemy aircraft operating without any hindrance has a paralysing [sic] effect, and during the barrage this effect on the inexperienced troops is literally soul-shattering. ... It is, therefore, essential for troops to be lifted out of this state of distress the moment the counter-attack begins. ... The revival of the practice of sounding a bugle call for the attack has been found to answer the purpose. ... An attack launched in this manner is an experience which new troops will never forget, and stimulates them into action again."

Read the full report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

4. Extracts selected from a report by the CG, 2nd Pz Div, on battle experiences for the period 17 June - 7 July, follow:

a. Infantry. The Panzer Grenadiers must be able to withstand the heavy arty fire of the enemy. This is the decisive factor. They must therefore be dug-in deeply. Since the enemy uses a very sensitive fuze, overhead protection is necessary against shells which explode on striking trees. During the barrage the weapons must also remain under cover, or else they get clogged with mud and rendered useless.

Our soldiers enter the battle in low spirits at the thought of the enemy's enormous material superiority. They are always asking: "Where is the GAF?" The feeling of helplessness against enemy aircraft operating without any hindrance has a paralysing effect, and during the barrage this effect on the inexperienced troops is literally "soul-shattering" - and it must be borne in mind that four-engine bombers have not yet taken part in attacking ground targets in this div's area. It is, therefore, essential for troops to be lifted out of this state of distress the moment the counter-attack begins. The best results have been obtained by the platoon and squad leaders leaping forward uttering a good old-fashioned "hurrah", which spurs on the inexperienced troops and carries them along. The revival of the practice of sounding a bugle call for the attack has been found to answer the purpose, and this has been made a divisional order. Moreover the use of the bugle in territory where visibility is restricted enables the troops to know when and where the attack is taking place. An attack launched in this manner is an experience which new troops will never forget, and stimulates them into action again.

The Panzer Grenadiers fight as assault detachments; in this more depends on the NCO's than ever before. Only an energetic commander will get his men to go forward. For weaklings there is every inducement and opportunity to hide in the hedges. Close-combat weapons (flame-throwers, anti-tank close-combat weapons, mines, and explosive charges) are especially effective in country of this nature. In defence it may be expedient to deplete the front line in order to maintain sufficient reserves for counter-attack. Especially efficient NCO's should be selected for this.

Source Material

From G-2 Periodic Report No. 62, Headquarters V Corps, August 8, 1944, by Lt. Col. James K. Gaynor.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Pride of Canada

In fall 1944, a Canadian unit was surrounded by Germans, and a German NCO called out to them, “You English gentlemen had better surrender.”

He received this reply: “We ain’t English—we ain’t gentlemen, and we ain’t gonna surrender.”

Read the report:

Quick Answer.

The following appeared in First Canadian Army Intelligence Summary No. 130: " A report has come to hand of a party of Canadians surrounded by the enemy. A German NCO called out to them, "You English gentlemen had better surrender". He received the reply, "We ain't English -- we ain't gentlemen, and we ain't gonna surrender". (Source: First US Army)

Source Material

From: "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944" to the Commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division by Lt. Col. Robert F. Evans, P. 120.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

SS Guards Protect U.S. Prisoners

In France on August 6, 1944, Army intelligence officer Capt. C.M. Jenter wrote that three U.S. Army soldiers who escaped after having been taken prisoner by the Germans' 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division said their guards protected them from harm by other German soldiers and had shared provisions with them.

"[One of the soldiers, a lieutenant,] stated that the German interrogators always asked about the effects of their robot bombs [V-1 cruise missiles], whether the Americans had any intention of using gas, and why the Americans were fighting in the first place," Jenter wrote.

The captured lieutenant said that while moving east to another prison camp, he and his two fellow soldiers overpowered their SS guards and escaped.

The report continued, "All three Americans were extremely generous in praising their German guards. The Lieutenant stated that the guards saved their lives on numerous occasions by protecting them from other Germans with murderous intent. It was stated that the guards shared their limited luxuries with the American prisoners even prior to the German withdrawal."

Read the report:

3. A div on the FUSA front reported the experiences of 2 U.S. Officers and 1 EM, who had escaped from an enemy P/W cage. Excerpts from the report are as follows:

a. The Lieutenant had been captured on 25 June, and had been at the 17th SS Div P/W Cage until his escape. He stated that American P/W's receive very good treatment. He stated that during his stay, he had listened in on numerous interrogations and that the American prisoners who had passed through the cage while he was there were very security conscious. He stated that the German interrogators always asked about the effects of their robot bombs, whether the Americans had any intention of using gas, and why the Americans were fighting in the first place. He also stated that the 17th SS Div has suffered severely, and that the Div G-2 is now a 2nd Lt DIETRICH KARSTEN, who also acts as interrogator. It is his opinion that the Germans will not use gas unless it is first employed by the Allied Forces. He further commented on the scarcity of enemy gasoline and oil, and on the total confusion of the enemy armed forces.

b. Forced into a rapid retreat to avoid encirclement by our forces, the 17th SS Div had no facilities for transporting prisoners. Two German soldiers were assigned as guards and told to march the American prisoners to the next prisoner of war cage, which was to be established somewhere to the rear. They were instructed to follow the road markings, which, according to the prisoners, just weren't there. After the 17th SS Div had left, the three Americans succeeded in disarming their guards. They then hid in a barn and waited for the advancing American forces.

c. All three Americans were extremely generous in praising their German guards. The Lieutenant stated that the guards saved their lives on numerous occasions by protecting them from other Germans with murderous intent. It was stated that the guards shared their limited luxuries with the American prisoners even prior to the German withdrawal.

C. M. Jenter
C. M. JENTER,
Captain, Infantry,
OIC, IPW Team No. 11.

Source Material

From: "Annex No. 2 to G-2 Periodic Report No. 60." 6 August 1944. P. 427

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Falaise Pocket Surprise

A report dated August 9, 1944, predicted what would become known as the Battle of the Falaise Pocket—which began a few days later near the city of Falaise, France—but it didn't predict the huge Allied victory that actually occurred.

One (quite convoluted) sentence in the report said, “But the enemy’s troops in this sector [near Alençon] and round VIRE and DOMFRONT will if they are not extricated be caught in a pincer whose jaws are the Canadians striking towards FALAISE and the Americans striking northwards from LE MANS.”

It added that the Germans tended to extricate their men at the last minute, and the Allies’ possibility of trapping the Germans hinged on making them miss their window of opportunity.

The report continued in a more pessimistic tone: “It is probable however that most of the [German] armour [sic] will be urgently needed in the FALAISE sector, and our chances of trapping it are slight.”

Read the report:

On our front we took 24 PW from twelve different companies of 276 and 277 Divs, including reinforcements that had left PARIS on 7 Aug. The inter-div boundary seems to run approx along the stream 852442 to 870420 with II/986 GR 276 Div immediately WEST of this line and I/990 GR 277 Div immediately EAST. Our Inf Div advanced practically along the join of 276 and 277 to reach a point just NORTH of TREMBLAY 8641. Further WEST the SUR LE MONT feature was captured and PW taken from I/986 GR. Enemy arty was again active and included air-bursts along the PINCON ridge. Only NORTH of TREMBLAY has the enemy had to fall back any appreciable distance towards his possible shorter line (ORNE at 912512 - Pt 266 8850 - Pt 229 8459 - Pt 235 8536 thence SW) covering CONDE SUR NOIREAU. He is still strong on Pt 172 8946 and SOUTH of the stream running EAST from there to the ORNE; and he is clinging to LASSY 7959 with II/192 PGR and to ESTRY 7437 with PGR HOHENSTAUFEN of 9 SS Pz. HOHENSTAUFEN have been particularly tough, their only relaxation yesterday being to yield up a Russian deserter who walked into our lines in a sports coat and a top hat. But the enemy's troops in this sector and round VIRE and DOMFRONT will if they are not extricated be caught in a pincer whose jaws are the Canadians striking towards FALAISE and the Americans striking Northwards from LE MANS; it is not, however, German practice to extricate before the eleventh hour and on our ability to confuse the Germans as to what really is the eleventh hour rest our chances of encircling a sizeable force. It is probable however that most of the armour will be urgently needed in the FALAISE sector, and our chances of trapping it are slight.

Source Material

From: "7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 60." 9 Aug 1944 P. 895.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A German Officer Offers Information

A report on August 10, 1944, told the story of a captured German officer who volunteered information about his unit to American interrogators. He ended his statement by saying, “You must think it very wrong for an officer to give information which is likely to prejudice the safety of his comrades, but today I am only concerned with seeking every possible means of bringing the war to a speedy end for the good of mankind in general.”

Read the report:

Note: The report uses the abbreviation “coys” for “companies.” A full-strength Wehrmacht company consisted of 100 to 200 men.

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

Consequently the enemy has been withdrawing between the ORNE and the LAIZE. Yesterday an offr PW from 271 Fus Bn volunteered the information that his Bn had taken part in the counterattack of 8 Aug and had suffered such hy casualties that it might be considered destroyed. He said that in the later stages he was commanding a composite force, from two coys, which totalled only 20 men. He ended his statements by saying "You must think it very wrong for an offr to give information which is likely to prejudice the safety of his comrades, but today I am only concerned with seeking every possible means of bringing the war to a speedy end for the good of mankind in general".

Source Material

From: "7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 61." 10 August 1944 P. 926.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

German Soldiers' Morale: Slowly Declining

In August 1944, Allied intelligence experts found that as the Germans' battlefield defeats added up, their soldiers' fighting spirit began to weaken.

"The growing fear of Russia, their desire to get back to their families is becoming more and more evident," they wrote on August 10, 1944. "Their realization that the war will end soon (not admitting necessarily a German defeat) seems to make the Germans think before capture that captivity is preferable to death, and undermines their will to fight. This is particularly so with the older men, whose numbers are increasing. ... [On the other hand,] the Germans mostly still believe that the V weapons will decide the war. They refuse to admit that it is mostly bluff and insist there must be something in it. So long as hope remains there will be some fight in the German soldier."

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

Morale of PW taken during present battle

The morale of a PW after capture differs from his morale before capture. That would seem to be an obvious statement, but errors in judgement of morale can easily be made, if it is not appreciated that the low morale of the PW when interrogated is due to his realising in most cases only after capture the futility of further fighting. It is the sight of the enormous reserves of material which they see during their journey within captivity that provokes that very popular phrase "Die Materialuberlegenheit ist Kolossal".

The following is an attempt to measure, in terms of "The Will to Fight" the enemy's morale, before and during the present battle, listed according to fms.

- (a) 326 Inf Div. - PW of 326 Inf Div consisted mostly of very experienced soldiers, some with as much as two years service in RUSSIA and some several times wounded. Promised that their sector of the front would be quiet, they were therefore completely overwhelmed when attacked. Their "Will to Fight" however, would appear to have been good, but the choice was between complete annihilation or surrender. The number of deserters was small, and it is difficult to say how many would have deserted had there been a choice. The ofrs and NCOs of the div were good and popular. Food in their sector was excellent.
- (b) 21 Pz Div - The morale of the 21 Pz Div may best be described as bewilderment. Reduced by the hy fighting nr CAEN, the survivors were only reinforced by Russians and personnel from 16 GAF Div, whose morale was non-existent. Consequently their "Will to Fight" was very low.
- (c) 9 SS Pz Div - The morale of the 9 SS Pz Div personnel was high, but had been reduced somewhat by the confusion which reigned in the German lines. Units of the div had no contact with one another, and conscious all the time of their previous hy losses, their "Will to Fight" suffered in consequence. The mixture of Russians in 19 and 20 SS PGRc does not appear to have affected the Germans' "Will to Fight" but did cause them to reconsider

the chances of/5

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

- 5 -

the chances of driving us from FRANCE.

- (d) Para Tps - The morale of the PW from the para firm was curious. Their willingness to fight was reasonably high, but they were, generally speaking, untrained tps. Consequently while "Willing to Fight" the results achieved were pitifully bad.
- (e) 2 Pz Div - Only a few PW were taken and their morale was the highest so far encountered in FRANCE.
- (f) Arty Bns (GHQ Tps) - These bns produced disillusioned tps whose inferiority of arty both in weight and shell they readily admitted.

Generally speaking, therefore their "Will to Fight", which is the main point about morale, is still fairly high. But there are signs of weakening.

The growing fear of RUSSIA, their desire to get back to their families is becoming more and more evident. Their realisation that the war will end soon (not admitting necessarily a German defeat) seems to make the Germans think before capture that captivity is preferable to death, and undermines their will to fight. This is particularly so with the older men, whose numbers are increasing.

On the other hand, rarely does the bombing of their home towns appear to affect the soldiers' morale. The Germans mostly still believe that the V weapons will decide the war. They refuse to admit that it is mostly bluff and insist there must be something in it. So long as hope remains there will be some fight in the German soldier.

(Source: 8 Corps Interrogation Team).

Source Material

From: "7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 61." 10 August 1944 P. 932.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Germans Say U.S. Soldiers ‘Violated Law’

A captured German intelligence report accused Americans of violating international law on Sept. 27, 1944, when a group of 10 or 11 U.S. soldiers in German uniforms allegedly gained entry to a German position.

“... [A] severe violation of international law has been committed,” says the report, “with the purpose of misleading the German troops in an unfair manner.”

Three months later, the Germans did the same thing on a much larger scale in “Operation Greif” at the Battle of the Bulge. See Chapter 53 for a complete discussion of the Battle of the Bulge and Operation Greif.

Read the whole story:

Miscellaneous Intelligence Items (Cont'd)

(4). Captured Documents.

All captured enemy insignia or documents are to be forwarded to Divisional G-2s at once. The same procedure is to be employed in the case of captured weapons, unless they can be put to use at once by frontline troops.

(5). Breach of International Laws by American Troops.

The following facts are published for general acknowledgement and for the purpose of instructions to troops:

Within the Army Group sector American troops have violated an international law. It is immaterial, whether the soldier responsible, employed a German PW under force, or an American, German-speaking soldier, dressed in German uniform.

On 27 Sept 44, at about 2130 a group of 10-11 men appeared under cover of darkness at one of our CP's. The officers and EM present at the CP identified the group as German soldiers and asked them: "Where are you going?" A soldier, dressed in a German uniform, leading the group, answered in fluent German: "Do not shoot, I am bringing some prisoners." Hereafter the approaching group deployed and pointed their guns at the German officers and EM from a distance of about 2-3 meters. At that point, the group was definitely identified to be American soldiers and were challenged to fight.

The German soldier, preceding the group of Americans, was over the distance of two feet clearly identified as wearing a German soldiers uniform. It is to be assumed, that this soldier had been captured by the Americans previously and had been forced into this undertaking.

The possibility, that the soldier in question was American in German uniform, must also be considered. At any rate, a severe violation of international law has been committed, with the purpose of misleading the German troops in an unfair manner.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 79th Infantry Division, "G-2 Periodic Report," 29 November 1944. P. 304.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Second Thoughts

The diary of a captured German sergeant who fought on both the Eastern and Western Fronts showed a man who fought for his country, but with some second thoughts:

“Sept '44 - NORWAY: ... I pray day and night that God will let me see the day when I can do my share in constructive work for this world I have been helping to destroy since 1938 ...

“Oct '44 - DENMARK: ... I feel like an old man, today – not in years but in spirit. I should not have seen all the things I have seen. ... I should be madly in love right now with the most beautiful girl I know, and here I am trying to kill some other girl's beloved or some innocent children's father. That is civilization! ...”

Read more:

The Thinking Sergeant.

The following extracts were translated from the diary of Sgt Heinz FRICK, who appeared in the First US Infantry Division Cage on 26 November. In some ways the prisoner is typical of what has happened to the small free-thinking segment of the German population. It is apparent that he approaches everything (including his own propaganda) with an open mind, yet he is unable or unwilling, to act upon what he believes. In Germany there is no such thing as a conscientious objector. On the contrary, the sergeant fought skilfully and hard and only his diary revealed that he was anything other than a hard-boiled and determined Lanser.

Dec '43 - RUSSIA: the soldier from my platoon was badly wounded and I tried to get him back to the aid-station. A major's car drove up and I stopped it, but the bastard refused to take the soldier because he might get the upholstery bloody..... I spoke to the regimental CO about it and he will investigate the case, but will he have the courage? There must be justice some place. . . .

Feb '44 - NORWAY: This world is really going to pieces. Here I am in a little Norwegian cafe talking to a Norwegian volunteer in the German forces. He openly calls QUISLING a traitor to his country, yet he himself wants to fight to preserve the Aryan race from Bolshevism. Now I ask myself, how can a traitor represent Germany and the German cause? Is QUISLING unworthy of Germany or could it be that Germany has become low enough to be worthy of a QUISLING???. . . .

June '44 - NORWAY: Since the war of 1812 the people of Germany have been fighting for their liberty and the goal has never been reached. Even after "the victory of 1870" we were not satisfied and we had another war in 1914. Is it we who are bringing all this misery to the world or could it be the English? I am trying not to fall for our propaganda, which also has its necessary part in warfare, but I will try to judge apart from politics. Does the world still recognize German Nationalism as separate from Hitlerism? I am beginning to doubt it, but for myself German Nationalism is the equivalent of British Imperialism and for the Americans it must be the "United" part of their United States. I think America has enormous possibilities; it has proven it during the last decades. Come to think of it, Roosevelt can't be so very bad. For Mr. Goebbels naturally, he is a Jew. How silly! But Germany believes it all. Why don't we wake up?

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Sept '44 - NORWAY: I pray day and night that God will let me see the day when I can do my share in constructive work for this world I have been helping to destroy since 1938. I have been destroying Russians mostly and I don't like them - neither do they like us! Funny, I like Marx and I could read his books when we were still able to buy them and understand the Russians' problems. I didn't have to like it. Today we kill each other and settle it that way. . . .

Oct '44 - DENMARK: I feel like an old man, today - not in years but in spirit. I should not have seen all the things I have seen; they are blinding for young people. I should be madly in love right now with the most beautiful girl I know, and here I am trying to kill some other girl's beloved or some innocent children's father. That is civilization! Hurrah, the 20th century is here, it needn't hurry! There was nothing we missed. . . .

En route to AACHEN Sector, Oct '44: I am going to the front. The train continues its monotonous rythm, I am going towards the front. I will meet my fate. Will I get away alive? What have I to look forward to? Is it worthwhile?

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." PP. 126-127

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Surrender of Aachen

On October 21, 1944, Aachen became the first German city to surrender to the Allies. After his surrender, Col. Gerhard Wilck, German commander of Aachen, said German officers were keeping up the fight against the Allies because they were fearful of retribution against their families in Germany.

Wilck cited an example that occurred after failed attempt to kill Adolf Hitler with a bomb at his headquarters on July 20, 1944. An excerpt from his interrogation: "... He had positive knowledge, he said, that every single member of the families of the officers connected with the August [sic] putsch against Hitler had been wiped out. As a close friend of [Field Marshal Erwin] von Witzleben, reputedly the leader of the cabal, he corresponded frequently with both von Witzleben and his family. After the Colonel's [editor's note: the writer meant Field Marshal] execution, all letters to the family were returned marked "Address Unknown." Later, Colonel Wilck learned from mutual friends that the entire family had been executed. ..."

Read more about Wilck's surrender, his message to German troops, and the story of the Nazis' revenge on families:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION



A column of German prisoners marches out of Aachen.

U.S. Signal Corps photo

Part 1: The Surrender Documents

I, Colonel GERHARD WILCK, commander of the German garrison of AACHEN, Germany, hereby surrender as of this hour, all troops, arms, matériel, and fortifications under my command to the United States Army, it being agreed that all said troops will be treated as prisoners of war. Likewise the medical personnel, sick, and wounded are turned over for disposition in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929.

All these troops have been disarmed.

1200 Hours, 21st day of October, 1944, at AACHEN, Germany.

signed/ GERHARD WILCK
Colonel

3. Colonel WILCK then was granted permission to address his men. The text of his speech follows:

Dear German Soldiers:

This is a painful occasion on which I must speak to you. I have been forced to surrender, as ammunition, food, and water are exhausted. I have seen that further fighting would be useless. I have acted against my orders which direct that I would fight to the last man. At this time I wish to remind you that you are German soldiers and to ask that you will always behave as such. I wish you all the best of health and a quick return to our Fatherland when hostilities have ceased so that you may help in the rebuilding of Germany. The American commander has told me that I cannot give you the "Seig Heil" or "Heil Hitler", but we can still do it in our hearts.

4. Colonel WILCK was then evacuated to the 26th Infantry Prisoner of War Cage. A member of his staff with a member of the staff of the 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry, then went into the enemy lines and began gathering up small groups which had not yet heard of the surrender. Several hundred more prisoners were gathered up in this manner.

ANNEX #5

(Commanding Officer Battle Group AACHEN)

1. Colonel GERHARD WILCK, commanding officer of the 246th Infantry Division and ex officio commandant of the city of AACHEN, who surrendered the city and its defenders to the 1st U.S. Infantry Division on 21 October, is an inadvertent spokesman for the confused loyalties which motivate many of the German officers now passing through our prisoner of war cages. As a soldier of 28 years' experience and discipline, he obeyed orders from higher echelons without question of default. On the other hand he was

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

well aware of the military futility of many of these orders and appreciated the dismal situation of the German army today as a product of the rattle-brained strategy of his Commander-in-chief, Hitler. The climax of this conflict came yesterday when the Colonel, after two hours interrogation at the prisoner of war cage, broke into tears while discussing the present position of Germany in the war.

2. In spite of his emotional collapse, Colonel WILCK remained secure, so far as military information was concerned, refusing to give the location, identification or composition of other units on his sector of the front. He was, however, perfectly willing to discuss his defense of AACHEN. According to his record, this is the story of that defense. Lt. Col. LYHERR, the officer who turned down the ultimatum for the surrender of the city, was relieved of command shortly after the ultimatum was served. Colonel WILCK did not know the reasons for the relief, but observed wryly that it was probably effected in order to decorate LYHERR for retreating slowly and skillfully or to cashier him for retreating at all. In any case, Colonel WILCK, as commander of the 246th Division, the main holding force in the city, was given both civilian and military command of the city. He entered the city alone, leaving the rest of his division staff at the command post northeast of WURSELEN, on the afternoon of 11 October. Colonel WILCK knew very well that in taking command of the city he had been handed the dirty end of the stick; two days later, in fact, he radioed his Corps headquarters advocating surrender, or as an alternate, fighting his troops out of the city by the northeast, a course which had a chance at the time. He was turned down flatly on both counts. When asked why he had not surrendered the city at the time anyway instead of waiting eight days to do just that, he replied stiffly that his conscience, plus 28 years' service, plus the prospect of a generalship, forbade it. He added that he had been ordered to hold to the last man, and that the order to take over the city had come directly from the Fuehrer's headquarters. In any case, after his suggestion to surrender had been rejected, Colonel WILCK got down to the business of defending the city as best he could. The forces at his disposal consisted for the most part of elements of the three regiments of his division: the 404th Regiment in the north, the 689th Regiment in the south and the 352d in the east. In addition there were several other make-shift units, like Battle-Group Rink, a machine gun fortress battalion and a replacement battalion. The force was not as imposing as it sounds: the 689th Regiment was composed exclusively of old men and cripples, and the 352d Regiment had already been decimated in the fighting. (The job was completed, except for a half-dozen headquarters officers, during the siege). Colonel WILCK set up his headquarters in the Quellenhof Hotel, where a considerable supply of food and ammunition had been stored. Shortly after the ultimatum was served on the city on 17 October, fighter-bombers and self-propelled 155s made the Quellenhof untenable, and the command post was moved to a bunker on the northeast edge of the city. Previously on 15 October the last supplies had reached the city and the last wounded

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

evacuated. From here Colonel WILCK conducted the rest of his retreat until the morning of 21 October, when his daily strength reports showed a total of no more than 500 men, and his ration and ammunition returns indicated that the city could last no longer than six hours. During the entire operation Colonel WILCK was in radio communication with his Corps headquarters. Just prior to the surrender, however, he ordered the radio set dismantled without telling Corps of his decision to give up. (Although Colonel WILCK's strength reports showed only 500 men, nearly 1600 prisoners were taken from the city after the surrender; the balance had become lost, cut off, or had just quit and gone into hiding). Asked why he had not informed his headquarters of the surrender of the city, Colonel WILCK replied that with no word from him, Corps would presume him killed in action, and therefore not responsible for the defection. "I wish I had been killed", he added. "It is difficult for a German officer of 28 years' service to end up in a prison cage". (It was noted, however, that before his evacuation to the rear from Division the Colonel was again back on his feet and perking up considerably).

3. Colonel WILCK admitted that the American strategy of forcing the city from the east was very effective. Originally, when plans for the defense of AACHEN were discussed, it was assumed that the main assault would come from the south. As it was, the German dispositions were fixed, during the day at least, by constant air cover over the city. The chief shock to the defenders, Colonel WILCK said, came from the self-propelled 155s, and tanks. The Colonel spoke with considerable consternation of the 155mm self-propelled rifles. A shell from one of them, he said, pierced three houses completely before exploding and wrecking a fourth. In fact, the Colonel was pretty well dismayed at the vast amount and mechanical excellence of all American materiel. Identification of the American divisions closing on AACHEN had been made some time before the final assault began. He had no previous experience with the First Division but his adjutant, who had dealings with the Division in Africa, had assured him that it was a tough nut indeed and probably the best division in the American Army.

4. It was while discussing the dissimilar situations of the American and German armies that an emotional catharsis overtook the Colonel. The fabric of the German Army, he said, is disintegrating at an ever-increasing rate. The most critical shortage exists in officer material. Not only do present organizations suffer from this lack but there is no prospect of improvement. As for the quality of the troops, the Colonel pointed out that one only has to consider the 689th Regiment of his division, all of which was physically unfit for combat. The picture of the home front is no brighter; Germany is being run by a group of ruthless civilians who have not the slightest concern for the welfare of the German people. The military value of the defense of AACHEN--to permit time for construction of defenses before COLOGNE--was vastly outweighed by the Party value of the defense--to stave off the civilian conviction that no city in Germany was safe from eventual assault.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

5. Like several officers before him, Colonel WILCK expressed a willingness to assist the Americans in a quick conclusion of the war, except for one factor, his fear of reprisals on his family in Germany. He had positive knowledge, he said, that every single member of the families of the officers connected with the August putsch against Hitler had been wiped out. As a close friend of von WITZLEBEN, reputedly the leader of the cabal, he corresponded frequently with both von WITZLEBEN and his family. After the Colonel's execution, all letters to the family were returned marked "Address Unknown". Later Colonel WILCK learned from mutual friends that the entire family had been executed. The only cement which holds many German officers in place is fear, he said, not only for their own lives, but of reprisals against their families at HIMMLER's hands.

6. At the depths of his despondency, Colonel WILCK admitted that Germany was washed up. The "V" weapons, upon which German propaganda leans so heavily, can be no more than harassing weapons, of no effect in the final outcome. "Only America can save us, as I don't believe in miracles any longer", he said. He was asked if German resistance, then, was nearly at low ebb, and the old conflict of military discipline and rational thinking cropped up again. "Even if you surround them in pockets, the German soldier will fight to the end to carry out the Fuehrer's orders", he said.

Part 2: The Revenge Order

A week before Wilck's surrender, Generalmajor Knut Eberding, commander of the German 64th Infantry Division, which was fighting in Holland, issued an order that civilian authorities in Germany will be told of any deserter and the deserter's "next-of-kin will be looked upon as enemies of the German people." The order's last paragraph: "This order is to be read to all troops by 1500 hours and reported, and as soon as read to all troops, at once destroyed."

Very Top Secret!

A recently captured order from the other end of the front on deserters is signed by EBERDING, the commander of 64 Infantry Division who is known to have been still with his troops in the BRESKENS bridgehead on 13 October. The order is translated as follows:

VERY TOP SECRET

14 October 44

Since it has happened that in many platoons soldiers of the German Army have given themselves up (deserted) to the enemy, and because this is a condition which cannot be tolerated, since we must hold the bridgehead on the SCHELDE WEST in order to hinder the enemy's advance towards ANTWERP and gain time for the homeland to prepare for a satisfactory conclusion of the war I hereby command that in cases where the names of deserters are ascertained, their names will be made known to the civilian population at home and their next-of-kin will be looked upon as enemies of the German people. I order all company commanders to carry out this order in strictest manner and to see that their own orders are carried out, at the point of a gun if necessary.

This order is to be read to all troops by 1500 hours and reported, and as soon as read to all troops, at once destroyed.

(signed) EBERDING.

(Source: SHAEF Weekly Intelligence
Summary #32)

Source Material

Part 1

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." PP. 85-88.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Part 2

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 114.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Aachen: ‘As Dead As A Roman Ruin’

On October 20, 1944, Army Lt. Robert G. Botsford toured the bombed-out streets of Aachen—the first German city to fall to the Allies—and described it in his report:

“The city is as dead as a Roman ruin, but unlike a ruin it has none of the grace of gradual decay. The end of Aachen came so suddenly and so completely that it is now of no historic interest except as an object lesson in the power and application of modern warfare.”

Read the full report:



American soldiers mop up German resistance in Aachen.

Courtesy of the George C. Marshall Foundation, Lexington, Virginia.

ANNEX #3
(The City of AACHEN)

The following report on the present condition of AACHEN, submitted by Lt. ROBERT G. BOTSFORD of the G-2 Section, is based on a four hour survey of the city on the afternoon of 20 October 1944.

1. The customary terms in figuring damage to a building--monetary value or a detailed inventory of the wreckage--cannot be applied even in extension to the city of AACHEN as it now stands

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

after twelve days of assault by bombing and artillery. The city is as dead as a Roman ruin, but unlike a ruin it has none of the grace of gradual decay. The end of AACHEN came so suddenly and so completely that it is now of no historic interest except as an object lesson in the power and application of modern warfare. The products of more recent civilization have only increased the disaster. Burst sewers, broken gas mains and dead animals have raised an almost overpowering smell in many parts of the city. The streets are paved with shattered glass; telephone, electric light and trolley cables are dangling and netted together everywhere, and in many places wrecked cars, trucks, armored vehicles and guns litter the streets.

2. Most of the streets of AACHEN are impassable, except on foot; many of the narrower alleys are impassable by any means at all. A few of the main thoroughfares are still open to vehicular traffic, chiefly because they are wide enough to permit passage around buildings which have sprawled into the street. Although it is true that some sections of the city have suffered less than others, comparison can only be set in terms of damaged or destroyed. In a tour through four-fifths of the city, not one building was observed which had been untouched by blast at least, and many sections, of course, had been piled into shapeless rubble by saturation bombing. It is hard to estimate how much of the damage now evident was caused by air raids before the land assault on the city began because many buildings which had been left only shells were completely knocked over in the last ten days. A rough figure, however, would be about 60%. Oddly enough, several sections (the eastern end of Adelbertstein Way, for instance) which were untouched in the recent battering, were completely gutted by earlier raids. Grass is already sprouting up in the rubble inside the walls of these buildings. Much of the litter in the streets in this area was caused by the fact that the Germans had made somewhat listless efforts to repair earlier raid damage, or at least sweep it out of the way. Piles of debris have been shored up along the gutters without much method. In one place on the Adelbertstein Way an automobile has been buried under the rubble by a street clearing crew too harried to take time to remove it. Vegetation is already growing in the upholstery. In some cases the Germans attempted full-scale repairs on isolated buildings. A house in the vicinity of the Munster Cathedral is a case in point. Although only one wall is now standing, a three-sided scaffolding had been erected and piles of new bricks indicate that the work was well in progress when the last crusher came. These buildings in the center of town which were not hit directly have suffered from blast; they look as though they had been picked up, shaken vigorously and slapped down into place again. In most cases the roofs have peeled off and the floors have caved in. In general, the buildings which have stood up best are those built in the weighty Victorian period like the Deutches bank on Ursuliner Street and the newly erected state buildings like the town library and local courthouse. Nearly all of the older and "picturesque" part of the city has ceased to exist.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

3. Destruction of historic and ecclesiastic monuments was inevitable. Only one church of the half dozen seen was in any shape at all, and that was possibly the ugliest church in AACHEN, St. Joseph's. Damage to the great Munster Cathedral on Munsterplatz, however, is probably more apparent than real. All the stained glass windows, of course, are shattered, but since these were only installed in the middle of the 19th Century, the loss is not irreparable. The vault over the main altar of the church appears to be firm, in spite of one direct artillery hit which pierced the groining. The main entrances to the church had been baffled by brick walls against blast damage; these appeared to have been effective for the interior of the Cathedral, although covered with dust and plaster from the ceiling, is in good shape. It is evident that the Cathedral was shaken by previous bombings; most of the main pillars supporting the arches have been reinforced. The central court and graveyard have been uprooted and taken over by a flock of chickens, all of which feel equally at home inside the church and hop through the broken casements at will. From discarded pieces of equipment and traces of food, it is apparent that German soldiers have been living in the Cathedral. Other old buildings in the near vicinity of the Cathedral have not fared so well. The town hall directly to the north has been hit repeatedly and the steel framework of its spire has collapsed and is hanging over the edge of the roof. This building is still slowly falling apart, and pieces of masonry give way every time a gun is fired nearby. Of St. Foillan's just west of the Cathedral there remains nothing but a spire and two walls.

4. If the damage to the church section of AACHEN is severe, it is nothing compared to the destruction evident in the palatial lay part of the city—along Manheims Allee and the Quellenhof Hotel and Spa. This is the elegant residential section of the city and of imposing and heavy mansions which line the boulevard there is hardly one which has not been blown apart and collapsed. The strip of park between the two lanes of the boulevard has been pocked and cratered, trees have been snapped off at the trunk, and medics are still carrying off German dead laid on the beaten grass. The dead horse in front of the portecochere of the Quellenhof has very obviously been there for several days. The Quellenhof is a vast, sprawling and luxurious building where a simple room and bath, with meals, cost the equivalent of \$16 a day, according to the price list still hanging on the bedroom doors. Adolf Hitler stayed at the hotel on his visits to AACHEN, and it was military headquarters for the AACHEN district until the fighter-bombers arrived. The main lobby now is a maelstrom of discarded German clothing, weapons, food, and broken furniture. The red brocade wall hangings have been peeled off, either by blast or by Germans looking for blankets. Not one of the oil paintings of hunting scened in the main reading room has fewer than a half dozen bullet holes in it. The gilt frescos on the pillars supporting the ceiling have been chipped off and several pillars have been snapped by fire which blew a gaping hole in the west wall of the building. Upstairs the curtains, valences and hangings of all the \$16 bedrooms have been torn and

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

draped across the rooms; the piping for toilets, washbasins, baths and towel-warmers in the \$16 bathrooms has been broken and twisted. Many of the ceilings have collapsed, and only rarely does a patch of the basic thick red carpet in the halls appear through the pile of dust and plaster.

5. There is tacit evidence that the civilians who elected to remain in AACHEN during the final days of the assault made desperate efforts to get away from the terror. Ordinary air-raid shelters, designed for a temporary stay until the all-clear, were packed to overflowing by civilians who moved into them permanently, if the pile of personal belongings left behind can be believed. Most of them, however, rocked by the blast, leaked badly and are now a foot deep in water. In many places in town civilians erected temporary sheds in the streets out of the debris lying everywhere. These sheds were protection against nothing but the rain, but because of lack of roofs in the city, getting out of the rain at all was an achievement. The most imposing shelters were the air-raid bunkers constructed by the government--four story buildings of solid cement with no windows and only limited ventilation through three-inch pipes. Civilians were packed into these, along with all their belongings until not another one could be squeezed in. Today the shelters show the appalling conditions under which the civilians lived during the siege. There was no electricity, and since the walls were absolutely sealed off to light, candles and lanterns were the only lights possible night or day. The water system collapsed early and any practical form of sanitation was impossible. The stench produced by the lack of sanitation, overcrowding and strictly limited ventilation is understandably nauseating.

6. There is no question that AACHEN, after the tottering buildings have been demolished by the engineers and after the rubble has been bulldozed off the main thoroughfares, will equal any of the destroyed towns and villages in Normandy.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 114.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Allies 'Re-Establish Parental Authority' in Aachen

As 1st Infantry Division authorities prepared to take control of Aachen, they were concerned that German teenagers might attack Allied soldiers or vandalize their equipment. They posted signs in the city warning, "Parents will be held responsible for any offense committed by Juveniles under 16 years of age." Commanders added that such a policy would also help to "reestablish parental authority in place of the previous state control of German youth."

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

19 October Bishop Johannes Joseph van der Velden of Aachen and Staff transported from Brand civilian center to Kloster Maria Hilf, Moreanet La Chapelle. In view of the fact that there may be hostile acts committed by Juveniles against our troops in occupied Germany, the following proposed notice was forwarded for consideration and recommendation, "Parents will be held responsible for any offense committed by Juveniles under 16 years of age". It will also help to reestablish parental authority in place of the previous state control of German youth.

Source Material

From: Headquarters 1st U.S. Infantry Division, Military Government Section.
“Monthly Report of Activities,” 1 November 1944.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum’s digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Nazis in Disguise

On October 22, 1944, Nazi party officials ordered high-ranking Nazis to turn over their uniforms so they could be dyed the same color as the uniforms worn by the Volkssturm, the German national militia, in an effort to escape identification upon capture by the Allies. New hats were also being manufactured to replace the caps the Nazi officials wore.

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

d. Wehrmacht and SA Fashion Notes

According to a document picked up by Third U. S. Army: Nazi officials and SA members are attempting to escape identification by becoming members of the Volksturm. Coats with peaks are being manufactured to replace old Nazi party and SA caps. Uniforms now in possession of Nazi officials and SA members will be kept but will be dyed the color of the Volksturm uniform. The document was a letter headed: Subject--Dyeing of Uniforms, dated 24 Oct 44. Addressed to all Ortsgruppenleiter, it was signed by Kreisleiter BEURK. The Ortsgruppen were ordered to remove all insignia and turn the uniforms over to the Kreisleitung by 29 Oct. Uniforms were to be returned by counties within about a week...The 90th Inf Div reports the capture of PW vic OBERESCH (Q1589) wearing the new reversible coat which is field gray on one side and white on the reverse side.

(Source: VII Corps G-2 Periodic Report No. 175)

Source Material

From: 104th Infantry Division, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 35," P. 64 .

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Feeling Was Mutual

In October 1944, several Russian prisoners of war from the 360th Cossack Grenadier Regiment, which was fighting for the Nazis, explained that they surrendered because couldn't stand serving with Germans.

A few days later some German prisoners admitted that they also had deserted because they hadn't had any rations for five days and they were fed up with serving with Cossacks.

Read more:



These Russians were captured in France after fighting for Germany. Note that the man on the left has removed the Nazi emblem from his jacket.

Courtesy of the George C. Marshall Foundation, Lexington, Virginia.

Love's Labor Lost.

When asked why they had deserted, several Russian PWs from 360 Cossack Regiment explained that they couldn't stand serving with the Germans. A few days later some German PWs admitted that they also had deserted; reasons - no rations for five days, and they were fed up serving with Cossacks. (Source: SHAEF)

Source Material

From: From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 126.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The 1944 U.S. Presidential Election

A prisoner of war told U.S. interrogators that on November 6, 1944, his Panzergrenadier regiment received an order to fire all of its weapons as often as possible the following day, November 7, in an attempt to prevent soldiers from voting in the presidential election between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Thomas E. Dewey.

After Roosevelt was re-elected, a group of German prisoners of war was polled and found to be unanimously supporting Roosevelt's re-election. Why? "If America had a new President, she would withdraw from the war," a prisoner said. "Then Germany would win—and we'd have to go back and be shot as deserters."

Read the reports:

Part 1

Morale Note For Young Republican and/or Democrat Clubs.

A prisoner of war states that on Monday, 6 November, an order came down to his battalion from 8 Panzer Grenadier Regiment to the effect that all weapons were to be fired to capacity, thereby simulating a counter-attack in order to make it impossible for U.S. troops to vote in the Presidential election. (Source: First Army)

Part 2

Credit Where Credit Is Due!

A poll conducted at the First US Army cage on 8 November to determine reaction of prisoners to election news showed unanimous approval of the President's reelection. When asked why they were so pleased, prisoners commented: "If America had a new President, she would withdraw from the war. Then Germany would win - and we'd have to go back and be shot as deserters."

Source Material

Part 1

From: From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 121.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Part 2

From: From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 120.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

That's Quite a Resumé

One German soldier captured in November 1944 had made the grand tour of the German armed forces, moving from assignment to assignment as each unit became obsolete. In order, he served in a German seaplane unit, a German coast guard unit, air force search and rescue, air force as a pilot, and the army as a paratrooper and later as an infantryman, which is what he was when captured.

Read more:

Variety Is The Spice Of Life.

The curious case of a prisoner who was successively transferred to every branch of the German armed forces, only to have each branch dwindle away from under him, turned up in the First US Infantry Division cage. The prisoner first enlisted in the German navy in 1939 and was trained as a small boat coxswain working at a seaplane base in SCHLESWIG. When the seaplanes were retired from service because of their high losses to Allied aircraft, the prisoner was transferred to the German version of the Coast Guard operating in the Black Sea. When the Black Sea became unhealthy for German craft, the prisoner was assigned to the Air-Sea Rescue branch of the Luftwaffe, operating over the North Sea. Explaining his next switch, the prisoner said, "When Germany lost her Navy there were no more sailors to be rescued." He was then moved inland and completed a preliminary pilot's course in the Luftwaffe. Just before he started advanced training last September he was told that pilots were a drug on the market on account of the shortages of airplanes, and that he was being transferred to the paratroopers. This new career lasted no longer than any of the others. He was captured as an infantryman yesterday.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 129.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Drone Tank Attack!

One of the Germans' less-heralded "secret weapons" was the Borgward IV, an unmanned, remote-controlled tank that was designed to approach an enemy, drop off an explosive charge, then scurry away before the charge exploded. The B4, as it was known to Americans, was operated by radio and the largest of a family of remote-controlled vehicles used by the Germans.

Allied intelligence was extremely interested in the vehicles and circulated a fascinating account of an attack by a swarm of B4s in France, probably against British or Canadian positions, in late July or early August 1944.

The B4 was driven near the attack area by a human driver, then controlled the rest of the way by radio from an accompanying tank. The radio range was just over half a mile. The vehicle weighed three tons and carried a maximum payload of just under 1,000 pounds. It was used not only against enemy troops but also to lead human-occupied tanks through minefields.

The account refers to a PIAT: This was a British hand-held anti-tank weapon (Projector, Infantry, Anti Tank). It also mentions Typhoons: These were British ground-attack aircraft.

Read the report:



A captured Borgward IV remote-controlled tank in France, 1944.

2. ENEMY METHODS.

Tactical Employment of B 4 Equipment.

(i) Enemy Int.

During the day before the attack the enemy increased somewhat his efforts to determine detailed dispositions along the sector raided. This was done in one area by moving a single tk back and forth under our observation in an attempt to draw fire. Similar incidents were reported elsewhere in the same general area. Some increase in sniping activity was also reported.

(ii) Approach.

The move to the forming up area was probably made the day before the raid and was adequately concealed by normal MT and AFV activity. Exaggerated tk and other veh noises were used periodically during the night directly opposite the target area to help conceal movement from the forming up area to the assault posn. Single hv vchs were heard shortly after midnight moving among enemy FDLs directly opposite the target. The assault posn itself was either in or in front of the enemy FDLs - far enough forward to be safe during the night from our Typhoons. Veh noises just before the raid gave our tps only very short warning.

(iii) Cam

During at least part of the approach phase the B4s were dressed up as haystacks. One "mobile haystack" was reported the evening before the raid and eye-witnesses of the assault noticed bits of hay and straw stuck to the eqpt. While in the final assault posn the B4s were concealed under large sheets of green and light brown mottled paper-like material. These sheets were not removed completely but simply thrown back over the rear of the eqpts when they went into action.

(iv) The Assault.

The raid was made between 310800 and 310830 - in broad daylight. A total of 12 B4s were observed, 6 of which assaulted our posns, approaching from a small pocket of dead ground on a flank in staggered single file fm. The other six withdrew, apparently after the first wave reached the target area. In the immediate approach the B4s moved across our front at a speed of about 15 mph and at distances of 15 - 40 yds from our fwd pl areas. Only two of the eqpts veered across our line before exploding, and in both cases penetration was not more than a few yds. At least two of the other four exploded or were destroyed while moving parallel to and from 15-40 yds from our front. Another turned away from our lines after the approach, stopped for a few seconds, started off again towards our posn, and then parallel to it. It finally exploded after being stopped by a stone wall off our flank.

(v) Eyewitness Comments on B4

The following are extracts from eye-witness reports of the "beetle tank" raid on a coy posn on our front on the morning of 31 Jul 44:-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

"PIAT fired at tk as it approached. Tk blew up 75 yds out from posn - PIAT hit or near hit may have caused this explosion. Another also blew up in front or directly SOUTH of pl lines. It is my impression that controls worked prematurely, the tk having been intended to reach our lines first. A third tk came straight in pl lines, hit hedgerow and stopped for a few seconds before exploding, when it blew in several slit trenches and apparently killed or wounded at least four men; one man was found dead in slit trench, although he may have been partially exposed to cover his front."

"Six were seen coming across our front. One made a left turn and stopped in hedge. Two stopped in front of another pl and one in hedge by Coy HQ. Another came in and circled back and then continued on to our flank. They were the size of our universal carriers and very much the same in appearance. The only way I could tell they were GERMAN was by the paint which was green and light brown. The explosions were terrific and pieces weighing 50 lbs were hurled about 50 - 60 yds. Vehs broke up into many pieces. Speed approx 15 to 20 mph. One veh carried an aerial with a flag on it."

NOTE: A PW from 7/1 SS PCR of 1 SS Pz Div, taken in the early morning of 1 Aug stated he could see B4 eqpt from the church at U 025607. He said that when the Germans are about to use B4s, a GREEN FLARE goes up and all ground tps take cover.

(Source: 1 Corps I.S. No 52)

Source Material

From: 7th Armored Division Intelligence Summary No. 61, 10 Aug. 1944. Part 2, PP. 2-3.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

What's a Volksgrenadier Division?

By early December 1944, U.S. forces were facing the Germans' newest fighting units, Volksgrenadier Divisions. This article gives their history as well as how they were formed, trained and equipped.

The divisions usually consisted of cores of older units that suffered severe casualties and were rebuilt with recruits from all over the German armed forces—navy and air force as well as army—and newly drafted teenagers. The 8,000-to-10,000-man units got a little infantry training and were expected to be used to defend Germany rather than have any offensive capabilities.

Read the complete article:

Incl 6 to
Periodic Report 179.

THE VOLKSGRENADIER DIVISION

A. PREFACE:

Sufficient information has been obtained on the Volksgrenadier division to warrant an additional discussion on this type organization at this time. A comparative chart of German infantry divisions was published as Inclosure #2 to periodic report No 168.

The question "When are 10,000 Germans a Volksgrenadier Division?" must have been puzzling to methodical German officers as it is to Allied Intelligence Agencies because every day more and more German divisions are laying claim to the title.

In contrast to these divisions are those true Volksgrenadier divisions which have been officially called Volksgrenadier since their activation or reformation.

There follows in the succeeding paragraphs a brief discussion of German Army divisions that preceded this latest type organization as well as a review of the Volksgrenadier Division.

B. HISTORY OF INFANTRY DIVISIONS IN THE GERMAN ARMY:

1. The original German infantry division which was observed early in the war and as late as 1942, was organized on a basis of three infantry regiments each with three battalions. The strength of this organization was approximately 17,000 men. Early in 1942 the German General Staff realized that the strength of this unit could not be maintained from available manpower sources. Consequently, they began to consider means of reducing the Division T/O to a level that could be maintained in practice. As a result the Infantry Division (new style) was brought into being late in 1943.

2. The strength of this Infantry Division (new style) was established at about 13,000, effecting a saving of about 4,000 men. This cut in personnel was obtained by first reducing the strength of each infantry battalion from 854 to 700 and secondly by reducing the number of infantry battalions from nine (9) to six (6), or two per regiment. Instead of the usual three (3). Additional reductions were made in other units and certain changes in the Division T/O as a whole was effected. The most noteworthy of these changes were; the Recon battalion was replaced by a Fusilier battalion, assault guns were placed in the anti-tank battalion and a field reinforcement battalion was established.

Although this type division was superseded in the Spring of 1944 the main features of this organization have been retained in the three succeeding models.

3. The German Infantry Division, 1944 type was scheduled to be activated in March 1944. However, captured orders directing the change over in the 71st Infantry Division was dated 11 May 1944. This unit had a T/O strength of 12,772 and differed only slightly from its predecessor. All infantry divisions in existence before July 44 are still organized along these lines. Divisions organized on this T/O suffering normal casualties will probably requisition replacements to bring it up to its authorized T/O. However, if a division is badly decimated and has to be withdrawn from the line and reformed it will very likely reappear as a Volksgrenadier Division. Recent developments indicate that the transformation to a Volksgrenadier Division may be ordered even though the division concerned has not suffered particularly heavy casualties.

~~SECRET~~

- 6 -

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

4. The Grenadier Divisions first made their appearance when HIMMLER took control of the German manpower situation in July 1944. He initiated the formation of four waves of infantry divisions, all on increasingly economical tables of organization. The title "Grenadier" appears to have been applied to those divisions formed at the beginning of this program. These units were also known as SFERR (Emergency) Divisions. These divisions were on a slightly larger T/O than the Volksgrenadier Division that immediately succeeded them. Some twenty divisions of this type have been identified. Many of these divisions were used as cadres for, or transferred into Volksgrenadier Divisions while still in their early stages of formation. This type of division now appears to be passing into the background with its predecessors.

5. The Volksgrenadier Divisions were the organizations formed or reformed later in Himmler's program of rejuvenation. It appears that the title of Volksgrenadier is now given to any division which, having been severely shot up and depleted, has to be withdrawn from the line for reorganization and replacements.

a. Personnel.

The term "people's army" appears to be well merited by the varied assortment of personnel observed in these units. The personnel found in these divisions are made up of convalescents, screened war workers, the German Air Force and naval personnel, men from disbanded units, volksdeutsche and young recruits, all of which are added to the remnants of the original division to form the new Volksgrenadier Division. Young, fresh and healthy naval troops have been present in nearly all true Volksgrenadier divisions and in many have been the real backbone of the fighting troops. Some German Air Force personnel have appeared in nearly all of these groups but not in the proportion to the numbers furnished by the Navy. One of the more common methods of entrance is the absorption of a German Air Force unit or battlegroup after a division has suffered losses. Re-cuperating soldiers, funneled through the replacement system have been a feature of all divisions of this type, and, with schools has probably been the chief source of non-commissioned officer material. Another interesting feature is the presence of former service men and young recruits. These two sources provide the higher and lower age brackets. A considerable proportion of the former service men saw action in the Blitzkrieg days of 1939-40 and were returned to industry after the initial German successes. This places the average age of this group in their late twenties or early thirties. The smallest portion of the personnel has come from Volksdeutsche and foreigners. This, of course, is dependent to a large extent on where the division was originally formed or reconstituted.

b. Training.

One of the outstanding weaknesses of these Volksgrenadier Divisions has been their training cycle; four (4) weeks minimum, six (6) weeks average, and eight (8) weeks maximum training has been the rule. Divisions have been committed in the line as they were needed regardless of whether they were ready or not. The results are as expected, lack of familiarity and confidence in weapons, ignorance of unit personnel and organization, fluctuating morale and discipline, and a lack of individual and unit aggressiveness. Consequently, potentially good divisions, had they been even satisfactorily trained, have been dissipated. In other words one would almost assume that these divisions were designed to be destroyed.

c. Organization and Equipment.

The more important differences between the Volksgrenadier Division and the Regular German Infantry Division are as indicated below:

- (1) The Mailier Company
- (2) Light Companies with two (2) Machine Pistol platoons, one (1) light machine gun platoon and no heavy machine guns nor mortars

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

~~SECRET~~

- (3) Heavy companies with heavy machine guns, 8.1cm mortars, 7.5cm infantry guns and no 12cm mortars.
- (4) Infantry gun companies with 7.5cm infantry guns and 12cm mortars.
- (5) Artillery regiment with:
 - (a) One battalion of three (3) troops each with six (6) 7.5cm anti-tank guns.
 - (b) Two (2) battalions each with two troops of 6 - 10.5cm gun Hows.
 - (c) One (1) battalion of two troops each with 6 - 15cm Hows.
- (6) Limited transport:
 - (a) Strength.

While reliable information is not complete on actual strengths of the Volksgrenadier Division details of the infantry organization are listed below.

Regiment	1,855
Battalion	642
Lt Company	119
Hy Company	194
Inf Gun Co	197
AT Co	167
Hq & Hq Co	207
Fus Co	200

Division 10,500 (estimated)

Some discrepancies have appeared as to the actual strength of these divisions. One source indicates an organization as listed above while other sources show a strength of approximately 8,000.

C. CONCLUSIONS:

The Actual Volksgrenadier divisions, specifically designed as defensive organizations with young personnel needing only infantry training, and adjusted to the everdecreasing German manpower situation and transportation difficulties presents an acceptable solution to a difficult problem. Sufficient equipment has been provided, except transportation for these divisions since they were designed as defensive divisions and their employment as reserves to be moved back and forth across the front was not considered.

The tendency to rename other divisions as Volksgrenadier Divisions probably indicates the intended or actual reorganization to a more modest type organization. In such a case the original Volksgrenadier Divisions would have personnel and organization in common while the later divisions would have only organization.

(See: AF HQ Int Notes #83, SHAEF Int Notes #37)

Source Material

From: Headquarters, VII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 179," 1 December 1944.
Inclusion 6.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Germans Run Short of Infantry

In November 1944, near the German town of Julich, the 1st Infantry Division faced its first Volksgrenadier Division. These were hurriedly thrown together units of a variety of servicemen given rudimentary infantry training; this one was created just a few weeks earlier and consisted of German air force personnel, including some pilots, sailors from the German navy and a small percentage of experienced infantrymen.

The Americans were anxious to see how these units would perform. The answer: Not well.

The new unit ran into problems from the start: Partisans dynamited the railroad lines, delaying the division's trip to the battlefield; when it finally arrived, the division's advance party was captured; one regiment was practically wiped out when U.S. units allowed the inexperienced German infantrymen to approach within 25 to 50 yards of their positions before opening fire; and German artillery fired into their own lines. One captured lieutenant said, "You shot more artillery ammunition than we expended rifle ammunition."

Read the report:

ANNEX #5

(The Rise and Fall of the 47 Volksgrenadier Division)

1. The 47th Infantry Division was originally stationed in the CALAIS area where it was formed in March 1943. From there it was sent to defend PARIS; it arrived too late. Then it was given the job of fighting a delaying action east of the SEINE and was buried in the MONS pocket. The Division Commanding General, Major General WAHLE, was captured by the 1st Infantry Division, and the remnants of the Division were sent to DENMARK for reorganization. The new 47 Volksgrenadier Division was designed to rectify the bad reputation of its former namesake. The new division included no foreigners and no grandfathers; it was offered the cream of the crop of the German youth. GOERING contributed a quota of excellent men, even trained pilots, and DOENITZ sent along a large group of trained Navy men. The majority of the officers and non-commissioned officers were drawn from the ranks of experienced Russia fighters. The Division received new equipment and the most modern weapons in large quantities.

2. The troubles of the new division started shortly after it left DENMARK on 10 November. Danish patriots dynamited the railroad lines at two places, and the division was held up for a day.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Nor did the advance detail of the division, which had been sent forward previously, fare any better. The majority of its personnel was captured while surveying the positions of the 12th Infantry Division which they were to relieve. The main body of the division arrived on 15 November, the day before our offensive. The 2d Battalion, 104th Regiment, for instance, detrained at JULICH at 1000, 16 November; two hours later, the railroad station did not exist. The 1st Battalion, 104th Regiment, detrained at ELSDORF during our air attack on 16 November; fortunately for them, our bombs missed their objectives. On the other hand, the 3d Battalion of the 147th Artillery Regiment was misdirected to JULICH, and it arrived just in time for our Air Corps reception. As a result, the 3d Battalion will not see much action in this campaign. The original plan called for the 47th Volksgrenadier Division to relieve the 12th Infantry Division on 16 November. This was impossible due to our heavy attack and concentrated artillery fire. Then came a series of conflicting orders. One battalion was ordered to occupy a position in a certain sector; 3 hours later, when the battalion was well on its way, it was recalled and ordered to attack in a different sector. The regimental commanding officers gave out one set of orders, and Corps had its own ideas. In the meantime, in good weather our air force was having a field day, and our artillery was making good use of its ammunition. On 18 November, orders to relieve the 12th Division were issued again and carried out amidst great confusion. As our troops overran the German line the units of the Volksgrenadier Division were unable to occupy fixed prepared positions, but found themselves in a sector which they had not had time to reconnoiter. The 1st Battalion, 104th Regiment found its nemesis on Hill 232. The Germans advanced to within 25-50 yards of our positions before fire was opened. Practically the entire 1st Battalion was wiped out within minutes, and the dead almost exceeded the number of prisoners of war taken. The 2d Battalion, 103d Regiment met an almost similar fate at SCHERPENSEEL and to add insult to injury, the German artillery fired into their own lines there. Communications to the rear were disrupted; regimental commanders did not know where their battalions were and vice versa. The artillery forward observers never located their own infantry, and in addition, their guns were reluctant to fire on account of the constant vigil of our air force.

3. First Lieutenant SCHUTKOWSKI, commander of 4th Company, 104th Regiment, said: "Not even during our worst crisis in RUSSIA did I experience such utter confusion and such drastic failures on the part of responsible German commanders." 1st Lieutenant BERG-BOLD, commander of 1st Company, 104th Regiment, said: "It was all mixed up; I did not know what was going on on my right or left nor

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

did I know what was in front of me, but still I was ordered to attack." Lieutenant LUMEN from 2d Battalion headquarters, 104th Regiment, said: "You shot more artillery ammunition than we expended rifle ammunition." All prisoners had high praise for our artillery; they claim it to be most accurate and effective. The first few prisoners from the division were arrogant and firm believers in the GOEBBELS propaganda, but after two days of fighting even the old experienced soldiers were glad to be in American captivity. Master Sergeant Rudolf FOEHRS of the 7th Company, 103d Regiment, a professional soldier with 10 years of service, observed: "Ours was a good division; it had the best personnel and the best of equipment. Had it been sent to a quieter sector in the beginning and put into battle gradually, it would have been a formidable outfit. Now we are finished". (Adapted from First US Army)

Source Material

From: Headquarters, VII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 179," 1 December 1944.
Inclusion 6.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Food Crisis in Holland

In November 1944, shortly after their liberation by the Allies, a serious shortage of food developed for more than 2 million people in Holland.

Severe food rationing resulted in a maximum of 1,100 calories per day for the residents, who were living on 3,000-4,000 calories a day before the war.

The reason: When the Germans retreated, they destroyed most of the country's canals, railways and trucks, so while there was plenty of food on the farms, transporting it to those who needed it in cities was almost impossible.

Read the script of a BBC news correspondent describing the situation:

[Editor's note: The script uses the abbreviation "tpt": That stands for "transport."]

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

FOOD CRISIS IN HOLLAND.

The following is a broadcast to be made in the near future by the BBC correspondent, Chester Wilmot, and it is published on account of the present difficult situation in HOLLAND and also because the enemy at the moment is making capital propoganda out of this situation.

As winter descends upon HOLLAND, a serious food crisis is developing. More than two million civs in the liberated territory are existing today on a ration that is barely enough for subsistence. Destruction and pillage by the Germans and dislocation brought about by the battle has left them with less food than they had during the occupation. This week there has been a hunger demonstration by workers in the industrial town of EINDHOVEN and in all the large liberated towns the situation is acute. Strenuous efforts are being made by Allied military and Dutch civ authorities, and there is reason to believe that the worst of the crisis is now past and that throughout December there will be a steady improvement.

If you were living with an average family in EINDHOVEN today, this would be your usual menu...Breakfast - three slices of bread with a scrape of butter - perhaps - and a raw apple. No tea or coffee - even if you had some - because there is no gas before lunchtime. Lunch - two slices of bread and another apple; a modest helping of potatoes and cabbage with gravy. Dinner - two more slices of bread; some more potatoes and cabbage and possibly part of your weekly quarter of a pound of meat; some kind of sweet made with apple but without sugar, and possibly a cup of ersatz coffee or tea with skimmed milk.

You wouldn't get much more than this for the weekly ration works out at this for each person. Potatoes 6 lbs; bread - enough for seven or eight small slices a day; meat - bones included - quarter of a pound. Butter or margarine - if obtainable - quarter of a pound a week; eggs and cheese, none; milk - one quart a day for babies under two years, one quart a week of skimmed milk for adults and children over two; vegetables - very limited amounts of cabbage and turnips; fruit - nothing but apples - possibly a pound a week.

That is the ration and even if you get it all it is worth only 1100 calories, and in some towns such as EINDHOVEN in the past few weeks the food available to the average family has had a calorific value of less than 800 calories. On this ration people are almost starving. Before the war the average Dutchman's ration was 3000 calories and for manual workers it was usually more than 4000. Even during the occupation it varied between 1600 and 2000 calories a day, but then, of course, it was bolstered with food bought on the "Black Market".

The present crisis is the result of a number of factors. The most important is the complete breakdown of the normal tpt system. Before the campaign in HOLLAND 60% of the foodstuffs was transported by canal. Today there is not one canal working. Many are out of action because the Germans blew up the lock gates or sunk barges to block them. Most are now straddled by the Bailey brs which we've had to build to replace those the Germans destroyed.

The closing of the canals would be bad enough, but the rly system has also been disrupted by German demolitions. A few lines are working again, but they are needed for military traffic and anyway they mostly run NORTH and SOUTH across the Belgian border. The Dutch want lines that run EAST and WEST, linking the main towns.

To make matters even worse, liberated HOLLAND has been almost entirely stripped of motor tpt. The only vehs the Germans left are on their last wheels. The liberated territory today has less than 10% of the tpt facilities it had three months ago, and with this the authorities can't hope to tpt the necessary food - even if they had it.

Today, grain, potatoes, sugar beet and even dairy products are stacked up on the farms. Farmers and refugees billeted with them are living well, and our tps often get a false impression because the farmers offer to sell or barter food. This is the food they can't tpt to the towns, where more than a million people are.

Even if the tpt situation could be solved, there would still be a major problem

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

because of the shortage of certain essential stocks. HOLLAND - SOUTH of the MAAS - doesn't normally produce enough food for itself. And this year the yield has been less than normal - because of the war. Dutch farmers deliberately postponed their harvesting, so that the Germans could not steal their crops. Then during the last weeks of possible harvesting the battle raged over their fields, and could not get the crops in at all. Labour was scarce, fuel for tractors and threshing machines was even scarcer. Reserve stocks of grain, sugar and dairy products, that had been put by during the summer months to meet the usual winter shortages - these reserves were plundered by the Germans. From one store, the Germans took 1500 tons of sugar enough to give everyone in free HOLLAND half a pound a week for four weeks. Since the end of July the Germans have been sending trainloads of food out of HOLLAND.

In some products the stocks are almost adequate, but they are in the wrong place. Two-thirds of the food in the liberated territory is normally produced in the area WEST of TILBURG; but two-thirds of the population lives in TILBURG and the industrial towns further EAST. There is, for instance, enough grain and potatoes in the islands of ZEELAND and in the coastal districts - enough to give a reasonable ration throughout the winter, but the mills to grind it and most of the people who need it are 50 miles away and more.

In the case of fats and milk even tpt won't solve the problem. The area SOUTH of the MAAS has always relied on imports from the NORTH, and this year the situation is worse than usual, because the fighting has disorganised production. In the mining districts of the SE around MAASTRICHT there has been no ration of butter, margarine or any kind of cooking fat for seven weeks. Even in EINDHOVEN, this week's ration was the first for Nov. One source of supply - oil from rape seed which grows everywhere - is lost because the factories which extract the oil are still in enemy hands.

During Nov the Second Army has already provided 70 tons of fats and 100 tons of evaporated milk for people in its area, and another 300 tons of fats have been promised for delivery before the end of the month. These contributions - plus the reorg of production and distribution - should lead to a very great improvement, but there will still be a shortage of fat throughout the winter, unless more help can be given by the Army.

The meat situation has eased a little by a contribution from the Second Army of some 358 tons of tinned and frozen meat captured from the Germans. The Dutch Govt has now bought 1,200 head of cattle in LUXEMBOURG and several hundred more have been obtained from occupied areas in GERMANY, but it will be some weeks before this is ready for issue.

The same is true of most of the stocks made available by the Second Army. In the first 20 days of Nov it handed over nearly 200 tons of foodstuffs a day to the Dutch civil authorities, but it will be well into Dec before this can be put on the market. This is partly due to the fact that the Dutch food adm is only just beginning to work. During the occupation it was highly centralised and controlled on a national basis from the capital - THE HAGUE. This adm has been completely disrupted by the campaign. The situation was much simpler in BELGIUM where the capital was liberated before most of the country and the existing machinery was carried on. In HOLLAND a new adm has had to be formed. Even their highly organised Black Market, by which they kept so much food out of German hands - even that has collapsed through lack of stocks and tpt. Whether the stocks are to come from Dutch or Allied source, the crux of the matter is still tpt. So far the armies have been able to spare few vehicles, and those available have been fully occupied with the urgent task of moving refugees from the actual battle zones. The Dutch food authorities tell me they have been allocated 100 trucks for food tpt and another 100 have been promised. These are very welcome but many more needed. The Allies have agreed that the ration must be raised to 1600 calories a day. To provide this the Dutch must move 14000 tons a week in the liberated areas, and with the tpt they have now they can tpt only 50% - 7000 tons a week. If they are to provide even this basic ration - and that surely is little enough - they need at least another 400 3-ton lorries. These are needed to save

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

people from starvation throughout the winter and it is in the Army's own interest to supply them. A doctor in EINDHOVEN reports that the general physical resistance of the population is alarmingly low. The tuberculosis rate has risen so sharply that no figures may be revealed. Doctors do not operate except in unavoidable circumstances. They fear that this winter may bring a bad influenza epidemic.

The civ food posn in HOLLAND is a real danger to the Allied tps. Thousands of ~~them are billeted in Dutch houses. Some of the worst are in the worst of the~~ If any epidemic were to break out, it would not be confined to the Dutch. So far military demands have had to take precedence, but now the civ food problem has become a matter of urgent military importance. By the end of this month, however, the worst of the crisis should be over. The situation will never again be as acute as it is now, and with the new tpt and stocks available there should be a marked improvement by Christmas.

Source Material

From: 7th Armored Division "Intelligence Summary No. 170," 29 November 1944.
PP. 225-226.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Germans Down to 16- and 17-Year-Olds

First Infantry Division interrogations on Nov. 26-27, 1944, of prisoners captured in and around Hamich, Germany, show the decline in the quality of German soldiers, contrary to German propaganda that high-quality soldiers were being held in reserve to defend their country:

“The first representatives of the enemy’s stock of hoarded main reserves appeared in the Division cage. ... Most of the prisoners, with the exception of the non-commissioned officers, are 17; a fair number are only 16. Only a few have started to smoke and one razor would satisfy all the prisoners. ... The interrogator asked one of them, ‘Did your parents give you their permission to join up and fight for Germany?’ ‘No, I was drafted,’ the prisoner said.”

Read more:

2. The first representatives of the enemy's stock of hoarded main reserves appeared in the Division cage during the period when 34 prisoners from the 9th Parachute Regiment (3d Parachute Division) were processed. A glance at the prisoners, however, showed that the unit had changed considerably since it faced the 1st Infantry Division in the vicinity of CAUMONT in July. Most of the prisoners, with the exception of the non-commissioned officers, are 17; a fair number are only 16. Only a few have started to smoke and one razor would satisfy all the prisoners. The uniforms of the prisoners were of the same quality as the original stubborn veterans of Normandy, but the weapons of the unit have been down-graded to the level of a normal infantry division: machine pistols for the officers and non-commissioned officers only, and belt-action rifles for the privates. One or two of the non-commissioned officers had seen action in France but not one private had been in combat before. The prisoners said, however, that in reorganizing the regiment 30 men with combat experience had been put in each company of 140 men. Apparently the veterans were experienced enough to avoid capture. Most of the privates had been drafted in Germany in the last six months; one in fact was conscripted in August. All of the recent recruits were former members of the Hitler Jugend, and as such, overflowing with love for the fatherland, though not necessarily for the Nazi Party. The interrogator asked one of them, "Did your parents give you their permission to join up and fight for Germany?" "No, I was drafted," the prisoner said.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, June-November 1944." P. 107.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Toll That Mines Take

Land mines are relatively cheap to manufacture, but they can do quite a bit of damage. In this example, on Nov. 27, 1944, a field of German Schu mines—little more than six-inch-square buried wooden boxes with a few ounces of explosive—injured a soldier hunting for firewood. During his rescue, four more soldiers were injured by other mines and one was killed.

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

The following is quoted from Ltr, Hq 294 Engr C Bn, 28 Nov 44, Subject: "Schu Mine Accident at K-009403":

"1. At about 1500 hours, 27 November 1944, one man from the 377th AAA Bn went up a hill at K-009403 to cut wood. The area had been marked with "Danger Mines" signs. He stepped on a mine which shattered his legs. Upon calling for Medics, about six men went to his aid. While moving around, another man stepped on a mine injuring himself and two others. Cpl Arnold F. Benedict, ASN 32350864, 294th Engineer Combat Battalion, upon hearing the explosion went to investigate. When he arrived upon the scene, he worked his way to the top of the hill in the other man's footsteps. When reaching the top, he administered morphine and applied tourniquets to the injured. An ambulance driver followed in Cpl Benedict's footsteps with a litter. As he handed Cpl Benedict the litter, he stepped back on to a mine, blowing off his leg and slightly injuring Cpl Benedict. Upon falling, the ambulance driver fell on another mine, thereby killing himself.

"2. A Captain in the Medical Corps probed his way up to the injured and found one Schu mine. He then assumed charge of evacuating the wounded. Cpl Benedict, also by probing, found three more Schu mines in the vicinity of the injured.

"3. The total number of wounded was five and one man was killed."

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "G-2 Periodic Report," 30 November 1944. P. 21.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

German Prisoner Praises U.S. Artillery

It doesn't get the credit it should, but the U.S. Army artillery's accuracy and volume of fire had a huge effect on the Wehrmacht.

In a report dated November 28, 1944, captured German 2nd Lt. Ernst Schmeling had this to say about American artillery during his interrogation by U.S. intelligence officers: "To be on the receiving end of Russian arty [artillery] is bad enough; U.S. arty fire is much worse—we just cannot control our men!"

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

1. U S Arty: 2nd Lt Ernst SCHMELING, Adjutant, 1 Bn, (now a PW) stated: "To be on the receiving end of Russian Arty is bad enough; US Arty fire is much worse, - we just cannot control our men! Your fire is dense and accurate, causing very heavy casualties."

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 9th Army, "Report on Interrogation of Prisoners of War," 28 November 1944.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Tight Squeeze for the V-2

The first long-range, guided ballistic missile, the V-2 (codenamed “Big Ben” by the British), was launched by the Germans from hastily prepared sites, often in forests to hide the weapon from Allied aircraft. In total, more than 3,000 were launched at Allied targets, most often at London.

The missile was almost 46 feet tall and 5½ feet in diameter. In November 1944 Allied soldiers were taken to an abandoned launch site on the island of Walcheren in Holland, and found that “[t]he gap in the beech trees through which the rockets passed was not more than 30 feet in diameter, the trees being about 70 feet high.”

Read more:



Bundesarchiv, Bild 141-1875B
Foto: o. Ang. | 1942/1945 ca.

A V-2, its tail fins covered, is transported to its launch site.

2. Big Bens

(Source:- SHAEF)

ANTWERP remains the main target, and there is little fresh intelligence on the BIG BEN situation.

Launching areas remain much the same, that is, the area SOUTH of ENSCHEDE, and to a smaller degree the TRIER area as well; possibly from scattered points between the RUHR and TRIER. Evidence is conflicting as to whether the GAASTERLAND area (on the NE shore of the ZUIDER ZEE) still remains a centre of activity.

3. General

Inspection of a firing site, and interrogation of local inhabitants on the Island of WALCHEREN elicited the fact that no constructional activity was carried out in the preparation of the site apart from the clearing of an area about 25 yards diameter among beech trees near a house, and the erection of a concrete trig point about 40 yards away. The gap in the beech trees through which the rockets passed was not more than 30 feet in diameter, the trees being about 70 feet high.

Vehicles in the rocket convoy numbered about 15, including one or two rocket trailers, with their tractors, and about six tank cars, two or three of which were thought to contain liquid oxygen. There was no sign of radio vans.

Rockets were stored on their trailers, dispersed under trees for one or two days, and no special shelters were provided for their protection.

Preparations for firing were stated to take at least three hours, the rocket being filled while in the vertical position. This work was reported to be carried out by 80 men, which enabled two rockets to be fired simultaneously.

Source Material

From: 7th Armored Division "Intelligence Summary No. 169," 28 November 1944.
P. 94.

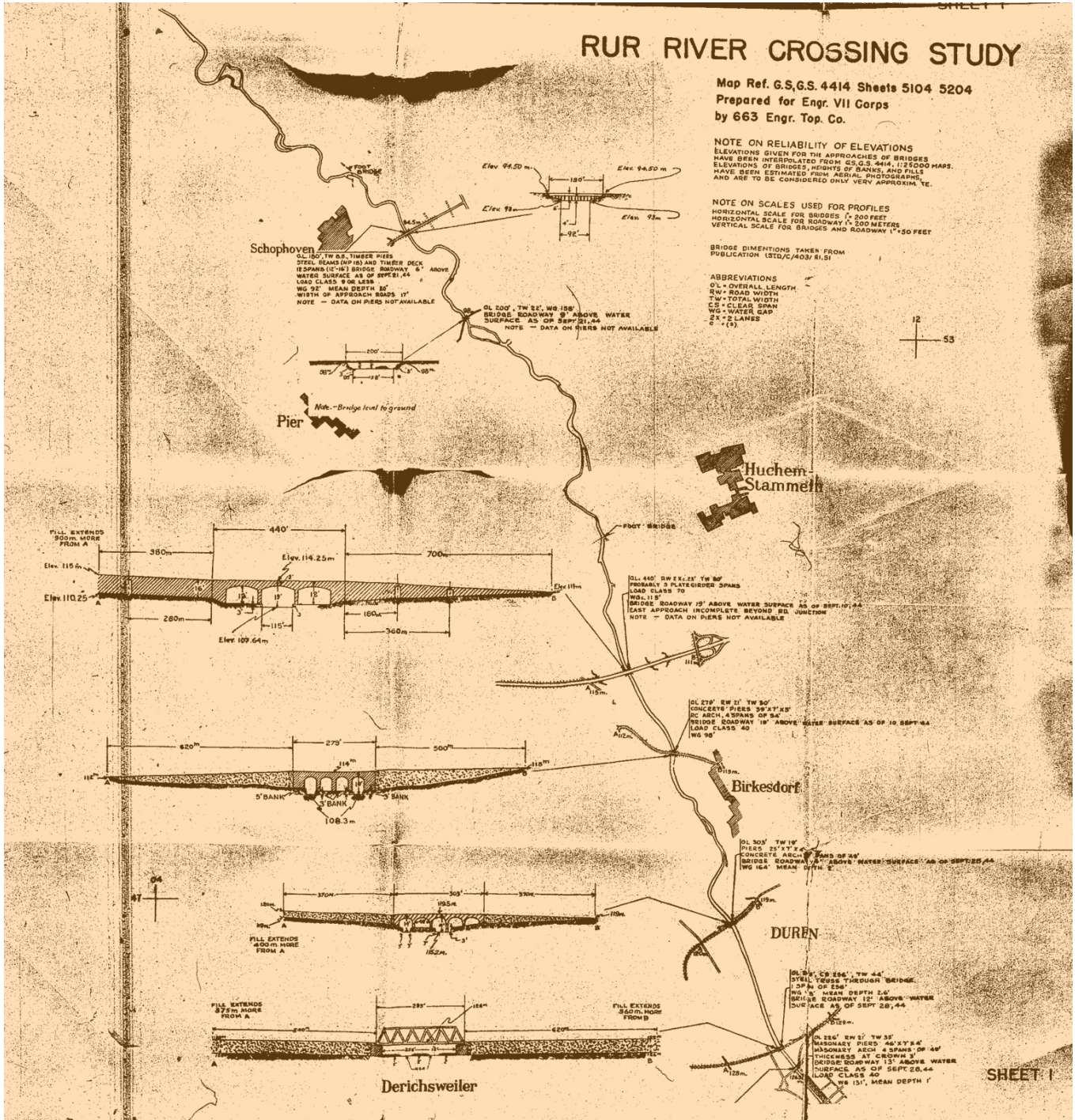
Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Art of the Map

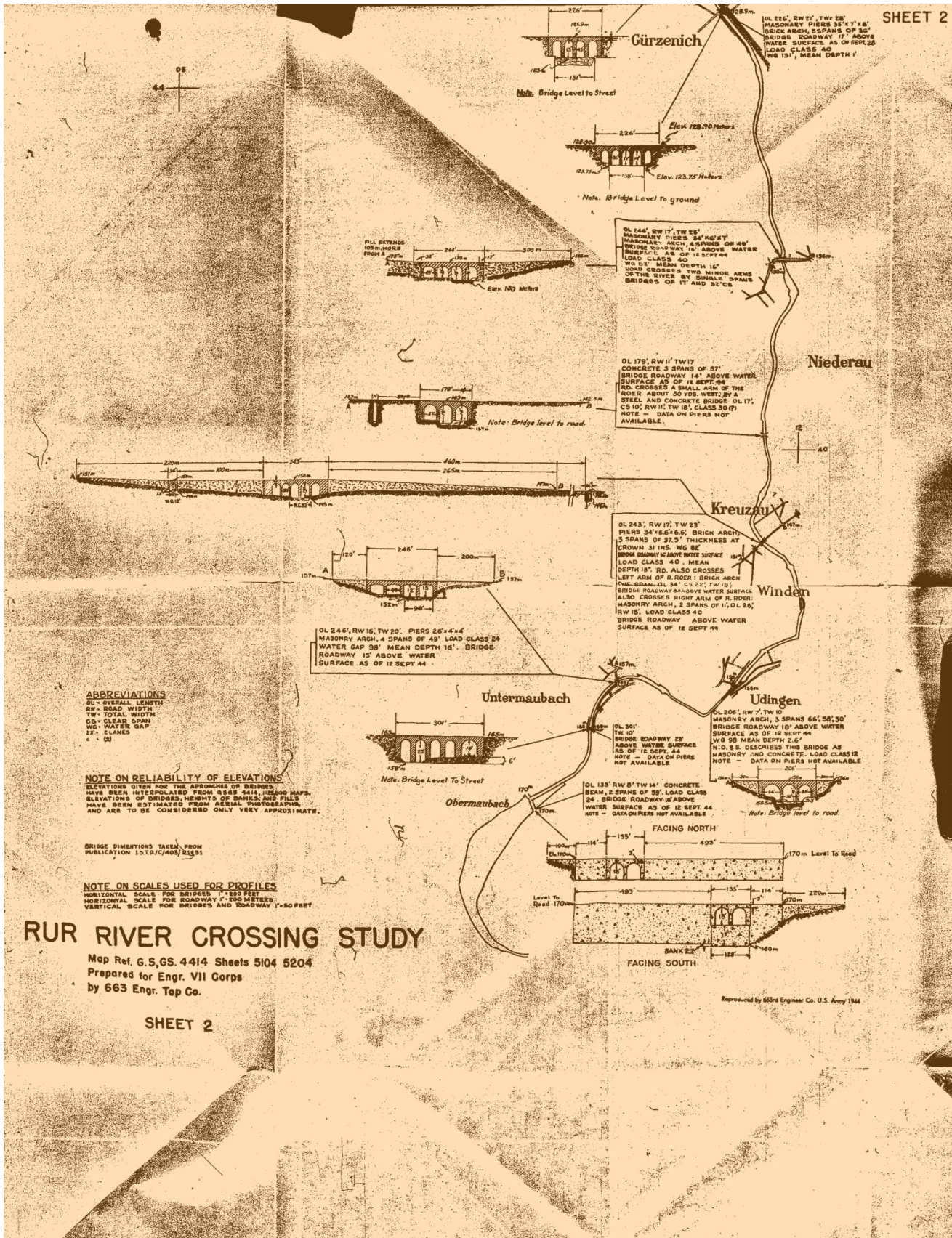
A beautifully drawn map created by the 663rd Engineer Topographic Company, included in a 1st Infantry Division report on November 30, 1944, shows crossings of the Rur River (in Dutch and French, the “Roer”) between Aachen and Cologne in Germany, including cross-sections of the bridges and details of their construction. In many cases, the crossings were still under German control, so many of the details had to be taken from aerial photographs and previously published documents.

View the map:



Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page



Source Material

From: Headquarters, VII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 178," 30 November 1944. PP. 37-38.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Choosing a Mayor for Stolberg

This Nov. 30, 1944 document describes the difficulties—repeated numerous times throughout Germany—of finding new, non-Nazi leadership for towns and cities taken by the Allies.

The newly appointed mayor of Stolberg, a small town near Aachen, was hesitant to work with the Allies because his four children were still serving in the German armed forces and he feared reprisals against them.

He also faced huge problems, including setting up a new government and feeding the population: When he took office, each resident lived on a plate of soup and a half-pound of rye bread a day.

The mayor, Dr. Friedrich Deutzmann, took office October 1, 1944, and served until July 31, 1945.

Read the report:

Incl 4 to

Periodic Report 178. THE PRESENT MAYOR OF STOLBERG AND HIS PROBLEMS

- A. The Mayor, Dr. Deutzmann
- B. The former Mayor, Dr. Reek
- C. Director of Deutsche Bank, Dr. Jacobs
- D. A social Democrat
- E. A Communist
- F. A former Colleague of the present Mayor at the "Volksschule", and "PG", Miss Schiessl
- G. A Catholic priest
- H. "The man in street" represented by 9 Catholic inhabitants, of different occupations.

BACKGROUND OF PRESENT MAYOR:

When the Nazis came into power the present Mayor was rector of the "Volksschule" in Stolberg. Apparently Dr. Deutzmann had a better education than the average "Volksschule" teacher, and took great interest in modern trends in education in all countries - for instance he is quite familiar with the WINNETKA Progressive Schools in the United States. Under normal circumstances Dr. Deutzmann would have been ready for promotion.

However, the Nazis decided to demote him to a plain "Volksschule" teacher because of his definite refusal to join the party. Up to the present moment he has remained true to his political convictions. For this reason Military Government appointed him temporary Mayor of the town.

Dr. Deutzmann at first had great doubts. The present Nazi policy of exterminating the entire family of political opponents put him before a serious decision. Four of his children are in Nazi Germany. The oldest is an artillery officer in the German Army; the second also is a soldier and seriously wounded in Russia; the third, a daughter, with the Labor Service somewhere in eastern Germany; the fourth, a fifteen year old boy, was drafted as "Luftwaffenhelfer" (member of the auxiliary service of the air force). Dr. Deutzmann accepted the appointment because he considered it his duty to accept and to fight for his convictions; but he knew that his decision might cost the lives of his children.

A fifth child, a fourteen year old boy, was drafted to build fortifications. When he was sent away, his father advised him to desert at the earliest possible moment. A short time later, he came back with several other boys. But the parents of these boys were afraid and sent their children back. Dr. Deutzmann decided to hide his boy in the cellar, even at the risk that the Nazis might burn down his house or murder the whole family. He closed all the shutters and doors and refused to admit any visitors in order to give the impression that the entire family had evacuated.

PUBLIC REACTION TO THE MAYOR:

After some reluctance, the former Mayor, Dr. Reek, said: "You realize that it is difficult for me to judge my own successor, but this is my opinion; it was a mistake to replace so many experienced officials of the old administration. Under the present difficult circumstances it would have been much better to keep the old setup for a few months. "The people were used to an authoritarian system in which they had confidence." The public reaction, as far as I can see is rather negative

A Social Democrat and a Communistic worker had no criticism to offer of the Mayor personally. However, they resented the disproportionately high representation of the former Center Party in the administration. In their opinion a few true representatives of the working classes should be included if we want to convince people we are really fighting to establish a democratic form of government. They were afraid that the same thing would happen through the Reich, and that this would have serious consequences.

A Catholic worker disapproved of the administration, because it did not

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

really represent the working class. In his opinion the workers in Germany always had been suppressed. He approves of the Center Party, but he wants a greater influence of the Catholic working men rather than the Catholic middle and upper classes.

The Catholic Priest approved of the Mayor, because he is a good Catholic.

The Bank Director, Dr. Jacobs, was rather critical: "Dr. Deutzmann, of course, is a good Catholic, but after all he is only a teacher; he lacks the wide horizon and élan of a business man. We need an industrialist. The entire local administration consists only of inexperienced people.

A Schoolteacher, Miss Schiessl, preferred the old Mayor. Of the present Mayor she said: "He is a man with backbone, he stood up for his convictions. But he certainly is not trained to take over the administration of the town". It may be of interest to note that the present Mayor does not have a very high opinion of his former colleague, Miss Schiessl. According to him, she plays up to whatever group is in power. Interrogators do not entirely agree with the Mayor.

The Mayor's Own Story: Whatever wrong Germany committed in the other countries falls back upon us. I, for my part, am willing to bear my share, even though I should lose all I have. I shall do all that is in my power to reestablish decency and honor in Government.

I shall be glad to use as my collaborators all men who believe in peace and honor. I cannot use men who never could make up their mind to also live up to this conviction. Nor am I going to use a man simply because he was in prison during the Nazi period. The Communists wanted me to appoint as Chief of Police a criminal who served many sentences in prison. I absolutely refused.

My work is especially difficult because I had to dismiss all the old employees who had been members of the Nazi Party. I replaced them with office employees and minor executives from various local factories. By now they are doing quite well in their new jobs. For instance, an old department head of a factory is now the head of our marriage bureau, and has his office under much better control than the four experts who were in charge before him. A few offices are still vacant. It is impossible for me to replace the City Architect with an office employee.

Food Situation: Our most serious problem at the present time is the food situation. The population is showing admirable patience. People are living on a plate of soup from the Community Soup kitchen plus 1/2 lbs rye bread a day. Only once during the last 9 weeks we were able to distribute 125 grams of butter per person. Unfortunately BBC broadcast that there is plenty of meat and butter in KORNELIMUNSTER, a nearby town. It was hard for me to explain to the people why we could not have that, as with us it is often impossible to provide even milk for the small babies. Of course the head of the local Military Government does his best. When the roads were blocked to civilian traffic, he himself went out to the neighboring farms to bring in at least some milk for babies.

There will be no early solution of the food problem. I shall be satisfied if I just can keep the people alive until the next harvest. I have no sympathy for grumblers. At a recent meeting of the leading merchants of the town, when everybody started complaining about his misfortune, I found it necessary to get quite rough. I told them they were lucky to have even the little which they receive now.

Industrial Situation: Some years ago, when I was still a teacher, I made a thorough study of the economic assets of the district. I am familiar with the set-up of most of our industrial enterprises. We have good reason to be optimistic. Luckily our factories are not destroyed. Some of them even have a stock of raw materials on hand right now and could start work as soon as the troops billeted there now will leave.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

CONCLUSION:

Interrogators came to the conclusion that the Mayor is a man of character and as reliable as anyone we will find in Germany. He obviously knew how to deal with the people. Even though he is not a trained administrator, he probably will acquire the necessary experience in a short time. His discussion of the present situation of STOLBERG and of the outlook for the future shows that he is not "just a schoolteacher", but a practical man of good common sense who knows what he wants and how to deal with his countrymen.

(See: PWB Combat Team, First U.S. Army
as reproduced by G-2, First Army)

* * * * *

Incl 5 to

Periodic Report 178.

INTERNAL SITUATION IN GERMANY

In studying Germany's industry it is particularly interesting to note some items from enemy press sources connecting the far reaching effect of Allied bombing, and the present ground situation, not only in production and supplies but also on the lives of the German people.

The use of trams for delivery of industrial goods and domestic requirements has now become commonplace, even unto their being given right of way over other vehicles. Coal is only delivered to the nearest point on the tramline whence the consumer must collect, notwithstanding the great shortage of handcarts in most towns. Heating is one of the greatest problems of the householder, not only as Kerosene almost unobtainable in October and November for domestic heating but also appeals have been made to reduce the gas consumption by discontinuing heating and hot water heating by gas.

On 7th November it was announced that the soap and supplementary soap cards for November will be extended to 1st December; coupons for the period 13th November to 10th December may not be used until 11th December. The announcement candidly admitted that the current monthly ration can no longer be maintained.

Transport difficulties and storage for the winter of the major share of crops account for the reduced supplies of vegetables according to a BERLIN newspaper on 2nd November.

In Berlin Brewers' drays are reported to be drawn by oxen. Postal services are less frequent, such items as milk and bread must now be collected and the public are warned that even when they seek relief in the local cinema they are liable to disappointment as film deliveries may have to be restricted.

These difficulties are part of the normal life of the German civilian; they are quite separate from the added complications and disorganization caused by Allied air attacks.

According to certain reports, the most important factories in ALSACE have been transferred to GERMANY with the necessary skilled workmen. The plants concerned included those making rollers for tank treads, cannon brakes and cast iron and constructional steel. Reports mention a shortage of plants and of lodgings for workers in the evacuation areas, the latter being particularly difficult in view of the large numbers of evacuees from the German cities.

In SAARBRUCKEN all inhabitants were required to register by the end of October. Presumably this was the first stage in an evacuation scheme. At the same time orders were published to arrange for released workers, and staffs of factories completely demolished by bombs, to be employed on defense diggings.

In conclusion, it appears that although in a few materials, giving coal for an example, production has increased during the war for the requirements of war, the oil shortage and railway difficulties have caused delivery of goods to be most difficult. Also the tightening of the net around GERMANY begins to affect production of essentials more directly than ever before.

(From A-2, IX Tac Air Comd)

Source Material

From: Headquarters, VII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 178, Inclusion 4," 30 November 1944. PP. 40-42.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Preparing for the Battle of the Bulge?

Part 1

A 1st Infantry Division intelligence report at the end of November 1944 said multiple German prisoners told of six SS Panzer divisions re-equipping not too far behind German lines. It also reported that aerial reconnaissance found a high amount of railroad traffic—hundreds of boxcars and dozens of tanks on flatcars—rolling into the same area.

Part 2

An intelligence report a few days later, on Dec. 1, 1944, combined the above report with others and predicted a possible large-scale German counterattack.

“Three significant occurrences during 1 December, coupled with two other suggestive factors, indicate that the enemy may be contemplating a large-scale counter-attack in the Division area,” wrote Lt. Col. Robert F. Evans.

The factors included extremely intense artillery attacks on the division’s forward positions; after a long absence, enemy aircraft were active over the division in daylight; and a large number of vehicles and troops were spotted by aerial reconnaissance.

“... [T]he capability becomes apparent of an attack of Division, or perhaps greater strength, anytime after 0400A 2 December in an effort to disorganize and seriously delay any attack which we may contemplate,” Evans wrote.

The Battle of the Bulge began two weeks later.

Read the reports:

Part 1

SECRET
 DATE 30 November 1944
 AUTH CG VIII Corps
 INIT W R R

From: 292400A
 To : 302400A

HQ VIII CORPS
 302400A November 1944

G-2 PERIODIC REPORT

NUMBER 166

Maps: GSGS, 1/100,000.

1. ENEMY SITUATION AT END OF PERIOD:

a. Enemy Front Lines: No change.

b. Defensive Organization: Hill 235 (L104251) now occupied by enemy. PW reports this hill to be strongly defended with work now in progress on mining and additional digging. Enemy work parties reported vic L055862, L043843 and L039835. Russian laborers are digging AT ditch vic NEUREUTH L1190. Tac/R and PI discloses ground defenses in the vic of many towns in the enemy rear areas. See Annex #3 which is a German order relating to fortifications of towns between their MLR and the RHINE RIVER.

c. Units in Contact: PWs from 7th Co, 295th Inf Regt, 18th VG Div report that their co sector has been extended to include nearly all of the sector formerly occupied by 1st Bn, 294th Inf Regt. The latter bn has been identified opposite the south flank of V Corps. If PW statement is correct, it would indicate that the enemy line opposite the north of the 2nd Div sector is very thinly held.

d. Reserves Capable of Intervention: The interrogation of a number of PWs from Pz LEHR Div has produced several interesting facts about Six Panzer Armees. All PWs were aware that there were six Panzer Divisions in WESTPHALIA while their division was reforming. (Presumably 1, 2, 9, 12 SS Pz Divs, Pz LEHR Div and 2 Pz Div (?)). The PWs stated that the intention was to use these six panzer divisions together as one unit. Last week, however, the situation in STRASBOURG was deemed so critical that Pz LEHR Div was dispatched to the south.

The division was in Westphalia for two months prior to crossing the RHINE, anxiously awaiting its equipment. The first battalion of one regiment received its machine-guns only one day before it left for the combat zone. PWs claim that the gas shortage was so critical that vehicles received on sufficient gas to reach the next fuel distribution point. The division had difficulty in obtaining its personnel and at the time of its commitment on the Third US Army front was not up to strength. The companies averaged 80 - 90 men. Personnel is made up of remnants of the old Pz LEHR Div, plus young and inexperienced recruits. Some companies did not receive any training as company units. No unit training was ever given to battalions or regiments.

Although it is possible that SS divisions in Pz Armees Six fared a little better in the receipt of men and equipment than Army panzer divisions, the present state of Pz LEHR division may be taken as a guide to the combat efficiency of the remainder of this highly-prized reserve army upon which so many German hopes are staked.

Reliable information during the past few days indicates that 10 SS Pz Div has moved E of the ROER River, where it may be refitted hastily and replace Pz

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

LEHR in Panzer Armee Six. (Source: FUSA G-2 Periodic Report #173).

2. ENEMY OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD:

a. General Summary: Enemy continued to remain inactive on the Corps front. Very little enemy patrolling was evident and enemy arty and mortar fires were light. Sporadic long range harassing MG fires were reported in the northern part of the 28th Div sector.

b. Operation of Component Elements:

(1) Artillery: During most of the period enemy arty activity was light. 3 light harassing fires were reported between 0940A and 1040A in the zone of the 88th Div and 2 were reported in the zone of the 83rd Div. However, between 1615A to 1645A an estimated 100 rounds of estimated 75mm fire fell in the vic P8875. This fire originated from the P9772 and P8867 grid squares. PW, 3rd Bn, 26th Arty Regt, reports that 3rd Bn is located vic P8867. PW stated that 2nd and 3rd Bns are armed with 7.5 dual purpose guns. Based on activity noted vic P9772, it appears probable that 2nd Bn is in position in that general vic and that Regt Hqs coordinates the fires of the two Bns.

(2) Armor: None reported during period.

(3) Air: One unidentified plane reported over the 2nd Div sector at 0442. 4 unidentified planes were reported over the same area between 2000A and 2300A.

3. MISCELLANEOUS:

a. Air Reconnaissance: The 1200 and 1530 hour Tac/R missions over our area were unable to make any observations due to weather. The other scheduled missions were cancelled.

Tac/R observations at 1025 hours in the EUSKIRCHEN F3329 area were as follows:

Ten trains of 30 box cars each w/o engines stationary at EUSKIRCHEN (These were attacked by fighters, results unknown). Three trains of 30 boxcars each at F3729, F4028 and F3533 were moving south and west toward EUSKIRCHEN and 1 train moving east from city. Two trains were stationary at F305260. Four trains of 35 boxcars each w/o engines were parked at F372394 and two trains w/o engines at F3535.

At SATZVEY F2725, 25 flat cars loaded with 25 tanks were stationary on sidings. Eight additional tanks were parked along road in woods at F305260. (Attacks by fighter aircraft shortly thereafter claimed 15 of these tanks destroyed). Also in SATZVEY yards were 2 trains of 20 boxcars each w/o engines.

It is believed that this concentration of rolling stock moved an unidentified unit into this area, as reinforcements to the V Corps front.

Tac/R reports a considerable motor vehicular activity during the day in the area west of ZULPICH F2333 but the direction of movement could not be determined.

What is believed to be an enemy trick to conceal rail movements was observed by Tac/R in the area west of ZULPICH F2333. The RR was covered by green colored camouflage sections about 30 feet long. These were spaced at 20 foot intervals and covered a stretch of RR about 2 miles long.

Interpretation of a recent photo sortie flown along RIVER RHINE in the vic of KOBLENZ show considerable trenching activity along the west bank of the RHINE. These trenches seem to be planned to form a series of strongpoints, but these may in the future be connected up with a fire and communication trench system.

Continued on Next Page

Part 2

4. ENEMY CAPABILITIES.

a. Three significant occurrences during 1 December, coupled with two other suggestive factors, indicate that the enemy may be contemplating a large scale counter-attack in the Division area. Enemy artillery fire increased to an unprecedented intensity on the Division forward positions, particularly in the vicinity of LANGER-WEHE. After a long absence, enemy aircraft were active over the Division area during the hours of daylight. An estimated 100 enemy vehicles were reported at approximately 1500A hours by air reconnaissance in the vicinity of SCHLICH. With elements of undetermined proportions of the 6th Panzer Army in close proximity to the ROER River and presuming an enemy estimate of our situation favoring an attack, the capability becomes apparent of an attack of Division, or perhaps greater strength, anytime after 0400A 2 December in an effort to disorganize and seriously delay any attack which we may contemplate.

b. Inasmuch as it is believed that the paratroopers now on the Division front are not motorized, the appearance of 100 vehicles strongly suggests Panzer Grenadiers. The increase in intensity of enemy artillery is believed to be due to the completion of the withdrawal of enemy artillery to the ROER River. Prisoners taken on 30 November and 1 December state that the Parachutists have their own artillery, but that it followed the infantry. It may be that this artillery is now being employed in the vicinity of the ROER River, together with the artillery remaining from the 47th and 12th Volksgrenadier Divisions, the 3d Panzer Grenadier, plus the normal Corps and Army artillery.

Robert F. Evans

ROBERT F. EVANS,
Lt. Col., G.S.C.,
A.C. of S., G-2.

Source Material

Part 1

From: Headquarters, VIII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 166," 30 November 1944. P. 104-5.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Part 2

From: Headquarters, VIII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 165," 1 December 1944. P. 138-139.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Some Secret!

In late November, 1944, German prisoner of war Walter Blehm, 17, had just promised his interrogators that Germany's secret weapons would win the war when a stray V-1 buzzbomb (one of those secret weapons; today we'd call it a cruise missile) exploded about 150 yards away.

Blehm ran out of the interrogation tent to see the damage. When he came back, his face showed a keen disappointment. "Ist iss alles? (Is that all?)," he asked.

Nearby, the blast had covered his fellow prisoners with mud. They, too, were not impressed.

"Well, if that is to decide the war, we lost already," said one.

"I'd like to know why they keep that thing so secret. Perhaps they don't want the people at home to know how ineffective it is," said another.

Read the whole story:

Annex #2 to
Periodic Report #169

"BUZZBOMB AND KRAUTS"

PW Walter BLEHM was being interrogated. A cocky, 17 year old, one of Hitler's children, who had volunteered for the parachuters and now had been captured as a member of the 9 Para Regt. "Germany will win this war," said the Nazi child, "our secret weapons..." His voice trailed off as a thunderous noise of a "down-to-earth" V-1 came by. A second later superbomb BLEHM by as yet unexplained acrobatics had left the bench on which he was sitting and was hugging mother earth. The explosion came, the tent shook wildly as the buzzbomb detonated about 150 yards away. A messkit came down, hit BLEHM's head who mumbled incoherent prayers. Then it was all over; BLEHM rose, rushed out of the tent and looked for the devastation caused by the Vergeltungswaffe. When he came back, his face showed a keen disappointment. "Ist iss alles?" (Is that all?) he asked.

Outside of the tent, PWs looked a sorry sight. They had just emerged from a mudbath and their features clearly mirrored a great disillusion. They cursed at their appearances and the fear made them, for once, talk freely. Here are some of the observations voiced by the Germans:

"Na, wenn das den Krieg entscheiden soll, dann haben wir schon verloren."
(Well, if that is to decide the war, we lost already.)

"Ich moechte wal wissen, weshalb man diesen Dreck so geheim haelt. Vielleicht sollen die Leute zuhause nicht wissen, wie wirkungslos das Ding ist."
(I'd like to know why they keep that thing so secret. Perhaps they don't want the people at home to know how ineffective it is.)

~~"Das war Versaeger-1." (That is Failure-1)~~

"Ein einziges amerikanisches Artillerie-Geschoss wirkt mehr."
(A single American Arty piece does more damage.)

"Was fuer eine Scheisswaaffe!"
(- One does not say that in English -). (Source: PW Report First US Army.)

~~SECRET~~

Source Material

From: Headquarters XIX Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 169," 1 December 1944. Annex 2, P. 285.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Tips on Interrogating British And American Prisoners

An intelligence report on December 1, 1944, quoted a captured German document that gave tips on interrogating British and American prisoners:

“In case of undisciplined conduct, or of obvious lying, or of especially stubborn behavior on the part of the P/W [Prisoner of War], a rougher treatment (within the limits of the Articles of the Geneva Convention) or a lengthy solitary confinement may be of help.”

“The interrogation of English and American P/W’s has often been very successful. They should not be neglected, even if they are sometimes uncommunicative. ... It can be established that English prisoners either refuse information altogether or answer questions to the best of their knowledge. The American soldier is extremely inclined to exaggerate and in general his information is not as valuable as that of the English soldiers.”

“The interrogation is most successful when the P/W is quite unaware that an interrogation is taking place, but rather feels he is taking part in a voluntary and pleasant conversation. The interrogating officer must therefore be quite alone with the P/W and not take notes. It is most useful to combine the interrogation with a short walk, for which, however, there are opportunities only in special cases. Care must then be taken that P/W is not seen by other P/W’s.”

“Success with British and American P/W’s is soonest obtained with a sympathetic but clear and methodical approach.”

Read the whole report:



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-J28589
Foto: Büschel | 1944/1945 Winter

American prisoners captured in the Ardennes Forest in December 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge

ENEMY INTERROGATION TECHNIQUE

The following is translated from a captured special order for the interrogation of British P/W's in the Army Dulag (Interrogation Camp) of C-in-C West.

1. Preliminary Interrogation: The immediate asking of leading questions is successful in only the rarest cases. The interrogation therefore begins immediately after the arrival of the P/W in the camp.

2. Hints for the Interrogating Officer:

a. After the introductory establishment of contact, the P/W is made to fill in a personnel form in the course of a general conversation. If information is already available concerning P/W's unit and its mission, this is used as a check on the accuracy of the statements made on the personnel form.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

b. In case of undisciplined conduct, or of obvious lying, or of especially stubborn behavior on the part of the P/W, a rougher treatment (within the limits of the Articles of the Geneva Convention) or a lengthy solitary confinement may be of help.

c. In the case of P/W's captured among the civilian population or in civilian clothes, a threat to treat them as sabotage agents unless they prove their identity by naming their unit and giving details concerning it is often successful.

d. Czechs, Belgians and Dutchmen sometimes, under orders of the English, claim to be Englishmen or French Canadians.

e. Expressing doubts about the effectiveness of English weapons or a conversation about German weapons sometimes causes a technically inclined P/W to supply information unwittingly. A discussion about sport may also help to start Englishmen talking.

f. The English soldier has a strong aversion to political conversations, even the peace time. It is not to be assumed that he shares our political views or attitude to life (Weltanschauung). In most cases it is therefore useless to talk to him about politics. Derogatory remarks about the English Royal Family or the English Government must be avoided under all circumstances.

g. Clumsy or premature questions may do more harm than good. In this connection see instructions to the English for conduct when taken prisoner, given in supplement 2. (This consists of a German translation of a British document which is omitted in this report). A short impression of the P/W and an indication of any information given is to be noted in the margin of the personnel form.

h. It is further recommended to allow the P/W to correspond with his friends and relatives as much as possible during the first days. Englishmen are inclined to write detailed descriptions in diary form. Experience from the last war shows that these letters may be very enlightening.

3. The Main Interrogation: Based on:-

a. The result of the interrogation on arrival.

b. The information gathered from captured papers, which have been evaluated in the meanwhile.

c. A summary of all information already known regarding the unit in question and of the most important questions still open.

The interrogating officer most suited to the character of the P/W proceeds with the P/W in the manner described under par a. If necessary, use of a second interpreter for special questions.

4. Special Methods of Interrogation. The following methods may be used with stubborn P/W's:-

a. Questioning by stool-pigeons.

b. Listening in to conversations in the camp, e.g. by means of special technical equipment (microphones).

Permission for the use of stool-pigeons in P/W camps must always be applied for from Ob West IG/AO, because of the danger of double-crossing (Doppel-seitigkeit).

5. General Questions.

a. Is the use of chemical warfare discussed in England?

b. What is the opinion concerning the GAF reprisal raids?

c. What is the food situation?

d. What is thought about Churchill, Cripps, Bevin, Eden?

e. What is being said about the cession of bases to the U.S.A.?

f. Where are German prisoners being employed?

g. What American units are known to P/W? Where are they located?

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

- h. How do Americans conduct themselves in England?
- i. What is the opinion regarding Lord Mountbatten? Where is his Hq?
- j. How is the general military training organized? Does the English soldier often shoot with live ammunition, throw hand grenades, etc.?
- k. Is there any special propaganda training (to increase hate)?
- l. What is the morale of the English worker?
- m. How are the Free French, Norwegians, Dutch, Belgians, Poles conducting themselves?
- n. What is the discipline of the English soldiers at home? Are there many military offenses?
- o. In what way do the shipping losses have effect?

6. Further Notes for the Interrogation of English and American P/W's.

The interrogation of English and American P/W's allows the following conclusions to be drawn: (1-7 are standard instructions for the handling, movement, searching, segregation etc., of P/W's).

8. The interrogation of English and American P/W's has often been very successful. They should not be neglected, even if they are sometimes uncommunicative.

9. The information given by English prisoners is to a high degree reliable. It can be established that English prisoners either refuse information altogether or answer questions to the best of their knowledge. The American soldier is extremely inclined to exaggerate. In general his information is not as valuable as that of the English soldiers.

10. The English and American soldier has been very well trained by means of memoranda and regular instruction about how to conduct himself as a P/W. The American soldier is in general more security conscious and less prepared to talk than the English soldier.

11. (Interrogators must brief themselves properly etc.).

12. For a successful interrogation it is fundamental to engage the P/W in conversation, as the English and American soldier has been strictly enjoined only to give his name, rank and number at interrogation. According to personality and temperament P/W's react:

- a. To speedy, exact and pointed questions.
- b. To introductory talk about personal interests (e.g. family, profession, sport, weapons, techniques).
- c. To being faced with our knowledge of enemy units.
- d. To the indication that officers have already given information, by means of which P/W can be confronted with exact intelligence about his unit. In this regard it is not necessary that the intelligence comes from officers.
- e. To the indication that, if a P/W refuses to talk, documents found on him, which he should have destroyed (marked maps etc.), may be shown to other P/W's, thus suggesting subsequent unpleasantness in store for him.
- f. To being offered cigarettes or a drink, and to the promise of taking trouble to see that his relatives are informed immediately of his capture by a postcard or through the radio.

13. The interrogation is most successful, when the P/W is quite unaware that an interrogation is taking place, but rather feels he is taking part in a voluntary and pleasant conversation. The interrogating officer must therefore be quite alone with the P/W and not take notes. It is most useful to combine the interrogation with a short walk, for which however, there are opportunities only in special cases. Care must then be taken that the P/W is not seen by other P/W's.

Under no circumstances may a secretary take down the information given by the P/W in his presence; if absolutely necessary it can be done by listening out of sight.

The information extracted must be written down by the interrogating officer as soon as possible after the interrogation.

14. Success with British and American P/W's is soonest obtained with a sympathetic but clear and methodical approach. The better the interrogating officer can convince the P/W that he already knows all details about the enemy

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

forces, the sooner will he get him to talk. It has proved helpful to collect systematically officers' names and all researches into the different enemy units to make use of them through the interrogating officer during interrogation.

15. Leading questions must be avoided, as they cause P/W to make vague and incorrect answers.

(Source: G-2, AF HQ).

Source Material

From: Headquarters, V Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 176," 1 December 1944.
Annex No. 3, PP 127-130.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A Joke with Consequences

In late 1944 and early 1945, German officers repeatedly told their men not to give up hope, because new secret weapons were coming that would defeat the Allies. On Dec. 1, 1944, a German prisoner of war told interrogators that his uncle was sent to a concentration camp for telling this joke:

“The new German secret weapons are more overwhelming than thunder or lightning. Thunder can be heard but not seen. Lightning can be seen but not heard. The new secret weapons can be neither be heard nor seen.”

Read more:

d. Morale

PW taken by First U.S. Army states: "The new German secret weapons are more overwhelming than thunder or lightning. Thunder can be heard, but not seen. Lightning can be seen but not heard. The new secret weapons can neither be heard nor seen." (PW's uncle was put into concentration camp for uttering this statement.) (Source: First U.S. Army Special Report).

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 30th Infantry Division, "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 167" 1 December 1944.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

What's the Password?

Outside Cologne, Germany, on December 2, 1944, if you were challenged for the password by a 1st Infantry Division soldier, you'd better get this right.

See the day's password and the required reply:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

HEADQUARTERS 1ST U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION
LPO 1, U. S. Army

SECRET
: Authority: CG:
: 1st US Inf Div:
: 12 Nov 1944:
: Initials: *SA* :

12 November 1944

Ref: 1st US Inf Div, Intelligence Instructions No. 1, 15 July 1944

<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>	<u>PASSWORD</u>	<u>REPLY</u>
1200 hrs 2 December	1200 hrs 3 December	HOUSE	EMPTY
Alternate for above period:		BATTLE	MLP

By command of Major General HUEBNER:

Edward B. Pfeiffer
EDWARD B. PFEIFFER,
1st Lt., U. S. A.,
Acting Asst Adjutant General

DISTRIBUTION:

"Special"

*1-3007
epp*

*1 Dec
15*

Source Material

From: "1st US Inf Div, Intelligence Instructions No. 1, 15 July 1944," 12 November 1944, P. 17.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

German Defensive and Anti-Tank Doctrine, 1943

A December 3, 1943, 1st Infantry Division intelligence report describes German defensive and anti-tank doctrine, as shared by the Soviet and British armies:

The German Army's most common defensive weapons are light and heavy machine guns, rifles and mortars. They use rifles and light machine guns at ranges of less than 400 yards; heavy machine guns at less than 1,000 yards, and mortars at less than 3,000 yards.

Anti-tank tactics include the use of artillery firing armor-piercing rounds, anti-tank guns used in strongpoints and in forward "islands," and small units of soldiers specially trained and equipped in anti-tank tactics.

Where mines are used, they're used heavily: One unit was ordered to lay 3 mines per yard. Booby-traps are also quite common; even German corpses are booby-trapped.

Read more:

File

*Dir 9th
w/13*

HEADQUARTERS 1ST U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION
A. P. O. #1, U. S. ARMY

2 December 1943

INTELLIGENCE NOTES)
NUMBER.....17)

1. GERMAN FIELD DEFENSES: (Soviet General Staff Appreciation)-
(Source: British War Office Publication) - (AFHQ Int'l Notes #29).

a. General:

(1) The Germans base their defensive systems on inhabited localities, on commanding heights and on the exploitation to the uttermost of tactically advantageous forms of ground. The German principle of basing defenses on inhabited localities was particularly strongly marked during the winter. The Germans' defensive system is principally formed of separate zones of resistance laid out for all-round defense and supporting each other mutually by fire ("strongpoints", "centers of resistance"). The ground between the centers of resistance and the strongpoints is covered by fire, often protected by obstacles and invariably patrolled. However, it has been noted recently that at some points on the North Western sector the enemy is endeavoring to create a continuous defensive belt by filling in the gaps between strongpoints with several lines of communication trenches, extended along the whole length of the front.

(2) When organizing a defensive system the German pays a very great deal of attention to the nature of the ground. Weapons are sited carefully after consideration of the possibilities of camouflaging them and of giving enfilade fire.

(3) Tactically speaking, the German defense zone generally consists of two defensive areas with a total depth of 5 - 10 miles. The main forces of the defense are concentrated in the first defense zone, which the Germans term the "main defensive belt". On an average this zone is 4 - 6000 yds deep, and includes the artillery positions. The second defense zone gives depth but is not, as a rule, manned. Under certain conditions it is occupied by reserves who prepare it in advance should it seem that the defense will be forced to withdraw to it. According to the Germans the

Continued from Previous Page

defense will be withdrawn from the first to the second zone when the resistance of the troops in the "main defensive belt" is broken and when the bringing up of reserves to it is likely to lead to disproportionately heavy losses. Individual strongpoints and fortified positions are set up in the area between the two defense zones; their purpose is to safeguard the rear of divisions and headquarters against the attacks of our partisans and of Red Army units which have penetrated to the rear. In addition, the two defense zones are connected by switch lines

(4) Experience has shown that whenever the Germans decide to put up a stiff resistance on a given sector, they put all their forces, including Army reserves, in the "main defensive belt" and that they even transfer units from other sectors for the purpose.

(5) German strategic defense includes defensive areas sited in depth; these are generally prepared in advance by the local population. The final touches are hastily put to them by the troops themselves, as soon as it seems imperative to withdraw to the new areas. (Comment: cf AGHEILA, BUERAT and MARETH).

(6) In addition AA artillery in separate zones of resistance (for the protection of important military objectives - bridges, railway junctions, L. of C. centers, etc.) is situated within the depth of the German strategic defense.

(7) The frequent attacks by our partisans on important military objectives in the rear of the enemy have forced the Germans to provide strong protective forces and often to put up special field fortifications for the protection of these objectives.

b. The German Defense System Inside The Main Zone of Defense. ("Main Defensive Belt").

(1) The German main zone of defense is generally sited according to ground features and natural sectors and invariably takes in inhabited localities. The forefield of the main zone of defense must be easy to cover by observation and interlocking fire. The main zone of defense consists of company strongpoints and battalion centers of resistance. The ground between the strongpoints is covered by a system of cross fire in enfilade from automatic weapons and, given time, by artificial obstacles. In addition, this ground is kept under the fire of artillery and mortars, sited in the depth of the defense zone.

(2) The essence of the "main defensive belt" is the center of resistance. This center can fight independently and is prepared for prolonged, all round defense. A center of resistance consists of a number of strongpoints interlocking cross fire in enfilade. A company strongpoint includes two or three platoon de-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

ensive areas and, in addition to automatic infantry weapons, anti-tank guns and mortars.

(3) The German Army considers the principal weapons of the defense to be LMG's, HMG's, mortars and anti-tank guns. Artillery fire is also much employed. The Germans prefer the following ranges in defense:

Rifles and LMG's	-	400 yds or below;
HMG's	-	1000 yds or below;
Mortars	-	1 - 3000 yds.

(4) As a general rule, fire-points are sited in buildings adapted for defense; sometimes timber and earth fire-points are built. MG's are frequently found in trenches, covered over with camouflage screens. The fire-plan of strongpoints and centers of resistance is reinforced by obstacles, above all, mines. Obstacles are invariably kept covered by fire from the strongpoint or from neighboring strongpoints.

(5) Roads and approaches to strongpoints are carefully mined. A system of wire entanglements, up to four poles wide, concertina wire, etc., is put up forward of the front line. A less developed system of wire entanglements (1 - 2 poles) is put up between strongpoints. Within the system of strongpoints, beside the anti-tank weapons, anti-tank minefields are laid on those lines the tanks are likely to use; anti-tank ditches and other static anti-tank obstacles are less frequently employed. It should be noted, however, that the German Command has recently grasped the value of anti-tank ditches. Referring to the instructions of the Führer, an order dated 8 Sept 1942 from the Inspector General of Engineers, points out the necessity of digging ditches one behind the other. It is indicated that these ditches should be dug sufficiently deep to make them effective in winter also.

(6) The anti-tank defense of the German main defensive belt is based on the fire of:

- supporting artillery, intended to block the approach of attacking tanks, opening at 3 - 400 yds; this is principally armor-piercing shell;

- anti-tank guns in the strongpoints and brought forward to form "anti-tank islands";

- anti-tank rifles, large caliber machine guns and also machine guns and rifles using armor piercing ammunition against vision slits.

Attacking tanks, which have penetrated into the depth of the defenses (according to German instructions, those which have penetrated the main defensive belt) are counterattacked from

Continued from Previous Page

ambushes by so-called anti-tank detachments ("tank-destruction detachments"). According to German views, every infantry company should include one tank-destruction detachment, consisting of a sergeant, four privates and two snipers. This detachment is equipped with five 3 kg explosive charges, four anti-tank mines, six smoke grenades and incendiary bottles. The detachments operate in the company sectors, co-operate with the anti-tank guns and generally take up their positions forward of the latter.

(7) In the defense the defenders try to prevent penetration of their front line concentrated fire and counter-attacks. When laying out the defense, the Germans generally create "fire-pockets", the purpose of which is to give an impression of weak defense in a certain sector, encourage the attacking units to penetrate into the said sector and then, having cut off their lines of withdrawal to destroy them. "Fire-pockets" are generally sited between strongpoints, in flat open country bordered by woods, heights or odd buildings. German fire-plans are normally based on: the principle of concentration of fire; cross-fire in enfilade from automatic weapons; concentrated fire of mortars; fire of anti-tank weapons; artillery fire from the depth of the position. The average weight of fire-power per thousand yards of front is up to five infantry and anti-tank guns and 1 - 2 divisional artillery pieces.

(8) From documents captured at various headquarters it may be concluded that German defensive positions are laid out on the following principles:

(a) The object of the position is to attain maximum results with minimum expenditure of manpower and weapons.

(b) Each strongpoint and each position should have allround defense. No standard model of layout should be followed; close attention should be paid to choice of ground in siting.

(c) The guiding principle in siting strongpoints should be mutual support by infantry support weapons.

(d) The fire-power of strongpoints should be reinforced by the laying of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines.

(e) All positions built should at least protect those inside against shell and mine splinters; whenever possible they should be capable of standing up under the weight of tanks. Shelters and command posts should be laid out for allround defense. Observation posts should be set up on groundcovered by fire from the various positions. The separate positions should be welded into fire-units of at least a reinforced battalion in strength (centers of resistance).

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

(f) Strongpoints should be combined into centers of resistance. The distance between strongpoints depends on the ground and the situation.

(g) In the initial stages simplified constructions should be built; those can be strengthened later as much as time and resources allow.

(h) Existing buildings and local resources should be used to the full in setting up defensive positions. Special consideration should be given to the use as shelters, of cellars in houses and barns.

(i) Concealed positions, (on reverse slopes behind buildings) should be selected for mortars which should be dug in; the positions should be changed frequently. Roving guns and mortars should be employed.

(j) Special attention should be paid to the choice and layout of artillery positions and to the protection of gun detachments and ammunition.

(k) Camouflage screens should be provided to enable the troops to occupy their positions quickly on an alert.

c. Field Engineering In A German Defense Zone in the Open.

(1) The German engineers make extensive use of existing houses and industrial buildings, road embankments and fences. For medium and light machine guns, automatic weapons and guns they either build special positions or adapt existing buildings. The Germans build dugouts for sections (more seldom for platoons) on reverse slopes; some of the dugouts are given a field of fire; entrances are constructed on the side facing the enemy so as to get the infantry into action more quickly. The Germans favor the construction of a very dense network of communication trenches, if time is available and ground suitable. A frequent German device to reinforce the defense is to dig in tanks, thus turning them into permanent positions.

(2) All German field fortifications are built of timber and earth and are, in the majority of cases, of a light type. Heavy works are very seldom encountered.

(3) The Germans use the following types of anti-infantry obstacles - wire barricades, wire entanglements stretched between trees, houses and fences, knife-rests, concertina wire, trip wires. They also use barricades in woods and on roads. In

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

winter they resorted to icing slopes. As a rule they mine their wire entanglements and barricades with trip-mines, booby traps, anti-personnel mines and, rather less, anti-tank mines. In addition the Germans lay anti-personnel mines to protect their anti-tank minefields; minefields containing only anti-personnel mines have also been noted.

(4) As anti-tank obstacles the Germans make wide use of various odd anti-tank mines and explosive devices, (siting minefields at points threatened by tank attack. It should be noted that Germans lay minefields not only in defense but also in attack for the rapid consolidation of an occupied area. The scale of German mining operations may be judged from the fact that on the front of one Army up to 15,000 mines and explosive devices were cleared in the course of three months. An order issued to the 170 Inf Div defense sector, stated that not less than three mines should be laid per yard of front. Extensive laying of minefields reinforced the German defenses and augmented its stability. All obstacles (both anti-infantry and anti-tank) are covered by fire. Minefields are generally laid 200-500 yards from the forward edge of the forward defense line. There seems to be no systematic method of laying mines within the minefields; mines are generally laid at will. The Germans make extensive use of booby traps, setting them up in dugouts houses, abandoned equipment; they even mine the corpses of their own men.

(5) The Germans use the local population on the construction of their defenses; their engineers are employed as fighting soldiers in co-operation with infantry and at critical moments even instead of infantry.

(6) Special attention should be paid to the way in which the Germans adapt inhabited localities for defense. Every inhabited locality is turned into a strongpoint; all separate buildings are adapted for allround defense and any defense works necessary added. As a rule the forward edge of the defenses does not run along the outskirts of the inhabited locality but is pushed forward about 150-200 yards. Projecting salients in inhabited localities are used to give enfilade fire. In addition to putting up the usual field works the enemy turns all the houses, barns and other buildings he needs into fire-points; all remaining buildings blocking the field of fire are burnt down. The most common method of adapting houses for defense is to deepen the basement for use as a dugout, cut embrasure in the basement and reinforce the roof by means of layers of corduroy and earth. The Germans also build dugouts in cellars and barns. In houses, especially stone houses, the embrasures are generally out in the walls; windows and doors are also made into embrasures. Barns and dwelling houses are likewise adapted to take guns. For this the Germans generally pull down one wall and then site the gun inside. Attics are frequently used for machine guns and automatic weapons. Wire entanglements (knife rests) are put up in the

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

streets; sometimes these entanglements are intersected by deep ditches. Mortars are generally put up in open positions behind buildings in the rearward outskirts of inhabited localities. Shelters are built for the detachments.

2. NOTES ON GERMAN BATTLE-GROUPS:

a. The term battle-group is used by the Germans to designate any unit or group of units reinforced in such a way as to be as nearly as possible self-sufficient in combat, and placed under command of a single person or headquarters for carrying out specific offensive or defensive combat missions. Battle-groups may vary in size from that of a company or two with attached close-support weapons, to that of a regiment or several battalions reinforced with tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft, engineers and reconnaissance elements. They may be organized for short - or long - term or changing missions depending on prevailing battlefield conditions and the plans of the commanders. Accordingly, their size and composition may be subject to frequent and great changes.

b. The projected battle tasks having been taken into consideration, the composition of a new battle-group will directly depend upon the immediate tactical situation and the availability of troops. When available units are strong, and there is plenty of time for preparation, a new battle-group will be of a lively and efficient character. In contrast, if time is pressing and available units are scattered and weak, the resulting group may be made up of normally dis-associated units and sub-units quickly thrown together to save the situation or to gain a vital point.

c. In view of the varied and ever-changing determining factors, battle-groups will seldom show any close similarity to each other in composition or tactical employment. Nevertheless, most battle-groups have three elements in common, namely assault, holding and support elements. Groups formed for defensive action, however, may lack the assault element.

d. Below is given the composition of several battle-groups identified recently in Southern Italy. In each case, the composition has been dictated not by the theory of what units should constitute a self-sufficient combat force, but by the demands of an emergency situation which the commanders have been forced to meet with only insufficient troops at their disposal. The examples given reflect wide dispersion of enemy forces, and the effects of a long campaign in which the enemy has suffered serious losses and has not been able to bring up reinforcements or replacements.

e. It will be noted that German battle-groups are usually known by the name of the individual commander.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

(1) Battle-Group HAAS: Formed to hold off Allies North of Salerno, to counterattack and if possible drive them back to the sea. (Capt. Haas was commander of III Bn P.G.R.I.H.G.; may now be Regt'l Comdr).

Hq Co	H.G. PGR I
II Bn	H.G. PGR I
III Bn	PGR 115
10 Co's	H.G. PGR I
III Bn (S.P. guns)	H.G. Tank Regt
1 Co	H.G. Engr Bn
unidentified artillery.	

(2) Battle-Group VIEBIG, for holding and delaying action in a favorable defensive sector where infantry was lacking (San Salvatore). (Col. Viebig is known as C.O. A.R. 93)

Regt Bn 26.
 8 Co's Tank Regt 26.
 1 Co Engr Bn 93.
 I Bn A.R. 93 (less 3, plus 8 Tp).
 3 Tp Flank Bn 304.

(3) Battle-Group 26 Pz Div, detached in emergency from own front to stop a gap in an important defensive sector.

II Bn PGR 67.
 4 Btrys (= Br Tp) A.R. 93.

(4) Battle-Group RAU, emergency defense area TERMOLI. (Maj Rau, from Operations Sec, Hq 1 Paratr Div).

	Officers	Men	Weapons
Hq Btry, III Bn Paratr A.R.I.	4	44	2 x 10.5 cm
3 Try (= Br Tp) Paratr A.R.I.	-	-	3 LMG
Hq Co Paratr Engr Bn	1	68	3 HMG 1 hvy mortar
2 Co's Paratr Engr Bn	1	85	9 HMG
1 Co Paratr Med Unit	3	100	7 LMG
Elements 3/851, 1/851 and 327 A.A. Bn's	3	69	(2 LMG 3 x 2.0 cm 1 x 8.8 cm
Kurz unit	-	5	1 x 7.5 cm SP gun
Total Strength	12	371	

Weapons:

12 LMG's, 12 HMG's, 1 hvy mortar, 3 x 2.0 cm AA guns, 2 x 3.7 cm AA guns, 1 x 7.5 cm SP gun's, 1 x 8.8 cm AA gun, 2 x 10.5 cm field arty guns.

(Source: AFHQ Int'l Notes #29).

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

3. MOBIL STEEL PILLBOX:

a. Information has been received of the Germans using a mobile steel pillbox on the Russian front. The following details have, so far, been received:

(1) Method of construction: It is made in halves. The top half consists of a steel box, open at the bottom, except that the side facing the enemy is sloped well back from the base of the box. The lower half consists of a regular-shaped steel box, open at the top, of lighter material. The two halves are welded together.

(2) Dimensions:

Overall length	4 ft 7 in
Width	4 ft 3 1/8 in
Height, top half	2 ft 11 3/8 in
" bottom half	3 ft 3 3/8 in
Overall height	6 ft 2 3/4 in
Height of aperture	5.9 in
Length " "	2.75 in
Total weight	3 tons

(3) Armor:

(a) top half:-

front plate	150 mm (5.9 in)
remaining plates	30 mm (1.18 in)

(b) bottom half:-

all plates	1 mm (.039 in.)
------------	-----------------

(4) Equipment: One MG, pivot mounted in front, is provided giving an arc of fire of 45 degrees, and gas is taken outside by a flexible pipe. There are fitted two adjustable periscopes. A foot-operated pump draws air from outside through louvres and maintains a positive pressure in the box. A small charcoal stove is provided with a chimney leading outside.

(5) Towing: For towing into position the pillbox is turned upside down and an axle is passed through the chimney aperture and corresponding hole in the opposite side. Two wooden wheels, each nearly 4 ft diameter, are attached to the axle. A towing shaft approx 4 ft 6 in. long, fits into the MG aperture. The chassis is detached when sitting the pillbox.

Continued on Next Page

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Intelligence Notes No. 17," 2 December 1943, PP. 3-12.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

How to Surrender to the Americans

By December 1944, German soldiers had devised creative ways to elude their commanders and surrender to American troops, including fooling front-line Wehrmacht units into pointing out safe passages through German minefields to get to U.S. lines.

Another method: asking German artillery units to stop firing so they can “collect the wounded,” and crossing to U.S. lines in the interlude.

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

6. Deserters. - Devices employed by Germans to become POW included: (a) whistling at passing American soldiers from cellars and coming out when their NCO could not see them; (b) telephoning from a bunker to the rear asking that Arty fire be stopped in order to collect wounded, then going over to the American lines when the coast was clear; (c) obtaining beforehand, the insignia of the Army paymaster, going to the front lines and scolding the outposts, ordering them to point out the minefield gaps, and moving out to the Allies.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, VII Corps, "G-2 Periodic Report No. 179," 1 December 1944.
Inclusion 8.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Keep Your Heads Down

By early December 1944, the Germans were using a variety of clever tactics against American soldiers, including firing tracers high overhead during night attacks, then suddenly opening up with rifles and machine guns two or three feet off the ground. This low fire was meant to catch unsuspecting infantrymen who thought the enemy was firing high and wild.

Another tactic was positioning mortars close behind thick-walled structures so mortar teams could take cover when they heard U.S. counter-battery shells approaching.

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

h. Mortars: Germans place their mortars close behind thick walled buildings. The mortar crew has a window or hole in the wall opposite the weapon through which they pass ammunition or take cover when our shells whistle. Bursts behind them and even direct hits on the building are not effective. It is suggested that bursts be fired close to the rear corners of buildings suspected of masking German mortars.

Tracer Fire - We have noted that the enemy, particularly at night, counterattacks, fires a great deal of tracer ammunition, flares, etc., in an attempt to confuse our infantry, tank and tank destroyer elements. Germans also like to fire tracers high over head then suddenly open up with ball ammunition 2 or 3 feet off the ground. This low fire is meant to catch unsuspecting infantrymen who think the enemy is firing high and wild.

Tanks - In night attacks with tanks the German tank commander always leads his tanks in the dark to its final position. The commander will invariably shout his commands to the driver (who is not "buttoned up") and this situation makes an excellent target even in the dark. Infantry and TDs will do well to fire at the sound of the commanders voice, also at the tank itself to kill the driver.

OP's - The Germans still use the old trick of laying mines and placing booby traps around a forward artillery OP when vacated for the night. When such OPs are reoccupied in the morning personnel should be alerted to this possibility. (Source: G-2 79th Inf Div and fr G-2 Per Rpt No. 166, 30th Inf Div).

Source Material

From: 104th Infantry Division, "G-2 Periodic Report, No. 36," 1 December 1944. P. 241.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Battle of the Bulge

The Battle of the Bulge started December 16, 1944. On the next pages are documents telling the story of the 1st Infantry Division's role at the battle.

The reports include a description of the Germans' "Operation Greif," a series of missions designed to confuse the Allies that included Nazi soldiers in American uniforms behind American lines and captured American tanks manned by Germans leading German tanks into battle.

They also include maps and a variety of captured enemy documents, from an SS soldier's letter home to an analysis of the Americans' fighting ability to optimistic reports of progress made in the first days of the battle.

Read more:

2. ENEMY BREAKTHROUGH (16 December to 31 December)

a. The Big Picture

On 16 December, the enemy, implementing a capability which had existed since the start of the Allied drive to the Rhine, launched a high-g geared meticulously-planned counterattack on the center of the American line between MONSCHAU and ECHTERNACH. The ultimate objectives of this drive are still not clear: it is probable that the operation was designed as a monumental spoiling attack cutting off the Allied supply port of ANTWERP and communications center of BRUSSELS. In any case, the German people and the Wehrmacht were promised LIEGE and the Meuse, and in the PW cages during the early days there was considerable high talk of PARIS for Christmas. One of the primary objectives of the attack was the seizure of the enormous American supply dumps in the LIEGE, VERVIERS and EUPEN area; in fact, the continued impetus of the drive hinged on the capture of these supplies. Certainly the thrust was for more than a local counter-pressure; if its success could not win the war for the enemy, at least it could delay the Allies' winning for a depressing length of time.

The enemy's plan for the blow was carefully thought out and carefully disguised (See Annex 1). He picked the terrain — an unlikely spot and therefore lightly held. He waited for the weather, and for the first week his operations were blanketed in baffling fog. He built up enough supplies to catapult the initial momentum. And he gathered up all his strategic reserves, including the Sixth SS Panzer Army, and drove them through in a gamble that was far from unreasonable. Furthermore, beyond the normal means at his command he used every deception and surprise element he could conceive, labelling them collectively "Operation GREIF".

The plan was simple enough once the necessary force had been assembled. Detailed intelligence reports and estimates kept track of the American situation in the avenue of the proposed attack (See Annex 2), and it was plain that the one imponderable in the German planning was the mobility of the American forces which could be made available to block the drive. "Operation GREIF" had the mission of equalizing this factor. Roughly 700 parachutists dropped behind our lines would seize the important road junctions between EUPEN

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

0700 hours, 17 December. Consequently, something of a race developed between the 26th US Infantry and the 12th SS Panzer Division for the occupation of BUTGENBACH, the next town on the projected northern route of the enemy. Before dark on 17 December the 2d Battalion, 26th US Infantry had taken over the town and was defending the high ground to the southwest against any thrust from BULLINGEN. The 16th US Infantry was on its way down from its bivouac area in the vicinity of VERVIERS to take up positions north of WEISMES; the 18th US Infantry remained just south of EUPEN on an anti-parachute mission.

During 18 December the enemy continued his attacks to reach his assigned road net from the east, putting heavy pressure on KRINKELT and ROCHERATH, and finally occupying these towns after the 2d and 99th US Infantry Divisions had been ordered to withdraw by V Corps. Preparatory to a full-scale offensive, the enemy probed our positions constantly during 19 December. The attacks grew in violence as the enemy tested our defenses from all sides with up to ten tanks and approximately a battalion and a half of infantry. During the day of 19 December no prisoners were taken who could identify the attacking units, but it is probable that they were elements of the 12th SS Panzer Division which was falling far behind in its failure to get on its route of approach according to the German over-all plan. With every day he delayed the enemy's opportunity of breaking the line and getting control of the ELSENBORN and MALMEDY roads lessened; during the day of 19 December the 18th US Infantry was moving south to take up a position in the line after sweeping the woods south of EUPEN for parachutists. During the hunt "K" Company ran into a sizeable force from the von der HEYDTE group dug in in the woods, but a large part of the group took off to the east and southeast during the night. Members of von der HEYDTE's ill-starred crew, in fact, kept showing up all over the area and turning themselves in to anti-aircraft units, supply installations and artillery positions; the whole venture was officially pronounced a fiasco when the colonel himself, trying to beat his way back to the German lines, called for an ambulance in the vicinity of MONSCHAU a few days later and asked to be evacuated. Although well aware of the failure of his mission, he asked the interrogator to notify him should the German radio announce that he had been awarded the Swords to the Knights Cross.

At 0225, 19 December, the first thrust at our positions southeast of BUTGENBACH was launched when 20 truck-loads of enemy infantry and several tanks hit "E" Company, 26th US Infantry; supporting artillery was called in and the attack faded out within an hour. Patrols from "E" Company later counted over 100 enemy dead in front of their positions. Later, at 1010, two tanks and about a company of infantry were observed moving in on the 2d Battalion positions from the south. The tanks managed to work their way up to our road-blocks where one of them was destroyed by 90 mm fire; the other

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

tank withdrew, but not before a bazooka team had damaged one of our 90 mms. The supporting infantry was disposed of handily by artillery fire. At the same time another attack in about the same strength thrust eastward from BULLINGEN; it, too, was dispersed with one tank destroyed. Other tanks, working their way toward WEISMES from the east and west, were turned back by intense artillery and mortar fire. Before dark two more forces, both of company size and supported by tanks, tried again to find a soft spot on the southern and eastern edges of WEISMES, with a complete lack of success. Altogether, the day was totally unproductive from the enemy's point of view; not only did he fail to sound a hollow spot in our defenses, but his attempts to do so were very expensive in both infantry and armor.

Nevertheless, with the 1st SS Panzer Division in serious straits to the west on account of the 12th SS Panzer's failure to clean up the north flank, and probably because it was clear to the most inflated SS ego that the campaign had stalled, the enemy continued resolute in his decision to force a passage to the north and west. He attacked on 20 December in greater strength but with no greater success. At 0615 the 2d Battalion, 26th US Infantry, reported contact with a heavy force of tanks and about a battalion of infantry. The attacking force was probably the 2d Battalion, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, reinforced by additional infantry (possibly elements of the special parachute regiment attached to the 150th Panzer Brigade, part of "Operation GREIF") and supported by the 3d Battalion, 12th SS Tank Regiment. Although first contact with our forces was made just before daybreak, previously, as an extremely interesting captured document indicates (See Annex 4), the attack had suffered high casualties and had been confused by our intense artillery, mortar and small-arms fire. In spite of this initial disadvantage the attack was driven home hard and a slight penetration was made. By 0815, however, the attack had been completely repulsed, eight tanks had been knocked out and were seen burning (the number knocked out and not seen must have been considerably higher, according to the same captured report), and all Division positions had been restored.

While this attack was under way, another attack, possibly coordinated with the 12th SS, but more probably not, was coming in against our positions south of WEISMES. The unit engaged in this thankless task was identified as the 8th Regiment, 3d Parachute Division, old acquaintances from NORMANDY, LANGERWEHE and JUNGERSDORF. The parachutists had had, in fact, much the same history as the Division during the month. Relieved from the line in the Duren area on 15 December, they were sent back to a rest area near MUNSTEREIFEL to refit and re-equip. On 16 December they were alerted and sent to MODERSCHIED to hold the northern flank of the German breakthrough. On 20 December the 3d Battalion, 8th Regiment, was ordered to attack our positions in OBERWEYWERTZ from the south. According to the captain commanding the 11th Company, who was taken prisoner during

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

the fighting, the 11th and 12th Companies worked their way northward along the railroad track to the edge of the objective. There the captain was told by a civilian that the area was lightly held by American troops. The captain was not sure of the civilian's integrity and circled the town to the east, intending to take it by the main road. Our troops opened fire on him before he could group his forces for the assault and the two companies scattered. The captain said that a great many of his men had been killed; the 10th Company, which was to support the attack, never showed up after suffering heavy casualties from our artillery fire.

Although these and subsequent smaller attacks throughout the day of 20 December were unpromising from the enemy's point of view, the build-up in front of the Division positions continued, and it was plain that it presaged far more than continued local pressure.

On 21 December another assault was launched. Into it the enemy put everything he had at his command, as well he had to, for by this time his need to break through to the north and come to the rescue of the beleaguered 1st SS Panzer Division to the west was imperative. At 0130 the enemy opened up with machine gun and tank fire on the 2d Battalion, 26th US Infantry, positions southeast of BUTGENBACH; artillery was brought down and the attack was disposed of as another feint. At 0300, however, the enemy laid down an intense, concentrated artillery, nebelwerfer and mortar barrage. The battalion positions were blanketed, communications were reduced to radio and no contact at all was possible with the forward elements of the battalion, but when the inevitable follow-up thrust developed, our infantry was ready for it. Ten to fifteen tanks and approximately a battalion of infantry drove forward on the battalion positions. Artillery defensive fires were laid down (during the day the artillery fired nearly 10,000 rounds) and succeeded in putting a serious crimp in the assembly of the reserve and following troops. In spite of this disruption of his rear elements, however, the enemy drove his attack hard and a slight penetration was made. Five tanks which hit between "E" and "F" Companies, 26th US Infantry, got through our lines, but our infantry held fast and cleaned out the infantry following. The tanks which got through, although working on borrowed time, succeeded in pinning down the 2d Battalion CP with direct fire at a range of 75 yards and overrunning the "E" Company CP. Anti-tank guns near the battalion CP destroyed four of the tanks; the fifth got away. By 1140 hours the full force of the enemy assault began to abate and the situation in the "E" and "F" Company's area was being restored. The enemy, though operating under considerably reduced power after his rough handling, continued to try to force his way through our positions during the day. Late in the morning, a couple of tanks, spearheading the attack of approximately a battalion of infantry (again, probably the 12th SS) broke through the lines of the 1st Battalion, 26th US Infantry, but again was isolated. At 1430 hours another attack led by tanks hit "F" Company, but was so punished by our artillery that the enemy was not able to come to grips with our infantry.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

After the full weight of the fighting was over it was possible, through the interrogation of the one prisoner captured (See Annex 5), to reconstruct the enemy's attack. This man said that the 9th Company, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, had led the attack with the mission of taking BUTGENBACH with strong tank support; following in line were the 10th, 12th and 11th Companies. Leading the attack, the 9th Company suffered extremely severe casualties from our machine gun and small arms fire and withdrew, but the following companies pressed on with, in the end, no greater success and at an equal cost.

Although the 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was pretty well eliminated as a potential in the fighting of 21 December, the enemy continued to place the highest priority on cracking our defenses to allow him to roll up the BUTGENBACH road. On 22 December the 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was committed to succeed where the 25th had failed. For a while this new outfit, again with heavy tank support, almost succeeded. Tanks started north against the Division positions shortly after dawn, attacking from three points west of DOM BUTGENBACH; enemy infantry following the tanks managed to push our lines back. At 0940 hours an undetermined number of panzer grenadiers had forced through our lines, splitting "A" and "K" Companies, 26th US Infantry. Elements of the 18th US Infantry were committed to hold further penetrations, "B" Company, 26th US Infantry, advanced to restore the ground and "A" Company attacked due east to close the gap. Later, around 1600 hours, elements of the 18th US Infantry moved in and helped in retaking the ground. One tank was still behind our lines after the fighting was over, but managed to escape after dark.

This second attack, which was equal in intensity to that of the 25th Regiment the day before, was, in the end, equally disastrous to the enemy. Beyond his failure to reach the promised land of his northern road net, he lost well over twenty tanks and his casualties, although uncounted, ran into crippling figures. Patrols sent out on 23 December reported enemy dead as common as grass, with corresponding amounts of abandoned equipment. For the two days fighting it was estimated that the enemy lost more than 44 tanks — more than 44 since that number was actually seen and counted. The 26th US Infantry estimated that it had inflicted over 1,200 casualties on the enemy.

With the collapse of his plan to force his way north, the enemy subsided into the defense, bringing up infantry units to hold the line while he withdrew the 12th SS Division for repairs. Movement in front of the Division was heavy but undetermined in purpose; the most significant report of 23 December was that horsedrawn equipment was observed moving across the Division sector indicating the arrival of purely infantry units. Small attacks came in against the 16th and 26th US Infantry, but they were obviously intended as holding efforts rather than serious attempts at penetration. Two more enemy tanks were knocked out in the vicinity of BULLINGEN.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

From 23 December to the end of the period the enemy continued to bring in infantry elements to replace his armor and to build up an artillery concentration, both field and anti-aircraft, southeast of BULLINGEN. Movement on the limited road net in front of the Division line continued heavy, and was taken under punishing artillery fire, but rather than indicating a new formation for an attack, it proved to be traffic supplying the deeper penetrations of the enemy salient, driven off the main roads by our air attacks. The Division prisoner count dropped to practically nothing; those who were taken were usually lost and snared on our minefields. Division patrols moving to the front were often able to penetrate 1,000 yards before contact, and from their reports it was evident that the enemy was digging in and preparing to defend. On 26 December, prisoners and documents indicated that the 3d Parachute Division still held the western flank of the Division's front; to the east it was believed that the 12th Infantry Division had moved into line.

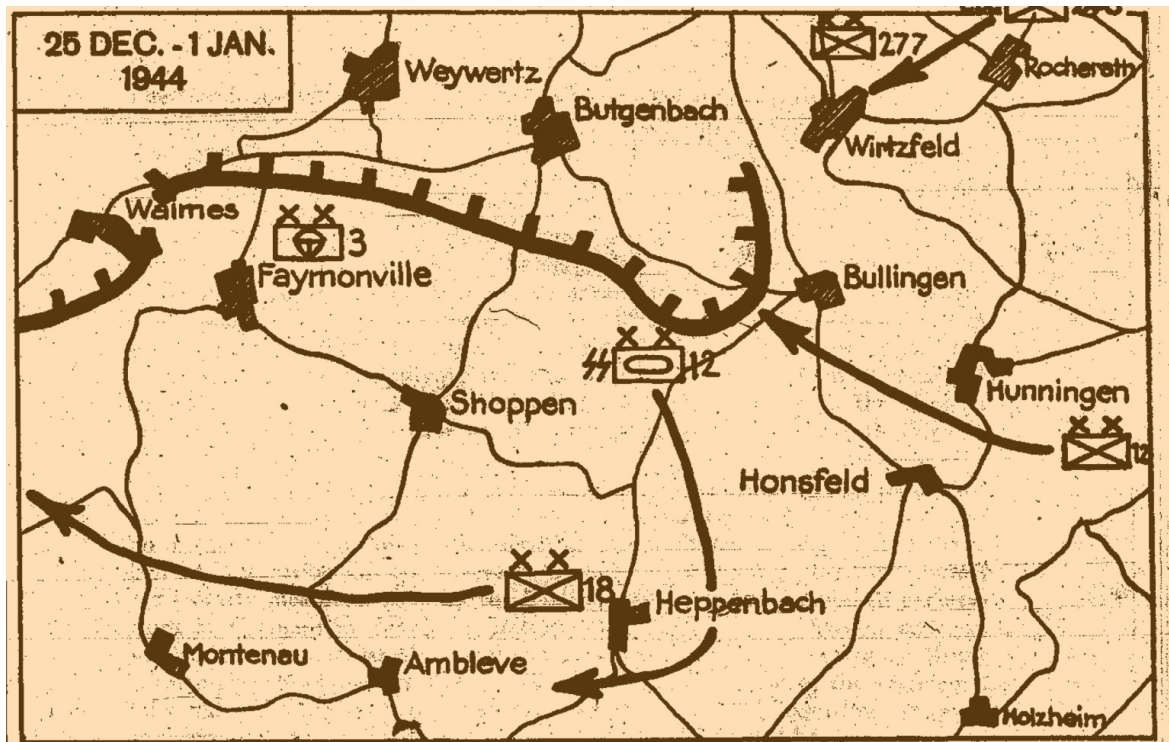
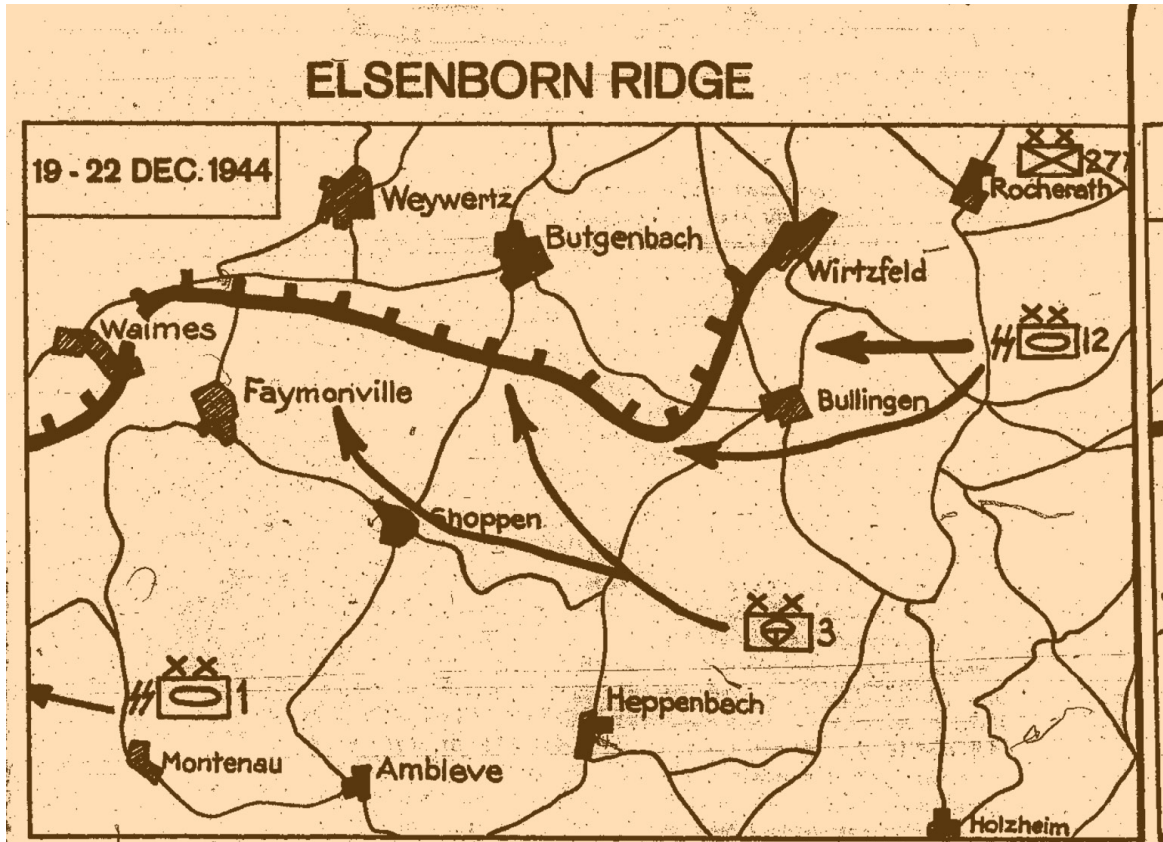
On 28 December, this belief was confirmed: shortly before dawn the 3d Battalion, 27th Volksgrenadier Regiment (12th Division) attacked the left flank of the Division positions after an intense artillery and nebelwerfer barrage. The plan was ambitious. The 1st Battalion, 48th Regiment, was to make a simultaneous attack to secure the high ground west of WIRTZFELD, and elements of the 246th Volksgrenadier Division, previously identified in front of the unit on the left of the Division, were to push through to ELSENBORN from the east. In spite of these elaborate plans the attack was a complete fiasco. The 3d Battalion, 27th Regiment, was taken under intense artillery fire during its approach march and a high percentage of the Volksgrenadiers reversed their field and moved rapidly to the rear. Some elements of the 9th Company and a handful of engineers from the 12th Engineer Battalion succeeded in infiltrating up the draw northwest of BULLINGEN; they remained ineffective during the day and were combed out by strong combat patrols before dark. The attacks of the 1st Battalion, 48th Regiment, and the elements of the 246th Division were equally discouraged, and the net result of the day's work was the capture of three men from the 53d Nebelwerfer Regiment which had supported the attack, thus giving a source for much of the nebelwerfer fire which had been falling on Division positions during previous days.

The failure of his last ambitious attack apparently convinced the enemy of the futility of trying to force his way through our defenses, for enemy activity to the end of the period, as reported by patrols, consisted only of busy digging and moderate counter-patrolling. The enemy continued to lay artillery fire on our forward positions and extended his efforts to interdiction of roads in the rear areas.

To what extent the stand of the 1st Division southeast of BUTGENBACH put a spoke in the wheel of the enemy's plan is an open question. Certainly the enemy, from the high priority he placed on getting through to the northwest and his successive all-out attacks, considered it of primary importance.

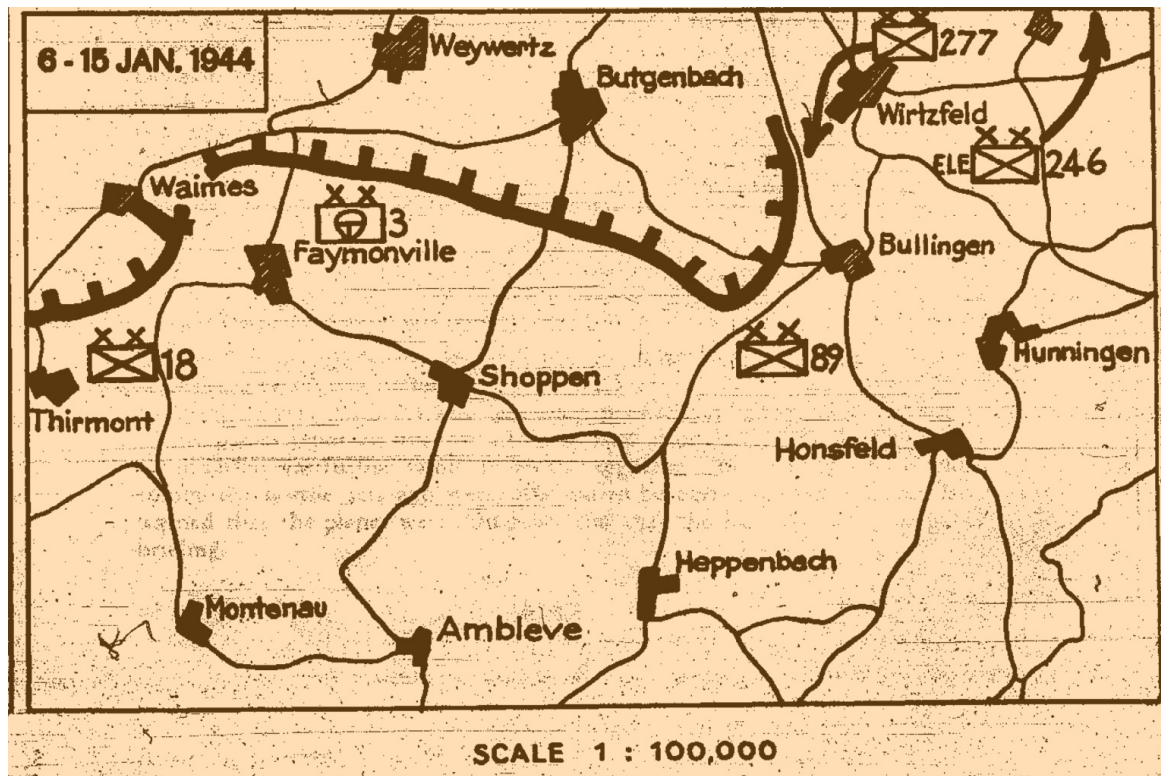
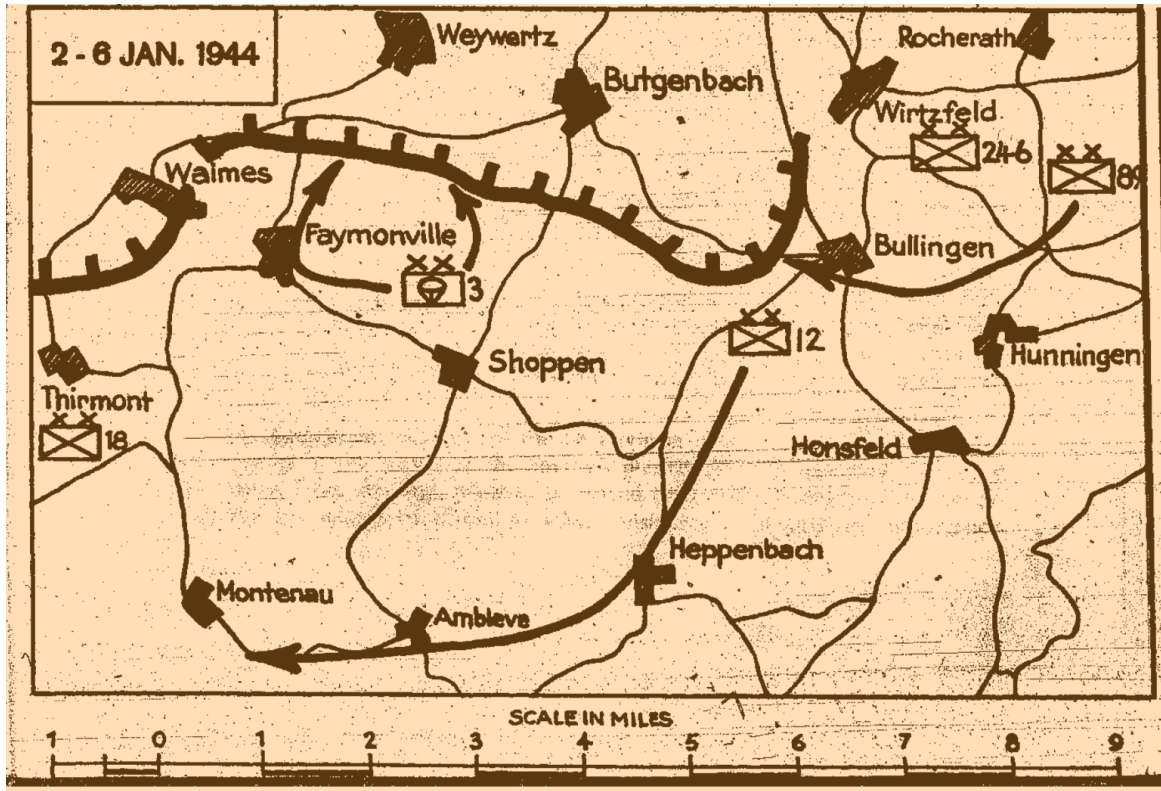
Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page



Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page



Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

The stand, moreover, was disastrous to the enemy in a negative way. On the positive side he had two regiments of one of his top-drawer SS panzer divisions ground down to a framework and lost up to 60 tanks in addition. On the negative side, however, he was unable to come to the rescue of the 1st SS Panzer Division caught in a vise in the STAVELOT—LA GLEIZE area by the 30th US Infantry Division. And, possibly most important of all, he was forced to rearrange his high-level plan completely, abandoning the idea of getting at the First Army dumps in the VERVIERS area. As a result, II SS Panzer Corps, which was to follow up the successes of the I Panzer Corps, was committed to the the south instead. With the 1st Division jutting out into the salient, the overloaded road net supplying the point of the thrust was further restricted in the radius of artillery fire. Altogether, the northern flank of the German penetration was not a matter of heart-warming satisfaction to the German High Command.

If the enemy had failed to gain his ground, certainly he had tried hard enough with every means at his command. Treachery and deception played an integral part in his plan. The tactics of the 150th Panzer Brigade (the power behind "Operation GREIF") were never fully successful due to greatly increased security measures taken by the Division. Although no established penetrations of Germans in American uniforms took place in the Division zone, an idea of the effectiveness of control can be had from the case of a strange officer from higher headquarters who got lost on his way to one of the regimental CPs and ended up on a road leading through one of the front-line company positions. Within an hour of the first alarm, the officer had been arrested four times and checked for identity. Treachery had an equally important part in the enemy operation. A number of American prisoners taken by the 1st SS Panzer Division southwest of MALMEDY on 17 December were disarmed and shot by their captors; more than 25 civilians were murdered in STAVELOT by the same unit. On 26 December a three-man enemy patrol entered the lines of the 16th US Infantry with the indication it wanted to surrender. It was discovered, however, that one of the enemy was carrying a machine-pistol behind his back. The patrol was eliminated.

Enemy artillery during the period was consistently strong, although it reached the intensity of the HAMICH Woods only on the few occasions before an attack. At the end of the period a considerable artillery build-up was still reported southeast of BULLINGEN.

During the operation the GAF put in an appearance in greater strength than the Division had encountered since the European campaign started. Enemy air attacks were frequent but not very productive; the highest number of enemy planes reported over the Division area at one time was 30. The enemy air situation was further confused by the appearance of American P-47s which committed hostile acts and were believed to be enemy-operated; it was later learned that the planes were American and that the fault lay with the pilots' briefing.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

ANNEX 1

(Captured Photograph Captions)

Evidence of the enemy's long-range planning and elaborate preparations for his drive to the west is obtained from four reels of newsreel and propaganda films captured by the 16th Infantry.

The films were taken off a courier who had been dispatched from COLOGNE to the leading elements of the 1st SS Panzer Division to pick them up. He was to return to SCHLEIDEN, the CP of the division, but was captured enroute. Eventually the films were to be sent to BERLIN for development; instead, they have been forwarded to higher US headquarters.

With the films was following descriptive note:

Unit: 1st SS Div.
No. 85-88

SUBJECT: "We Attack" LIGHT: Dark, rain
Develop and cut!

s/ SCHAEFER

Contents and Captions:
1st SS "AH"

LIGNEUVILLE, Belgium, 18 December, 1944.

Battle Sector: Belgian Border.

Route: MUNSTEREIFEL, HALLSCHLAG, Belgian Border, BULLINGEN, six kilometers south of EUPEN—MALMEDY.

The attack started on 17 December across the Westwall, at 0530. The weather is extremely bad. A very heavy artillery barrage throws the surprised enemy out of his position. We follow up our attack day and night. Already plenty of PWs are being brought in during the early hours of the first day. Many guns and vehicles are being captured. Most of the American gun crews are surprised and killed at their guns.

REEL	PICTURES	
230	1-4	The first surprised PWs come in during the early hours.
	6-8	Bridges demolished by the Americans are rapidly fixed by our engineers and we only stop for a few hours.
	9-11	Only four shots were fired from this US 75mm anti-tank gun; after that our tanks took care of it.
	13-19	New PWs stream back.
	20-24	Pictures from a vacated American tent city in the Eifel.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

- 25—30 New weapons and vehicles are captured —
And plenty of dead are left by the surprised
enemy.
- 231 1—3 Snapshots of the advance.
— Laughing drivers.
— Captured cigars are distributed.
- 4—8 Scenes of the march through the Eifel mud.
- 9—13 Pictures of the advance of the infantry.
From our SPs we have shot up many
US tanks, scoutcars, and supply vehicles.
1st SS Div attacking the Belgian Border.
- 232 1—30 Attack; captured vehicles, burned out US
tanks and vehicles.
- 233 1—17 On road to MALMEDY.
18—20 CO of Reconnaissance Unit, SS Stbf. Kattel,
speaks to an officer.

(Danger G-2 Note: Many of the photographs captured in this haul later
received prominent attention in the Allied press.)

ANNEX 2

(Captured Intelligence Estimate, 12th SS Division)

12 SS Pz Div "HITLER JUGEND" Annex to G-3 Journal 1503/44
G-2 Section top secret

Div HQ 14. 12. 1944
TOP SECRET / III/25

Intelligence Report Page 1.
closed 14. 12. 44, 1200 hours

1. Enemy Strength and Organization.

In the first line of our own frontal sector the 99th US Inf Div
has been identified. The Division covers the MONSCHAU-ORMONT
sector (along the road bend 2 kilometers west of HOLLERATH) with
3 Regiments along a front of 30 kilometers.

At MONSCHAU the newly-arrived 78th US Inf Div is in po-
sition. This unit succeeded in penetrating the German defense lines
with the intentions of reaching the ERFT reservoir. The 99th and
78th US Infantry Divisions belong to the V Corps of the 1st US
Army. South of the 99th US Inf Div sector the 108th independent
Cavalry Regiment is probably committed. It may be assumed that
the operational reserves in the rear of the 99th Infantry Division
consist of the 2d US Inf Div plus the 4th and 102d independent Ca-
valry Regiments. Furthermore those units, now in rest areas, which

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

have been relieved in the ROER sector, including the 1st US Inf Div, may be considered as operational reserves.

In this sector may be committed units of Division size from the reserve of the 9th Army now attacking in the JULICH area.

2. Enemy Operations.

In the sector of the 99th US Inf Div the enemy is in a defensive position. His defensive line in the sector in the sector HOFEN—HOLLERATH consists of strongpoints only, due to the wooded terrain, while in the area HOLLERATH—UDENBRETH and to the south a system of strong entrenchments has been identified. Due to the recent digging activities in the area HOFEN—HOLLERATH it may be concluded that his defense line will be strongly fortified. It may even be assumed that the enemy will commit his units south of MONSCHAU into the attack in the direction of the ERFT reservoir. (99th US Infantry Division.)

German prisoners of war are being used to dig entrenchments. A large number of dogs have been observed at many places. Apparently troops occupy all villages near the front. The American soldier is very careless in guarding his billets. In many instances the guards desert their posts at night.

Enemy artillery build-ups are apparent in three main areas:

In the area KRINKELT—NUNNINGEN (5 to 6 battalions).

South of MONSCHAU (approx 4 battalions).

At MANDERFELD (approx 4 battalions).

So far only harassing fire has been employed.

3. Evaluation of Enemy Units.

99th US Infantry Division activated 1942; in Europe since end of October; first combat experience middle of November . . . The 78th US Infantry Division is also a newly-activated infantry division without combat experience. These units in reserve areas which will probably be committed from their rest areas have suffered heavy losses during the battle in the sector west of the ROER. In spite of the fact that they are old and battle-experienced divisions it appears that the replacements are not of the desired caliber, since it has been learned that one of the divisions used members of a penal company as replacements.

4. Enemy Capabilities.

In view of his intentions in the area east of AACHEN, and the heavy losses sustained there, the enemy has occupied the EIFEL front only very weakly.

In order to secure this sector against German surprise attacks the relieved units from the ROER sector have been placed in rest

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

areas in the forward sector. These units are only capable of offering strong resistance against an energetic attack if the enemy succeeds in bringing to the south in a short time the operational reserves held in readiness for the ROER attack.

As learned from experience it is assumed that the enemy will not quickly recover from his unexpected reverses.

As far as terrain is concerned, the attackers as well as the defenders must cope with the heavy clay of the area HOHEN VENN and also the many rivers and rivulets which mostly flow from north to south. A good road net is available for troop movements in a north-south direction.

5. Enemy Airforce Employment.

In the area of Belgium and northern France, enemy can employ from 1700 to 1800 fighters and fighter-bombers. Besides, he has at his disposal units stationed in Holland and northeast France.

6. Partisan Activities.

At all times one must consider the employment of a Belgian — French Militia or members belonging to units of the "Armee Blanche". In this connection your attention is brought to the instructions about interrogation of civilians, which has been sent to the F. P. A. (lower unit interrogation).

For the 12 SS Pz Div "HITLER JUGEND"
First General Staff Officer
signed/ Illegible

ANNEX 3

The following letter was written by an eager SS man to his sister Ruth:

Bifel 16 Dec. 44
Saturday

Dear Ruth:

My daily letter will be very short-short and sweet. I write during one of the great hours before an attack-full of unrest, full of expectation for what the next days will bring. Everyone who has been here the last two days and nights (especially nights), who has heard the constant rattling of Panzers, knows that something is up and we are looking forward to a clear order to reduce the tension. We are still in the dark as to "where" and "how" but that cannot be helped!

Some believe in big wonders, but that may be shortsighted! It is enough to know we attack, and will throw the enemy from our homeland. That is a holy task! I do not want to talk or write much now-but wait and see what the hours ahead will bring!

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

*Overhead is the terrific noise of VJ, of artillery - the voice of war.
So long now - wish me luck and think of me . . .*

The following postscript was hurriedly scribbled on the back of the sealed envelope:

"18 December 1944 . . . Ruth! Ruth! Ruth! WE MARCH!!!"

ANNEX 4

(Captured Combat Report, 3d Battalion, 12th SS Tank Regiment)

During the night of 19-20 December the 26th US Infantry received a heavy armored and infantry attack on its left flank. The attack, which started at about 2300 hours, continued in varying degrees of intensity throughout the night and until about 0800 hours. An hour later a second attack, at the time believed to be a continuation of the first, came in on the right flank of the 26th US Infantry. After the attacks had subsided, the 26th US Infantry estimated that it had knocked out six tanks.

During the morning of 24 December, a courier, apparently lost, ran across a minefield laid by the 16th US Infantry in a tracked motorcycle and blew up. The courier was carrying the document below. The report deals with the attack on the left flank of the 26th US Infantry, and it is evident that considerably more than the estimated six tanks were knocked out by our fire. The infantry mentioned is believed to be the 2d Battalion, 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; the parachutists were probably from the special (z. b. v.) parachute regiment attached to the 150th Panzer Brigade. The later attack on the right flank of the 26th US Infantry was launched by elements of the 3d Parachute Division.

3d Battalion, 12th SS Pz Regt.

Bn CP, 23 Dec 1944

COMBAT REPORT FOR PERIOD FROM 18 to 23 Dec 1944*

After the night attack on KRINKELT during the night of 18-19 December the battalion was ordered back to its starting position on orders from regiment. The battalion, less 11th Company, reached the highway in the wooded area vicinity point 639 and 672 at 2400 hours. 11th Company, which, together with 5th Company, had remained at the northeastern edge of KRINKELT for security, was also pulled back into the wooded area later during the night.

Losses in the night attack: 1 Mark IV belonging to 10th Company became a casualty when it hit a mine.
1 Mark IV belonging to 11th Company was damaged by a Sherman tank during the night fighting in the town (damage to tracks).

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

1 Officer of 11th Company was slightly injured by shrapnel.

Accomplishments: 1 Sherman put out of action by 11th Company; 10 prisoners taken. After replenishing its gas and ammunition supply, the battalion was to assemble at 0500 hours and start its advance on BUTGENBACH via LOSHEIMERGRABEN—BULLINGEN. Because of difficulties in connection with refueling and the clogged highways, the battalion's point reached the road near (left out of original) at 1200 hours.

The battalion commanding officer, together with his liaison officer, went ahead to BULLINGEN in order to reconnoiter terrain and situation and establish contact with elements committed there. After being briefed by Captain URABEL of 3d Battalion, 26th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the battalion was oriented as follows by the commanding officer of the advance elements of the 12th SS Panzer Division, Major (Wehrmacht, not SS) MEIER:

"I reached BULLINGEN which had already been taken for one or two days. (The exact date slipped my mind; it can, however, be established by further inquiry). I was then stopped by my division in spite of my suggestion to penetrate to BUTGENBACH without delay, lest the enemy gain time to bring up reserves and establish a strong line of defense."

Major MEIER further explained that the enemy had strengthened himself continually during the preceding day, that he had dug in, and thus established a defense line in the vicinity north of BULLINGEN, DOM BUTGENBACH, to the edge of the woods southwest of DOM BUTGENBACH.

After the report concerning the situation at BULLINGEN had been given to the Regimental Commanding Officer in the Division Commanding General's presence, the latter gave instructions concerning further plans.

The alerted battalion moved in the following dispositions:

10th Company with Engineer Platoon

9th Company

11th Company

Parts of Headquarters Company

As the infantry reached its first objective west of BULLINGEN only at 2300 hours, the battalion started its attack at 2310 hours. In the darkness, the tank point, instead of advancing in a westerly direction, advanced towards the southwest; yet it was possible to halt it and direct it to the correct road. In the meantime, the liaison

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

officer had found out that the infantry was still on both sides of the road about 800 meters west of the road junction at the western entrance into BULLINGEN. Slowed down by the pace of the infantry, the attached paratroopers and mine detector squads, the point made halting progress only.

After the security lines of the infantry, paratroopers, and engineers already committed in that area, had been passed by about 220 meters, heavy anti-tank fire from the left, from the direction of DOM BUTGENBACH, as well as exceedingly heavy artillery and mortar fire was encountered. The infantry suffered most serious losses as a result of this fire and the accompanying heavy rifle and enemy machine gun fire. The attack failed before the point could be fully committed, as several vehicles were in bad shape because of artillery and mortar hits.

The company was withdrawn by the commanding officer, and the battalion was regrouped.

At about 0500 hours, the battalion, on both sides of the highway, renewed its attack with the 9th Company (Jagdpanther Tanks) as point. It penetrated the foremost anti-tank defenses, but the commanding officer and his tank were hit. The commanding officer took his burning command tank to the rear and took the command tank of 11th Company, which he led during the attack. In the meantime, 9th Company, in spite of extremely heavy anti-tank fire, had penetrated to the high ground west of DOM BUTGENBACH, and was engaged by superior enemy forces, which put three of eight tanks out of action. 9th Company, engaged in that vicinity, was exposed to extremely heavy artillery and mortar shelling.

The 11th Company, which had been brought up in the meantime, received heavy anti-tank fire from the right flank, and the command tank with the battalion commanding officer, received a direct hit and started to burn. Other tanks were damaged by artillery and anti-tank fire.

As 9th Company was unable to advance further, and the point was pinned down, the commanding officer decided to discontinue the attack. There was no further hope of success, and friendly artillery was unable to diminish the enemy's artillery fire.

The battalion was taken back into its starting positions. Refueling, repairs, and receipt of ammunition could not be accomplished in BULLINGEN as originally planned. For that reason (the enemy's artillery having zeroed in on the town), the battalion was taken two kilometers to the rear to the vicinity of TIEFENBACH.

Since very few elements of the battalion were left (3 Jagdpanther and 10 Mark IVs), they were consolidated under Captain WEWERS in order to take part in another attack on 21 December.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

During that action, the battalion's liaison officer, Lieutenant **FRITSCH**, was killed by a direct anti-tank hit on his tank. Detailed reports about that action will have to follow, as Captain **WEWERS** has probably been killed and the situation will have to be cleared up through further inquiry.

The same is true of the attack of **SCHOPPEN** on 22 December 1944.
(Illegible Signature)

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." PP. 145-165.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Battle of the Bulge: the Aftermath

By the middle of January 1945, with German attack in the Battle of the Bulge halted, the 1st Infantry Division counter-attacked to the south, trying to stop German forces from withdrawing with their tanks and other armored vehicles.

Both sides had a difficult time with the weather—deep snow with drifts as high as 5 feet, frozen ground and temperatures in the 20s.



Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division drag a heavily loaded ammunition sled through the snow as they move for an attack on Herresbach, Belgium on January 28, 1945.

“Soldiers walking through snow pulling sleds,” 1/28/1945, World War II Signal Corps photograph collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA

“The weather was so bad, in sum, that during the engagement PWs [German prisoners of war] often expressed surprise that the Division had been able to attack at all,” according to a report. “...The attacking [1st Infantry Division] infantrymen found the going as difficult as wading through waist-high water. A man carrying his equipment could go no more than 300 yards without stopping for a rest.”

By late January the cold had become a factor, too.

From a 1st Infantry Division report: “Frostbite and freezing were common. Radio mouthpieces froze, signal wire froze and broke. Laying wire at all was extremely difficult and repairing a break almost impossible. A wire crew from the 16th Infantry [Regiment] worked for six hours to locate a break in 1,000 yards of wire buried under four feet of snow. Evacuation of wounded was equally serious, when only a Weasel [a small, tracked vehicle] was able to cover the ground. ...

“Since most of the terrain covered by the Division in its advance was open ground, there were no villages or houses to shelter the troops. Many of the advance companies spent two or three successive days with no more shelter than they could dig for themselves in the frozen ground. Altogether, the month’s operations were as difficult as any in the Division’s campaigns.”

Also in this chapter:

Interrogation of the 1st Infantry Division’s German prisoners indicates that the Soviets’ approach of Berlin on the Eastern Front is weighing heavily on their minds. From the report: “The general attitude in the [prisoner] cage was, ‘Why not let the Americans advance? Our real enemies are the Russians.’”

A captured German report of the interrogation of an American prisoner of war, Sgt. Edward G. Morlock, and what he told (and, more importantly, didn’t tell) his captors.

Read more:

Part II

(1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945)

1. CHOICE OF ACTION (1 January to 15 January)

On 1 January the enemy was on an operational see-saw: his original plans of an unchecked drive to the MEUSE had been blocked to the west and his desperate efforts to enlarge his salient to the north by driving the 12th SS Panzer Division through the 1st Infantry Division and on up the BUTGENBACH-EUPEN road net had failed with serious losses. As a consequence, the 1st SS Panzer Division, farther west, had been cut off on its exposed right flank and very roughly handled. The enemy was rapidly losing the advantage of initiative in operations, but he still had sufficient forces to attempt to seize it again, although on a plan considerably revised from his original ambitious strategy. What he could do, and eventually, what he did was to bring in infantry units to hold the salient which he had won while he withdrew his striking forces, the panzer divisions, and assembled them for a new blow, possibly to the north toward LIEGE. (See Annex 1). But as so often in his planning, the enemy waited too long before initiating this policy. By the time sufficient infantry forces had been brought into the salient, his armored forces, regrouped in the center of the bulge, had to hurry off to answer the threat of the American penetration from the south in the vicinity of BASTOGNE. The idea of holding his gains by infantry, however, persisted, and on 1 January, a prisoner from a Volksgrenadier division was captured to the right of the Division sector.

On 2 January a battalion of the 27th Regiment, 12th Infantry Division, another old acquaintance from VERLAUTENHEIDE and GRESSENICH, was identified in the BULLINGEN area, and on 3 January the 1st Battalion, 1055th Regiment (89th Volksgrenadier Division) was located south of DOM BUTGENBACH and the 2d Battalion in the BULLINGEN-WIRTZFELD area. It was probable that the 27th Regiment had dropped off on its way west to protect the stalled panzers and that 1055th Regiment had been moved into the area to hold the line permanently. In any case there was no question but that the enemy was implementing his capability of trying to hold the line he had gained with infantry while he regrouped his panzers elsewhere for either a concerted attack, or, failing that, an integrated withdrawal. (See Annex 2). It was evident from the activities of the enemy infantry units

Continued from Previous Page

facing the Division that they held no idea of attacking in force. Our patrols, which were active and frequent, reported that the enemy was digging in, putting up wire and constructing dugouts.

By 5 January the enemy position had become more or less stabilized, with the 1st Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment on the extreme left flank of the 3d Parachute Division (one company held THIRIMONT), the 8th Regiment to the east extending to within 1,500 yards of the road from MORSCHECK to DOM BUTGENBACH, and the 1055th Regiment carrying on from there, through BULLINGEN to WIRTZFELD. Elements of the 5th Parachute Regiment, believed to be in strategic reserve, were identified in VIELSALM on 7 January, but prisoners captured on the Division front later in the fighting said that the main body of the 5th Regiment had relieved the 8th Parachute Regiment on 7 January.

2. DEFENSE OF THE SALIENT (15 January to 30 January)

In the early morning of 15 January, the 1st Infantry Division, with the 23d Combat Team attached, jumped off from positions which had been held since the 12th SS Panzer Division had tried to force a passage north at the beginning of the German breakthrough. The attack was the reverse swing of the pendulum: the Division was attacking to the south to close off the ambitious enemy salient. During the time between the German breakthrough and the Division's attack to the south the enemy had seen his best forces shot up, his reserves committed, his drive curbed and turned and his main power slowly draining away by attrition, lack of gasoline and the paralyzing rigors of winter. By the middle of January he no longer had the initiative of attack; his most pressing concern, in fact, was to get what he could of his indispensable panzer divisions off the hook. To accomplish this it was imperative that the shoulders of his original salient be held firm. He could not allow any reduction of the mouth of his bulge, since his road nets, clogged with traffic and blocked with snow, were already carrying capacity movement. The loss of any roads at all would be disastrous.

It was into this situation that the 1st Infantry Division attacked on 15 January. The enemy's strategic position forbade a slow and organized withdrawal; he had to hold the ground he was on and hold it to the last man. Over and above any reaction by the enemy, however, was the difficulties of the terrain and weather. Both presented conditions which were almost insurmountable. The terrain comprised a series of high ridges and deep draws, usually heavily wooded. These obstacles, difficult enough in themselves were greatly increased by the weather: a deep snow, over a foot and a half on the level and running as high as five feet in drifts, covered the area. The ground was frozen, making it extremely difficult to dig sufficient cover. The temperature hovered around 20 degrees and the wind was strong and cutting. The weather was so bad, in sum, that during the engagement PWs often expressed surprise that the Division had been able to attack at all. The only

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

advantage that the weather presented, and it was a somewhat left-handed one, was that the Division was often able to achieve surprise because the enemy did not believe that an attack was possible under the prevailing conditions.

It is hard to say whether or not the initial attack came as a surprise to the enemy. (See Annex 2.) Prisoners taken later said that their officers had told them that the Americans would attack on 15 January; it was front-line gossip, and the report may have had its origin in "Operation GREIF". On the other hand they said that the attack without artillery preparation certainly was unexpected. Probably as a result of the first report, a strong combat patrol, numbering over 50 men attacked the 16th US Infantry positions after midnight, and was only driven off by 0430 hours. Shortly afterwards the Division jumped off all along the line, with the 23d US Infantry on the right, the 16 US Infantry in the center and the 18th US Infantry on the left. The 23d US Infantry was to take STEINBACH and REMONVAL, the 18th US Infantry was to take the high ground about 1400 yards south of their line of departure, and the 16th US Infantry was to seize FAYMONVILLE. The first and all-encompassing obstacle was the snow. Complete mine detection was next to impossible and in at least one case a tank was knocked out by one of our own mines/buried so deeply in the snow that it did not register on the detectors. The attacking infantrymen found the going as difficult as wading through waist-high water. A man carrying his equipment could go no more than 300 yards without stopping for a rest. All across the front progress was slow.

On the eastern end, the 23d Infantry, moving out from positions near WEISMES, labored over the difficult terrain to take STEINBACH and REMONVAL against enemy resistance. REMONVAL was held by about 120 men from the 3d Battalion and part of the 2d Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment; the enemy in STEINBACH numbered about 100, with an equal number on the hill southeast of the town. The approaches were well mined and difficult to detect: 56 mines were probed at one point near the underpass, and two tank destroyers and one tank were lost. In spite of the fact that the enemy controlled all observation and had ideal fields of fire, the two towns were taken by 1900 hours, as well as a bag of more than 100 prisoners.

In the center of the line, the 16th US Infantry pushed towards FAYMONVILLE, but was stopped cold north of the town; the 3d Battalion moving to the east, got into a hornets' nest in a patch of woods east of the town, which was only cleaned out by "K" Company after a hard and bloody struggle. Later, however, the 1st Battalion was able to push the enemy out of the northern part of FAYMONVILLE, which was held by the 2d Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment. (See Annex 4). By nightfall, the 16th Infantry held about half of the town, but the enemy at first showed no disposition to vacate his end without forcible ejection.

On the Division's left flank, the enemy was giving the 18th US Infantry serious trouble from well emplaced positions on KLINGELBERG and the hill

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

to the south. "L" Company, advancing to the south was caught by daylight in front of the enemy's MLR, and the 1st Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment on the high ground was able to cut the company to ribbons. By 1125 hours the company's attack had been broken and the company was forced back to its original positions. Casualties were heavy; one officer and 25 men were wounded; one officer and 42 men missing.

The first day of the attack emphasized the difficulties imposed on supply and evacuation which were, indeed, as dogged as the reaction of the enemy himself. Jeeps were almost useless in the snow; the only vehicle which could negotiate the drifts, in fact, was the Weasel, and there were not enough of them: only one to a battalion. Evacuation was particularly difficult and made more so by the fact that unless casualties could be evacuated within a few hours the chances of the wounded, if seriously hit, were pretty slim. It is probable that a large percentage of the men listed as missing were not captured by the enemy but had fallen when hit and had been covered over by the snow.

The attack, however, continued. The enemy facing the 23d US Infantry had retired south of the AMEL River to take up strong defensive positions on the south bank. As the deployed troops of the 23d US Infantry pushed on down to the river bank they were subjected to intense small arms and mortar fire, but in spite of heavy casualties, the 2d Battalion managed to reach the near bank. But the position was untenable; exposed to direct fire from the other side, the troops were being decimated. After dark on 16 January the battalion pulled back to the high ground southwest of ONDENVAL.

In the center sector of the 16th US Infantry it was found that the enemy occupying the southern half of FAYMONVILLE, in spite of a show of force earlier in the night, had withdrawn to the south. By 0915 hours the town was open and the high ground taken to the south. Enemy resistance stiffened almost immediately, however. As the 2d Battalion, 16th US Infantry pushed on down the road to SCHOPPEN, with "F" Company leading, intense small arms fire, supported by self-propelled guns, was laid on the advancing troops from the town. The condition of the road prevented friendly tanks from being brought up, and it is doubtful that they would have had much effect anyway: the enemy was firing from hull-down positions and had the road covered and zeroed in from several directions.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, facing the 18th US Infantry on the right, continued to resist any attempts to push further south, a resistance that was considerably aided by artillery support that resembled that of HEISTERN and VERLAUTENHEIDE ridge. An attempt to take the ground at 888014 was turned back, although other elements of the 18th US Infantry managed to push through the snow east of the KLINGELSBURG draw. To the east the 1055th Regiment, 89th Volksgrenadier Division was identified holding the northern edge of the woods

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

from 903017 to 921017. In spite of the artillery concentrations laid on the 18th US Infantry, enemy artillery over the whole front showed a substantial decrease from the day before, when more than 1,700 rounds were reported. The reduction was believed to be the result of the 3d Parachute Division artillery moving to more secure areas.

The next day, 17 January, the first offensive enemy reaction to the attack of the 18th US Infantry hit "K" Company at 888018; about 40 men from the 1st Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, supported by two tanks, attacked and were repulsed. Later elements of the 18th managed to push to the southern edge of Hill 566 and to the high ground north of SCHOPPEN. Enemy artillery was intense.

On the other end of the front enemy mounted a major counterattack to break up the drive of the 23d US Infantry (with 1st Battalion, 18th US Infantry attached) through the ROHR BUSCH, 865990. About 200 men from the 8th Parachute Regiment (160 of whom were replacements fresh from Holland), plus 60 men from the 13th Company, 9th Regiment, and 30 men from the 3d Parachute Division Reconnaissance unit, launched their attack supported by five to seven self-propelled guns. The attack came in at 0730 hours, just before the 23d US Infantry was to launch its own attack to clear the woods, and raged back and forth through the woods until noon. Extremely heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy; at least two-thirds of the attacking force was killed, captured or wounded, and by 1400 hours the remnants of the enemy began pulling out to the south.

While this fight was going on, the 1st Battalion, 18th US Infantry, attacking the elements of the 1st Battalion, 9th Regiment plus the 15th Company, 8th Regiment and the reserve companies of both regiments which were holding the pocket south of the AMEL River, cleaned the force out of the woods. The complete surprise of the attack from the south resulted in the captured of three 88mm guns, four 105mm howitzers, a half-track and an ammunition dump. (See Annex 6). These two actions on the western flank of the Division sector netted a total of 236 prisoners for the day. To the east the 16th and 18th US Infantries continued to work their way south under heavy artillery fire.

On 19 January four more enemy-held towns were taken in the worst weather of the battle. EIBERTINGEN, the first, was defended by a force of about 130 replacements and stragglers from the ROHR BUSCH. Entrance to the town was blocked by a large number of wooden box mines. Self-propelled guns and one tank were in the town, which faced the attacking 23d US Infantry, and it was only after heavy artillery concentrations forced the enemy to fall back into the town that infantrymen were able to move forward and seize several houses on the northern edge. The enemy counterattacked immediately, and bitter hand-to-hand fighting resulted, but by 1400 hours the enemy troops began to pull out toward DEIDENBERG. One hundred prisoners

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

were taken and more than 35 enemy dead were counted in the streets. MONTENAU and IVELDINGEN, also taken by the 23d US Infantry, put up less resistance, and only 22 prisoners were taken from the two towns. The most effective resistance was put up by a nine-man strongpoint from the 5th Company, 352d Regiment in IVELDINGEN; the same group was later encountered in MONTENAU after they had been forced back.

With the line on 20 January running roughly on the axis DEIDENBERG—EIBERTINGEN—SCHOPPEN, the division attack held up, except for readjustment of the lines and mopping up of stubborn areas. Most stubborn of these was the BUTGENBACHER HECK, where elements of the Fusilier Battalion, 89th Volksgrenadier Division, and the 1st Battalion, 1055th Volksgrenadier Regiment were deeply and skillfully dug in. Division troops succeeded in clearing about 800 yards of the northern edge of the woods in the face of extremely heavy small arms and artillery fire and the relentless weather and terrain. On other sectors of the front the enemy took advantage of the breather to reorganize his shattered forces and feverishly erect defenses. He was anxious to learn our intentions. (See Annex 5). Division patrols heard digging and construction work all along the front as the enemy tried to bring a coordinated resistance line out of the chaos. This activity, with concomitant stubborn defensive action on the part of the enemy troops in the BUTGENBACHER HECK, continued to 24 January. It was clear from patrol reports that the enemy intended to make an MLR on the east bank of the MODERSCHIED River, with an outpost line on the western bank.

During 24 January, the enemy's MORSCHHECK position, which he had captured in the early stages of his December offensive, was retaken. The MORSCHHECK crossroads, possibly the best organized of the enemy's defensive positions, and probably where he least expected an attack, was held by the 1st Battalion, 1055th Regiment. The force was divided by the attack of the 18th and 26th US Infantries, and our troops, achieving this breakthrough by surprise, continued to push on south and southwest against stubborn but disorganized resistance. Coincidentally, the enemy positions in the BUTGENBACHER HECK were heavily attacked and the enemy was forced to withdraw from the northern part of the woods. A high number of prisoners were taken from the 1st Battalion, 1055th Regiment, which held the eastern part of the woods as well as the crossroads, and the 2d Battalion which was deployed to the west. Our troops pushing south from the crossroads position reached MODERSCHIED shortly before dark. Our positions in the vicinity of the crossroads were counterattacked by the 2d Battalion, 1056th Regiment, which had assembled in HEPSCHIED, but effective artillery fire beat the attack off. A second attack by 50 enemy was similarly handled. MODERSCHIED itself fell after a brief struggle when the 3d Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, pulled out toward HEPSCHIED at dusk. A total of more than 280 prisoners were taken during the day.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

On the next day, 25 January, the enemy was cleared from the ridge southwest of MODERSCHEID and the towns of AMEL and MIRFELD were taken. The 2d Battalion, 1055th Regiment, encircled in the BUTGENBACHER HECK managed to extricate only a limited number of its personnel to HEPSCHIED to organize another line of defense. The 3d Parachute Division, which had been holding the MODERSCHEID—MIRFELD—AMEL line apparently withdrew to the HEPPENBACH—VALENDER area, a move that was reported by several PWs and civilians. The outposts left in the two towns were captured when our forces took advantage of the withdrawal and attacked, not from the southwest as the enemy expected, but from the northeast. The only enemy reaction to this operation was to move a force of about 50 or 60 personnel north from HEPPENBACH to HEPSCHIED, but if he had any idea of an attack it was discouraged by our intense artillery fire.

During the next two days, 26 and 27 January, as the Division attack halted, the enemy activities were confined to further work on his defenses and counter-patrolling. On 27 January two of our outposts, one about 1,000 yards west of HEPPENBACH and the other on Hill 625 (939008) were pushed back by stronger enemy forces, but the latter outpost was retaken after a heavy artillery concentration had driven off the enemy.

On 28 January, however, HEPSCHIED, HEPPENBACH and VALENDER were cleared of the enemy, and our troops, taking advantage of the enemy's disorganization, pushed rapidly up the HEPSCHIED-HONSFELD road to Hill 620, about 1500 yards west of HONSFELD. This move apparently caused the enemy to believe his troops in the REIGELSBUSCH were being encircled; at any rate, the enemy in the area pulled back to the HONSFELD area, and when the woods were taken by our forces, only a few stragglers remained. A total of 257 prisoners were taken during the day's operation. HEPSCHIED was held by the remnants of the 1055th Regiment and elements of the 5th Parachute Regiment; the rest of the 5th Regiment held HEPPENBACH. In both areas the enemy had taken advantage of the hiatus in the Division's attack, and well-constructed fortifications were encountered. The flanking position to the north in the REIGELSBUSCH was held less firmly by the 2d Battalion, 1056th Regiment, and a strong position in the patch of woods about 1,000 yards west of HEPPENBACH was outposted by a force of about 40 men from the 48th Parachute Regiment under a Lt SPRENGER. In spite of these precautions, however, the fighting in HEPSCHIED was over as soon as our tanks penetrated the town. Fighting in HEPPENBACH was more severe: our tanks got stuck in the snow and the initial assault was by infantry alone. With the taking of HEPPENBACH, our troops moved along the road to HONSFELD, encountering small resistance, but eventually clearing the enemy as far as Hill 620. Battlegroup SPRENGER was eliminated when our tanks were able to advance far enough to bring the woods under direct fire. It appeared that the 2d Battalion, 1056 Regiment had pulled back to HONSFELD and was holding the

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

town. To the north, BULLINGEN, the base of the attack of the 12th SS Panzer Division in December, was finally cleared of enemy after stubborn fighting in the southern and western parts on 29 January. The town was held by the 3d Battalion, 1056th Regiment, from which more than 200 prisoners were taken. Prisoners said they had no warning of the attack until it had actually closed in, but in spite of this surprise, the elements in the outskirts put up a stiff fight before the added support of our tanks discouraged them. Whatever was left of the 3d Battalion, 1056th Regiment pulled out toward MURRINGEN. Along the rest of the Division front the enemy was inactive.

3. WITHDRAWAL TO THE SIEGFRIED LINE (30 January to 31 January)

MURRINGEN, HUNNINGEN and HONSFELD, the last enemy-held towns in front of the German border, fell to the 1st Division on 30 January, after moderate fighting which netted nearly 350 prisoners. The attrition which the enemy had been suffering since the start of the Division attack on 15 January was noticeable in his defense of the towns; although he had excellent defensive terrain around the villages, he was unable to round up enough men to defend them to their full capabilities. In MURRINGEN were elements of the 1st Battalion, 991st Regiment, 277th Division, and also elements of the 1056th Regiment. What was left of the 5th Parachute Regiment (combined under a Battlegroup NOETH) defended HONSFELD, and HUNNINGEN was held by the discouraged remnants of the 2d Battalion, 1056th Regiment and about 80 men from the 89th Fusilier Battalion. Coordination between the various defending forces was not complete, and the Division attacked with such force and speed that HONSFELD was taken shortly after 0300 hours, 30 January. The attack against HUNNINGEN got under way at 0800 hours under bitter resistance at first, but as the enemy began to withdraw an hour later, he was taken under effective mortar and artillery fire. Coincidentally the attack against MURRINGEN proceeded with our troops moving in from the east and northeast. The enemy was taken by surprise and by dark our forces had outposts on the high ground well to the east of the town. It was apparent that the enemy had withdrawn a considerable distance to the east. Above the resistance of the enemy, however, was the continued heavy snow and rough going which hampered the Division's movement. In spite of this obstacle, the Division continued its push to the east, and enemy screening forces were pushed back from the approaches to the high ground northeast of the HOLZWARCKE River on 31 January. The only severe fighting during the day developed around the crossroad (005052), which was eventually taken.

The fighting during January marked the grand deflation of the enemy's ambitious plan of 16 December. At the beginning of the month, though his drive to the east had been bent, he had the intention of holding what he had with infantry divisions, while he regrouped his panzers. At the end of the month he had been forced to give up even this compromise measure: the divi-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

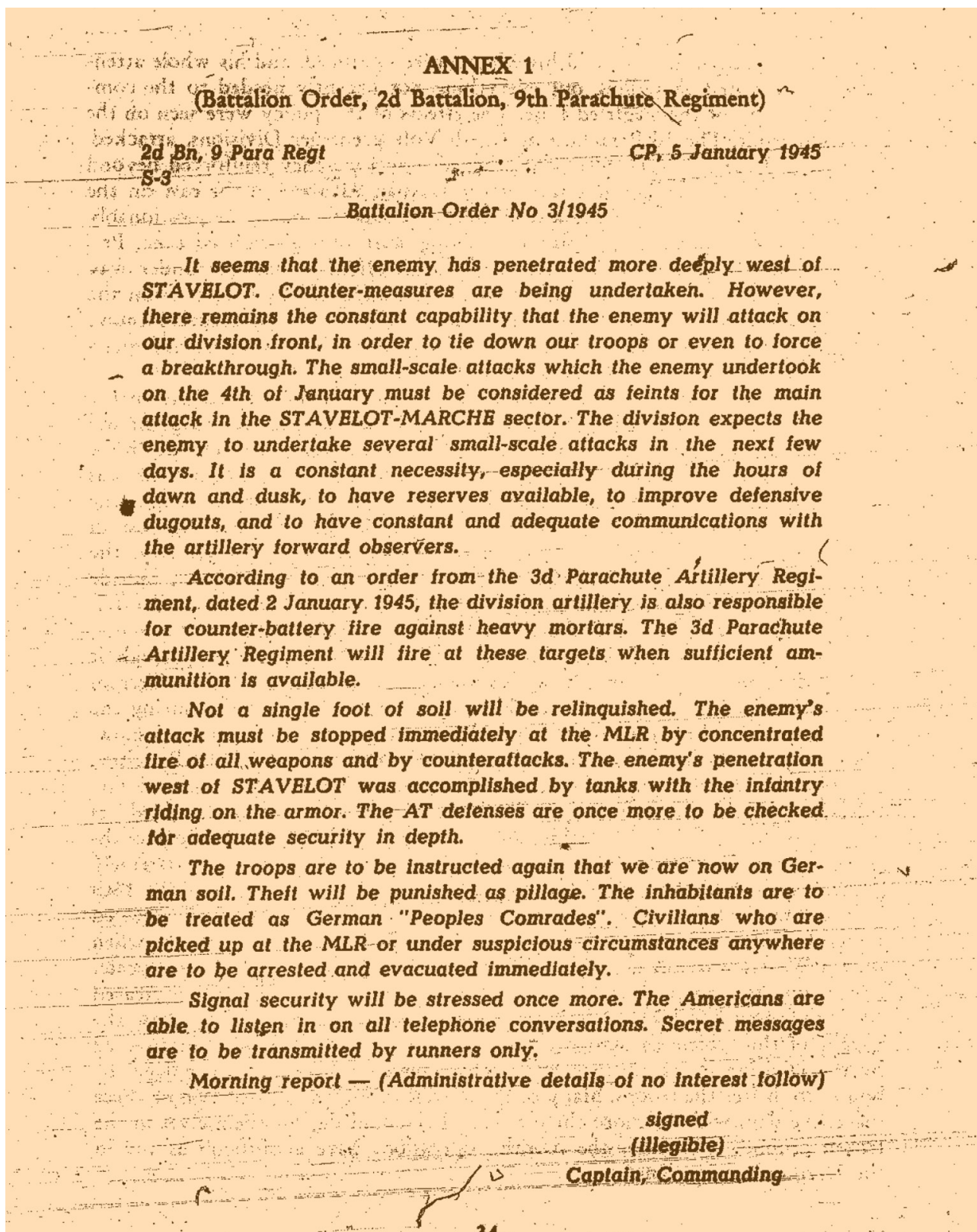
sions which he had left to hold his salient were sacrificed, and his whole attention was devoted to pulling out everything not urgently needed to the comparative safety of the Siegfried Line. The effects of this policy were seen on the Division front. The 3d Parachute and 89th Volksgrenadier Divisions, attacked, mauled and cut to pieces, were not relieved, nor were they reinforced beyond a trickle from Holland. The effect of the Russian advances in the east on the enemy's policy in the west cannot, of course be assayed, but it unquestionably forced major changes in the plan of holding west of the Siegfried Line. Prisoners taken by the Division after the Russian offensive had got under way indicated the official German information still controlled the reports from the east, but that grapevine rumor had given the prisoners a fairly accurate knowledge of events. The general attitude in the cage was, "Why not let the Americans advance? Our real enemies are the Russians."

In spite of this dispiritedness which was evident in some cases, the enemy put up a bitter, exhausting fight for the ground that he held. At no point did he retreat without pressure, no matter whether he held good or poor defensive terrain. The higher enemy policy of selling every foot of space for time was evident in the month's operations, and during the first days of the attack, the enemy had considerable success with his plan, although at shattering cost in personnel and equipment. His losses were indeed severe. By 31 January, the 3d Parachute Division, in its original form, was virtually non-existent outside of scattered battlegroups. The same was true of the 89th Volksgrenadier Division, and the dissolution of the 277th Division was in progress.

One element which aided the enemy in his delaying defense (though it operated against him by increasing his losses) was the bitter weather. Terrain which would have been a minor problem in supply and evacuation during the summer presented almost insoluble problems under a two-foot cover of snow. The progress of the infantrymen through this obstacle was painfully slow. Points had to be changed every 75 to 100 yards. Machine gunners and mortar-men were barely able to move at all. Moreover the temperature added its weight to the difficulties. Frostbite and freezing were common. Radio mouth-pieces froze; signal wire froze and broke. Laying wire at all was extremely difficult and repairing a break almost impossible. A wire crew from the 16th Infantry worked for six hours to locate a break in 1,000 yards of wire buried under four feet of snow. Evacuation of wounded was equally serious, when only a Weasel was able to cover the ground. Mines were very hard to locate, and in one case an invaluable Weasel was destroyed travelling over a cleared road: the snow had been packed down just enough by the traffic to allow the weight of the vehicle to detonate the mine. Since most of the terrain covered by the Division in its advance was open ground, there were no villages or houses to shelter the troops. Many of the advance companies spent two or three successive days with no more shelter than they could dig for themselves in the frozen ground. Altogether the month's operations were as difficult as any in the Division's campaigns.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page



Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

ANNEX 2
(3d Parachute Division Estimate of the Situation)

3d Parachute Division
G-2

Div CP, 4 January 1945

SUBJECT: G-2 Report No 1
TO: Distribution

ESTIMATE OF THE ENEMY SITUATION:

Both the presence of new enemy troops brought up since the beginning of our offensive and the well-sited enemy positions and mines encountered during our attack on 28 December 1944 show that the enemy has constructed strong defensive lines after re-grouping and consolidating the breakthrough. This strong defense line in front of the Corps sector is supported by strong artillery formations.

ENEMY INTENTIONS:

Further entrenching and holding of the ELSENBORN apex in order to prevent further progress of our defensive screen towards the north and west.

1. Especially in the direction of ST VITH in order to narrow our bulge in southeastern Belgium.
2. Enemy attacks of greater than merely local significance must be expected in a southeasterly and easterly direction from ELSENBORN.

ENEMY METHODS OF SPECIAL NOTE:

The enemy is conducting a stubborn defense in well constructed, strategic positions, and is well armed.

1. He will place his MLR in a locality where there is open ground between his and our positions, at the outer edge of the woods; he will construct strongpoints along this line, using houses and high ground sometimes located in front of the MLR. A complete system of communication lines. He will construct strongpoints in the middle of the woods, from which he can dominate the MLR.
2. Enemy defense is in depth, with usual thin outpost line. There are strong reserves for counter-thrusts and holding attacks and roadblock defenses, and artillery plans for fire on advancing troops, even far inside his own lines. The MLR has been strongly fortified by mines and log obstacles, which are only superficial and badly camouflaged; use of mines in depth is rare. Infantry defense in forest fighting is extremely stubborn; the attackers and patrols will remain unmolested until they reach the immediate vic-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

nity of the enemy, where they will be suddenly taken under fire. Snipers will be employed, and hand-to-hand combat is probable.

3. AT defense in the woods and along main highways will be exploited by means of single AT guns, bazookas, rapid construction of AT gun positions and use of armor at places where our troops have to leave the woods for open terrain. The enemy will use HE shells against attacking infantry.

4. Enemy artillery is exceedingly mobile, firing effective concentrations on our movements and congestions with excellent intelligence. He will rely on maps for night firing, Cubs and forward observers for observed fire. Frequent use of forward observers with infantry, tanks and planes is usual.

5. Armor has been committed only to a limited extent in front of the Corps sector; it is mostly used as artillery support for infantry troops and fires at a considerable distance from the front lines. Occasionally, tanks are dug in.

6. Enemy Air: Support of medium bombers, fighter-bombers, and fighters when weather conditions are favorable (fairly clear weather) is probable. These craft as well as Cubs will take part in combat. Use of four-engined formations in forward positions is to be expected.

For the Division Commander

ANNEX 3

(Defense Order, 1055th Grenadier Regiment)

On 10 January the 89th Division expected the 1st US Infantry Division to attack. This captured order shows the measures the division undertook to counter the blow. On 15 January, the 1st Division fulfilled the enemy's expectations by attacking. The defense outlined in the extracts of the order as translated below, was followed until the heavy pressure of our attack forced drastic, and eventually make-shift revisions of the enemy's plan.

Secret

Grenadier Regiment 1055

S-3 Reg No: 55/45 Sec

Regt CP, 10 January 1945

6 Copies

4th Copy

Regimental Order for the Defense of the
BULLINGEN — BUTGENBACHER HECK Sector

1. Enemy: The strong infantry patrol activity has now been somewhat reduced. However, we must expect further patrols during the daytime as well as at night. We also must

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

expect reconnaissance in force, with the enemy probing our positions constantly to determine our strength, and prevent withdrawal of our forces.

Artillery interdiction fire has been considerably reduced. Immediate attack seems unlikely. However, we will have to keep the possibility in mind at all times, since the enemy may want the BULLINGEN—HUNNINGEN—HONSFELD high ground in order to disrupt the MSR of our attacking armies.

2. 89th Infantry Division will defend the present front line and oppose any enemy attempt to break through to the east, southeast and south.

3. 1055 Grenadier Regiment has the mission of defending the present MLR against any enemy attack. An active defense must be initiated. As soon as our own strength permits we will assault all located enemy strongpoints in order to camouflage our intentions and to gain a more favorable defensive line.

4. The following units will be employed: 2d Battalion, 1055 Regiment on the right, 1st Battalion on the left.

5. Mission: 2d Battalion, 1055 Regiment will defend and hold the present MLR to oppose a breakthrough on either side of BULLINGEN and the line MURRINGEN—HUNNINGEN—HONSFELD.

1st Battalion, 1055 Regiment will defend and hold all enemy breakthrough attempts in the direction of MORSCHHECK and BUTGENBACHER HECK and in the neighboring sector of HEPPENSCHIED—MODERSCHIED SCHOPPEN.

The battalions will also prepare an offensive defense, which will mean combat patrols to capture enemy strongpoints.

6. Artillery: 2d Battalion, 189 Artillery Regiment will cooperate with the regiment and support the regiment on the defense.

407 Volksartillery Corps will support the regiment with TOTs and other fire as directed by Commander, 189 Artillery Regiment.

The artillery will at all times be coordinated with the organic heavy weapons of the battalions.

For all missions code names will be used.

7. Infantry Employment: The regiment will defend the present MLR and will repulse any attack directed against it. The MLR

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

will be held with strongpoints because of the present strength of the unit. Strongpoints will be laid out according to the terrain. He who tries to defend everything ends by defending nothing.

Constant reconnaissance will be maintained.

To give the troops more rest, the line will be held in less force in the daytime. That is the only alternative.

Infiltration of enemy forces is a constant danger and will be vigorously opposed.

HMGs will not be employed within the MLR, but about 100 meters to the rear. During the day these HMGs will be moved without the tripods and employed with and as LMGs.

8. Defense in depth: At all times resting troops will constitute the reserve. Each company will furnish one squad, each battalion one platoon and each regiment one company. This force will be the initial counter-attacking force and will form an effective defense in depth. Every position will be made a strongpoint. Enough ammunition, food and first aid equipment will be on hand to make every position self-sufficient.

s/ Meyer Bertholdt

Secret

ANNEX 4

(Order of Col Liebach on Resuming Command of 8th Parachute Regiment)

8 Parachute Regiment
Commanding Officer

7 January 1945

Special Order

As of today I am again in command of the 8th Parachute Regiment. I greet you in old comradeship and mindful of the old spirit and soldierly bearing which you displayed in so many actions as parachutists.

With proud memory I think of the many officers, NCOs and enlisted men who died for the freedom and future of Germany. Also I think of the many who were taken prisoner through no fault of their own and who now must endure the rest of the war defenseless.

I particularly expect the "old men" of the EIGHTH to carry on the traditions of the regiment and also that the new men will fit themselves into the unit. They owe that spirit to the many who have died for the banner in the course of their duty. With the old parachutist spirit we will fight on, master the difficult and achieve the impossible. I expect strict discipline in all men of my command;

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

I expect everyone to bear responsibility for his command down to the letter.

We know that we parachutists always draw the toughest assignments. In proud tradition of our branch, we think back to the men of Crete, the many battles in the east, west, and south which have added here and there more and more glory to our banner!

We are a community of battle-hardened men; we look with confidence to the new year!

Our watchword is: STRONG AND TRUE FOR FUEHRER AND REICH!!!

*s/ Liebach
Colonel and Co
First Staff Officer
s/ Gaul
Major*

ANNEX 5

(Captured Interrogation Report)

The following interrogation report was captured by the 1st Infantry Division. It is a model of its kind in several ways. First, it indicates how much the enemy wants to know about our order of battle, our replacement system and our organization. Second, it points up again the enemy's preoccupation with the propaganda value of interrogation, i. e., V-1 damage in LONDON, the effect of his leaflets and, the stock question, the progress of Communism in America. Third, and most important, it shows that the soldier in question refused to say a word of value to the enemy. His identification was made by shoulder patch and documents.

*89 Infantry Division
G-2 Section*

Div CP, 24 January 1945

INTERROGATION REPORT

Through interrogation of a PW taken shortly after midnight 2 kilometers north of BULLINGEN, the following information was obtained:

UNIT

9th Infantry Regiment, 2d US Infantry Division. Through document interpretation it is believed that the PW probably belongs to the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment. The shoulder patch of the 2d Infantry Division, US Army, was worn on the sleeve.

NAME

Sgt Edward G. Morlock, 35129778, 25 years old single, from Ohio. In the army since September 1941. Sgt for over one year, volunteer; civilian occupation: clerk.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

HISTORY

According to documents, the PW was still in Camp Blanding, Florida in June 1944. Five months ago he came to England and has been, in this sector for a few months. At one time he came through the outskirts of LONDON, where he observed heavy damage and saw intense labor being done.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF CAPTURE

During the night of 22—23 January he was at an outpost with a few other men two kilometers north of BULLINGEN. The PW was somewhat in advance of the others. Here he was surprised by a German patrol of about 5—6 men which he did not notice due to their camouflaged clothing. He was taken PW without a fight; the others escaped.

ATTITUDE OF PW

The PW shows good soldierly bearing and refuses to give any information, although he has been influenced by propaganda about the supposed maltreatment of American PWs. He refused to give information about his unit, number of replacements and losses, the location of the 23d and 38th Regiments, neighboring divisions or weapons of his unit with the reasoning that he would hurt his friends that way. The PW says that he is ready to take the consequences of his decision.

**WEAPONS
EQUIPMENT
RATIONS**

As far as weapons are concerned he admitted that he himself had only an M1 at the time of capture but added that his battalion has heavy mortars, with which they will bombard BULLINGEN. He would not say how many mortars there are in a company or platoon. From captured documents it can be assumed that the 2d Platoon of "A" Company was supported by 60mm mortars.

With reference to gas masks the PW said that each man has a gas mask which is always kept within reach. In case of loss, the mask is replaced without penalty. Concerning his basic training the PW would

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

**OWN PROPAGANDA
AND ENEMY PRO-
PAGANDA**

say nothing. Food was termed excellent by PW; he got warm food twice daily.

Our own propaganda leaflets and loud-speakers were not observed by the PW. However he was very much influenced by the US point of view. During our breakthrough at one time we were alleged to have murdered 105 drivers after taking them prisoner.

In another instance German tanks were alleged to have shot several drivers after they had surrendered. To our doubts, he answered that the report can be read in the "Stars and Stripes" (a US Army paper).

MISCELLANEOUS

With reference to his serial number the PW said that all volunteers do not have a "1" as a first number. Those who enlisted before a certain date kept their old serial number.

Concerning the end of the war, the prisoner said because of the rapid advance of the Russians the war would be over by April at the latest. Our resistance on the western front is still formidable, but what he saw of our transport on his way to the rear he termed "catastrophic". He expressed surprise that soldiers march everywhere and that so many dilapidated vehicles are on the roads. When we explained, he replied that in spite of the weather conditions all the vehicles needed repair and maintenance badly. America and England know how to prevent Communism from spreading in Europe and the more territory England and America occupy the better off Germany will be.

A true copy
s/ Illegible
1st Lt

Interpreter
Schonfeld, Corporal

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

ANNEX 6

(Interrogation Report)

(Period 171800A January to 181800A January 1945)

Prisoners of war processed through the Division cage represented the following units:

5th Parachute Regiment	— 6
8th Parachute Regiment	— 19
9th Parachute Regiment	— 50
3d Parachute Reconnaissance Company	— 3
3d Parachute Artillery Regiment	— 3
TOTAL	81

A major provided rank and a modest amount of information at the Division cage during the day. Commanding the 1st Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment, he was captured by the 18th US Infantry during the hard fighting in the vicinity of 846987, along with his adjutant. The major said that his battalion, before his last engagement, numbered 110 men; it was, however, a battalion in name only. Remnants of the 7th Company from the 2d Battalion had been lent to him and small detachments of clerks, butchers, signalmen and the like had been moved up from the trains to fill out the ranks. This force held a line running from the river on the left to the looping bend of the railroad on the right.

Last night, the major said, contact with the 8th Regiment on the right was broken. Nor was there any word from the 3d Parachute Reconnaissance Company which had been moved into the draw on the right to hold the gap between the 9th and 8th Regiments. On the 1st Battalion's left there was nothing, except possibly American troops; the major didn't know. Although he realized he was cut off, or soon would be, the major held his battalion in line and was putting up a stiff defense when suddenly American troops appeared from the south and it was all over. The major was captured in his CP, a bunker dug into the side of a hill. "I stuck my head out and about 12 automatic weapons opened up, so I came out," he said.

The prisoner was brought up in East Prussia and had been an officer in the army for 12 years. He is 32 years old. Before his arrival in this sector 14 days ago, he had been on the eastern front as an air observer. Three days ago the commander of the 1st Battalion was wounded by artillery and the prisoner took over. Although he had never been in the infantry before, he had studied infantry tactics by the book at various times during his career. "The book doesn't work when you have men like mine to deal with and no weapons," he added. He was considerably impressed with the conduct of our infantry, observing that in his opinion every soldier was at least the equal of a squad leader.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

The prisoner also said he had been in ONDENVAL and THIRIMONT when artillery TOTs had landed; the effect caused him to view the prospects of the German army with misgivings.

The story of the 3d Reconnaissance Company's move into the gap between the 9th and 8th Regiments was filled out by three PWs from the company, one of them the 1st Sergeant. Most of the company had been moved into the line after dark on 17 January, but the 1st Sergeant and two NCOs had stayed behind to bring up the ration truck from DEIDENBERG. Everything proceeded according to plan until the sergeant and the two men reached the crossroads at AM KREUZ and took the left fork for ONDENVAL where they were to meet a company guide. The guide didn't show up, so the men left the truck and went up the road on reconnaissance. Near the edge of the woods they suddenly ran into a mine-detonating tank which was rumbling along unconcernedly. The PWs thought the tank was one of the "Operation GREIF" captured tanks and let it go by; when, however, they saw the American soldiers following the tank, they grew doubtful. By that time it was too late: the Americans had spotted them. One of the Americans called out, "Are you Heinies?" and the sergeant, unable to think of a crushing reply, said nothing. He and the two men with him were picked up and put in a jeep accompanying the tank. While they were sitting in the back seat waiting to be carried off, a fourth and unexpected German appeared from nowhere out of the woods and asked the 1st Sergeant for a ride back to DEIDENBERG. Before the sergeant could point out to the newcomer that he was making a very big mistake, the man perceived it for himself and vanished back into the woods. The jeep driver was so astonished at this sideshow that he was unable to hurry the fourth party along with a shot. At this point the remaining platoon of the Reconnaissance Company came marching up the road in column of twos and stumbled on to the mise en scene. The tank opened up with its 50 caliber machine gun, the jeep took off at high speed, and the prisoners, who were as disconcerted as anybody, were finally disarmed behind the American lines.

A prisoner from the 8th Regiment who showed up at the cage with only one shoe explained how he had lost the other. He was a forward observer for a mortar squad and in his foxhole OP when he decided to massage his feet to prevent trenchfoot. Sitting on the edge of the hole, he had taken one shoe off when one of our mortar forward observers spotted him. The prisoner heard the mortar shell coming and fell back in his hole. The shell hit the shoe on the edge of the hole and the prisoner was captured before he could get another. At the cage he admitted to one cold foot and a strong respect for the accuracy of our mortar fire.

Strong and repeatedly-voiced rumors collected from the prisoners indicated that a relief of the 3d Parachute Division may be effected on 20 January. At least six prisoners, from different outfits, had heard the report and all agreed on the date. Identification of the relieving (or supporting) unit was not so spe-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

cific: The 2d Parachute Division was most frequently mentioned, followed by an unnamed SS Division, and last, an equally vague Volksgrenadier Division. One PW said that a battalion of the 2d Parachute Division was already at VALENDER and the rest of the division at STADTKYLL. Another prisoner said that two days ago at COLOGNE he had seen elements of SS Panzer Division FRUNDSBERG packing up. The men said they were on their way to the Hungarian front.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." PP. 166-187.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Good Shooting

On January 18, 1945, a 1st Infantry Division interrogation report told this story of a very lucky German soldier:

“A prisoner from the 8th Regiment who showed up at the [prisoner of war] cage with only one shoe explained how he had lost the other. He was a forward observer for a mortar squad and in his foxhole OP [Observation Post] when he decided to massage his feet to prevent trenchfoot. Sitting on the edge of the hole, he had taken one shoe off when one of our mortar forward observers spotted him. The prisoner heard the mortar shell coming and fell back in his hole. The shell hit the shoe on the edge of the hole and the prisoner was captured before he could get another. At the cage he admitted to one cold foot and a strong respect for the accuracy of our mortar fire. “

Read the report:

A prisoner from the 8th Regiment who showed up at the cage with only one shoe explained how he had lost the other. He was a forward observer for a mortar squad and in his foxhole OP when he decided to massage his feet to prevent trenchfoot. Sitting on the edge of the hole, he had taken one shoe off when one of our mortar forward observers spotted him. The prisoner heard the mortar shell coming and fell back in his hole. The shell hit the shoe on the edge of the hole and the prisoner was captured before he could get another. At the cage he admitted to one cold foot and a strong respect for the accuracy of our mortar fire.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 186.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Germans Send Cologne Policemen into Battle

On Feb. 2, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division crossed the Siegfried Line for the second time, this time near the German towns of Scheitert and Ramscheid. There they met strong resistance, but not for long: Worn-out German troops were reinforced by second-rate units as well as “a terrified group of elderly city policemen from Cologne who had been dispatched to the forward areas to protect the civilian population from looting by the Wehrmacht.”

These second-rate units fought hard, but they weren't crack troops. From an intelligence report: “Their general appearance belied the stubbornness with which they had hung on to their pillboxes and bunkers. Their average age was 45; most of them had been drafted out of war factories and were 4-F retreads. All of them suffered from one physical trouble or another — speech defects, lung defects, epilepsy, and one even had a heart attack while being interrogated and had to be trundled off to the medics.”

Many of the Cologne policemen who were captured were even older: “One, who was 65 years old, actually said to the interrogator, ‘Now watch your attitude, young man, or I'll run you in.’”

Read more:

Part 1

On the next day, 2 February, elements of the 1st Division penetrated the Siegfried Line for the second time in the European campaign. Defenses of the line, an unknown quantity until the positions were tested, proved to be as stubborn as at the first cracking of the line at AACHEN. The attack jumped off at 0500; in the attack on SCHEITERT and RAMSCHEID the Division units ran into two rows of dragon's teeth generously fortified with mines, both antipersonnel and anti-tank. At SCHEITERT the enemy put up hard resistance with machine guns and mortars, and our troops were unable to enter the town until shortly before dark when supporting tanks and TDs were able to breach the dragon's teeth and get into the fight. Both towns were occupied. In the northern sector of advance, however, defending forces were alerted by a trip-wire flare, and our troops attacking toward the road junction at F-036070 were taken under intense machine gun fire from pillboxes defending the area with the customary text-book fields of fire. It was impossible to bring up heavy supporting weapons, and the Division attack was stalled. Late in the afternoon, however, self-propelled 155mms were laid on two of the more troublesome pillboxes. It was apparent that the enemy had made no plans to relieve or reinforce the worn-out units already engaged by the 1st Division, except with the usual second-grade troops which appear whenever the enemy is hard-pressed. (See Annex 2). During the day prisoners were identified from the 1076th Security Battalion and the 106th Fortress Maintenance Company, as well as a terrified group of elderly city policemen from COLOGNE who had been dispatched to the forward areas to protect the civilian population from looting by the Wehrmacht.

Part 2

The policemen who were captured in the vicinity of RAMSCHEID were of much the same line as their counterparts who were captured by the Division in AACHEN. They were originally from a battalion of COLOGNE policemen, commanded by a Major HEISSE, which was sent to the towns directly behind the line to protect the civilians from looting and terrorism by their own distinguished Wehrmacht. The PWs belonged to the detachment which had been sent to RAMSCHEID, where, like any one else who happened to be wearing a uniform, they were impressed into combat duty. All the prisoners were middle-aged and well established — typical apple-scrounging, heavy-footed patrolmen. They were still shaken from their sudden conversion into combat soldiers. One, who was 65 years old, actually said to the interrogator, "Now watch your attitude, young man, or I'll run you in."

Source Material

Part 1

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 188.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Part 2

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 195.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Collapse of the Rhineland

From February 26 through March 10, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division was driving through Germany's Rhineland to Bonn and the Wehrmacht's resistance was disintegrating. Toward the end of the drive, members of a vast variety of units began to appear in the division's prisoner cage.

"These ran from a bonafide woman soldier to a 65-year-old Volkssturmer and included postal workers, bakers and clerks of all descriptions," according to a report. "[O]ne was the 60,000th PW taken by the Division in its nearly 400 days of combat in this war."

[The Volksturm was a German national militia made up of men who were not already in the armed forces.]

On March 16, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division crossed the Rhine River for the second time in its history. The next day it went into action in the northern sector of the bridgehead. The enemy forces trying to contain the threat east of the river were disorganized, but it was obvious that the Germans were trying hard to bring up reinforcements to fill in the gaps.

"To some extent they succeeded," reads a report. "Certainly the 1st Division had some of its most exhausting and roughest days in the battle to expand the bridgehead and, finally, to break open a corridor for the eventual thrust to the east."

Read more:

The bag of prisoners during the advance from the ROER to the RHINE was equally lucrative. During the 12 days, of the advance, from 26 February to 10 March, the Division took 5,163 PWs, most of them from the three major units — the 62d Volksgrenadier, the 353d Infantry and the 12th Volksgrenadier Divisions — which faced the Division sector. Towards the end of the drive, however, a vast variety of units began to appear in the Division cage, most of which had been trapped between the 1st Division and the RHINE. These ran from a bonafide woman soldier to a 65-year-old Volkssturmer and included postal workers, bakers and clerks of all descriptions, and one was the 60,000th PW taken by the Division in its nearly 400 days of combat in this war.

While the 1st Division was cleaning up BONN, elements of the 9th Armored Division had seized the railway bridge across the RHINE at REMAGEN and had captured a bridgehead on the far bank. On 16 March the 1st Division crossed the RHINE (for the second time in its history), and the next day went into action in the northern sector of the bridgehead. The enemy forces trying to contain the threat east of the RHINE were in a disorganized condition, but it was obvious that the Germans were bending every effort to bring up reinforcements to fill in the gaps. To some extent they succeeded: certainly the 1st Division had some of its most exhausting and roughest days in the battle to expand the bridgehead and, finally, to break open a corridor for the eventual thrust to the east.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 207.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Black Soldiers Join 1st Infantry Division's Combat Units

On March 11, 1945, the first black combat soldiers ever to fight in the 1st Infantry Division arrived while the division was fighting near Friesheim, Germany. One platoon was assigned to each of the division's three regiments.

"At this writing," a report reads, "nothing but favorable reports have been received as to the performance and morale of these colored soldiers. They are proud of the unit they belong to and the units are pleased to have them assigned."

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

6. On 11 March, three (3) Colored Infantry Rifle Platoons were assigned to the Division, pursuant to Secret directive from Headquarters First U.S. Army. One platoon was assigned to each Infantry Regiment. When word was received that these platoons were in the Reinforcement Battalion, the Division Classification Officer received and assigned the men. They were welcomed to, and given the insignia of the Division as well as a history booklet giving a brief description of its accomplishments. They were received at the regiments and immediately were assigned to rifle companies. At this writing, nothing but favorable reports have been received as to the performance and morale of these colored soldiers. They are proud of the unit they belong to, and the units are pleased to have them assigned.

Source Material

From: Headquarters 1st U.S. Infantry Division, Office of the A.C. of S., G-1, "Report of Activities, March 1945." 1 April 1945. P. 295.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Enemy Toughens Up

Fighting its way through Germany in late March 1945, the 1st Infantry Division noticed a marked improvement in the fighting spirit of German units. They attributed it to several factors, including better leadership, especially by a “Col. Becker,” who was commanding a parachutist unit; better artillery support; and most notably a change in tactics by officers.

According to an intelligence report, “Several prisoners remarked that their officers were now constantly up forward (e. g. the battalion commander of the 957th Regiment who was captured in his forward OP [observation post]) instead of urging the men on to greater efforts from the security of cellars well to the rear.”

Army intelligence officers were intrigued by “the terrible-tempered” Col. Becker; his story is told in the next chapter.

Read more:

ANNEX 2

(Consolidated Interrogation Report, 24 March)

From the ferocity of the day's fighting, the high number of major counter-attacks and the general tenor of the prisoners, it seems plain that the enemy has been given a powerful shot in the arm. The same units — such as the 958th Regiment and the 363d Fusiliers — which appeared to be left-handed military step-children in previous fighting, today resisted as stubbornly and bitterly as the top-grade troops of the Normandy campaign. Even when surrounded they still fought on, something which no German unit has done for the past six weeks. Just what is responsible for this galvanic change of attitude is not clear; the outward signs have all the earmarks of the presence of Col BECKER, the eager martinet, but it is more probable that the 1st Division's attack caught the enemy just as he was launching a well-coordinated and well-supported attack himself. Most of the prisoners were unaware of any special plans; but piecing together the stories of several individual PWs, it is apparent that the enemy had something up his sleeve, although timed for somewhat later than the Division's push.

The first witness was a battalion commander of the 957th Regiment. He had just been elevated from commanding the 13th Company, and consequently was not up on the regiment's rumors and gossip, but he said that he had been expressly ordered to put his battalion in position on the west bank of the HANF Creek and not behind it. The prisoner, figuring on a continued defense of the sector, thought the order silly and left most of his troops on the east bank while he set up an advanced OP on the west bank in the vicinity of HERMESMUHLE (712367). Consequently, he and his OP staff were among the first of his battalion to be captured. Thinking over the situation in the cage he began to see why he had been ordered into position on the west bank: he had overheard the regimental commander say that he expected 12 tanks from the 11th Panzer Division to arrive before noon to support intended operations.

The second witness was a prisoner from the 209th Engineer Battalion of the 11th Panzer Division. This man was a motorcycle messenger for his company commander. Until 0500 today his outfit had been in the area of ALTENBURG; at that time they were ordered to move. On the way up, he said, he passed a group of 45 Tiger tanks which had pulled off into the woods in the

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

vicinity of KIRCHIEB (8034). The PW subsequently received an order to go on a route reconnaissance of the roads to HERMESMUHLE. Particular attention was to be paid to the weight capacity and width of bridges which tanks would have to cross on the side roads beyond UCKERATH. Before he left on the reconnaissance, the prisoner was told by his lieutenant that the tanks were to support a counterattack by the 363d Division.

The prisoner who should have been able to give the most accurate information on the projected plans of the 11th Panzer Division proved to be of least value. He was from the 111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, but he was stupid. He said that he and 51 other men had been sent into the line near UCKERATH, the group was shortly withdrawn, and the prisoner was captured near HUCHEL. He said he had come to this area from NEUSTADT (7825), near ALTENBURG.

Another factor in the increased tenacity of the enemy was undoubtedly due to the exceptionally strong artillery support he was able to muster. Some indication of the intensity of this support can be had from the bag of prisoners on EULEN BERG, the high hill commanding the center of the division sector. Four officers and ten men were taken off the hill — all of them forward observers, radio operators and wire men. One officer was from the 8th Battery, 3d PG Artillery Regiment; another from the 5th Battery, same regiment; the third from the 53d Werfer Regiment, and the last from the 1183d GHQ Mortar Battalion. This last outfit is noteworthy both for the size of its mortars (210 mm) and its complete TO and TE. The battalion had been stationed on the defenses of BERLIN, but was sent to this sector 12 days ago. It arrived with high-caliber personnel and complete equipment, including a large supply of ammunition. The battalion consists of three batteries of nine mortars each, all of them committed in this area. Moreover, all the mortars have been ordered well forward; one battery, in fact, was overrun by the 18th US Infantry north of the EULEN BERG.

The prisoner from the 53d Werfer Regiment (encountered once before by the 1st Division in the BUTGENBACH area) said that the regiment now consists of two battalions, with eight nebelwerfers in one battalion and nine in the other. He added that there is plenty of ammunition of all types on hand.

Finally, and this may well be the most important factor in the enemy's increased determination, it seems there has been an important though undocumented change in the commitment of officers in the fighting. Several prisoners remarked that their officers were now constantly up forward (e. g. the battalion commander of the 957th Regiment who was captured in his forward OP) instead of urging the men on to greater efforts from the security of cellars well to the rear. Apparently the officers, either by order or because of a feeling of hopelessness, are now sticking it out with their men come what may, instead of pulling out at the last moment to form new alarm companies or to organize

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

straggler groups. And the men, either inspired by the officers' presence or prodded on by the officers' pistols, fight on as hard as they can.

The only unexpected identification of the day was that of the 959th Infantry Regiment. Prisoners said it is called a regiment for sentiment only: actually it is one battalion of about 200 men without a regimental organization and operating under direct divisional control. It was committed in the 957th sector. According to the prisoners the regiment (or battalion) was recruited in even greater haste in LEVERKUSEN than its sister regiments. As many men as possible were pulled out of the LEVERKUSEN area and others were tapped for duty on the way down to this sector. The regiment arrived last night.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 219.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

The Terrible-Tempered Col. Becker

As they advanced through Europe, the 1st Infantry Division kept coming up against the Germans' 3rd Parachute Division, first in Normandy, then Hurtgen Forest, then in the Ardennes and finally at Remagen. A stream of German prisoners from that unit kept telling their 1st Division interrogators about the "inspirational" leadership of a certain Colonel Becker.

Read Colonel Becker's story:

The Terrible-Tempered Col Becker

Probably the most irritating thorn in the side of the 1st Division during the fighting on the European continent was the 3d Parachute Division, encountered in Normandy, in the Hurtgen Forest, in the fighting in the Ardennes and finally in the Remagen bridgehead. Of that thorn the barb was a certain Col Becker, commander of the 5th Parachute Regiment, Col Becker, a ranting, roaring, rooting, tooting regimental commander, left his imprint on almost every prisoner captured from the Regiment — usually on the seat of the unfortunate's pants. By degrees, a sharp, unpleasant picture of the colonel filtered through interrogation of the parachutist prisoners and eventually he became the symbol of the typical German regimental commander. He was the model for a rash of Terrible-Tempered Col Poopnagels and Terrible-Tempered Col Fernsprechers established by other American divisions, but in the end, there was only one Terrible-Tempered Col Becker. That he was never captured by the 1st Division is just another example of the Frustrations of War.

The following extracts from Division interrogation reports record the colonel's rise, breast-beating and eventual decline.

"When a battalion commander approached the colonel and said that his men were in bad shape from hunger, lice, and particularly from freezing of the feet, the colonel replied, 'The position has got to be held at any cost. If the men's feet are freezing, tell them to kick each other in the stern until they thaw out.'" — (23 Jan).

"The lone parachutist prisoner, a deserter from the 2d Company, 5th Parachute Regiment, added color to the sketch of Col Becker, the regimental commander. He said that Becker travels around the rear areas in a captured American armored car, using up all the regimental headquarters' ration of gasoline. The colonel's current practice is to stop any soldier he sees on his way back to the aid station, give him a summary court martial on the spot and sentence him to three days' arrest and cancellation of furlough for one year for having frozen feet. The prisoner's feet were frozen." — (24 Feb).

"Latest report on the terrible Col Becker: The colonel's American armored car, in which he used up the 5th Regiment's ration of gasoline, was stolen by a couple of transient SS men last week. The colonel commandeered a passenger car which was almost immediately knocked out by our artillery. Now the colonel is walking again." — (24 Jan).

"A few days ago Col Becker remarked to a soldier in a rare moment of camaraderie, 'If you're going to get it, you're going to get it. The bullet meant for me hasn't been cast yet and won't be for ten years.' With this pronouncement, the colonel darted nimbly into a building to avoid an incoming shell." — (29 Jan).

"Col Becker comes from Konigsberg, where he was a high school teacher. He received the Ritterkreuz for the campaign in Crete, where he jumped with the 1st Parachute Division as a 2d Lieutenant. At last report he was trailing

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Goering in medal honors by about four, and of these, three were medals Goering thought up himself. Nothing strikes the colonel as being more hilarious than a pair of well-frozen feet on a rifleman. 'Get back to your fox-hole,' he roared at one unfortunate. 'If your feet are frozen, at least you can't run away!' The prisoner who furnished today's item said he believed the colonel had taught theology in Konigsberg." — (1 Feb).

"A PW from the 8th Parachute Regiment said that when he had been at a combined 5th and 8th Regiment combat school in Bessenich he saw a notice on the bulletin board signed by Col Becker, that familiar old horror. The notice read, 'Transfer to the 5th Parachute Regiment and be a real parachutist! Privates who are accepted for duty in the 5th will receive automatic NCO ratings.' The margins of the notice, the PW said, were adorned with a glossary of four-letter words written in by cynical Landsers. One had scrawled, 'I'd rather be a private in the 999s than a master sergeant under that —!'" — (26 Feb).

"The circumstances relative to the capture of seriously wounded colonel of the 3d Parachute Regiment by the 13th Armored Division are not yet clear due to the prompt evacuation of the officer. It is believed, however, that the officer is the infamous Col Becker, now commanding the division, as documents show that only Col Becker holds rank higher than major in the 3d Parachute Division." — (Source: XVIII Corps, 13 Feb).

Source Material

From: "G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 – May 1945." PP 120-121.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Interrogators Disgusted by SS Prisoners

By April 8, 1945, 1st Infantry Division interrogators had had their fill of “enthusiastic” SS prisoners of war.

“The SS men who passed through the [prisoner] cage seemed to have read their own press clippings,” an interrogator wrote. “They were as arrogant, as irritating and as nasty as any SS man who ever appeared in a Saturday Evening Post serial. Several of them were very young—17 and 18—but were under no handicap or apprentice allowance. The young fry were, in fact, possibly an even greater outrage against the Geneva Convention than the older ones. ‘Hitler is the greatest man in the world.’ ‘Germany will win the next war, if not this one, because Hitler said so.’ ‘It is an honor to die for the Fuehrer.’ They gave the Hitler salute and sang ‘The Horst Wessel Song.’ Altogether, it was a very frustrating day at the cage.”

The interrogators went on to report that the SS men had trouble keeping their mouths shut and offered up some valuable information.

Read more:

ANNEX 2
 (Consolidated Interrogation Report)
 (8 April 1945)

661st Infantry Regiment	—	67
6th Observation Battalion	—	23
1st SS Pz Rcn Tng Bn	—	4
2d SS Rcn Repl Tng Bn	—	6
SS NCO Pz Rcn Repl Tng Bn	—	3
116th Replacement Battalion	—	1
Signal School	—	2
BIELEFELD Motor School	—	3
246th AT Bn Repair Shop	—	4
82d Replacement Battalion	—	3
Stragglers and Deserters	—	27
		143
	TOTAL	143

The SS men who passed through the cage seemed to have read their own press clippings. They were as arrogant, as irritating and as nasty as any SS man who ever appeared in a Saturday Evening Post serial. Several of them were very young — 17 and 18 — but were under no handicap or apprentice allowance. The young fry were, in fact, possibly an even greater outrage against the Geneva Convention than the older ones. Hitler is the greatest man in the world. Germany will win the next war, if not this one, because Hitler said so. It is an honor to die for the Fuehrer. They gave the Hitler salute and sang the Horst Wessel song. Altogether, it was a very frustrating day at the cage.

Their allegiance to the Fuehrer, however, did not go so far as keeping military security. All of them talked, but all of them said the wrong things.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 241.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Harz Mountains Offer a Refuge for Germans

By April 10, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division was approaching the Harz Mountains in central Germany, where the terrain would be to the Germans' advantage.

According to a report: "It was more favorable to the enemy than the Ardennes because the road net was more limited; it was rougher than the Hurtgen Forest because the woods were thicker and the ground more broken by ravines, hills and draws. What roads there were capable of carrying heavy traffic were child's play to block. The number of trees which could be felled across the roads at critical spots was only limited by the amount of explosive on hand and the number of men available to handle saws. ...

"If the enemy had had better communications and had been in a better state of organization at the time he pulled back into the Harz he could have made the mountains a major obstacle to the Americans' continued drive to the east. He had plenty of men—probably close to 100,000—and he had supporting weapons in strength, which gave him equality with the attacking forces, if not superiority—except in artillery."

Read more:

integrated unit. That the HARZ Mountains were the refuge of more than the 6th (Wehrkreis) Corps was not immediately apparent as the 1st Division pushed on rapidly to overrun the first line of outposts in front of the hills and forest. Later in the fighting, both from the variety of units encountered, both of divisional and independent unit status, it became evident that the HARZ Mountains were defended by four corps and not one — the 6th and 9th Corps, both converted Wehrkreis affairs; the 66th Corps and the 67th Corps, old line outfits which had moved up from the south. Not one of these corps was by any means up to the level of a German corps in the Wehrmacht's salad days; in fact, the 6th and 9th Corps were little more than a formless body of troops topped by a headquarters staff, and not much communication between them. But in spite of the original shapelessness of the Corps, there were certainly enough troops on hand to make the reduction of the HARZ a tough proposition, especially since there was also present a liberal seasoning of SS men from the Westphalia Brigade and a core of experienced division staffs from 326th Volksgrenadier Division, 26th Volksgrenadier Division and 5th Parachute Division. Moreover, the terrain which the enemy could use for his defense was about as forbidding to an attacker as could be found. It was more favorable to the enemy than the Ardennes because the road net was more limited; it was rougher than the Hurtgen Forest because the woods were thicker and the ground more broken by ravines, hills and draws. What roads there were capable of carrying heavy traffic were child's play to block. The number of trees which could be felled across the roads at critical spots was only limited by the amount of explosive on hand and the number of men available to handle saws. The roads which wound around the sides of the hills could be cratered at a moment's notice. If the enemy had had better communications and had been in a better state of organization at the time he pulled back into the HARZ he could have made the mountains a major obstacle to the Americans' continued drive to the east. He had plenty of men — probably close to 100,000 — and he had supporting weapons in strength which gave him equality with the attacking forces, if not superiority — except in artillery. True, there was little possibility that the HARZ could hold out forever surrounded on all sides, but there was always the hope that some sort of delay could be imposed on the Americans which would grant more time to the High Command — time to do what was never clear.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 228.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A Tank Shooting Gallery

By April 20, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division had crushed resistance in the Harz Mountains, but officers were surprised by the number of tanks the Germans had and were impressed by the way they used them.

According to a report, they “employed them professionally and with skill, backing up road blocks and supporting local counter-attacks. During no other operation of the 1st Division have enemy tanks and self-propelled guns been such a painful thorn in the side ... as they were during the Harz fighting.”

By the time the stronghold was finally conquered, the division had knocked out more than 52 tanks and self-propelled guns and destroyed or captured nearly 1,500 vehicles of all types (the great majority out of gasoline), 75 artillery pieces, whole trainloads of signal equipment, truck parts, machine gun mounts, airplane fuselages and ammunition.

Read more:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

Where the enemy laid hands on the astonishing number of tanks he was able to bring to bear in the mountain fighting is still not clear. Many of them came with the Westphalia Brigade, and others undoubtedly were turned out by the repair shops of the of the 116th and 9th Panzer Divisions. Though these sources were not alone enough to supply the number involved, there was no doubt that the enemy had all he needed and gasoline enough to run them. He employed them professionally and with skill, backing up road blocks and supporting local counter-attacks. During no other operation of the 1st Division have enemy tanks and self-propelled guns been such a painful thorn in the side (with the possible exception of the major counter-attack launched by two panzer divisions to cut the REMAGEN bridgehead in two on 25 March) as they

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

were during the HARZ fighting. When the stronghold was finally blotted out on 20 April, more than 52 tanks and SPs had been knocked out by the 1st Division alone, and a considerable number of others were picked off by other friendly units as they tried to pull out of the trap.

Though the tanks represented the most important tactical destruction, their number was insignificant beside the vast quantity of other military equipment destroyed or captured by the 1st Division. Nearly 1,500 vehicles of all types were bagged, though the great majority of them were out of gasoline. Seventy-five artillery pieces were taken, as well as whole trainloads of signal equipment, truck parts, machine gun mounts, airplane fuselages and enough ammunition to shoot up a typhoon.

The most unexpected result of the operation in the HARZ, however, was the surprising number of prisoners taken, an indication of just what forces the four corps hemmed up in the pocket had available. The 1st Division alone took 30,343 prisoners between 1 April and 25 April, when the pocket was finally sponged up; adjacent units walling up the other sides of the trap, brought the final total haul to 73,490 prisoners, a number far beyond any of the original estimates of the contents. The prisoner catch rose in geometric progressions to a point where the 1st Division, engaged in drying up the enemy's rear areas while he was still resisting in his forward positions, took more than 10,000 prisoners in one day. As can be imagined, the strain on the PW cage and PW transport was considerable. Hundreds of PWs arrived under their own steam, some marching in formation, others plowing their way through crowds of interested spectators in order to turn themselves in. They arrived by foot, by truck, by passenger car and by horseback. Recaptured Allied PWs, mainly Frenchmen and Belgians, joined in the hunt, dragging dank Landsers out of the woods. No vehicle traveling the roads between the towns of the HARZ could complete a trip without a clutch of PWs riding the hood, the fenders and pyramided in the back seat. Interrogation broke down completely, with little loss since the crush of prisoners had nothing to say of interest except that they had been lost from their units and tramping the woods for several days. But among the horde was the 100,000th prisoner captured by the 1st Division during the war. He was at least significant if not productive of information. (See Annex 6).

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 236.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Another Version of the Assassination Attempt on Hitler

One of the German officers interrogated on April 20, 1945 played a small role in the nearly successful 1944 assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler, but told his interviewers a little different story from the one that we know today.

He also told them that Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering had a role in the unsuccessful coup that followed the assassination attempt.

Read his story:

A spectacular story turned up with a Lt von KIELMANNSEGG, who was the son of a Gen Maj hung by the Reich Peoples' Court for participation in the July 20 attempt on Hitler. His father had been attached to the office of the Chief of Staff in BERLIN; the son said that every important general in the Wehrmacht was involved in the plot either directly or indirectly, and that the most surprising member of the opposition was Goering himself. He believed that Goering was involved only negatively by leaving the path open for the conspirators with full advanced knowledge.

The plan, in which the lieutenant also participated, but to a minor degree, was to load two experimental knapsacks with explosive. Hitler, who always interested in new items of equipment for the Wehrmacht, would inspect the new models himself. Everything went off well: the explosive was concealed in the knapsacks, Hitler ordered the knapsacks brought in to look them over and the charges went off. The only, and fatal, flaw was that the timing mechanism in the charges was set an instant too late. Hitler had just stepped out of the room when the explosion occurred. As it was, a good toll resulted in attending staff officers, but the main prize got away with concussion and lacerations of the arm.

Immediately afterwards every Wehrmacht officer was suspect, and for a time the chief blame tottered between Keitel, Bock and Witzleben, all of whom were taken into custody. Eventually the affair was settled on Witzleben and he was executed along with a host of smaller fry, including the prisoner's father. The son was also arrested, but escaped from the jail in BERLIN pending the investigation. His mother, also arrested, is still in jail and being shamefully treated the last the prisoner heard. In any case the prisoner and another officer named WOLF, also implicated, made their way to HANNOVER where they took refuge with the prisoner's sister. Both men assumed false names and hired themselves out as farm laborers in the area, and even signed up for duty in the Landeschutzen. Eventually the Gestapo got too hot on the trail, and the two men fled to HOXTER in order to surrender to our forces. WOLF was successful in crossing the lines, but the prisoner was nailed by the SS Feldgendarmerie as a likely straggler and sent to Battlegroup KARST. He realized that he could continue the masquerade no longer, as KARST was sure to be up on the affair, and told KARST the whole story. KARST at that time was in greater need of company commanders than of confessed assassins (and by that time probably feeling regret that the coup had failed) and put the prisoner in command of an alarm company.

A little later the prisoner heard that the Gestapo was still on his trail and getting closer, so he fled again, this time to SCHIERKE in the Harz. He succeeded in hiding out from the Gestapo and our troops until today when he turned himself in.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." P. 245.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Concentration Camps Found

On May 7, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division's soldiers found a women's concentration camp in vicinity of Swodau, near Falknov, containing 900 Allied nationals, all of whom were starving. A day later, they came across a concentration camp for Russians at Falknov. Of the roughly 1,400 prisoners, approximately 500 had active cases of typhus. Soldiers requested permission to burn the camp to the ground.

Read the report:

ZOOM IN ON THE DOCUMENT FOR A LARGER VERSION

- 7 May - Prov Mil Gov Det V-1 attached to Division per VOGG, V Corps, to operate in the town of CHEB (EGER).
Woman's concentration camp located in vicinity of SWODAU, near FALKNOV, containing 900 Allied Nationals, was inspected. Kitchen was organized and food supply procured from the surrounding vicinity. All individuals had suffered from lack of food. Medical attention being administered to those needing same. Soap, DDT powder and rations for one week for one thousand (1000) Displaced Persons requisitioned and procured.
- 8 May - SMGO made routine check of Division area and inspected Russian DP camp at FALKNOV, containing approximately 1400 Russians. Camp had approximately 500 active cases of Typhus present. Recommendation for field hospital with delousing equipment submitted and request that inmates be evacuated and camp burnt to the ground.

Source Material

From: Headquarters. 1st U.S. Infantry Division, Military Government Section, "Monthly Report of Activities." 1 June 1945. P. 47.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

Tap or click here
to see this document in context

For more on this incident, visit this page at the web site of the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn35171>

The War Is Over, the Exodus Begins

At 8:15 a.m. on May 7, 1945, the 1st Infantry Division, fighting its way east into Czechoslovakia, received an order to cease firing. World War II in Europe was over, triggering a mass flight toward the American lines to avoid capture by the Soviet Union's armies, which were approaching from the east.

“Apparently the entire German nation within traveling distance of the 1st Division zone was on the roads leading toward the Division front—Wehrmacht soldiers, SS men, women auxiliaries, renegade Russian troops and, in the greatest



Captured German officers, among the thousands taken in the last weeks of the war.

Courtesy of the George C. Marshall Foundation, Lexington, Virginia.

mass of all, civilians by the thousands, all in frantic flight from the Russians,” a report read.

“Every conceivable means of transportation was employed—wheelbarrows, tremendous Army troop transports, civilian buses, pushcarts, horses and wagons, sporty civilian cars, generals’ staff cars, bicycles, buggies. Every road was clogged with crawling German humanity and the brew of sights, sounds, heat, dust, shouts and smells was fantastic.”

Summing up the 1st Infantry Division’s World War II experience: 443 days at combat; 108,000 prisoners of war captured and another 100,000 from overrun hospitals and at the collapse of Germany; approximately 500 tanks and self-propelled guns destroyed.

Another interesting account in this section:

When the war ended, the 1st Infantry Division was in a part of Czechoslovakia [today’s Czech Republic] that had been annexed by Germany before the war and renamed the Sudetenland. A German general, trying to salvage some “honor” for Germany, wanted his surrender document to indicate he surrendered in the Sudetenland. Brig. Gen. George A. Taylor, 1st Division assistant commanding general and representative of the Third Army commander, told him, “There is no Sudetenland. You are in Czechoslovakia!”

In its final form the surrender document read, “Elbogen, Czechoslovakia.”

Read more:

Part VI
UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

(1 May — 9 May)

On 1 May the enemy was all through. The political leaders and the Party boys were still grabbing at straws, but the Wehrmacht and the ordinary civilians were through. There was no big picture enemy situation because there was no enemy except in Czechoslovakia, which, of course, is where the 1st Division happened to be. The only question at hand was whether the enemy would fall over of his own weight or whether he would have to be pushed. In the end he had to be pushed.

For the first four days in May, the enemy's reaction to the Division's minor shiftings and improvements of the line was variable. In some cases he put up stiff fighting at isolated roadblocks and strongpoints and in others Division patrols found towns completely clear. The enemy force facing the Division seemed to be comprised of various units under the command of a Gen Benicke and called Division Benicke. Many of the soldiers were, oddly enough, some of the best quality troops encountered by the Division in quite a while. These men were from an officer candidate school at the large training center of Milowitz in Czechoslovakia.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

During this interim period of waiting not for the bang but the whimper of the war's end, the Division was engaged in cleaning up the rear areas; more soldiers, most of them in civilian clothes, were picked up behind the front, in fact, than were captured in the readjustments of the line. The most spectacular catch was of five Hitler Jugends and an SS leader all bent on sabotage and equipped with a remarkable amount of explosive devices (see Annex 1).

But though the enemy was down, he was still twitching. He needed one more poling to stretch him out completely. The 1st Division, with CCA of the 9th Armored Division attached, delivered the blow on 5 May. Spread out on a 48-kilometer front, the Division attacked again to the east. The advance encountered moderate resistance, a matter of surprise only to those experts who started predicting six months previously that the Germans had only one gasp left. The enemy defended strategic road junctions and village strong points bitterly, making good use of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Artillery fire was light, scattered and confined to the southern part of the Division zone. At Drenice the enemy held out in positions on a hill just north of the town, and the area was not cleared until late in the day when Division tanks were able to move in and clear up the situation. Somewhat over 200 prisoners were captured during the day's fighting, most of them of the expected identifications (see Annex 2).

The advance continued on 6 May against lighter and more scattered resistance as the Division pushed on 10 to 20 kilometers in the northern and southern sectors. In the center, however, the enemy held out as though he had all Germany behind him. Along the main road from Cheb to Falkenov 88 mm anti-tank guns were deployed in depth, and each one had to be eliminated by the infantry before the tanks could budge. In the vicinity of Eubabrunn the enemy, although lacking the necessary artillery support, put up a tough fight. Klinghart, Plesna, Sneky, Mnichov, Sangerberg and Kynsperk were all cleared of the enemy during the day, and five anti-tank guns were destroyed. With the exception of one concentration of 150 rounds of mortar fire, enemy mortar and artillery demonstrations were scattered and light.

At 0815 hours on 7 May the 1st Infantry Division received an order to cease firing, an order for which the Division had fought since 8 November 1942 from Oran, through Tunis, through Sicily, through France, through Belgium, through the Ardennes, through Germany to its final achievement in Czechoslovakia.

The first product of the cessation of offensive action was the surrender of Genmaj Fritz Benicke, commanding Division Benicke, and his staff. He was given instructions on the procedure required for the surrender of all troops under his command. Later in the day several staff officers from the 12th German Army Corps entered the Division lines to arrange a meeting

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

between their commander, Gen d. Artillerie Osterkamp, and a representative of the American forces. The 12th Corps commanded the sector between Chemnitz and Marienbad and numbered about 18,000 men.

The meeting took place shortly after 0900 hours, 8 May, in the Weisses Ross Inn at Elbogen. Gen Osterkamp and his party arrived in a fleet of Mercedes-Benz touring cars and proceeded immediately to business at hand. The general, a small dapper man, pressed and shined and bemedalled to within an inch of his life, attempted, with absolutely no success, to effect various small compromises in the terms, apparently trying to rescue some vestige of German "honor" from the affair. His major effort was to have the date-line of the surrender document read "Elbogen, Sudetenland". Brig Gen George A Taylor, 1st Division assistant commanding general and representative of the Third Army commander, said, "There is no Sudetenland. You are in Czechoslovakia!" In its final form the document read, "Elbogen, Czechoslovakia".

The administrative arrangements of the surrender provided that Gen Osterkamp would assemble his troops into groups of regimental size, be responsible for their rations, medical attention and discipline, and await further orders. On 9 May, after the total surrender of all German land, sea and air forces had been signed at 0001 hours at Supreme Allied Headquarters, the vast hegira of Germans began to flow toward the Division lines. Apparently the entire German nation within traveling distance of the 1st Division zone was on the roads leading toward the Division front — Wehrmacht soldiers, SS men, women auxiliaries, renegade Russian troops and, in the greatest mass of all, civilians by the thousands, all in frantic flight from the Russians. Every conceivable means of transportation was employed — wheelbarrows, tremendous Army troop transports, civilian buses, pushcarts, horses and wagons, sporty civilian cars, generals' staff cars, bicycles, buggies. Every road was clogged with crawling German humanity and the brew of sights, sounds, heat, dust, shouts and smells was fantastic. The Wehrmacht and the German nation had come a long way from the day of the Afrika Korps, the defense of the Normandy beaches, the battles of the Roer and the Ardennes offensive. But the 1st Infantry Division had come just as far and was still there at the end. Just how much the Division did alone to wreck what was once the most powerful army in the world can never be measured mathematically. More than 108,000 captured prisoners of war in the Division's 443 days of combat and another 100,000 prisoners who fell into Division hands from overrun hospitals and at the last collapse; 500-odd tanks and SP guns destroyed, thousands and thousands of trucks and vehicles — the statistics of the trail of enemy wreckage left behind from Africa to Czechoslovakia are only indices.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." PP. 254-257.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Catching 'Werewolves'

As the war wound down, Allied leaders were concerned that SS soldiers might melt into the mountains and run a partisan campaign against them. These potential groups were called Werewolves. Very few were found, but a group was captured on May 2, 1945.

According to a report: "A group of these unregenerates was nailed by the 1st Infantry Division CIC [Counter-Intelligence Corps] detachment today, almost by accident but with pyrotechnic results."

Six young men pushing a cart along a road were stopped and questioned. When the leader decided to pull a pistol, he was killed and the remaining five men arrested. Upon inspecting the contents of the cart, officials found a suitcase that "contained enough explosives, detonators, time pencils, primacord and hand grenades to supply a Central American Revolution."

Read more:

ANNEX 1

(Incident on The Road)

2 May 1945

With bejewelled and pear-shaped news popping the tubes of radio receivers every hour on the hour, it has become increasingly difficult to realize that there are still die-hards and fanatics on the German side of the fence who are determined to go on fighting. Moreover, the kind of fighting these hard-heads carry on is becoming more and more dangerous since most of it is necessarily underhanded.

A group of these unregenerates was nailed by the 1st Infantry Division CIC detachment today, almost by accident but with pyrotechnic results. The CIC men driving down a road near Ober Roslau observed a pushcart-and-stout-walking-shoe group of six men tooling down the road. They all seemed younger than the standard brand of refugee, so the CIC men stopped them for a routine check of papers. On the pushcart was a paper-maché suitcase which when opened appeared to contain nothing but cigaret packages and food parcels. One of the CIC men asked who owned the suitcase, whereupon such an appalled silence and freezing horror came over the six civilians that it was apparent that the CIC men had opened a Pandora's box. The oldest civilian, a stout youth of about 25, seemed to be fixing for a break so the CIC men laid hold of him and started to handcuff him until this mysterious matter should be cleared up. With one hand secured and the other about to be snapped, the civilian made a lunge toward one of the CIC men and started to pull a pistol out of his pocket. In the ensuing scuffle he was shot dead. When stripped for identification and documents he was found to have the SS blood-type mark tattooed on his upper arm.

The five remaining youths were loaded into a jeep and brought to the PW cage for further investigation. There it was found that the brown paper suitcase contained enough explosives, detonators, time pencils, primacord and hand grenades to supply a Central American Revolution. Obviously not every refugee bundle contains only bread-crusts, sausage-ends and garter samples.

At the cage the five prisoners told the usual and constantly dangerous story of sabotage school, SS inspiration and line-crossing missions. All five of the prisoners (none was over 18) were formerly elite members of Hitler Jugend formations in and around Bayreuth. On 6 March they were sent to a school in KOLLESCHOWITZ, Czechoslovakia, to learn how to short communication wires, blow bridges, set supply dumps on fire, wreck railroad trains and all the other functions of the complete saboteur. There were 60-odd Hitler Jugend students at the school and 40 teachers, all SS NCOs and officer candidates. At the end of the course three days ago the school was split up into teams consisting of three to five students and one SS teacher. These

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

teams were assigned missions all over Germany. (One of the prisoners said that one team had been given a mission somewhere in the COLOGNE area; he did not know where specifically.)

The group on hand was on its way to BAMBERG where it was to check in at a farmhouse for further orders. If necessary it would stay there for two weeks while the SS leader reconnoitered the area for suitable objectives and got in touch with other members of the sabotage combine. (Unfortunately the leader was the only man who knew the address and location of the farmhouse, and he was beyond all questioning). One of the prisoners said he understood the team's final mission was the destruction of the airport at BAYREUTH and the wrecking of communications in the area. All of them agreed that the over-all mission of the school graduates, with no specific assignments as yet, was the assassination of city and local government officials appointed by the US Military Government. To this end all the students in the school had been particularly trained in pistol sharpshooting. They said they knew that two other sabotage groups had crossed the lines at the same time they had, but they had no idea of the other group's mission or assigned area.

Apparently, if the strenuous insistence of the prisoners can be believed, this particular sabotage set has no connection with the Werewolf organization, but is strictly an SS affair operating under Jagdkommando West. All the Hitler Jugend members of the school were volunteers; they had, in fact, vied for the honor of doing a little nasty business for the Fatherland. The lucky winners were chosen by SS field-agents on the basis of sound Nazi doctrine, ability in various sports and knowledge of English (very limited in the case of the representatives on hand).

Their system of operations was simple and effective, and based, unfortunately, on the laxity of our controls. Only the SS leader had a set of false papers, usually consisting of a Wehrmacht medical discharge. He took an alias. The Hitler Jugend boys carried no special papers at all, and assumed no false names. If stopped they were instructed to say they were on their way home (home was any convenient town in the vicinity). This was believed to be sufficient cover and had the added advantage of being very simple. The youths had instructions to commit no assaults on US personnel as any such action would inevitably lead to unpleasant investigations and increased watchfulness. Nor were they ever to enter a house (other than those contact points known to the SS leader) since they would then be open to suspicion on the part of the householders. They were to stay on the main roads, where none but the most casual checks were made, and lay up in the woods when necessary.

The mental attitude of the five prisoners was, as usual, inexplicable. They were obviously the product of a spoon-fed indoctrination: the Fatherland was the highest good; any blow struck for the Fatherland, particularly when the holy soil was in danger, was the blow of a hero; any evil or painful con-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

sequences could be borne in the doughty knowledge that Greater Germany was grateful, and so on and on. Not one of them had weighed the practical side of the matter or had the slightest idea of what he intended to do when his explosive was all gone and he was left stranded deep in occupied territory. Nor did one of them consider the over-all futility of the plan — any blow was the blow of a hero. Only in the cage did they begin to perceive dimly that they would not be around to admire the statues erected in their honor by a grateful Greater Germany. They were scared but unrepentant. There is no reason to believe that the other little wretches still pining to strike a blow for the Fatherland will, in a blinding flash, see the error of their ways, as in a technicolor Hollywood ending.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." PP. 257-259.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A Top Nazi Official Gives Up

Just after World War II ended, Konrad Henlein, the chief Nazi official in Prague and the man appointed by Adolf Hitler to oversee the Sudetenland [now a part of the Czech Republic], surrendered to a unit attached to the 1st Infantry Division.

He was the first Nazi Gauleiter to give up and blamed the Nazis' mistreatment of the Czechs solely on the SS.

Henlein, described in a report as "the man who started the wretched snowball downhill before the Munich Conference of 1938," was astonished to find he was considered a war criminal. "The SS wanted to rule by force and I wanted to rule by peace," he told his interrogators.

Read the report:

ANNEX 3

(Special Interrogation Report)

The unwholesome business of picking and sorting PWs was today finally taped, tied and packaged with the capture of Konrad Henlein, the man who started the wretched snowball downhill before the Munich Conference of 1938. He surrendered himself, his secretary and chauffeur to elements of the 9th Armored Division attached to the 1st Infantry Division.

Henlein has changed considerably from his days as ranter, shouter and end man for the Nazis in Czechoslovakia. Once a gymnastics instructor, he now looks like a former professional football player who has made a hatful of money in the restaurant business. His pants were pressed, his shoes were shined and his overcoat had evidently employed a platoon of tailors. He has put on a lot of weight and wouldn't do a giant swing on the horizontal bar to win a bet. He looks like just what the Fuhrer ordered in the way of Gauleiters. Altogether, in fact, his plushy presence as a prisoner was the most satisfying thing about him. As far as his testimony went he was a flop — he weaseled out of embarrassing questions, he solemnly and consistently maintained that he was a man of good reputation and high honor and when he was stuck beyond a wriggle, he fell back on the tiresome excuse that he was only a little fellow, bound as so many others to follow orders without question.

Henlein's most important job was, of course, Gauleiter of the Sudetenland. He was in addition Reichsstadthalter of Prague, or in other words the chief Nazi official of the city. In his dual capacity he was in position to throw a little light on just what has happened to Hitler, but again he fouled off. He maintained blandly that his first news that the Fuhrer was dead came over the German Home Service. The next day he received a radio message from Bormann, head of the Nazi Party: "Admiral Donitz will take over from the Fuhrer." No further details, no indication that Hitler was really dead, and apparently Henlein was not even moved to speculate on this strange turn of events. In the cage he said that naturally he believed Hitler was dead: a responsible official like Donitz would not make such a statement otherwise. What Henlein really believes is another question; when it comes to playing cards, Henlein plays them from inside his vest.

The more offensive details of his regime Henlein blamed entirely on the SS, an organization which he naively asserted to be entirely divorced from his own. His relations with Himmler were constantly at cross-purposes. "I told

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Himmler to let me do my own job in Czechoslovakia," he said. "If left to myself I could have got the Czechs to understand German rule and to work with the Germans, but always there were orders from inside Germany — orders which did not recognize at all the delicate state of relations. After all, my grandfather was a Czech and I understand the problems. The SS wanted to rule by force and I wanted to rule by peace." With this gratifying statement Henlein sat back in his chair and folded his hands resignedly. The cancerous thorn of Heydrich, "the Hangman", he disowned virtuously and entirely. Heydrich was an SS bully sent to Czechoslovakia and from the day of his arrival Henlein recognized him as an enemy to his plans for a great happy family of Czechs. "There was nothing I could do, of course," he said. "Heydrich was there under orders and I was under orders myself." The violent purges that took place in Prague and Lidice to avenge Heydrich's assassination were also strictly SS affairs into which Henlein did not pry.

Henlein's conception of himself as chief purveyor of goodies and avuncular philosophy to the Czechs was so complete that he was indignant, and probably honestly so, to find himself on the list of war criminals. He did not understand exactly what a war criminal was, but in any case he was certain he was not one. He pointed out that he is the first Gauleiter to surrender himself to our forces, evidence enough of his lily character. He said nothing about the Russians who were prodding him coarsely from behind, nor did he explain why he was not in Prague, where one still has to be nimble of foot, but in Karlsbad, well within the American surrender territory. Some time ago Henlein was ordered by Bormann to take to the woods with his kreisleiters in case of occupation by enemy forces. There he would defend himself with a special company of SS men and approved Nazis and make himself unpleasant to the occupying forces. Henlein was to lay on arrangements to take care of this move. Consequently he appointed a Gen Hermann (a Wehrmacht general, according to Henlein) who was to lay in a supply of stores in Riesengebirge and Altvatergebirge. Gen Hermann was to be assisted by a Waffen-SS named Skorzeny. (And who was Skorzeny? Henlein did not know — probably just the man's name.) When it became clear that this plan might have to go into effect, Henlein realized he would have a tough time hiding out in the woods in Czechoslovakia. His face was too well known to a great number of Czechs who did not care for him. Consequently he called the plan off, at least so far as he was concerned, and advised Gen Hermann to use the special company as regular soldiers.

Over and above this personal plan, however, was an order to establish the Werewolves in his Gau. According to his secretary, also a prisoner, each Kreisleiter was to receive 50,000 marks to pay for the establishment of the underground organization. Henlein claimed the money was "to pay off Party debts". In any case, he said, he only gave the money to one kreisleiter, whose name he had forgotten, conveniently enough.

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

Henlein was born in Mattersdorf on 6 May, 1898. In the first war he was a lieutenant in the army and was captured by the Italians in 1917 (a remarkable feat) and was not released until 1919. After the war he became a bank official in Asch, doing push-ups and deep knee-bends on the side. In 1925 he became a full-time gymnastics instructor. It was not until 1933 that political worries about the down-trodden Germans in Czechoslovakia began to gnaw at him, and he started the Deutsch Heimat Front at that time. In 1935 he ran for the Czech parliament on a platform of German misery, with no success at all. He first met Hitler at the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. In 1938, after Henlein's now-famous series of howls, complaints and screams, Hitler informed him that he could not expect Party support until the West Wall was finished. This arrangement obviously was not known to Lord Runciman, the British envoy who arrived to straighten matters out between the Czech government and the Sudeten German Party with a conspicuous lack of results. The inevitable break between Henlein and the Czech government occurred just prior to the Munich Conference and Henlein fled to Germany, where he organized a group of rowdies called the Freikorps, allegedly to protect German interests in the Sudetenland. On 1 October, the German army moved in, and Henlein was appointed Gauleiter of the territory. In 1939 he was made Reichsstadthalter of Prague.

When he was captured Henlein had a small bottle of tablets hidden in his belt. The bottle was marked with a skull and crossbones, but may have contained Mothersill's Seasick Remedy. Again, it may have not; nobody has volunteered to try them out. Henlein said they were for consumption in case some undisciplined Czechs misinterpreted his kindly interest and got rough.

Source Material

From: Headquarters, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, "Selected Intelligence Reports, December 1944 – May 1945." PP. 261-263.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Surrendering German Generals Cling to Rank

As the war ended, German soldiers—from privates to generals—were streaming to the American lines to give up. Some of the generals refused to give up the benefits of rank, even as they surrendered.

On April 20, 1945, “The highest brass to show up during the day was Gen d. Inf [of Infantry] Otto Maximilian Hitzfeld, commander of the 67th Corps. In the pandemonium he could not be overlooked. He arrived in his personal Mercedes attended by two dog-robbers*, a sort of combination dog-robber and aide, and his chief of staff. In the car he had a footlocker, six knapsacks, five briefcases, eight blankets, two bulging cardboard boxes and 15 bottles of schnapps (which he took with him when he left).”

Read more:

** A dog-robber is a low-ranking enlisted man who is assigned as a servant to a commissioned officer.*

ANNEX 3

(Consolidated Interrogation Report)

(20 April 1945)

When Julius Caesar overran the pelted and fur-bearing Germans centuries ago, his PW wattle could have been no more flushed and crowded than was the 1st Infantry Division cage today, nor more filled with strange and guttural alien tribesmen. Today in the Division cage there were Hungarians, German sailors, Wehrmacht infants, ancient and spavined flak men, SS men, women auxiliaries, RAD workers — anything that the German Reich could turn out in a uniform. The uniforms themselves, for that matter, would have made Jacob's coat look like a Boston banker's swallowtail. The crush was tremendous; the prisoners arrived in standard trucks for the most part, but also in captured buses, charabancs and trailers. One general drove up in a Mercedes-Benz convertible. The area where the prisoners were searched looked like the back deck of the Albany night boat on the Fourth of July, and the take in pen-knives, razor blades, nail scissors and hand mirrors was enormous. Before midnight nearly 10,000 prisoners passed through the cage. Interrogators who had leaped avidly on second lieutenants for information early in the day merely grunted at anything less than full colonel in the afternoon, and by night even generals had trouble making themselves heard in the Babel. It was a lovely sight.

The highest brass to show up during the day was Gen d. Inf OTTO MAXIMILIAN HITZFELD, commander of the 67th Corps. In the pandemonium he could not be overlooked. He arrived in his personal Mercedes attended by two dog-robbers, a sort of combination dog-robber and aide, and his chief of staff. In the car he had a footlocker, six knapsacks, five briefcases, eight blankets, two bulging cardboard boxes and 15 bottles of schnapps (which he took with him when he left). Somewhat later two of his subordinate generals appeared: Gen Maj SAUL and Gen Maj HEYDENREICH, as well as another subordinate commander, Col BONGARTZ.

Gen HITZFELD is 46 years old, and said he is the youngest Gen d. Inf in the German Army. He had fought on all the major Russian fronts as a division commander, and had enough decorations, including the Ritterkreuz with Oak Leaves, to embellish a jeweler's window.

The general had had command of the 67th Corps for more than a year: he said the corps had come north to this sector from south of KASSEL. In all, the 67th Corps had only two organizations which could be called divisions by any stretch of the imagination. One was Division BONGARTZ and the other Division STURM. The rest of the corps consisted of anybody in uniform who could be impressed into service. There were two generals in the corps who did nothing but collect stragglers. Division BONGARTZ consisted entirely of Luftwaffe personnel; Division STURM consisted of a varied assort-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

ment of odds and ends. Col BONGARTZ was a former commander of a fighter plane wing and a pilot himself in the last war. He said he had five battlegroups under his command, each roughly the size of a battalion, and his sector ran from MADESPRUNG (3546) to ALTENBRAK. On the left of this sector was Division STURM, on the right was Division POTSDAM.

Gen Maj SAUL was a Luftwaffe signal general who had had command of all radar stations and other signal installations in the HALBERSTADT area. When our tanks moved in too close, he ordered all the installations blown up and took off for the HARZ. There he reported to the nearest commander for duty. That commander was General HITZFELD who gave General SAUL the job of setting up straggler posts all over the corps area in order to rejuvenate the ranks of the corps and to keep the personnel already in the corps faced in the right direction. About this time or shortly before, another straggler general showed up for duty. He was Maj Gen HEYDENREICH, who was a Reich Production Ministry Officer and a Pentagon general exclusively. He had been sent to THALE on a mission by the Production Ministry in BERLIN and had learned too late that the way out had been blocked. He was first given command of Division STURM, but when that outfit wasted away he was made assistant to General SAUL as a straggler collector. He took the left half of the corps sector, and reported his take to General SAUL in the right half, who in turn reported to General HITZFELD. (General SAUL ranked General HEYDENREICH).

General HITZFELD's Chief of Staff, a lieutenant colonel who also emerged from the Mercedes, was a career officer and a very tough nut. He was well acquainted with the 1st Infantry Division, having encountered us before when the 67th Corps was opposite the 1st Division front during the 16 December offensive. He would say nothing regarding military operations, and when asked why such a staunch and true German officer had not fought to the death rather than face capture, he asked, "What would you want me to do — pull out my 7.65 mm and shoot at your lead tank until the tank commander tells himself he's had enough of this nonsense?"

The three generals were of entirely divergent temperaments. General HITZFELD was a tight-lipped, brisk and hard young man who listened to the BBC broadcast daily, but had all his officers put out of earshot of the mental poison while he got the news. He admitted the war is over militarily but maintained that the last card had not been played politically. He liked his work. "Give me one of your corps," he said, "with your personnel and immense supplies and I could go anywhere in Europe I cared to go." General SAUL was a tall, slick-haired, thin general who was embarrassed at the undignified death throes of the Wehrmacht. He said that he, and every other thinking officer, had realized the war was over long ago; continued resistance is not only suicidal but degrading when no better troops can be scraped up than the men he had in the HARZ and when general officers are required to

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

head straggler, collecting systems. The third general, HEYDENREICH, was an old man, obviously unused to the strains of troop duty, and furthermore very scared. He was as eager to answer questions as a lieutenant deserter, but the trouble was that he knew nothing.

The remarkable thing about all three of the generals, and the collection of colonels as well, was that not one of them knew a single thing about any unit outside their corps. They did not even know what other corps or divisions were defending the HARZ. A secondary point of interest was the number of glass eyes in the group. One general, one colonel and the lieutenant colonel chief of staff all had glass eyes. Whether this indicates a trend is not yet apparent.

Source Material

From: G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 – May 1945. P. 92.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

A South African POW's Agony

This is the heartbreaking journal of a South African soldier who spent four long years as a German prisoner of war and was found shot in the back of the head, presumably by his captors. The last entry was dated April 5, 1945—just one month and two days before the German surrender.

Despite his captivity his journal entries remained remarkably upbeat: As American fighter bombers buzzed his camp, he saw the end of the war on the horizon. But there were far more dark moments.

Among his final entries: “Only those who have been prisoners of war have any conception of the horrors of being a prisoner... Four years of that awful life. Four years of misery and tantalization while other people were covering themselves with glory and winning the tinkling symbols thereof.”

Read his journal:

Not all the sidelights and non-tactical facets of the campaigns were frolicksome, nor was the backwash of the actual fighting a great game of Cops and Robbers. From time to time units of the 1st Division turned up outside evidence that the Germans were still the Germans and the enemy was still the enemy beyond the actual confines of the battle line. Such a document is printed below.

Man In Captivity

A journal kept by a South African prisoner of war was found by the 1st Infantry Division in the vicinity of St Andreasberg.

The prisoner was evidently captured in Bardia, North Africa, more than four years ago; his journal, however, maintains a written record of events dating only from 26 February 1945, though other entries reach much farther back.

Altogether, the journal is an unconscious record of a man fighting to keep his reason above the clogging monotony of life in captivity, and an open record of a man's obsession with food while being dragged under by starvation. Of the first, there are dozens of entries of card tricks and sequences, meticulous records of letters sent and received, snatches of home-made verse, records of

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

books read, pay and allowances due (and not received), and addresses of various other prisoners, including one American.

But as an anthology of the misery of a man in captivity the journal speaks for itself.

26 Feb: Arrived at Stalag 90 west of Leipzig on Sunday after marching for 31 days at an average of 22 kms daily (total mileage to date: 507 kms from Breslau). Stayed night in camp. Next day fell out of march with 28 other South Africans, Canadians, Englishmen and Americans, also Frenchmen. Taken to hospital with infected foot. Examined by doctor. Had hot meals. Received four American Red Cross parcels between the 28 of us, and other kit. Feel very much better after today's rest.

28 Feb: We are staying here again today. Had quite a good night's rest; foot not so painful. Last night we received two good helpings of soup. Yesterday afternoon American fighter bombers flew over the camp very low and dipped their wings. The French sanitators looking after us here have been doing a wonderful job of work for us as regards food.

1 Mar: Had usual early morning German mint tea. I had to go up to the hospital and had an operation done on my heel; no anaesthetics, very painful. Had a marvelous thick bean soup from the French sanitators in the evening.

8 Mar: Coffee arrived very early this morning. At 10 I heated up some left-overs for Bobbie and me and the French sanita-tor sweetened it (very much so, too) with sugar. Had my heel dressed. At 11 I went into the sanitators' room and had a very long chat with one of them who speaks perfect English. I gave him some stamps in exchange for $\frac{1}{2}$ tin malt, and he promises to bring some other eatables later on... It is 12 o'clock, and my friend the sanita-tor has just been in with the balance of our swap. He brought me $\frac{1}{2}$ loaf of bread, a piece of cake, $\frac{1}{2}$ packet English tea, about 20 lumps of cube sugar, two sweets, 10 tags. Have been trying to read to pass the hours, but find it very difficult to concentrate. I read a few lines then throw the book down.

10 Mar: Had number and rank taken so most probably we shall be leaving the hospital any day now. Still, I have been very thankful for the rest and my foot has healed up nicely.

11 Mar: We all had to hand in our occupations in civilian life to the Germans, so it looks as if we may be sent out on

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page

working parties. I'm just letting fate decide now as I'm sure the war will not last more than a month. If I go on a working party it will mean more food and something to occupy my mind.

13 Mar: A big soup meal at midday. Balance of parcels were issued at 3 PM to the ones who didn't get them yesterday, great excitement in the room. It really is a treat to have such good food and so many cigarettes after the last six to seven weeks of starvation.

14 Mar: Feel very weak from lying on my bed all day. The only walking space we have is from the barracks room to the lavatory, a distance of about 10 yards. Many of the chaps have dysentery. The only meals we have from the "detaining power" is a little ladle of soup at midday with our bread ration (seven to a loaf) per man per day. We would be skeletons if it wasn't for the $\frac{1}{2}$ Red Cross parcels per man per week containing good food and vitamins. Lights out at 9 PM. Washing facilities very poor, one tap for all of us, 268. The boys are very weak and hungry. It is a physical impossibility for us to do any more marching in our condition. I find my mind wanders when I read and I don't know what I'm reading about. I've cleaned my boots dozens of times for something to do and to pass the time away.

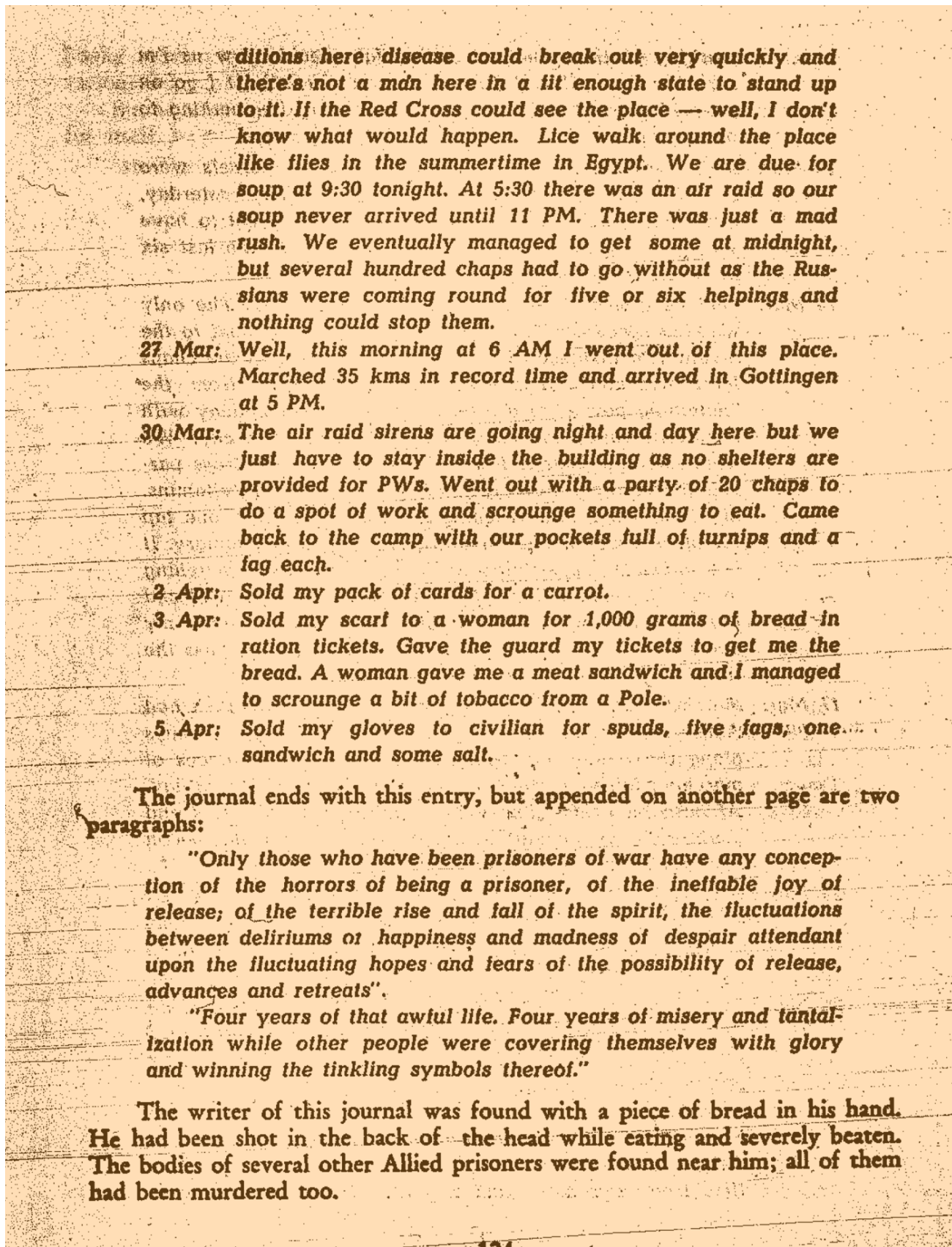
17 Mar: Marched out of 90 as a column of about 150 English and Americans, 200 French and 200 Russians. The ration issues along the road were pretty good and daily distances of marching fairly reasonable, between 15 and 25 kms a day. At barn on Friday had very good sleeping quarters and could get any amount of bread, eggs, syrup and bacon from civilians for clothing, etc.

24 Mar: Arrived at Stalag WIB at midday. No food, no Red Cross — prospects look very good. We received no rations whatsoever today; fortunately I had a bit of bread which I managed to get from the civilians en route.

25 Mar: After a mad rush and scramble among a lot of starving men, we managed to get half a mug of mint tea at 7 AM after waiting an hour. There is nothing else to do but sit still next to your kit as the thieving that goes on is something terrible. A Russian was found dead at the bottom of my bed in the middle of the night. The conditions here are something appalling. Men are dying like flies from dysentery and malnutrition. Under the con-

Continued on Next Page

Continued from Previous Page



ditions here disease could break out very quickly and there's not a man here in a fit enough state to stand up to it. If the Red Cross could see the place — well, I don't know what would happen. Lice walk around the place like flies in the summertime in Egypt. We are due for soup at 9:30 tonight. At 5:30 there was an air raid so our soup never arrived until 11 PM. There was just a mad rush. We eventually managed to get some at midnight, but several hundred chaps had to go without as the Russians were coming round for five or six helpings and nothing could stop them.

27 Mar: Well, this morning at 6 AM I went out of this place. Marched 35 kms in record time and arrived in Gottingen at 5 PM.

30 Mar: The air raid sirens are going night and day here but we just have to stay inside the building as no shelters are provided for PWs. Went out with a party of 20 chaps to do a spot of work and scrounge something to eat. Came back to the camp with our pockets full of turnips and a fag each.

2 Apr: Sold my pack of cards for a carrot.

3 Apr: Sold my scarf to a woman for 1,000 grams of bread in ration tickets. Gave the guard my tickets to get me the bread. A woman gave me a meat sandwich and I managed to scrounge a bit of tobacco from a Pole.

5 Apr: Sold my gloves to civilian for spuds, five fags, one sandwich and some salt.

The journal ends with this entry, but appended on another page are two paragraphs:

"Only those who have been prisoners of war have any conception of the horrors of being a prisoner, of the ineffable joy of release; of the terrible rise and fall of the spirit, the fluctuations between deliriums of happiness and madness of despair attendant upon the fluctuating hopes and fears of the possibility of release, advances and retreats".

"Four years of that awful life. Four years of misery and tantalization while other people were covering themselves with glory and winning the tinkling symbols thereof."

The writer of this journal was found with a piece of bread in his hand. He had been shot in the back of the head while eating and severely beaten. The bodies of several other Allied prisoners were found near him; all of them had been murdered too.

Source Material

From: "G-2 Selected Intelligence Reports Reflecting Enemy Operations Against the 1st Division During the First Six Months of the European Campaign, Jun 1944 -May 1945." PP 121-124.

Click the button below to see the complete document in context at the First Division Museum's digital archives in Wheaton, Illinois. A browser window will open and you must have an internet connection.

[Tap or click here
to see this document in context](#)

Acknowledgements

I've had an interest in military history since I was a child. When I wasn't playing baseball or football, I'd ride my bike to Memorial Hall Library in Andover, Massachusetts, to wander through the military history section.

About eight years ago, after 25 years as a newspaper reporter and editor at some of the biggest papers in the U.S., I started volunteering as a researcher at the Col. Robert R. McCormick Research Center at the 1st Division Museum in Wheaton, Illinois. It was one of the best decisions of my life.

I've done a variety of things:

- Helped answer questions from the public about relatives' experiences in the 1st Division. My favorite was diving into hand-written World War I muster rolls (on microfilm!) to be able to tell a woman which hospital her father was taken to after he was gassed in the trenches of France.
- Compiled a list of the thousands of 1st Division Silver Star winners from World War II so a full-time researcher can dig up what each soldier did to earn the medal. Amazingly, the Army does not keep those records, even though the Silver Star is the third-highest medal awarded and it takes an incredibly heroic act to win it.
- Found photos of various topics at the request of historians and filmmakers.
- Skimmed every issue of several military affairs periodicals published for the last 45 years and pulled out items about the 1st Division.
- Shelved hundreds of books in the Research Center's extensive collection. (I probably take longer at that than I should because there is so much to distract me!)
- And finally, reading the documents that became the source material for this book.

This book wouldn't have been possible without the help of the wonderful and dedicated people at the research center: Director Eric Gillespie, Librarian Tracy Cirar, Reference Librarian Mary Manning, Research Historian Andrew Woods and Archivist Kate Kleiderman, as well as the museum's Executive Director, Paul Herbert.

Pound-for-pound, this museum and research center is one of the finest in the world and well worth a visit. For more information about the museum, please visit its web site: <http://www.fdmuseum.org/>

Thanks, too, to Jeffrey Kozak of the [George Marshall Foundation's Research Library](#) in Lexington, Virginia, for his help in allowing me to use images from its great collection of Signal Corps photos.

This book was a one-man effort—I chose the stories, prepared the images, wrote the introductions and created the book—so any errors are, obviously, mine and mine alone.

Mike Hanlon

About the Editor

Mike Hanlon spent 25 years as a newspaper reporter and editor at three Pulitzer Prize-winning newspapers, most recently the Chicago Tribune. After seeing the Philadelphia Inquirer's "Black Hawk Down" online series in 1997—and the revolutionary way the newspaper was able to mix text, video, audio, graphics and hyperlinks to tell a story—he left the newspaper business and went back to school to learn web site design. Hanlon is currently design director at a tech firm he helped start and lives with his wife, Marcia, outside Chicago.

