

PHASE XIII (CONT'D) - THE DRIVE TO THE RHINE
1 March 1945

The closing days of February saw the 29th Infantry Division take a major part in the sweep of the Allied armies across the ROER River. The attackers had found the going fairly easy and the advance was rapid. On 1 March the 175th Infantry Regiment occupied the line GUMMERSBACH (F0981) - GUMMERSBACH (F0984) with the 1st and 3rd Battalions, while the 116th Infantry Regiment on the right of the Division zone was occupying positions at DÜRENBACH (F1262), WITT (1303) and the crossroads at F1183. The 115th Infantry remained in Division Reserve in the vicinity of JACHENBACH (F1071), TITZ (F0868) and GUMMERTON (F0969). The Division had the following attachments on 1 March:

40th FA Bn -- Attached to Division Artillery
821st TD Bn (SF) -- Attached to Division Artillery
554th AAA AB Bn -- Attached to Division Artillery
7th Tn -- Co A and one platoon Co B and four assault
guns attached to the 175th Infantry Co
B and one platoon Co B attached to the
116th Infantry, Co C and one platoon Co
B attached to the 115th Infantry.

On 1 March at 0700 hrs the 116th Infantry attacked with the 3rd Bn on the right and the 2nd Bn on the left. The 1st Bn followed the 3rd Bn and was given the mission of protecting the left flank of the Regiment. The leading battalions moved out from WITT (F1303). Moderate small-arms fire and light self-propelled gun fire met the Regiment throughout the day. By 0630 hrs both battalions had reached their initial objectives at GUMMERSBACH (F1264), STAMM (F12554), AHEM (F120843) and in the vicinity of HAPPERT (F12055). From this line the advance was extremely rapid and opposed only by a few tanks and self-propelled guns, each supported by a squad or two of infantry. At the close of the day the 116th Infantry had advanced seven miles and had completely cleared GUMMERSBACH (F123046), BAUSHURTE (F130652), KORSCHENBACH (F115306), HENNINGHOFF (F142915) and GUMMERSBACH (F133972). The Regiment then consolidated, constructed and maintained road blocks, at the same time maintaining contact with the units on the flanks.

The 175th Infantry also resumed the attack at 0700 hrs with the 1st Bn leading and the 2nd Bn following. These battalions leapfrogged each other all morning with success against light to moderate resistance.

At noon the advance had reached the point where the Regimental zone widened. The Regiment, therefore, employed two battalions abreast with the 2nd on the right and the 1st on the left. Both units were advancing in MUNCHEN-GLADBACH, and both moved fairly slowly as many houses had to be cleared along the way. The 3rd Bn was employed to follow the leading units to mop up any resistance that the 1st and 2nd Bns had missed. By midnight the 175th Infantry had reached its objective and the largest German city yet taken by the Allied Armies had fallen to the men of the 29th Infantry Division. Enemy resistance in MUNCHEN-GLADBACH had been light to moderate.

The 2nd Bn, 115th Infantry had been alerted at 1400 hrs to move forward and attack through the 2nd Bn, 175th Infantry. The Battalion had all preparations made and the troops were ready to load in the necessary trucks when word came that enemy resistance in MUNCHEN-GLADBACH had weakened and the commitment of the 2nd Bn would not be necessary. The 29th Infantry Division had, therefore, cleared out all enemy resistance in its zone and was pinched out by the advancing 2nd Armored Division on the right and the 102nd Infantry Division on the left.

REST AND REHABILITATION

On 2 March the Division regrouped and all units moved to designated areas for rest and rehabilitation. The 115th Infantry occupied the West Central portion of MUNCHEN-GLADBACH, while the 175th Infantry occupied the Northwest section and the 116th Infantry the Northern section of the town. The 2nd and 3rd of March were spent in the clearing of equipment and a shower program was initiated. On 3 March the Division was ordered into 11th Army reserve and detached from XIX Corps. The next day physical as well as dental inspections were held and lost and unserviceable equipment was replaced. A training program was also put into operation and it included lectures on fraternalization and looting, range firing, road marches, small unit tactics, after combat discussions and athletics. The after combat discussion periods were particularly emphasized as mistakes were pointed out, unit pride was enhanced and valuable lessons were learned from these critiques. On 2 March the 70th FA Bn was detached from the Division, and

at 0001 hrs, 6 March the 747th Tank Bn was detached. On 10 March the 3rd Bn, 115th Infantry was attached to 44th Army for the purpose of guarding the Army C.P. which had moved to MUNCHEN-CLADACH.

The following day units of the Division began moving to new areas to continue their rehabilitation programs. The 115th Infantry moved to positions at ROTENWALD (R150810) and the 175th Infantry occupied MICRATHERO (R076803). The 116th Infantry delayed its move until 12 March when the entire Regiment occupied positions in OBERLINGEN (R070820).

The 29th Division Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop and the three regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoons conducted a ten day training course 15-24 March. The first day was devoted to the inspection of equipment, personnel and discipline. Personnel were tested as to their knowledge of weapons, vehicles, demolitions, radio transmission, field orders, range estimation, field glasses, compass, message writing, map reading, first aid, field sanitation and scouting and patrolling. The second day all weapons in the organization were reviewed and map reading and the use of the compass were covered.

The following six days were devoted to problems involving aggressive reconnaissance on approaching towns and in open terrain and the use of different field expedients upon encountering minefields, anti-tank ditches, streams and road blocks. In conjunction with the infantry battalions of the Division the I & II platoons and the Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop participated in problems in which they were employed as flank protection and as covering forces for the battalions. Problems were set up and directed by Division with the assistance of all concerned.

On 17 March the 3rd Bn, 115th Infantry reverted to unit control and in turn the 3rd Bn, 175th Infantry was attached at 1030 hrs to Special Troops, 44th U. S. Army to take over the guard detail formerly held by the 115th Infantry. The 1st Bn, 116th Infantry took over the detail on 24 March and was relieved on 27 March. The 747th Tank Bn was reattached to the 29th Division on 29 March.

Plans were formulated for possible commitment in the VII Corps zone east of the HINE, but these plans never materialized. On 29 March the 29th Infantry Division was attached to XVI Corps and on 31 March began moving by motor across the HINE. The Division, less the 175th Infantry Regimental

Combat Team, the 110th, 221st and the 227th FA Bn (8 vehicles only), the 554th AAA AB Bn (less Battery "B") and the 29th Quartermaster Company moved to the vicinity of DINSLAUBNER BRUCH (A3032) on the East bank of the RHINE river and the remainder of the Division closed in the following day.

In addition to the training previously mentioned during the period 14-24 March the entire regiment participated in a training program designed to correct the deficiencies noted in the past operation, to maintain physical condition and to prepare for forthcoming operations. Disciplinary standards were stressed and all units practiced operation in fast moving situations.

All communication sections in the Division were checked by personnel of the Division Signal Office paying particular attention to the use of radio in a fast operation. The ammunition and pioneer platoons were instructed by the 121st Engineer Bn in the passage and reduction of obstacles, demolitions and basic pioneer work.

In addition personnel designated by the Commanding General, Division Artillery tested all anti-tank and cannon personnel in the firing of their pieces and ASOP. Technical inspections were held by each infantry battalion of the BMT teams in each company, all bazooka teams and the weapons platoon and heavy machine gun platoons. Attention was also paid to the battery firing of the 81mm mortars.

The small unit and individual training stressed physical conditioning, village fighting, marching fire and rapid movement against light resistance.

Each Regiment then prepared field exercises in which each battalion commander demonstrated that their units were proficient in:

- (1) Assembly and movement on road across country out of contact.
- (2) Approach march on broad front, including change of direction.
- (3) Use of covering force and flank guards.
- (4) Daylight attack from approach march stressing rapid and wide maneuver.
- (5) Daylight attack within a town stressing rapid mopping up and aggressive action against enemy armor and SP guns.
- (6) Advance in coordination with attached tanks, TDs and covering cavalry or I & R plat. In future fast moving situations this headquarters contemplates the attachment of a cav recon plat to the exterior flank bn of each attacking regt and recommends the attachment of the regt I & R plat to the interior flank bn.

The 29th Division was fully rested, equipment was in excellent condition and the preparations were under way for possible commitment in the XVI Corps zone of action.