THIRMONT BATTLE VITAL IN REDUCING BULGE

30TH SEIZES VILLAGES IN HOT FIGHTS

By W. C. HEINZ
North American Newspaper Alliance

THIRIMONT, Belgium, Jan. 17.—(By Wireless)—(Delayed)—The cows, thin and hungry, are wandering around alone amid the rubble in the lonely, white streets and the G. I.s are in the cellars. The Americans have taken a key piece of ground here, and some of these who did it were sitting around, next to the white porcelain kitchen range, talking.

There used to be about a hundred houses in this place. The Americans wouldn't give 10 cents for it except that it lies on a ridge commanding two miles of ground beyond, and that is why some of Adolf Hitler's best paratroopers fought 48 hours here to keep the Thirtieth (Old Hickory) division out.

"Eighteen to 25 years old," a colonel said, "and in excellent physical shape. Any of our men will tell you that these Krauts were as tough as any we ever fought."

The Colonel is Lieut. Col. Ellis Williamson of Raliegh, N. C., who used to teach high school music and who now commands the First Battalion of the 120th Infantry. His executive officer is Major Chris McCullough of Fayetteville, N. C., who has a long, red handle-bar mustache.

"Excellent marksmen," the Major said. "This is the first time we've ever fought and good German marksmen staying up their officer change, too.

While the Colonel and the Major were talking, Robert Scarpello, private first-class, from 35—28 99th street, Corona, L. I., was cooking some beans in a can on the stove. A cow was bleating somewhere outside, and a Heinie mortar came crumping in.

"I can't hear very well today," the colonel said when somebody said something about mortars. "I got pretty close to one yesterday. Couldn't hear a damn thing this morning, but it's getting better now."

There were many things that made this a tough deal for the Americans here. There was the snow, the open ground with the Heinies looking down, and there was the fact that the Germans had the only road zeroed in.

"Every damn one of our radios froze," the Colonel said, "so we had to depend on runners for our communications. We couldn't even bring a jeep up, so that meant that we had to hand-carry everything we needed."

The Major said that one tank which tried to get through a piece of swampy ground that for some reason had not frozen was mired up to its gun.

"But worst of all were the houses," the Colonel said. "I never saw a town like this before." The town is sprawled all over the ridge. Between the houses there is open ground, sometimes 50 yards, sometimes 500 yards.

"Each house was self-supporting," the Colonel said. "It was mighty rugged, covering that open ground."

What the Colonel meant was that when the Americans attacked one house, they were under fire from another. Sometimes they were under fire from two or three.

For 24 hours the Americans held ten houses, and no more. Twice the Germans threw fresh troops and tanks into counter-attacks, and then the infantry in the 10 houses and the artillery behind them stopped the Germans for good.

"That was what you call artillery support," the Major said. "They averaged 200 rounds a minute for 30 minutes, and you've got to consider the build-up, which means at the hottest our guys were throwing up to 400 rounds a minute at the peak."

Outside, another long Heinie mortar came crumping in. It was close enough to rattle, muffled, but distinct, through the house.

"That's what we call non-habit forming," the Major said. "The more you get, the less you want, if you know what I mean."

Rain of Shells Splashes River Road — Well Planned Artillery Barrage Aids Infantry in Roer Crossing

By WES GALLAGHER

AT THE ROER RIVER IN GERMANY, Feb. 23. (AP).—Here is what I saw from a ringside seat near the river bank beginning yesterday afternoon:

The sky was full of American P—47s and P—38s in the late afternoon, circling over the river.

Suddenly out of the sun three twin-engined jet planes dropped through the fighter screen and leveled off at 2,000 feet, dropping one heavy bomb apiece along with a regular snowfall of tiny anti-personnel bombs not much bigger than 50-caliber bullets which burst like firecrackers.

Joseph Finnich, jeep driver, a former taxi driver from Allaquip, Pa., cleared a 6-foot fence by a good three feet on the way to a foxhole. It was a record.

Operating a 50-caliber flak gun in a near-by pit was Cpl. Ivey Willis, Harlan, Ky., who snorted: "Those things are here and gone before you can get a good crack at them."

LEFT EVEN P-47s BEHIND!

An artillery observation and command post (the 197th Field-Artillery) overlooking the river under command of Lieut. Col. Patrick Seawright, Savannah, Ga., offered a ringside view of the battle and on down the road as jets appeared again in another quick-attack. Even the P-47s in full dive could not get close to them.

Although a 500-pound bomb had hit a building in which the command post is located a few hours before, it was functioning calmly and the operations officer, Maj. Gordon Coltrin, San Francisco, explained how the great barrage would operate.

"For the first minute we will cut loose with every gun on quick fuses which catch them outdoors," he said. "After that we send in delayed stuff and go down in the cellars after them."

The command post was set up in a cellar which saved the lives of the men working there since the bomb completely demolished one wing of the building. It was a typically-designed Hitler cellar which means reinforced concrete for use in air raids.

IN BRIGHT MOONLIGHT.

Every room was crowded to capacity for the big assault. It was a bright moonlit night, almost Mediterranean in quality and the front was quiet the nearly evening although the roads were restless with doughboys moving up for the jump-off. Some are cursing, others were grimly silent and always a cheerful minority was wisecracking on the way to possible death.

Across the river, every inch of ground had been carefully plotted and in a few hours a rain of death would cover every German position.

It was quiet except for a sporadic shell right up to the opening barrage.

In the cellar, Coltrin gave quiet commands to his computers who relayed them to waiting batteries. The computers handled their lightning job with veteran skill although in peace-time Daniel Novitsky, T-4, Hazelton, Pa., was a time clerk; Charles Ottino, T-4, New York, was a singer, and Austin Stepsony, T-5, Rochester, N. Y., and Cpl. James Whitecotton, Auburn, Calif., were students.

Coltrin gave orders and in a few seconds the American front for miles erupted into flame and a mighty roar of sounds.

The moonlit land was split by flame and guns. The attic of the building gave a good view of the river since the bomb had knocked all the slates off the roof.

SOME FIRES ARE STARTED.

Across the river some thousand yards away burst flashing red blossoms like some gigantic fireworks show. It spread to miles along the river. Some shells started fires which burned steadily among the deadly twinkle of the bursting shells.

"We sure are giving it to them," declared Lieut. Louis Diskin, Brooklyn, a signal officer, who recently was given a battlefield promotion from sergeant. "I never saw anything like this before."

Under this steel explosive curtain, thousands of doughboys waded out into small assault boats and paddled across or dashed over tiny footbridges.

These were followed by amphibious alligators which spashed across with heavier equipment like seagoing dinosaurs.

The barrage then lifted farther and started sweeping back and forth across the front from German strongpoint to German strongpoint like a giant scythe.

REFUSES TO LEAVE HIS POST.

"They spoiled our breakfast yesterday morning and now we are spoiling theirs," grinned Capt. Richard Powell, San Francisco. Powell was buried in the bomb attack the morning before but was dug out with minor scratches and refused to leave his post.

"I bet the Germans don't know what hit them," opined Maj. John Frerichs, Memphis, Tenn., executive officer.

OLD HICKORY TURNS TABLES AT ST. VITH

By IRIS CARPENTER
Globe Special War Correspondent

St. Vith, Jan. 23—American troops are now fighting in the outskirts of St. Vith. (Ed. note: They captured the town a few hours later.)

As the sun slanted blue shadows over hills now two feet deep in snow, two task forces set off down the last lap of the road over which they fought their way out of St. Vith just a month ago.

They were units of the 7th Armored Division, whose lone stand against two crack panzer divisions, backed by Elite Guards, held up all Nazi armored brigades for three agonizing, but from Von Rundstedt's viewpoint, infinitely precious and irreparable, days.

Their stand denied the enemy use of this hub of the vital road net to the west, gave us time to organize the most tremendous troop movement in all military history, and enabled the remnants of the inexperienced and badly mauled 106th Division, the sole outfit holding the sector, to get away.

For three days, from Dec. 18 to 21, the 7th's metallic half-moon held against five times their own strength. Finally, on Dec. 21, a German onslaught broke the line by sweeping out of the woods around the ridge-top of Hindenhausen.

This is precisely what we have now done to the enemy. The 30th Division turned the tables on him yesterday morning by jumping off at dawn after only 15 minutes of artillery preparation. The Germans thought this was not enough to mean an attack. So little did they expect it, in fact, that the battalion commander, and all his staff were surprised at breakfast.

500 PRISONERS CAUGHT

Five hundred prisoners were taken—a motley collection from several different divisions left to hold while the best troops got back of the Siegfried Line for refitting and regrouping.

From Hindenhausen, 30th Division troops swung down, approaching the villages of Crombach and Braunslauf to dominate the road into St. Vith, which virtually won the battle for the town.

From this road they had observation over a column of vehicles of all types moving bumper to bumper towards the Westwall. Urgent calls for bombers to come and help with the kill produced a reply that they were too busy with kills of their own.

So the artillerymen of the 30th put in their hardest two hours of the war. Not for one single day since D-Day has this division been out of contact with the enemy. But nothing like this degree of contact had ever been made before. Thousand of rounds of artillery fire were put down on the columns in those two hours. The gunners were so exhausted that when dark finally ended their efforts they could barely [illegible]

This afternoon they are down across the road, moving in toward St. Vith in support of the 7th's armor. Nobody has had time yet to count the score, but it is big enough to make up for the way our men felt when they moved out along the same road before.

It was a stubble-haired captain, one of the last along that road, who told me how that feeling hurt. He left during the night of the 21st after hours of the worst shelling the Germans could throw in.

"God knows what happened to the civilians," he said. "Many had no time to get out. The whole town seemed to be burning when we left. It was worse than you could imagine an inferno would be."

Since then, of course, we have bombed and shelled the town. So have the Germans. From the hills it looks like a mere rubble pile. One soldier said cynically: "I'm getting to look forward to fighting for something else besides brick dust and pine trees."

That's all there seems to be to fight for in this sector. Whatever advantage, if any Churchill finds for the rolling Ardennes as a battleground, it is certainly hell on its inhabitants

THE TIME HAD COME TO PAY THE PIPER

By JOHN M. MECKLIN
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WITH THE 30TH U. S. INFANTRY DIVISION IN HAMELN, Apr. 7—(Delayed)—This lovely town of the gingerbread homes and the cobblestone streets, immortalized by Browning in the poem of the Pied Piper, was just another Nazi stop on the road to Berlin to the U. S. 9th Army doughboys who overran it this morning.

Unlike the legendary minstrel who is supposed to have rid the town of rats nearly 700 years ago by piping them into the river, the riflemen of the 30th Division's 117th Regiment rounded them up inside the town in three-hour skirmish. When the last street had been fumigated more than 1000 prisoners, including four colonels, had been counted.

"We fixed figured our own way", said Col. Walter M. Johnson, of Missoula, Montana, commander of the 117th, "with a slightly different kind of flute".

Hameln has a normal population of 30,000 and it is now gluttet with 20,000 refugees in addition, but when we followed men of the 117th's 3d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Samuel T McDowell, of Rock Hill, S. C., into the town the streets were deserted.

Riflemen were posted at every block to keep the people indoors and it was a lonely sight.

Two dead German soldiers with full packs still on their backs lay face down in a ditch on the outskirts of town. A lone German fighter circled overhead and the sky crackled with fire.

A man, wearing an elaborate uniform, came running out of a shuttered house when he saw our jeep parked near his door. The shabbiness was a German officer and our driver reached for his carbine.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" he shouted in hysterical German, "I am a railroad engineer." He smiled.

Then his voice cracked and he continued between sobs, "My three little children are dead. They are in my house one kilometer from here. Please, may I go there on my bicycle."

We told him he could if he wanted but he was running the risk of being shot if a doughboy saw him in that uniform.

The flak had stopped and we left him against the doorway, still sobbing. We learned later the German plane was shot down.

Acrid smoke of five days of intermittent shelling still hung in the streets. Several buildings were smoldering. Broken glass crunched under our tires on the pavement.

In one place we saw a number of 1000-pound bombs in the gutter. But the town was not badly damaged and we were struck by the medieval beauty of its narrow streets and sharp-pointing rooftops, even in this moment of violence.

The famous Rattenfaengerhaus, a coffee house that had become a sort of a symbol of the Pied Piper since it was built in 1602, was undamaged but the cathedral was badly scarred by artillery during the five days the Yanks had the town cut off but had made no effort to enter it.

The few civilians who ventured to the doorways were white-faced and deathly afraid after long days and nights in cellars.

One man stopped a doughboy and asked him what could be done about an exploded shell lodged in his roof. The doughboy told him to leave it alone.

823rd TDs Rescue 2,500 Jews In German Train

With the U.S. Ninth Army on the Elbe River, Germany, April 18.—(AP)—Approximately 2500 Jews held by Hitler for ransom have been liberated by the 30th Division, it was announced tonight.

They were Jews held in a special concentration camp by the Nazis and exchanged for German prisoners through neutral countries. Some were freed by bribes from friends or relatives in North or South America.

The 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion found the 2500 prisoners packed like cattle in 45 cars, mostly freight, in the village of Farsleben. The Germans had been trying to rush the Jews to the Sudetenland from the [illegible] of Hitler for ransom or [illegible] in the providence of [illegible].

There were no sanitary facilities on the train and no food. Many of the captives had not eaten for three days, and when released swarmed into a local bakery to lick up raw flour from the floor.

The commanding officer of the Tank Destroyer Battalion, Lt. Col. Stanley Dettmer, ordered the burgomeister of Farsleben to kill some local cattle to feed the refugees.

Trenches Helpful

"Many thanks to the Jerries who dug all of those nice trenches outside the town and leading into it, we crawled right up through them and were protected from the tank fire coming from the place," said G Company's 1/Sgt. Howard C. Crawford, of St. Charles, Ill.

Members of the G group who went right in with the assault team to lend a hand were Sgt. Crawford, S/Sgt. Lawrence L. McCracken, of Boomburg, Pa., Pfc Lon Paulsen, Chicago, Sgt. Michail Urben, Pottstown, Pa.

SERGEANT FIGHTS TO REJOIN HIS OUTFIT

Nothing stops First Sgt. Joseph Shtunbel of the Bronx, N.Y., once he sets out to rejoin Co. K of the 120 Infantry, 30th Division, after a leave. Just back from Paris, he found his company had gone into battle and was surrounded. So the sergeant went up front, fought his way through to his outfit and reported to his commanding officer.

Col. Johnson had installed his command post in the Burgomeister's office and when we entered, he presented us with a fistful of postcards, leaflets and other promotion literature about Hameln.

"With the compliments of the Chamber of Commerce, the Burgomeister and the City Fathers, all of which is me", he smiled.

John MacOrmac of the New York Times and I were the first Americans to enter the Nazi party headquarters in Hameln. We found it in a respectable-looking, four-story building. There was no marking of any sort outside.

Inside a very frightened and aged couple told us the place had been evacuated long ago and the rooms the party had used were empty. We skeptically broke down a door into the main assembly hall where we were startled by the sight of a gigantic Nazi eagle insignia stretched across the whole length of the opposite wall with a huge black swastika in the middle.

There were three long tables stretching down the room from the platform on which was draped, emblazoned with a big swastika and on each of the beams across the ceiling was painted the words, "One People, One Country, One Fuehrer."

Except for a heroic painting of Hitler on one wall and a few empty cartridge boxes on the floor, the room was bare, but in the next room we found an arsenal of dozens of rifles, a great heap of boots, uniforms, brand new gas masks, water bottles, cartridge belts, sabers, daggers and similar equipment.

Upstairs in the party administrative office, we found evidence the Nazis had burned incriminating papers before leaving. The calendar of one desk was turned to April 6.

In the drawer of another desk we found a wicked looking rubber hose that quite probably had been used as a persuader.

PATCHES BAD EATING

Thirtieth Division patches make bad eating. Ask Pfc. William G. Bryant of Roxboro, N. C. Jumping across the Roer river in a night attack, Bryant found he had a patch in the front and, remembering orders that the division was on the secret list, the soldier chewed and swallowed the cloth patch. A few minutes later he learned that just before the jump off the division had been informed it could wear patches.

German Officer Praises Tactics Of 30th Doughs

Stars and Stripes

WITH 30th INF. DIV.—In a lightning attack the Second Bn., 119th Regt., captured Konigshoven to climax a five-day, non-stop battle toward the Rhine.

A German officer captured along with 180 of his men told Lt. Leo Eule, of Long Island, N.Y., and the 119th, that the action was the best example of effective infantry tactics that he had seen during his 17 years in the German Army. The officer said that he had fought in Normandy and on one occasion against the 30th Div.

The action that excited the commendation of the veteran German soldier came after the second battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Hal D. McGown, of Ruston, La., had knifed its way through the wilderness of the Hambach forest and captured two German fortified towns—Daubenrath and Hollen.

Nest of Tanks Found

At Hollen the battalion ran into a nest of Nazi tanks. Pvt. Raymond O. Butts, of Waynesboro, Pa., fired his bazooka from a second-story window and knocked out a Panther tank. A German officer was standing halfway out of the turret, flourishing a P-38 pistol. While Butts got the tank, Lt. Thomas Gibbons, of Carbondale, Pa., got the officer.

In the assault on Konigshoven, G Co. commanded by Lt. John R. Faris, of Rock Hill, S. C., pounced on its garrison so suddenly after an artillery barrage had forced them to take cover that few had time to man their guns.

Gibbon's platoon got in first. The command post group which is usually pretty far back came pounding in on its heels and had to fight for its C.P.

Tells How One Nazi Shot 8 G.I. Captives

LIGNEUVILLE, Belgium, Jan. 24 (AP)—A middle-aged Belgian spinster, who said she saw a German noncommissioned officer murder eight captured American soldiers today led a United State's burial squad to the frozen bodies which were in a roadside snowbank.

On the same day, Dec. 17, the same German reconnaissance battalion of an armored SS (elite guard) division moved up the road two miles and slaughtered some 100 other Americans in an open field.

This German outfit has been blamed for a number of other atrocities against Americans and civilians all across Belgium.

Three Yanks Hear Story

Mlle. Marie, who keeps house for her farmer brother, told the story of the murder of the eight Americans to Capt. George W. McBurney of Memphis, Tenn., assistant inspector general of the 99th division; Lt. Henry Schmitz, New York, a 99th division officer, Sgt. Mark B. Carl of Chambersburg, Pa., McBurney's assistant.

"I was milking Dec. 17 when the Germans came down the road, marching the American prisoners before them," Mlle. Marie said. "The Germans, all of whom were young and loud, were shouting at the Americans and knocking them about.

Dig Graves for Nazis

"About 20 yards from our house they halted the Americans and ordered eight of them to dig graves for three Germans who had been burned to death in a knocked-out tank in front of the house.

"After the Americans finished digging the graves, the eight were lined up along the road. The German noncommissioned officer then stepped up and shot them in the face one at a time. The Germans then kicked the bodies over the hill into a ditch.

"Afterward the Germans asked if I'd seen what happened. I told them no. I knew that if I'd said yes they would shoot me, too.

Germans Steal Shoes

"Later other Germans came and looked at the bodies. They stole the shoes—all except one's, whose shoes apparently wouldn't fit the Germans."

The arms of most of the victims still were raised up stiffly in surrender when the bodies were found.

In the shirt pocket of one 18 year old tank man was a letter from his girl back in New York state, received only a few days before. It was dated Nov. 15