

PHASE XII

1 - 24 February

Attack on the Boer River Line

The month of January had seen the 29th Infantry Division conduct an organized defense in depth on the west bank of the ROER River. This was necessitated by the enemy offensive in the "bulge" area and the consequent shift of troops to the south to meet this threat. As the gains made by the enemy offensive were retaken, the shift was reversed and preparations for offensive action in the north got under way. The first days of February correspondingly witnessed a change in the formative thinking and planning of the 29th Infantry Division. While defensive installations were maintained, the emphasis had shifted almost entirely from defense to offense, to the crossing of the ROER River instead of defending against a possible enemy attempt to cross.

The Division passed from control of the XIII Corps to that of the XIX Corps on 4 February and the entire Corps embarked on a regrouping program in preparation for the projected offensive operation.

This planned operation entailed the establishing of a bridgehead across the ROER River, the capturing of JULICH and exploitation to the north and east of any successes achieved. For this operation XIX Corps consisted of the 29th Infantry Division, 30th Infantry Division, 83rd Infantry Division, the 2nd Armored Division and Corps Troops. The plan contemplated an attack on 10 February at 0530 hours.

However, heavy rains caused the ROER River to approach near flood stage in its upper reaches on the proposed date and the operation was postponed for twenty-four hours.

In the meantime the enemy also controlled the large ROER River dams upstream to the south. As the hour of attack approached and as allied troops neared these dams, the enemy blew the controls on the largest, thereby releasing tons of water which flooded the entire river and further delayed the operation. A plan was formulated to be used in the event the recession of the river did not proceed rapidly. Time for the attack was finally set at 0130 hours 23 February. The following outlines the general plan.

The assaulting division of XIX Corps were to be the 29th and 30th Divisions with the 29th on the left making the main effort.

The 115th Infantry Regiment, with Co B, 92nd Chemical Mortar Bn, Co C, 747th Tank Bn, one platoon of Co D, 747th Tank Bn, and seven "Alligators" of the 234th Engineer Combat Bn was to attack with one battalion in the vicinity of Bridge Sites #4 (PO23602) and #5 (PO20611), using the "Alligators" and assault boats to seize and secure Objective A (Broich). The remaining battalions were to cross rapidly behind the left assault battalion of the 175th or the assault battalion of the 115th to secure Objectives "C" (MIDSCHEIDTSCHE and NEUHAUS) and "B" (high ground NE of BROICH).

The 330th RCT, 63rd Infantry Division, attached to the 29th Infantry Division, was to be prepared to cross any time after 1600 hours 23 February in either regimental zone and to relieve the 115th Infantry of the defense of the Division bridgehead.

The 175th Infantry Regiment with the 3rd Bn, 116th Infantry, 747th Tank Bn (Less Co C and one platoon of Co D), Co C, 821st Tank Destroyer Bn (SP), Co A, 92nd Chemical Mortar Bn and one platoon of Hq Co, 739th Tank Bn (M) Special, attached, was to make the main effort for the 29th Division. At 1900 hours 22 February the two assault battalions were to assemble in a forward area and to provide a covering force for the three foot bridges at Site #2 (ALDENHOVEN - JULICH road) and the Infantry support bridge at Site #3 (east of SPORTPLATZ). As soon as the foot bridges were constructed, the two assault battalions were to attack generally south of JULICH, circumventing the city itself and then to seize successively, Objectives "R" (POLICO), "S" (FO46588) and "U" (HUCKWELD) and to protect the right flank of the Division. The Regiment was to employ the 3rd Bn, 116th Infantry, to secure JULICH.

The 116th Infantry was to assemble in forward areas sometime after 1200 hours 23 February. The Regiment was also to be prepared to move across the river on two hours' notice in the zone of the 175th Infantry and to be prepared to assist in either zone or to assist in the reduction of enemy resistance in JULICH.

The 29th Division Artillery had the following attachments:

83rd Division Artillery, 554th AAA AM Bn, 70th FA Bn, Cannon Co of the 116th Infantry, 92nd Chemical Mortar Battalion (less Cos A, B and C), Co A, 821st Tank Destroyer Bn (SP). Preparatory fires were to start at 0245 hours 23 February and were to continue unabated for approximately one hour. Protective fires prior to H-hour and prepared fires and call missions after H-hour.

The 121st Engineer Combat Bn was to cross the assault elements of the 175th Infantry by assault boats and "Alligators" were also to be used in the vicinity of Bridge Sites #4 and #5. Three foot bridges were to be constructed at Site #2 and an infantry support bridge at Site #3. Building was to begin promptly at 0330 hours 23 February. Immediately after the infantry units cleared the small arms fire from Sites #2 and #3 the Engineers were to construct a treadway and a ponton bridge at Site #2. The battalion was also to assemble equipment to operate a ferrying service at Sites #4 or #5.

All preparations were complete on the evening of 22 February and when darkness fell all engineer equipment and troops were moved to assembly areas without incident. The night was clear with a bright moon. The large number of troops involved and the necessary movement of engineer vehicles made a certain amount of noise unavoidable, but the enemy, from his positions on the east bank, showed no reaction at all. Promptly at 0245 hours the Division Artillery, supported by Corps and Army Artillery, began its preparatory fires and shortly afterward the machine guns of the Division opened up to cover the east bank. This preparation was huge in scale. The din was tremendous and exploding shells lit up the whole of the rivers east bank. Two platoons of Co B, 747th Tank Bn, attached to the 175th Infantry, also supported the crossing by direct fire from positions near the SP08FLAT2 and Bridge Site #2. The covering forces provided by the 175th Infantry moved across the river without mishap and promptly at 0330 hours 23 February construction of the bridges began. Shortly afterward, light artillery fire was received at Bridge Site #2. The first foot bridge at Site #2 buckled when an assault boat drifted into it. As fast as one foot bridge was completed troops were sent quickly over. The Engineers building the ponton and treadway bridges at this same bridge site experienced a great deal of difficulty. An enemy self-propelled gun, probably an 88, was sited in on this site from

positions somewhere in the town of JULICH. The roadway was completely destroyed once when it was well underway and the pontoon bridge was hit twice. Consequently construction was started farther to the south with the result that the pontoon bridge was finally opened for traffic at approximately 1645 hours. At Site #3 more trouble was experienced. It was imperative to fill several large craters on the approaches to the site before the bridging materials could be brought up to the site. While this was going on, small arms fire from houses just across the river was received, further disrupting the operation. Co F of the 175th Infantry effectively silenced this threat, but almost immediately artillery fire was delivered on the site. This caused casualties and destroyed vital material, causing further delays and consequently the infantry support bridge at site #3 was not completed until 24 February.

Meanwhile the 115th Infantry Regiment on the left was also experiencing difficulty. No bridges were constructed in the 115th's zone; all elements crossed in "Alligators" and assault boats in the vicinity of Sites #4 and #5. The assault battalion, the 3rd Bn, once ashore, moved quickly on to take BRUCH (FULD). The 2nd Bn, crossing in a column of companies, reached the crest of the hill above the river, but there heavy fire, particularly machine gun fire, was received from the reverse slope. The 1st Bn, after supporting the crossings by fire, followed the 2nd Bn, but crossed at site #5 and advanced rapidly to seize Objective "B"--high ground NE of BRUCH.

The 175th Infantry Regiment attacked as the main effort in the vicinity of Site #2. Troops were crossed initially on foot bridges. The 1st Bn was the first to cross and advanced through the center of JULICH. Co A was left to contain the CITADEL from which light small arms and machine gun fire was received. Light opposition prevailed and the Bn was on Objective "R" (high ground just NE of JULICH) at the close of the period. The 2nd Bn started to cross at 0615 hours and proceeded to advance north of the CITADEL. Co F was pulled back to mop up the enemy resistance in the houses directly opposite Bridge Site #3. Initially the opposition was light, but grew heavier as the

attack progressed. The positions immediately NE of the CURIAVI and just short of Objective "C" were consolidated at the close of the day.

The 3rd Bn, 175th Infantry, moved to its forward assembly area at 0715 hours and followed the 2nd Bn across the MOER River. The increasing number of troops and equipment on the far shore served to crowd that area considerably and the battalion did not completely get over the river until 1200 hours. Resistance for this battalion also stiffened as the attack progressed and positions on Objective "D" (vic 0400 2400) were consolidated in the late evening hours.

The next day, 24 February, the 29th Division continued the attack to secure the Division and Corps bridgeheads with the 115th and 175th Infantry's again leading the push. The 3rd Bn, 175th Infantry, remained on the left flank of the Division by holding positions in the town of KALICH (020201) and the 1st Bn, 115th Infantry, defended the nose at 00363. The 2nd Bn resumed the attack at 2150 hours 24 Feb and seized the buildings and bunkers at 0036018 and continued on to establish a road block on the JUKICI - BACH road. After this was accomplished the battalion pushed out strong combat patrols in the direction of KALICH and KATIBI. These units advanced rapidly until the towns themselves were approached, when enemy small arms fire increased.

The 330th Infantry Regimental Combat Team of the 63rd Infantry Division, attached to the 29th Division, began moving forward in the late afternoon of 24 February and proceeded to relieve the 115th Infantry in position and assumed responsibility for the sector at 2200 hours that evening.

All battalions of the 175th Infantry continued the advance on 24 February at 0600 hours. The 1st Bn attacked due east astride the JUKICI - KATIBI road, proceeded to take KATIBI (000000) against light resistance and established contact with the 30th Infantry Division operating on the right. The 2nd Bn moved to the northeast, also meeting light opposition, and succeeded in taking the battalion objective, which was in the vicinity of 0400 2400. There positions were then consolidated. The 3rd Bn advanced south

and secured the thread factory on the southern edge of JULICH. The 3rd Bn, 116th Infantry, attached to the 175th Infantry, was not employed as a unit during the day and reverted to parent unit control at 2000 hours. Co K of the 116th Infantry, however, was employed to seize the CITADEL. This strongpoint had been more or less of a sore spot for two days. Light small arms and machine gun fire had emanated from there and had caused some degree of annoyance. A moat averaging about 65 feet in width and about 20 feet deep surrounded the CITADEL. The walls of the fort were very thick and though it had been hit in several places it still presented quite an obstacle. Flame-throwing tanks of the 739th Tank Bn (M) (Special) moved to the gates and "flamed" the openings. The small enemy force quickly withdrew and the infantry went in. The famed CITADEL had fallen at 1500 hours 24 Feb. Co C, 621st Tank Destroyer Bn (SP), reverted to parent unit control at 2000 hours, while Co A, 92nd Chemical Mortar Bn, was detached from the 175th Infantry and attached to the 330th Infantry at 2200 hours.

#### PHASE XIII

25 - 28 February

#### The Drive to the KLINE

During the night 24-25 February the 1st Bn, 175th Infantry, sent out patrols to probe enemy positions and to mop up scattered pockets of resistance in the vicinity of SPETTERMICH. The 2nd Bn attacked at 1120 hours the next morning to clear the enemy from LINDENBERGER WALD (NO659).

The 116th Infantry moved through the zone of the 175th Infantry, which had actually been pinched out by the 116th and 119th Infantry regiments. The 1st Bn, 116th, therefore attacked at 0515 hours in the direction of WELLDORF (NO762). Here the regiment met its first determined resistance. Self-propelled guns, small arms, mortar and artillery fire made the going slow, particularly as most of the enemy's firing positions were well concealed. This opposition originated from positions on the right and from northwest of WELLDORF. At 1500 hours the 1st and 2nd Bns launched a coordinated attack from the west to envelop WELLDORF. The 1st Bn advanced rapidly and the town was taken with little trouble. The 2nd Bn was forced to cover the enemy positions just west of WELLDORF with smoke before it was able to advance

to the outskirts of the town. Over there, Co F attacked to clear SERMENT and after being joined by Co K succeeded in clearing out all opposition by 2000 hours. Meantime, the remainder of the battalion advanced to GUSTEN (FO863) and actually launched the attack on the town immediately after WELLDORF had fallen. GUSTEN was in the northwest portion of Objective "W" and heavy resistance was met both on the outskirts and in the town itself. Bitter fighting continued throughout the night and it was not until 0530 hours 26 February that the town was declared cleared. The 116th was then pinched out by the 115th Infantry.

The 115th Infantry, after being relieved by the 330th Infantry Regiment, remained in the vicinity of JULICH until 1900 hours 25 Feb when it moved to PATTERN so as to be in position to attack the following morning. The regimental objective was SPIEL (FO765) and the order of attack was 1st, 2nd and 3rd Bns. The 1st Bn moved directly on SPIEL and secured it at 0621 hours. Resuming the advance, the 1st Bn moved on AMELN (FO866) and again had little trouble in taking it, actually occupying the town at 0805 hours. While this operation was taking place, the 2nd and 3rd Bns moved from the vicinity of JULICH and the 3rd Bn was placed in both of the captured towns. The 2nd Bn on the evening of 26 February launched an attack on TITZ (FO868) from the direction of MEERHOF. The objective was taken at 2040 hours against light small arms and some artillery fire.

The 330th Infantry Regiment, after relieving the 115th Infantry, which had been accomplished on 24 February, attacked the next morning at 0545 hours to take MERSCH (FO463) and PATTERN (FO562). The 2nd Bn moved on MERSCH and met heavy small-arms fire from the objective. Co G, moving on the town from the south, effectively silenced this fire and enabled all units to enter the town, which was completely cleared at 1400 hours. The 3rd Bn had much less trouble with PATTERN and it fell at shortly after 0800 hours. The 1st Bn, initially in reserve, moved into the zone of the 102nd Infantry Division to advance on the town of MUMFZ (FO466) from the west. This attack got underway at 1600

hours and it was supported by the direct fire of the 453rd AAA Bn from positions near the line of departure. The "going" again was easy until the town limits were reached. Here numerous road blocks held up the attackers and small-arms and self-propelled gun fire grew heavier. This stubborn resistance prolonged the fight through the evening and it was not until 0012 hours 26 February that the town fell to the 1st Bn, 330th Infantry. The same morning the 1st Bn attacked from positions in the vicinity of HUNTZ towards HANSENWILLER (PO560). Co A, followed by Co B, moved rapidly and at 1100 hours was in the town and one hour later all resistance had ceased. Shortly afterward this battalion, in a coordinated maneuver with the 2nd Bn, 330th Infantry, moved on the town of GEVELDORF (PO568) and succeeded in securing it at 2130 hours 26 February. Co B and one platoon of the 747th Tank Battalion almost immediately set out to clear the woods at ISSENROIDF (PO67694) and consolidated there at 2000 hours after subduing all enemy opposition in the area. The next morning at 0700 hours the 330th Infantry Regiment reverted to control of the 3rd Infantry Division.

The 115th Infantry, after taking TITZ on 26 February, attacked with the 3rd Battalion moving on OPHERTON (PO969) from the direction of SPIEL. The town was occupied at 0930 hours against light resistance. Meanwhile, the 1st Bn had moved from AMELN to TITZ and "jumped off" to attack JACKMATH (PO71) at 1000 hours. The objective was announced secured at 1210 hours. These positions were held as the north closed with the 1st Bn in JACKMATH, the 2nd Bn in TITZ and the 3rd Bn in OPHERTON. Rest and reorganization were the order of the day and preparations also were being made to move the Regiment to forward assembly areas.

The 116th Infantry had been pinched out by the 115th Infantry in the early morning hours of 26 February. The Regimental objective was the OSTMATH - GARKWILLER road. The Division had been ordered to take this road by 2400 hours 27 February as it was to be the line of departure for the 2nd Armored Division. On the next day the entire Regiment



moved from WELLDORF to a forward assembly area near HOLZWELLEN (FO773) and attacked in a column of battalions in the order, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Bns. The leading battalion advanced on IMBATH (FO973) while the 2nd swung off to clear the town of LUTZERATH (FO874). The first town fell at 1120 hours and exactly seven minutes later the occupation of LUTZERATH was completed against light small-arms and self-propelled gun fire. After a hasty reorganization the attack was resumed with the 2nd Bn moving on SPENRATH (FLO74) while the 3rd Bn continued east to attack RESSCH (FLO73). By 1730 hours both of these objectives had fallen and the 1st Bn, initially in reserve, set out to take OSTENRATH (FLO75). This was done rapidly with an envelopment from the west and the battalion consolidated here at 1845 hours with the OSTENRATH - GARZWELLER road cleared. The next morning at 0700 hours the Regiment resumed the advance with battalions abreast, the 2nd Bn on the left and the 1st on the right. The 3rd Bn followed the assault elements by bounds. Once again little resistance was met initially, but when the 2nd Bn entered HOUHEBERG and the 1st Bn entered HACKHAUN (FLL79) the resistance stiffened appreciably. Both towns fell, however, before 1200 hours and the 2nd Bn continued on to MONASCHOF (FLO80) and moved rapidly through the town. The battalion then turned to SASSERATH (FLL83) and occupied this place at 1140 hours. The 110th Infantry, after making some further progress, consolidated on the evening of 28 February on positions at DUSMELLEN (FL282), WAAZ (FL363) and the crossroads at FLL83.

The 175th Infantry, after being pinched out on 25 February by the 110th Infantry, rested and reorganized until noon the next day when the Regiment moved to forward assembly areas. The 1st Battalion assembled in MARSCH, the 2nd Battalion in GEVELSDORF and the 3rd Battalion in MASSDORFELLEN. The Regiment employed the 2nd and 3rd Battalions abreast, with the 2nd on the right. The advance was rapid throughout the day. The "jump off" was at 0500 hours and the 2nd Battalion had taken HOLZWELLER (FO773) by 0700 hours. The 3rd Battalion captured REVENICH and at 1015 hours secured both KUCKUM (FO576) and KEIENBERG (FO776). The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, moved forward to GEVELSDORF and then advanced behind the 3rd Battalion. At approximately 1015 hours the

Battalion attacked WORSCHMELGI (F0876) and captured it at 1500 hours against light resistance.

The final day the 175th Infantry resumed the advance at 0700 hours in a column of battalions in the order 2nd, 3rd and 1st Battalions. The leading battalion attacked WASSLO (F075765) moved through it with ease and then ran into entrenched infantry just north of the town. This obstacle was satisfactorily cleared out by 0845 hours and by 0930 hours RICHEN/THLEKO (F0760) had been secured. When this town was taken the 3rd Battalion made ready and attacked GUDENWATH (F0981). At 1250 hours this town also was occupied and by 1430 hours the 3rd Battalion, followed by the 1st Battalion, was in OBERFLECHEN. Here, both battalions received moderate small-arms and mortar fire. Nevertheless, the attack continued with the 3rd Battalion entering BELLA at 1750 hours. The 2nd Battalion, meanwhile, had been moved forward and followed the 3rd Battalion through this town. The 1st Battalion, which had been following the 3rd to the left rear, attacked the town of GELSMANBECK (F0984) and occupied it at approximately 1800 hours. The closing hours of February found the two front-line battalions occupying consolidated positions at GUDENWATH (F0981) and at GELSMANBECK.

Many resistance for the whole operation was moderate and usually quite apathetic. The enemy offered token resistance which quickly dissipated when our troops approached his well constructed positions. Small groups of infantry and numerous self-propelled guns held up the attack on many occasions, but, even so, the advance of the 24th Infantry Division was extremely rapid and casualties were light. The big prize of MUNCHEN-GLADBACH, largest German city seized by the Americans to date, was next on the Division's list in the drive to the RHINE River.