The operations of the 28th Infantry (1st Infantry Division) in the Battle of the Harz Mountains, 13-22 April 1945. (Central Europe Campaign) (Personal Experience of Assistant Regimental S-3)

Type of operation described: Infantry Regiment Attacking in Mountainous Terrain

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The General Situation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Division Situation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Regional Situation and Plan of Attack</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Attack out of Gneisthal-Zellefeld</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Attack on Schiers and Breunlage</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief of the 26th Infantry</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Criticism</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map A - General Situation, 1 April 1945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map B - First Army Situation, 11 April 1945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map C - Attack out of Gneisthal-Zellefeld</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map D - Attack on Schiers and Breunlage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 29TH INFANTRY (1ST INFANTRY DIVISION)
IN THE BATTLE OF THE HARS MOUNTAINS, 17-22 APRIL 1945
(CENTRAL EUROPE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of Assistant Regimental S-3)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 29th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, in the Battle of the Hars Mountains, Germany, 17-22 April 1945, during the Central European Campaign of World War II.

The Hars Mountains, the northernmost chain of mountains in Germany, extending for a length of 36 miles and an average width of approximately 16 miles. There is a sharp contrast between the mountains, which are covered primarily with coniferous trees and numerous small streams trickling down to many ravines, and the surrounding plains of well laid-out, fertile farmland. The mean annual temperature is 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Brocken, the highest peak in central Germany, rising 3746 feet above sea level, dominates the entire chain of mountains and surrounding plains.

Near the summit of this peak vegetation becomes rather scanty, disappearing approximately 100 feet from the top. (1)

At this point, it is necessary to orient the reader on the major developments before the 1st Division reached the Hars Mountains.

On 7 March 1945, Germany's last major natural obstacle to the Allied onslaught was breached when a small spearhead of the 9th Armored Division seized the Ludendorff bridge across the Rhine River at Remagen. Within one week after this crossing, the Allied spearheads were racing eastward, isolating corps and divisions and cutting off one army from another. (2)

The Allied forces completed the largest double envelopment in history when the Ninth and First Armies met at Lippestadt on 1 April, closing the Ruhr or "Riese" pocket. This pocket comprised about 9,000 square miles.

(1) A-1, pp 312, 33; (2) A-2, pp 81, 103.
including one of the most highly developed industrial areas of Germany. Inside the pocket were the whole of the German Army Group B and two corps of Army Group H, totaling 21 divisions or more than 380,000 men and enormous quantities of supplies. [3] (See Map 4)

Let us consider the enemy situation for a moment. With the loss of the Ruhr, the only two possible barriers between the Allies and Berlin were the Weser and Elbe Rivers. Neither of these would halt our forces for any great length of time, but there was one possible stronghold which could be fortified—the Harz Mountains. “An area as difficult and forbidding militarily as it was scenic in peace-time. There he might hope to reassemble whatever forces he still had on hand to stage a reverse Eastone. The mountains would take time to reduce for no other reason than the terrain, and when defended by even the low-calibre troops at hand the area might possibly hold out successfully enough to throttle down the high-powered drive into the vitals of the Reich.” [4]

The encirclement of the Ruhr, isolating the industrial heart of Germany, set the stage for the accomplishment of the final objective assigned the Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, by the combined Chiefs of Staff—the complete destruction of the German armed forces. [5]

As soon as the Ruhr was sufficiently secure so as not to present any major threat to our advances to the east, the Supreme Commander considered three possible plans to accomplish his mission. Any one or all of these plans would produce the required results. The allied armies were so disposed that a minimum of regrouping would be necessary to follow any of these plans. These plans were: (See Map A)

1. A drive south down the Danube Valley with the objective of isolating the “National Redoubt,” in southern Bavaria and Austria, reportedly being built up as a final stronghold for the Nazi Government, and a junction with the Soviets in Austria.

2. A central advance on the Kassel-Leipzig axis to split Germany in half and destroy the Soviet main effort, and to capture the East German industrial area (Leipzig-Chemnitz).

3. An advance across the north German plains to secure the German ports and cut off Holland, Denmark and Norway from Germany. (5)

After consideration of the three plans above the Supreme Commander decided that one main effort, the central drive, would shorten the war and reinforce divisions could then be brought into play as they were released from action in the Ruhr. This plan would also afford more flexibility as the situation developed in either the south or north. (7)

The 12th Army Group, commanded by General Omar N. Bradley, was ordered to destroy the enemy in the Ruhr pocket and to launch the main attack on the axis Kassel-Leipzig and be prepared to carry out operations east of the Elbe River if the opportunity presented itself. The 21st Army Group in the north and the 6th Army Group in the south were instructed to launch limited attacks to support the main effort. (8)

On 6 April, the 12th Army Group launched its attack with the First Army in the center, the Ninth Army on the north and Third Army on the south.

This found the First Army fighting on two fronts - the V and VII Corps attacking eastward and the III Corps and XVII Airborne Corps fighting westward into the Ruhr. (9)

The VII Corps, on the left flank of the First Army zone, comprised of the 1st and 104th Infantry Divisions and the 3rd Armored Division was ordered to advance rapidly along the line Einbeck-Frenswede-Duderstadt and be prepared on army order to continue to the Elbe River. It was directed to by-pass but contain any resistance in the Harz Mountains. The V Corps was ordered to advance rapidly in its zone to seize the line Duderstadt- (6) A-4, pp. 96, 97; (7) A-2, p. 106; A-4, p. 67; (8) A-2, p. 106; A-4, p. 96; (9) A-2, p. 27.
Schlachtenschlag. Both the V and VII Corps were given the authority to exploit any opportunity to seize a bridgehead across the Sake River and to be prepared to take contact with the Soviet Forces. (10) (See Map G)

At 0430 hours, First Army, General Eisenhower, and Generals of Army Commanding General, 12th Army Group, issued orders to V and VII Corps that the advance within the army zone would be limited to securing a general line.

On April 13, 1945, elements of the VII Corps, 3rd Armored Division, were in the vicinity of Nordhausen. The 3rd Armored Division was closely behind the 3rd Armored Division and blocking the southern approach of the Harz Mountains. The First Infantry Division with the 11th Armored Division attacked and entered the western side of the Harz Mountains by clearing Gatersleben and Halberstadt against increasingly heavy resistance in the form of road blocks, minefields, anti-tank guns, small arms and bazooka fire, and flamethrowers. (See Map D) Bad Grund produced a prisoner, a General Major Oberstleutnant, commander of a battle group under the 6th (German) Corps, who testified in the prisoners-of-war camp that overall command of the Harz Mountains had been invested in the 11th Finnish Army, a unit whose antecedents were not very clear. Evidently, it was only a headquarters transferred from the eastern front responsible to no one but Marshal Keitel. There was no organized army involved. (11) The 83rd Infantry Division, Ninth US Army, was moving through the northern edge of the Reich in an effort to meet the advance of the 3rd Armored Division, First Army, which was moving on the (12) Map E, p. 13, 1-2, p. 52a; (13) A-23, p. 62.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 13 April, elements of VII Corps, 3rd Armored Division, were in the vicinity of Nordhausen. The 3rd Armored Division was closely behind the 3rd Armored Division and blocking the southern approach of the Harz Mountains. The First Infantry Division with the 11th Armored Division attacked and entered the western side of the Harz Mountains by clearing Gatersleben and Halberstadt against increasingly heavy resistance in the form of road blocks, minefields, anti-tank guns, small arms and bazooka fire, and flamethrowers. (See Map D) Bad Grund produced a prisoner, a General Major Oberstleutnant, commander of a battle group under the 6th (German) Corps, who testified in the prisoners-of-war camp that overall command of the Harz Mountains had been invested in the 11th Finnish Army, a unit whose antecedents were not very clear. Evidently, it was only a headquarters transferred from the eastern front responsible to no one but Marshal Keitel. There was no organized army involved. (11) The 83rd Infantry Division, Ninth US Army, was moving through the northern edge of the Reich in an effort to meet the advance of the 3rd Armored Division, First Army, which was moving on the (12) Map E, p. 13, 1-2, p. 52a; (13) A-23, p. 62.
southern edge of the mountains. This line-up east of the Herb would seal
off all men and equipment which the Germans had been able to reassure
there. To the south of 111 Corps, 17th Corps was making rapid advance to
the west. (12)

THE DIVISION SITUATION

On 17 April 1945, the mission of the 1st Infantry Division was to
eliminate all enemy resistance within its zone of responsibility in the
Herz mountains and to maintain contact with the 57th Infantry Division on
the north and the 104th Infantry Division on the south." (13) (See Map 5).

The terrain in the division's zone of responsibility was about as for-
bidding to an attacker as could be found anywhere. It was rougher than the
Burggen Forest in that the woods were thicker and there were many more trees,
woods and hills. It favored the enemy more than the Ardennes because the
roads were more difficult. The roads which could withstand enemy traffic
were easy to block. Large trees lined many roads, and the number of road-
blocks which could be thrown across critical points were limited only by
the amount of explosives on hand and the number of men available to handle
sew. Many of these critical points - hairpin turns in the roads - were
taken where the towering trees had explosives strapped to them but whose
defenders had been unable to set them off. These winding roads could also
be cratered on a moment's notice. (14)

As the 1st Division entered the Herb, it knew only one German Corps
in its path, the 6th (Wachkres) Corps. As the fighting progressed, how-
ever, it became apparent from the variety of units encountered, both divi-
sional and non-divisional, that the Herb mountains were defended by four
Corps and not one - the 6th and 9th Corps, both converted Wachkreis units;
the 68th and 69th Corps, both old line units which had been moved up from

(12) A-7, p. 290; R-6, p. 329; R-13, p. 42; 4-9, p. 207; A-5, p. 51;
(13) A-8, p. 380; 114 A-1, p. 278; A-10, p. 30; Foremost, Wachkreis

the south. (See Map B) None of these corps were up to the standards of a German corps in the hey-day of the Wehrmacht. The 6th and 9th Corps were little more than a gag of troops, mostly stragglers, with little organization or communications. In spite of this disorganized state, there were enough troops on hand to make the reduction of the Harsberg a difficult undertaking, especially since there were a good number of SS personnel from the Westphalia Brigade and a core of experienced division staffs which had been absorbed by the allied onslaught. It was estimated that there were approximately 100,000 troops in the area with enough supporting weapons to give them equality with the attacking forces, if not superiority, except in artillery. (15)

By the end of the day's fighting on 12 April, the 1st Division was disposed on a general line from Cleusthal-Zellerfeld in the north to Harsberg in the south. (See Map B) The Division plan called for the attack to continue on 13 April with the 28th Infantry on the left, or north flank; the 18th Infantry in the center; and the 13th Infantry on the right, or south flank.

THE SEGMENTAL SITUATION AND PLAN OF ATTACK

The night of 12-13 April 1945 found the 28th Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Francis J. Murdock, disposed in and around the twin cities of Cleusthal-Zellerfeld as follows: (See Map C)

The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Frank Dulligan, occupied the northern part of the twin cities, or Zellerfeld. (16)

The 3rd Battalion, commanded by Major Walter M. Nation, occupied the southern part of Cleusthal. (17)

The 2nd Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Merrill R. Daniel, was in reserve and had moved in just west of Zellerfeld. (18)

The regiment had attached to it for this operation Company C, 1st Engineer (C) Battalion; Company C, 785th Tank Battalion; and Company C, 634th TB Battalion. The first, second and third platoons of the tank and the companies were returned respectively to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions respectively.

The regimental plan of attack for 13 April called for the 2nd Battalion to attack the town of Blomberg with the support of Fire Support, which was 3rd Battalion minus Company I, to follow the 2nd Battalion with the mission of protecting the left flank of the regiment. Company I was to remain in Blauenthal-Kellerfeld and patrol the twin-cities, thereby clearing the regimental combat trains. This was necessary because the enemy situation was obscure, at this time. Units of the regiment were continually flushing out prisoners in the rear areas, some armed and some not, some in uniform and some in civilian clothes. The 1st Battalion was given the mission of clearing out the edges of the twin-cities. (19) [See Map 9]

Enemy forces facing the regiment at this time comprised the remnants of the German VI Corps. Identified units of this corps included the 9th Panzer Division, elements of the 116th Panzer Division, and the Westphalia Brigade, an SS Panzer unit which had been delaying our progress for quite a few days. In addition there were numerous small battle groups of unknown origin which had drifted in from the Ruhr and other sectors. (20)

ATTACK CUP OF BLAUVITZ-KELLERFELD

The attack jumped off at 0600 hours 13 April with the 2nd Battalion moving through positions held by the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion followed the 2nd on orders from the Regimental Commander. (21)

The 2nd Battalion encountered only scattered resistance until about 1000 hours when Company F, leading the attack, hit a strong point at 1

(19) Personal knowledge; 4-14; (20) 3-13, p. 61; (21) Personal knowledge;
composed of a roadblock of large trees felled across the road defended by
dug-in infantry and three tanks. One of these tanks an American M-36, was
knocked out by the attacking tank platoon and the other two withdrew. At
this time more tracked vehicles were heard around the bend of the road near
Aufenau, so the Battalion Commander ordered Company G to attack directly
west over hill 537 with the mission of cutting the road just north of town,
merely preventing re-inforcement going out of town to reinforce the
remainder of the Battalion. Due to the terrain no tanks could accompany
Company G on this mission, but as they reached the road at about 1800 hours
they knocked out two enemy tanks with bazookas and captured approximately 15
Germans. Meanwhile the remainder of the Battalion was clearing the road to
link up with Company G. This created a problem due to the composition of
the battalion columns on the road. Each company had its own transport-
ation with the tanks, TDs and Engineers interspersed in the column. When
the leading elements hit a road block, they immediately called for tanks or
Engineers. Due to the narrow width of the road these units had
difficulty in getting up to where they were needed rapidly. This situation
was remedied by placing all vehicles under battalion control and keeping
them in rear of the tanks and engineer vehicles. Our tankers knocked out
another enemy tank, a Mark IV, in the vicinity of H72. The link-up was made
just after dark and the battalion continued through town, leaving Company
F with two M-10 TDS in the vicinity of H72 to protect the rear of the Bat-
talion. As soon as Companies E and G got through the town, they were hit
immediately by a counter-attack of some 100 infantry supported by tanks.
This enemy attack was beaten off and the 2nd Battalion settled down for the
night. (22)

The 3rd Battalion had been following the 2nd Battalion and set up for
the night along hill 537. During the day C Troop, 4th Cavalry Group felt
the statement of Major Thomas J. Sandron, then B-3, 2nd BN, 26th Infantry.
out the enemy positions east and south of Cleaveath-Zellerfeld. [23] (See
p. 25)

The attack continued on 14 April with the 1st Battalion attacking at
0800 hours out of Cleaveath-Zellerfeld astride the main ridge road with
the mission of seizing Breunlage. The 2nd Battalion was ordered to jump off
at 1400 hours with the road junction in Torfhaus as an objective. Progress
of the 1st Battalion was slow as it ran into numerous roadblocks defended
by dug-in infantry and self-propelled guns.

At noon, Brigadier General George A. Taylor, Assistant Division Com-
mander, emphasized that the main mission of the 26th Infantry was to clear
the main ridge road from Cleaveath-Zellerfeld to Breunlage. [24]

At 1400 hours the 2nd Battalion jumped off for Torfhaus. The forma-
tion was a column of companies with Company E leading, followed by Compa-
nies G, H, Headquarters and F. At the same hour, the 1st Battalion re-
ported that Company A was held up at H3 by heavy enemy tank and anti-tank
fire. The enemy was making very skilled use of tanks and self-propelled
guns in an effort to check our drive upon Breunlage. [25]

At 1930 hours, the 1st Battalion met a strong roadblock at 4, destroying
one tank and disabling another. Two prisoners were captured who stated
that all along the road trees were set to blow, thus forming roadblocks.
They also stated that there were about 2,000 SS troops and 14 tanks in
Breunlage. Company A gained about 400 yards more before the Battalion
halted for the night at 2400 hours. [26]

All was not going so well with the 2nd Battalion in their effort to
take Torfhaus. Very little active resistance was met until Company E got
to within about 800 yards of the RJ in Torfhaus. Here a very strongly or-
ganized position was met - the most determined defense yet encountered in
the Herz Mountains. After two unsuccessful attempts to gain the RJ, Colonel
[23] Personal knowledge, A-12; Statement of Captain Robert L. Stevens, 3rd
Daniel called it quits for the night, consolidated his position and prepared to make certain that some morning his attempt would be successful.

The morning of 15 April at 0800 hours found Company E in possession of Hill 360, but this was a very important hill which one of the few good roads the Germans had which they could use in moving armor laterally across the front and they weren't going to give it up that easy. Shortly after the sun rose over the front, the Germans counterattacked with a force estimated to be one company of infantry supported by tanks and self-propelled guns. A very sharp battle ensued for the next two hours with German tanks running up and down the street in front of Colonel Daniel's forward CP. When the dust cleared around the little village Company E was still in possession of the Hill and six enemy tanks and two SPs had been destroyed, an estimated 100 enemy had been killed and more than 200 prisoners had been taken. At the same time Company G attacked the Hill, Company G which was following, was ordered cross-country with the mission of cutting the road south of Torphouse. At 0900 hours, Company G reported that they had reached the road 1000 yards south of town. Shortly after this, communications, which consisted only of the SCR 300 radio, went out between 2nd Battalion and Company G. The Battalion S-3 sent out a patrol in an attempt to locate Company G but the patrol returned with one man who had gotten lost from his platoon.

Contact was established with elements of the 330th Infantry, 83rd Infantry Division, just north of town at 1100 hours.

At 1300 hours, Colonel Daniel attacked south from Torphouse with the remainder of his battalion in an effort to link-up with Company G. It was necessary to leave the platoon of tanks that was attached to the battalion in Torphouse for maintenance which was vital if they were to stay in the fight. The platoon of M-10 TPs, which consisted of four guns, were used as
tanks in the attack south of town. Contact was made with Company G and the attack continued toward WJ7. Two roadblocks were encountered north of the WJ - neither one was defended, but one was mined. As the lead of the battalion neared the WJ, noise of tracked vehicles was heard in the vicinity of and east of the junction, but as the advance continued the enemy vehicles withdrew and no fire was received. As the leading elements passed the junction, machine gun and AT fire was received from the woods to the east and one of our M-10 TD was knocked out. Artillery fire was called for and after a heavy concentration was delivered in the woods all fire ceased. The battalion proceeded to consolidate positions around the WJ for the night and here it was found that the artillery had knocked out three 88mm guns and two machine guns with that one concentration. (27)

The 1st Battalion jumped off in a column of companies at 0600 hours, making very slow progress throughout the morning in its attack on hill 602. In the afternoon Company G was committed north of the road and Company F south of the hill in an effort to break through the enemy resistance. All three companies reported receiving heavy self-propelled, mortar and small arms fire. Just before dark the 1st Battalion reported gaining hill 602 and WJ7. The battalion consolidated around this WJ and immediately began preparing for the next day's operations. Casualties for the day - 9 enlisted men wounded. (28)

The 3rd Battalion, less Company I, had remained in the vicinity of Altena with Company K patrolling to the south maintaining contact with the 1st battalion. (29)

(27) Personal knowledge; 8-10, p. 82; A-12; Statement of Major Thomas J. Gendron than S-3, 2nd Bu, 26th Infantry; (28) Personal knowledge; A-12; (29) Personal knowledge; 4-13.
The attack on Schleben and Brandlack

The regimental attack plan for 16 April directed the 1st Battalion to continue the attack along the main ridge road toward Graunings, the 3rd Battalion to move through the battalion positions at Hill 577 and Hill 275 and HI 59 in conjunction with the 1st Battalion and continue to Graunings, and the 2nd Battalion to attack eastward from HI 57 toward Graunings. (13)

The 1st Battalion plan called for Company C, commanded by Captain Donald Lister, to lead the attack by passing through Company A. Following would be Company B, CP group, Company A, Battalion Headquarters Company and Company D. (12)

The 2nd Battalion plan called for a column of companies, Company F leading, as they jumped off from their position in the vicinity of HI 710. (32)

The 3rd Battalion plan called for a column of companies, Company K leading until HI 710 was cleared, then Company I would take the east fork to Hill 926. The remainder of the battalion would follow Company K down the main road to Graunings. (37)

As can be seen, all units were confining themselves very closely to the road net that wound through the hills. This was necessary due to the inability of tanks, and in most instances wheeled vehicles, to negotiate the muddy, hilly and thickly-wooded terrain which prevailed in this situation. The line of departure for each day's operation was the position of that unit as of the hour of the attack or the first line of a friendly unit in the case where there was a pass through.

The 1st Battalion crossed the LD at 0800 hours, meeting little resistance until they reached 9, where they found a small bridge which had been blown. After clearing the enemy out, it was found that the bridge could be bridged. (30) A-12; (31) A-13; (32) Statement of Major Thomas J. Genzien, then 2nd Co., 26th Infantry; (33) A-14; A-15.
not to be passed and it would take an hour to affect a crossing. The Battalion Commander ordered Companies C and E to proceed without tank and \textit{to support} toward 8 and inform them that as soon as was possible their supporting weapons would be sent to meet them. At Company C approached
\textit{overpowering} \textit{artillery and small arms fire}
coming from across the open field east of Oder Lake. Here Company C deployed south of the dam in the wooded area and a fierce fight raged for approximately an hour. The enemy continued to resist doggedly as Company C pushed on toward RJ9. At 0954 hours the 1st Battalion reported that Company C was meeting intense resistance as it approached the RJ. At 0944 hours the Regimental Commander informed the 1st Battalion that it would button up after securing RJ's 9 and 11 and Hill 926. At 1200 hours 1st Battalion reported Company C had secured RJ3 after repelling two counterattacks from the south. (34)

The 3rd Battalion after being joined by Company I who had been in Gleesfeld since 12 April passed through 2nd Battalion positions at 0815 hours. Little happened until the leading elements of Company K approached RJ9 where they received heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire. A brisk fire fight followed as the enemy unsuccessfully tried to hold the RJ. Known enemy casualties in this skirmish were 21 killed and 7 captured. By 1115 hours the RJ was clear and Company I, reinforced by two tanks, two TDCs, and one platoon of heavy machine guns attacked Hill 926 while the remainder of the battalion proceeded toward RJ9. Due to the heavy fighting 1st Battalion had been engaged in, the Regimental Commander had relieved them of the mission of taking Hill 926 and ordered them to proceed to Bramling. He ordered the 3rd Battalion to secure this high ground in an effort to relieve the pressure around RJ9. As Company K neared the RJ, they joined the fight that the 1st Battalion had been in since reaching that point. The (36) A-12, A-13.
the enemy was continuing to counterattack with force in an attempt to dislodge our units there. Resistance around the Hill broke about 1730 hours and Com-
pany C moved out rapidly on orders from the Battalion Commander and by
1830 hours had reached a point approximately 100 yards south of the hill. The
1st Battalion was ordered to hold up and was informed that the 3rd
Battalion would pass through them very shortly. Meanwhile Company I had
been moving slowly toward point II on the way to Hill 926, but by 1900 hours
Hill 926 was secure. At about 1930 hours the Regimental
Commander ordered the 1st Battalion to relieve Company I on Hill 926 with
one company. The remainder of the 3rd Battalion, attacking down the medal
road, followed Company C, passed through them and secured RT12 where they
battened up for the night.

Company B relieved Company I on Hill 926 at 2200 hours, thereby
giving the 3rd Battalion all its companies for the attack on Brumage the
next morning. After the 3rd Battalion had gotten settled down for a good
night's rest, an enemy 75mm SP, which had been overlooked in the pitch
dark of the night, opened fire on the Battalion CP from about 200 yards
north of RT12. No great damage was done before it was destroyed, but con-
tinued fire was paramount until it was silenced by a bazooka team from Head-
quarters Company. Casualties for the 3rd Battalion for the day totaled
6 killed, 5 missing in action, two battle injuries, and 18 wounded. Per-
sonnel captured were returned to our control in Fland.

The end of the day's fighting found Company C about 600 yards SE of
Hill, Company B on Hill 926, Company A around RJ2, and Company D and Head-
quarters just east of the Old Lake Dam. (See Map 2)

Casualties for the battalion during the day totaled 8 killed and 21
wounded seriously enough for evacuation. (75)

The 2nd Battalion had another day of slug it out with dug-in enemy
(261: A-12; A-13; A-14; A-15; Personal knowledge; Statement of Captain Walter
D. Stevens, then B-3, 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry.
and tanks disposed around roadblocks. They captured a heavily defended roadblock at 14, were driven back by a counterattack but recaptured it just before dark where they closed in and set up a perimeter defense until the night was over.

At about 1445 hours 16 April, broken, the high, bald hill overlooking the entire mountains, received a blow from the air when it was attacked by F-47 fighter-bombers. Although at the time of the attack it looked as if some destruction was done, it was found later that the mission was not effective.

Elements of the 6th Cavalry Group which had been operating on the right flank of the regiment and maintaining contact with the 16th Infantry were relieved from attachment to the Division and the Regimental 11th platoon was given this mission.

When the attack began from Neustadt-Kallerfeld the Regimental Command Group followed the route of the 2nd Battalion, but since the 3rd Battalion had been shifted to the south the Command Group also shifted, thereby staying on the axis of the bulk of the regiment.

The regimental plan for 17 April directed the 2nd Battalion to continue the attack on Schlierke, the 3rd Battalion to seize Braunlage, and then the 1st Battalion to push through the 3rd and seize Blend. Due to the late hour which the units fought on the 16th, the time for the attack was set at 0600 hours. (37)

The 2nd Battalion crossed the ID as planned and made considerably better progress, still sighting and clearing roadblocks. Enemy artillery and SP fire was received in increased intensity as they moved forward. Five defended roadblocks were encountered between 14 and 15 with four of these along the helipad turn just east of 14. The Battalion Commander, not knowing that Schlierke was a hospital town, called for an air mission. (37) Personal knowledge: Statement of Major Thomas J. Anderson, then S-3, 2nd Bn, 26th Infantry. (37) Personal knowledge: A-12.
on the town hoping to knock out some of the high-angle weapons which were firing on elements of his battalion. The Battalion advanced slowly the rest of the day and by dark had reached 16 where an all-around defense was set up for the night. (36)

The 3rd Battalion crossed the LD at 0500 hours, with Company K leading. By 1130 hours, the Battalion had reached Ernabiage and had begun the detailed cleaning up with Company K clearing the southern sector, Company L the northern sector, and Company I pushing out to secure the eastern edge of town. The heaviest artillery received in the Hara Mountains fell during the day on the road leading into town. Ernabiage proved to be a hospital town with many small wards in private homes. Prisoners captured by the 3rd Battalion consisted of 5 men who were in the fight, 1000 bed patients and 360 walking patients. Casualties for the 3rd Battalion totaled 3 killed and 2 battle injuries. Five Americans were returned to our control here. (39)

The 1st Battalion attacked through the positions of Company I at 1000 hours, with the mission of taking Ernabiage again. Colonel Dulligan decided on a column of companies as the best formation because of the inability to get his vehicles cross-country. Company G led the attack, followed by C, the Battalion Command Group, C and then D, with Headquarters Company moving in order of the Battalion Commander. The attack moved rather slowly against dug-in infantry supported by tanks and automatic weapons. Attached tanks knocked out one medium tank and one half-track in the vicinity of a blown bridge at 17. Company B, commanded by Captain Felker L. Fair, by-passing the blown bridge, encountered a roadblock defended by tanks and SPs at 18. He was ordered to hold up until the tanks and SPs could get across the stream. This was accomplished by 1200 hours, and the attack continued, meeting scattered resistance and two additional roadblocks. By (30) Statement of Major Thomas L. Hendrix, 3rd Co., 3rd BN, 25th Infantry; (33) A-12; A-14; Personal Knowledge.

19
2400 hours 1st Battalion reported that M105 was in their hands. Casualties for the battalion were 7 men wounded. (40)

2430 hours 2nd Battalion continued its attack on its positions around Elend. The 2nd Battalion continued its attack on Schierke against bitter resistance. An air mission was requested and a flight of F-47 Fighter-Bombers came over and bombed and strafed enemy strong positions in and around the town. After this the enemy high angle fire decreased appreciably and by 0230 hours, Schierke had fallen. A great number of prisoners were taken, largely hospital patients. The battalion set up a defense around the edge of town, mostly in buildings as it could be seen that the collapse of the entire area was at last in sight. (41)

The 3rd Battalion remained in Brauneiche, ate three hot meals, and patrolled the woods north and northeast of the town which had many prisoners who had been bypassed.

At about 0700 hours, a train consisting of three cars loaded with German soldiers rolled into Elend. A 50mm AT gun of the battalion AT platoon knocked out the train and all occupants were either killed or captured. A patrol from Company K located five 100mm howitzers on a road east of town. These were destroyed by the battalion AT platoon.

At 1538 hours, 1st and 2nd Battalion were ordered to send out patrols to contact each other. The one from the 1st Battalion ran into a roadblock at 19 defended by infantry and two tanks. This was cleared, but due to darkness, contact was not established with 2nd Battalion. The patrol from the 2nd Battalion was unsuccessful in contacting the 1st Battalion. (42)

Contact between the 1st and 2nd Battalion was firmly established early the morning of 19 April. Patrols continued to sweep the woods to the north and east bringing in numerous prisoners.

(40) A-12; A-15; Statement of Captain Oiller L. Peir, then commanding officer, Co. B, 36th Infantry. (41) A-12; Personal knowledge; Statement of Major Thomas J. Condron, then Co. B, 36th Infantry; (42) A-12; A-15; Personal knowledge.
To the 3rd Battalion fell the unpleasant job of taking Brocken, the highest peak in Central Germany. At 0915 hours, Company K moved out of Bramlage retracing their route through 10, 11, and 9, turning east at 277 and proceeding to 15 where they ran out to the northeast to clear and protect an assembly area for the remainder of the battalion. At 1300 hours, the rest of the battalion, with the exception of the rear CP, moved out, followed by Company N and closed in an assembly area approximately 500 yards northeast of 15. Company L was given the mission of clearing hill 1023, which it accomplished by 1520 hours. Company I secured hill 1044 without incident. Immediately Company L proceeded to take Brocken, a bare knoll on top of which stood a seven-story, reinforced concrete structure housing a weather bureau and a radio station. As the assault across the barren area near the summit began, the enemy opened fire point blank with bazookas, anti-aircraft guns and automatic weapons of all types. After two unsuccessful attempts to reach the crest from the south, Major Nation ordered Company I around to the northern side to assault from there. While Company I contained the enemy from positions on Hill 1044, by 1700 hours, Company L was 100 yards north of the objective so the Battalion Commander ordered Company L, less one platoon, to proceed back to the vicinity of Schierke where they would entrain for Bramlage. Company L was unable to make any further progress against the intense machine gun, anti-aircraft, and panzerfaust fire which they met again. By 2300 hours, the road up to Company L had been cleared and the platoon from Company I escorted two tanks up to their positions. Even with the tanks firing point blank at the concrete building, Company L was unable to over-run the position and for security reasons was forced to withdraw to the edge of the woods for the remainder of the night. On the morning of 20 April, Company L seized Brocken and remained atop this barren
peak until 22 April. The remainder of the battalion returned to Braun-
thalce. (43)

DURING 21 APRIL, ALL UNITS CONTINUED PURSUING THROUGHOUT THE
regimental zone, still capturing large numbers of prisoners. Company C
alone captured approximately 400 prisoners 20 April. (44) By the end of
21 April, the entire regimental zone had been swept clear of the enemy.

SECTION OF THE 29TH INFANTRY

On 21 April the regiment was notified that the 8th Armored Division
would take over our sector in the Herb Mountains and the 29th Infantry
would be given a new mission. During 22 April Commanders and Staff Officers
were busy orienting the advanced detail of the 8th Armored Division and
realigning their units for the move. At 2300 20 April leading units of the
regiment crossed the JP at Breunlage on the way to a new area and a dif-
ferent task. I venture to say there was not one man present who regretted
seeing the last of this beautiful mountain retreat in Central Germany. (45)

SUMMARY

During the period covered by this monograph the 29th Infantry slugged
it out with the enemy over better than fifteen miles of the most rugged
terrain in all Sicily. Even with the high state of confusion prevalent
throughout the ranks of the defenders, the small battle-groups fought to the
bitter end. It is still not clear where as many tanks came from that
showed up in the Herb. When the stronghold was finally blotted out the 1st
Division had knocked out more than 52 tanks and 88s. Nearly 1000 vehi-
cles were either knocked out or over-run; seventy-five artillery pieces were
taken; and whole trailheads of airplane fuselages, machine gun mounts,

(43) Personal knowledge: A-14; Statement of Captain Walter D. Wolseley, then
Lt. Col., 29th Infantry; (44) A-12; A-13; Personal knowledge;
(45) Personal knowledge: A-12; A-13.
truck parts, and signal equipment were captured.

The Ist Division took 34,247 prisoners during the reduction of the
Kron Mountains. This number, when added to the totals of adjacent units
in this area, the enemy's ultimate total of 73,247, is considerably in excess of the strength
in this area reported in General Gruenther's report.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In making a study of this operation, it is likely the writer finds
the reduction of the Kron Mountains could have been a far greater task
if the enemy had been given more time to organize his troops and lay out
the defense. Had he had this time, a closer resemblance to a reversed
parable would have been realized. Even with the lack of communications
and organization, the weapons at his disposal were very skillfully utilized.
This was demonstrated time and time again when our forward ele-
ments approached the ever-present roadblocks of fallen trees. Due to the
restricted road network and the inability to get vehicles above country, the
terrain favored the defender very heavily.

At the beginning of the operation all estimates of the enemy strength
in the Kron were far less than was later realized. As the regiment pro-
gressed further into the mountains, it became evident that every soldier,
whether officer or enlisted man, who became lost from his unit took refuge in these mountains.

Considering the mission of the regiment - to clear the main ridge road
from Clementhal-Gellersfeld to Braunlage - and the restricted roads not capable
of carrying heavy vehicles, our attack was very much delayed. The enemy
knew this and made the utmost of the situation by continually blocking our
advance with defended and undefended roadblocks. He knew where we were at all
times. But the end of the war was near in sight and many of the men and officers in the regiment had been in the fight for over one year and were tired of the constant battle. The morale of all concerned was at its all time
high.
When a unit finds itself in a situation as obscure as that which existed on 17 April, it is imperative that all possible protection be given the trains supporting the operation. It is felt that the mission given Company I was good insurance for continuous support from these trains.

The advance on 17 April was hampered considerably because the companies of the assault battalion and their transportation with them. The tanks, the aid engineers were dispersed throughout the column. Due to the nature of the terrain, practically all vehicles were road bound which created a problem as soon as the tanks, T8s or engineers were needed up with the leading elements of the battalion. Company transportation was placed under battalion control and kept in rear of the combat vehicles and engineers. This proved to be very satisfactory and was used throughout the remainder of the operation.

The close support of Combat Engineers played a major role in this operation. The task of clearing the many roadblocks, repairing bridges, and removing mines was not a small one. This support was necessary to enable our attacking columns to advance with the maximum support from attached tanks and TDs.

The enemy employed the great bulk of his forces around roadblocks and critical road junctions. These forces consisted mainly of tanks, self-propelled guns, and infantry equipped with automatic weapons. The close mutual support between our infantry and tanks was vital indeed.

Our attached tanks and TDs were employed to knock out enemy automatic weapons while our infantrymen protected the tanks and TDs by warding off panzerfaust teams and loading enemy tanks and anti-tank weapons.

Most of the towns in the Euse Mountains were found to be hospital or recuperation centers, a fact which was unknown to us prior to taking the towns. Even though the enemy employed his defensive tactics within the
tows, but this fact been known it is felt that these towns would have been spared more then they were.

The task of seizing the high, bald peak of Brocken should have been undertaken by an entire battalion in a coordinated attack, and not a reinforced company. With the weapons which the enemy had atop this peak, it was an easy matter to concentrate these weapons on an attack from the direction. Had an attack been made from two directions at once it is felt that the mission would have been accomplished in much less time and with considerably fewer casualties.

At the end of a day's operation, it was imperative that all units set up with all around protection. Many enemy were by-passed during the attacks astride the roads and with the confusion that already existed among the enemy forces, it was necessary to button up close at night and increase local security. Especially, it was imperative to pull the tanks and M-10s inside the perimeter and guard them against enemy tank hunter teams.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized in this operation are:

1. When the enemy situation is obscure, it is often necessary to assign combat troops the mission of protecting combat trains supporting an operation.

2. It is often necessary to place company transportation under battalion control when the road net is restricted. This practice gives the Battalion Commander more control of movement over the available roads in his zone.

3. Control in mountain operations takes on increased importance. The means of control available should be used to the maximum. Often SCR 300 radios are inadequate since the range is decreased in this type of terrain. Wire should supplement radio in the attack.
4. Maintenance of tracked vehicles cannot be neglected regardless of the tactical situation. It is better to pull them out of the attack for this service, thereby losing their support for a short time, than to lose them up front until they are lost for the remainder of the operation.

5. A commander must be alert to capitalize on the success of one unit, and be the first to adjust his plan when one unit meets unexpected resistance. Frequent revisions in plans per dividends when one subordinate unit can relieve the pressure being placed on another.

6. Close support by fighter-bomber aircraft aids materially in neutralizing enemy artillery.

7. Even with little organization and communications, an effective defense can be established in mountainous terrain.

8. Combat Engineer support is vital in clearing routes of advance in mountains.

9. In close terrain it is necessary for all units to tie-in closely at night.

10. Attacking infantry units should endeavor to destroy all the enemy in its zone as they move forward. This will greatly reduce the probability of being hit from the rear after nightfall.