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# SEVENTH ARMY HISTORY

PART TWO

CHAPTERS XXVII Thru XXXI

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HISTORY OF THE SEVENTH ARMY

PHASE IV (Part Two)

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## CHAPTER XXVII

The Rhine Crossing

The day after Seventh Army launched its offensive against the Siegfried Line a conference at SHAEF announced that plans were being made to drop the 13th Airborne Division just east of the Rhine and northeast of Worms prior to the crossing of the ground forces, with the mission of securing the east bank of the Rhine in the crossing area and protecting the flanks of the bridgehead. On 18 March, however, it was found that the 13th Airborne Division would not be available before 28 March. In a letter to General Haislip, Commanding the XV Corps, General Patch announced that XV Corps would definitely have available only four infantry divisions and one armored division for the bridgehead. Although the crossing site was more or less definitely fixed in the Worms area, to anticipate any contingency XXI Corps and VI Corps were directed to plan for a crossing in the Speyer-Germersheim area as an alternate thrust across the Rhine.

Troops Move Into Position

On 22 March the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions were ordered to halt the bulk of their troops west of the line Alzey-Gruenstadt-Wachenheim and reconnoiter for crossing sites. To prepare for the operation XV Corps was ordered on 23 March to relieve all Third Army units holding the west bank of the

Rhine in its zone. This was accomplished by reserve regiments of the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions prepared for imminent attack. During the few days available boat lists were revised and vehicle crossing priority lists prepared. Storm and assault boats were not yet available. Training was carried on by outlining the craft on the ground with engineer tape and assigning new men their proper positions in the boats in that manner.<sup>3</sup> As the motor columns of the two engineer river crossing groups, each about 35 miles long, rumbled toward the Worms area, the infantry divisions inched forward toward the Rhine River, making their later moves under the cover of darkness as they approached the west bank.

The 45th Division had been assigned a zone on the left flank of XV Corps and on 23 March had given the 157th Infantry the mission of patrolling the west bank of the river in its zone. The 179th and the 180th Infantries as the assault regiments remained farther to the rear and carried on their training. Farther south the 3rd Division likewise employed the 15th Infantry for patrol activities, while the 7th and 30th Regiments prepared for the attack.

#### The Problem of the Weirs

It has been mentioned that Seventh Army's actual crossing was based on a revision of plans drawn up by Seventh Army in October of 1944. These plans included



not only a scheme of maneuver and troop list applicable in their main characteristics to nearly any portion of the Rhine, but also detailed Engineer studies on the physical problems involved. Not the least interesting of these was the German capability of interfering with a crossing effort by tampering with dams upstream.

The power of the Rhine is harnessed by nine dams on the Rhine itself and on its tributaries. A manipulation of the weir gates or the total destruction of the dams would release approximately 6,420 million cubic feet of water to form a powerful German weapon of desperation that would sweep bridges from the Rhine and inundate Swiss, French, and German lowlands.

The possibility of an artificial flood to hamper operations had been first mentioned on 19 September in an engineer study which stated that the opening of the Rhine River power weirs at intervals of four or five hours would cause flood waves and endanger downstream bridges. Operation of the weir gates is undoubtedly under agreement between Germany and Switzerland, the engineer study concluded; and a diplomatic approach to Switzerland was therefore suggested by Seventh Army.<sup>4</sup> Sixth Army Group recommended to SHAEP that, if enemy manipulation of the weirs could not be stopped, quick counter-measures by the Swiss could minimize the flood.

The Rhine crossing planning board had also touched on the problem when it reported:

Consideration should be given to the establishment of a flood warning system as far upstream as possible. This will entail coordination with French First Army or with agents in Switzerland. Should flood waves be created artificially the only hope of protecting the floating bridges is by breaking and securing them to the river banks. This would require considerable time....<sup>5</sup>

In response to the Allied request G-2 of Seventh Army on 12 October was informed by the United States Military Attache in Switzerland that "...chances are favorable for positive action."<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the problem of millions of tons of water behind German-controlled dams ready to sweep down the Rhine, wash out Seventh Army bridges, and strand assault troops on the far shore continued to cause concern. On 17 November it was suggested that power installations and dams on the Schwarzen River in the Black Forest be destroyed by bombing, unless the Swiss Government guaranteed absolute control of the weir gates to prevent their use to cause flood waves in the Rhine River. No action, however, was taken. At that time G-2 and G-3 were of the opinion that the Germans would not destroy the weirs because of their need for power.<sup>7</sup>

Word was received on 18 November that the matter had been more satisfactorily negotiated through diplomatic channels when Brigadier General B. R. Legge, United States Military Attache, Berne, Switzerland, informed Seventh Army that indications were the Swiss Government would take necessary action to guard the weirs in the Rhine River

between Lake Constance and Basel, Switzerland.<sup>8</sup> During the fall of 1944 the dam at Kembs had been bombed by specially trained Royal Air Force crews which earlier had destroyed large dams in the Ruhr. The Kembs Dam had been breached and part of Alsace flooded.

#### Engineer Training for the Rhine Crossing

Because the wide, swift Rhine River presented previously unencountered engineer obstacles for both the assault phase and later bridging operations, the two previously mentioned river crossing schools for Seventh Army units at Dole and Camp De Valbonne had been established on 26 September. One battalion each from the 40th Engineer Combat Regiment and the 540th Engineer Combat Regiment attended the nine-day course. The schools had trained engineers in the operation of assault and storm boats, the construction and operation of rafts and ferries, and the construction of ponton bridges. Results of their experiments in means of crossing personnel, vehicles, and supplies over a river approximating the conditions to be found at the Rhine River in the Seventh Army projected zone were now available.<sup>9</sup>

The two types of craft to be employed to carry assault waves across the river were the storm boat, the spearhead of the assault because of its high speed, and the assault boat. Two companies of each engineer regiment were trained in storm and assault boat operation and in raft and ferry construction and operation, while a third company was trained



in floating bridge construction. Storm and assault boat and ferry operators spent five days at Dole and four days in the swifter current school at Valbonne, and the bridging school was conducted entirely on the swift Rhone River.

Seventy-two two-man crews per battalion were trained in storm boat operation. Boatmen and motor operators received identical instruction, producing a total of 144 trained storm boat operators per battalion; and, in addition, 100 operators of 22-horsepower motors per battalion were trained for work with assault boats. Each motor operator and assistant received approximately 20 hours training in the water. The remaining men in the two companies studied the construction of rafts and worked as cable handlers and boatmen and floating mine carriers.<sup>10</sup>

When the schools had completed their mission, the seventh Army had river crossing equipment and trained engineer personnel ready to force the Rhine River.

#### XV Corps makes final Preparations

XV Corps Field Order No. 23, issued at 2400 hours on 24-25 March, ordered the attack for which no D-Day or H-Hour had at that time been assigned. The 3rd Division was to force a crossing of the Rhine south of Worms with its initial objective to cut the Gernsheim-Mannheim railroad line in its zone, with the Jaegersburger Wald north of the Lorscher Wald as its second objective. Both divisions were to attack east into the Odenwald on corps order.

Follow-up troops to cross as soon as practicable after the assault divisions were the 63rd and 44th Infantry Divisions. On the left the 63rd Division was to attack in conjunction with the 45th Division on corps order, and the 44th Division on the right was given the same mission in the zone of the 3rd Division. The 106th Cavalry Group was later attached to the 3rd Division. The proposed air drop east of the Rhine was no longer considered necessary and was cancelled on 24 March.<sup>11</sup>

By this time the Seventh Army zone west of the Rhine had been cleared of enemy except for a small pocket in the southwest portion of Ludwigshafen, which was being taken care of by XXI Corps troops, and isolated resistance in the VI Corps zone.<sup>12</sup> During the night of 24-25 March the assault elements of XV Corps crept toward the Rhine until they were assembled two to three miles from the river.<sup>13</sup> Conditions were such that regimental, and battalion, and many company commanders had been able to reconnoiter thoroughly the crossing sites on the near shore between 23 and 25 March. Liaison planes were employed in shifts allowing commanders of all echelons to view first hand the terrain over which they were to attack, although the enemy was sensitive and retaliated with heavy flak when the craft came within range. Cautiously, the near shore was investigated on foot.

From personal observation and from maps and G-2 data

commanders determined that the Rhine in the selected area was approximately 1,000 feet wide, and 17 feet deep, flowing swiftly between revetted banks. The terrain on both shores is flat and sparsely wooded near the river. Therefore all concentration of personnel and equipment had to be accomplished during darkness. The Rhine valley, densely populated, is crosshatched with roads which were thought capable of supporting the operation.

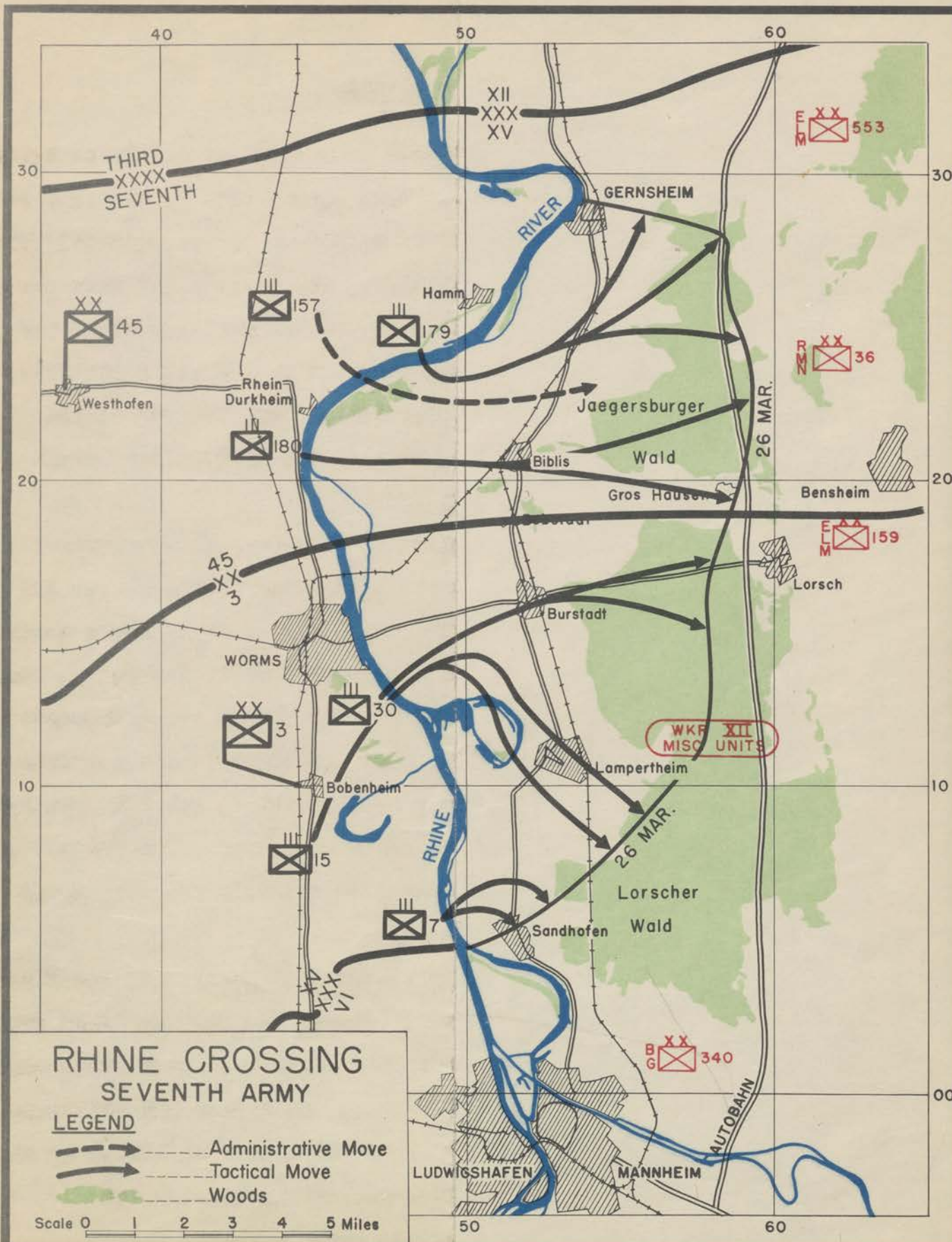
paralleling the Rhine in the crossing area and some eight miles east of the river are the Odenwald Mountains, roughly 40 miles long and 32 miles wide, rising sharply out of the Rhine plain. An exploitation in the Worms area, although not hampered in its initial stages by the Odenwald, was threatened by its presence because the enemy possibly could make a stand there and contain the bridgehead. The Worms area had been selected not because of the advantageous terrain but because operations there and the Third Army bridgehead to the north would be mutually supporting.

No accurate diagnosis of the enemy strength opposing XV Corps on the far bank of the Rhine was possible. The utter confusion in which the German First and Seventh Armies of Army Group C had retreated before the west bank assaults of the American Seventh and Third Armies precluded any intelligent surmise of the units to oppose the bridgehead. It was probably that the Germans themselves did not at that time know their own order of battle.<sup>14</sup>



Remnants of 22 divisions were believed to have escaped across the river in the XV Corps zone, but the effective strength of the divisions could not be estimated. It was believed, however, that the average strength to oppose the initial assault would not be more than 50 men per river front kilometer. Based on experiences at Strasbourg and Colmar, it was believed that the enemy had no large guns permanently emplaced east of the Rhine and that the only enemy artillery support would come from organic division and corps artillery.<sup>15</sup>

To oppose the Seventh Army bridgehead the enemy would probably make a determined but unsuccessful effort to oppose the crossing. His opposition was likely to prove less a hindrance than the current, the river banks, and other technical difficulties. A first hand study of the far shore was made by the battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, who with three men paddled across the Rhine in a rubber boat at about 2400 hours on 24-25 March and reconnoitered for nearly half an hour after landing in the Altrhein Canal. The patrol found no mines, no wire, and no emplacements. Although the four men saw several enemy and were positive that they, in turn, were seen, they were not fired upon and returned safely. D-Day was announced as 26 March and H-Four at 0230 by Operations Instructions No. 111, Seventh Army, on 25 March.



# RHINE CROSSING SEVENTH ARMY

## LEGEND

- Administrative Move
- Tactical Move
- Woods

Scale 0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

### The Attack

Under a cloud-obscured moon that did little to relieve the darkness, engineers began preparation of the near shore approaches on the revetted banks of the wide, rapidly flowing Rhine River. Nervously alert, the enemy 1,000 feet across the stream heard activity in the 3rd Division zone; and engineers worked under steady mortar and artillery fire. Perhaps the enemy was especially jumpy because of two feints made across the Rhine in the Speyer-Germersheim area earlier in the evening.<sup>16</sup>

Thirty-eight minutes before H-Hour the occasional crunch of an artillery shell deepened into a roar. All guns and howitzers in the 3rd Division zone, where surprise had already been lost to the alertness of the enemy, opened up to saturate the far shore with 12,000 rounds directed on known anti-aircraft artillery emplacements and possible defensive positions. The 45th Division, north of the 3rd Division had received no undue amount of enemy fire; and its guns remained silent to maintain the secrecy of the operation in that zone.

While the artillery preparation continued, the first wave of the five that were to make the assault moved from the assembly areas to the dark river, carrying storm boats or pulling them on small carts. At H-Hour the stillness that followed half an hour of artillery was broken by the roar of nearly 100 fifty-horsepower motors. With storm boats approximately 50 yards apart to allow maneuver



room, the initial wave swept across in less than 30 seconds, each of four regiments making a bridgehead along a nine-mile stretch of the Rhine River. The 7th Infantry had jumped the gun, and one of its battalions made the crossing safely four minutes before H-Four, taking advantage of the heavy artillery fire.

On the left of the bridgehead the 45th Division crossed with the 179th Infantry on the left near Famm and the 180th Infantry in the vicinity of Rhein Durkheim. Both assault regiments came under flak, small arms, and scattered mortar fire on the water, and met strong initial resistance on the beach from anti-aircraft guns, machine guns, and small arms fire. The crossing of the 180th Regiment seemed to come as a surprise to the enemy, and the first wave met relatively slight resistance on the water that stiffened as the troops swarmed ashore. The initial shock wore off rapidly, however; and nearly half the assault craft in subsequent waves were sunk in this zone by mortar, flak, and artillery fire.

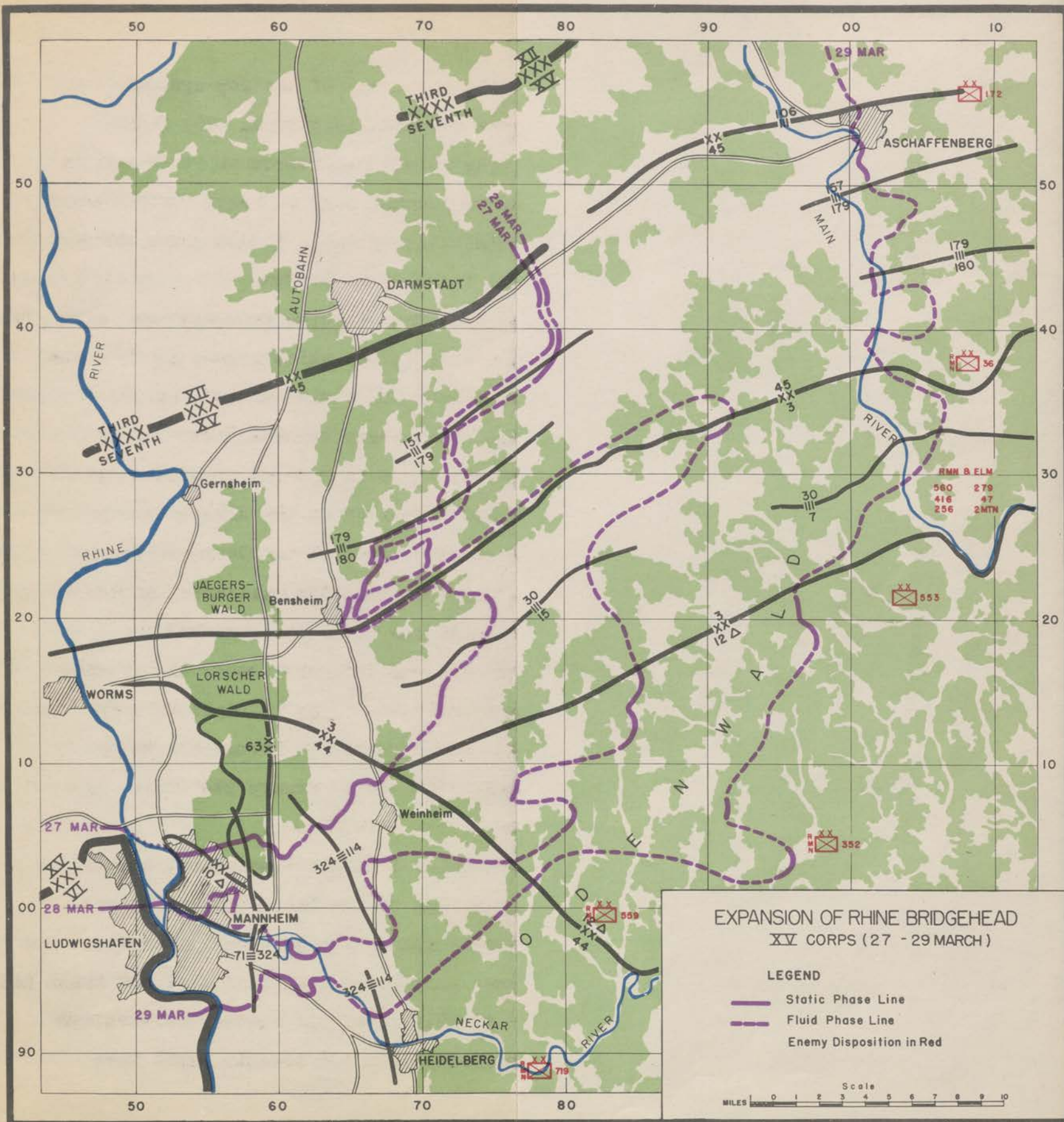
Once on the beach the two assault battalions of each regiment battled fiercely for a foothold and then began to fan out. All assault elements of the 179th Infantry were over and moving inland by 0315 hours. Resistance deteriorated rapidly; small towns in the

bridgehead area offered opposition but were quickly flanked and subdued. The 3rd Battalion of the 180th Infantry met and overcame strong resistance in Biblis in front of the division objective. By 0800 hours the division had reached the railroad line and had begun its drive through the Jaegersburger Wald to the corps bridgehead line, the autobahn in the eastern edge of the woods. Early in the day the 179th Regiment secured contact with elements of the Third Army on the left, and the 180th Infantry made contact with northern elements of the 3rd Division after some difficulty. The 3rd Division had met stiff resistance before reaching that far inland. Overcoming blocks on the roads in the Jaegersburg Wald, the 45th Division had reached the corps bridgehead line across its entire front by 1720 hours, after the 180th Infantry had called on 24 planes to soften the strongly resisting town of Gros Hausen. At 1100 hours the 157th Infantry, in reserve, had begun to cross and had closed on the far shore by 2000 hours.<sup>17</sup>

The 3rd Division crossing on the right of the Seventh Army bridgehead was made to the shore line against slight opposition, which increased as the troops drove inland.<sup>18</sup> The 30th Infantry on the left crossed near Worms against sporadic machine gun, flak, and mortar fire; and both assault battalions were over

by 0300 hours, fanning out to secure the crossing site. Troops met opposition not only from anti-aircraft 88 mm guns but from machine guns emplaced in fox-holes, and resistance increased as the division moved eastward. Advancing slowly, the 2nd Battalion on the left attacked Burstadt, where fierce fire from automatic weapons, tanks, and mortars met its assault. While American units were driving inland, enemy leaders had effected a semblance of organization among troops withdrawing from the overrun defenses of the river line. The Germans counterattacked Burstadt with armor and flak wagon support at 1027 hours. With bazookas, rifle grenades, and anti-tank guns, the 2nd Battalion turned the attack and knocked it out. Farther south at approximately 1200 hours the enemy used the same tactics against the 3rd Battalion as it battled for Lampertheim. The town was cleared after the counterattack was repulsed. During this time the 1st Battalion, in reserve, crossed, cleared snipers from the bridge sites, and took Bobstadt on the regimental left flank by encirclement.

To the right of the 30th Regiment the 7th Infantry had crossed north of Mannheim against slight initial resistance. By 0340 hours both assault battalions were across; and the 1st Battalion on the right drove into Sandhofen, where it fought from



house to house the remainder of the day against strong small arms and artillery fire. The 3rd Battalion met only slight resistance as it passed on the left of the regimental line to reach the railroad line. The 2nd Battalion crossed at 1100 hours and was committed to the fight in Sandhofen.

Meanwhile, fire from machine guns and anti-aircraft weapons on the island in the Rhine midway between the two bridgeheads of the 3rd Division hindered the work on bridges. Here enemy weapons fired across flat ground directly into both crossing sites. At 0900 hours the 3rd Battalion of the 15th Infantry crossed the Rhine and recrossed to clear the island by 1200 hours. By this time the remainder of the regiment had crossed the river and attacked in conjunction with the 7th Infantry toward the eastern edge of the Loracher Wald.<sup>19</sup> By midnight of D-Day the 3rd Division was moving rapidly through the woods against slackening resistance toward the corps bridgehead line on the autobahn.

Opposition to the 45th division operation had been moderately strong on the beach but had proved to be only a hard shell shielding a soft interior. The thrust inland was only lightly opposed once the shell had been pierced. Shortly after the initial penetration was made, guns firing into the crossing area were

overrun; and the operation continued with a minimum of difficulty.<sup>20</sup> In the zone of the 3rd Division, however, the situation was reversed. Resistance on the beaches had been slight, testifying to the efficacy of 12,000 rounds of artillery; but tough pockets developed in the bridgehead area and by-passed enemy continued to fight after the division had taken its initial objective. Although smoke was available to both assault teams, only the 3rd Division chose to employ it. The 3rd Division crossing sites and bridges were smoked continuously for three days, beginning the morning of D-Day.<sup>21</sup>

While assault elements were driving east, activity on the river went ahead under artillery fire that at times was intense. All 14 DD tanks in the 45th Division zone crossed safely, although those attached to the 179th Infantry were forced by muddy banks to cross farther south in the divisional zone. Ten of the 14 amphibious tanks assigned to the 3rd Division reached the far shore. No maneuver cable had been constructed and the tanks crossed by "free float". Three sank as a result of enemy action in the zone of the 7th Infantry, and one was hit and destroyed on the far shore. Six tanks crossed in the zone of the 30th Infantry, and one sank.<sup>22</sup> All DD tanks were relieved on 27 March by armor which had crossed on bridges and



rafts.

Engineers in both assault zones began construction of floating bridges as soon as small arms fire ceased to harass the sites. Under heavy artillery and mortar fire the 540th Engineer Combat Group supported the advance of the 3rd Division by constructing and operating two heavy ponton rafts and two infantry support rafts. By the end of the day on 26 March the group had completed a 948 foot treadway bridge and a 1,040 foot heavy ponton bridge. The latter had been constructed in nine hours and 12 minutes. Badly needed transportation rolled across the two bridges. Two heavy ponton rafts and two infantry support rafts operated by the 40th Engineer Combat group had supported the 45th Division. At the end of 26 March a heavy ponton bridge and a floating treadway bridge were nearing completion in that zone.<sup>23</sup>

The first field artillery battalion crossed the river three and one half hours after H-Four, and all artillery normally supporting the four assault regiments was across six hours later. During the first 24 hours of raft operation over 1,000 vehicles were ferried.<sup>24</sup> Evacuation was by DUKW and ferry, as all bridges were one way. By 27 March it was believed that the enemy was making a break for the rear to establish a defensive line on the Main River.



Resistance, even in the strongly defended 3rd Division zone, had become negligible except for scattered pockets. Both divisions exploited their successes by mounting troops on tanks and tank destroyers and on trucks to sweep into the Odenwald to overtake the retreating enemy before he had time to consolidate his defense. German trucks, captured the previous day, supplemented American vehicles which were being brought over the newly-built bridges.<sup>25</sup>

The 45th Division continued its attack on 27 March to the northeast with three regiments abreast, one battalion of each in reserve, and moved ahead without significant hindrance. The enemy showed the effects of the mauling he had received, and the best opposition he could offer was mediocre small arms and machine gun fire in two towns. Elsewhere the division met only uncoordinated and disorganized attempts to delay its advance. The 157th Infantry on the left flank shot forward 16 miles and patrolled 11 miles farther to the main river. The other two regiments made almost equally good progress.<sup>26</sup>

On 27 March the 3rd Division also met sporadic resistance, as it expanded its bridgehead on the army right flank. During the day the enemy broke into by-passed Sandhofen, and the 7th Infantry was relieved here by the 44th Division. The forward elements of

the 3rd Division, mounted on armor and trucks, advanced over multiple routes into the Odenwald, striving to catch the retreating enemy before he reached the Main River.<sup>27</sup>

Because of the uncoordinated and rapidly deteriorating opposition, the bridgehead could be considered secure on 27 March, although the army bridgehead line had not been reached at all points. On 26 March 2,462 prisoners of war had been taken, and 1,369 were captured on the following day. Three American infantry divisions, one armored division, and many corps and army troops were safely across the Rhine River. The 44th Division on 27 March had secured without opposition the army right flank, and the 12th Armored Division had crossed on the same day.

Although an army bridgehead line had been designated, it proved to be only a mark on a map, for the army did not halt its advance there. Customarily, a unit making an amphibious operation fights to reach a bridgehead line which has been selected to give the greatest protection to the crossing area. Supplies and build-up troops are then crossed until sufficient force is available to launch a break-out attack. But this procedure was not followed in the Rhine operation; the opposition did not warrant a halt in the advance.

To oppose expansion of the bridgehead the Germans

had only a miscellany of stop-gap units. Burden for defense fell on elements of more than 40 anti-aircraft battalions, who first used their guns as ground support weapons and fought as infantry when the guns were destroyed. Service and guard units were also committed to support combat divisions, which were unable to provide more than 15 percent of the combat effectives met during the first few weeks east of the river.<sup>28</sup> Immediately after the bridgehead was launched, the enemy's capabilities were rapidly coming to be based on Allied logistics. It was not believed that the enemy would divert troops from the northern fronts to stop the Seventh Army thrust, because the Ruhr area was so much more valuable to the enemy than the Frankfurt-Wannheim area.<sup>29</sup>

The two remaining corps of Seventh Army crossed the Rhine over bridges in the XV Corps assault zone during the last days of March. The 63rd Infantry Division and the 10th Armored Division of XXI Corps were east of the Rhine by 29 March, and the 4th and 42nd Divisions crossed on the last day of the month.<sup>30</sup> On 30 March VI Corps was ordered to cross the Rhine over the Worms and Mannheim bridges. The corps secured the east bank of the Rhine as far south as the Seventh Army right boundary with little enemy hindrance.<sup>31</sup>

### Bridges and Troops

The long term logistical support of Seventh Army after a successful crossing of the Rhine River was the responsibility of the army engineer insofar as road and rail maintenance was concerned, and a long term bridge building plan was necessary. When a crossing of the Rhine had first been contemplated in the fall of 1944 plans, for semi-permanent bridges had been drawn and submitted. Procurement of all supplies available locally was begun. Contracts were let to civilian firms for fir piling. Seventh Army engineers also hauled logs from the forest, supervised the operation of the mills, and moved timber from the mills to the railheads. During the six week period required to produce sufficient piling the daily output of the mills was increased approximately 500 percent.

Bridge designs were adapted to utilize prefabricated, drop-center, lattice girders for stringers which were produced in French civilian machine shops according to Seventh Army engineer specifications. Since November, plans, material, equipment, and troops were available to construct semi-permanent bridges across the Rhine.

Alerted on 26 March, the 343rd and 344th Engineer Regiments moved forward to begin construction of semi-permanent bridges. The first highway span, begun on D plus 3, was completed on D plus 13, a total

construction time of ten days. It was a 1,048 foot, two-way Class 70, timber pile bent, steel stringer bridge built entirely of materials procured locally. Three hundred and forty piles and 280 lattice girders went into its construction, after materials had been moved from an assembly area 85 miles to the rear. As an interim measure between light floating bridges and fixed, semi-permanent bridges, construction of a Bailey bridge on barges had been approved on 19 March. Orders had been issued by Seventh Army that commanders were to secure intact all floating equipment including barges and tugs which could be found in their respective areas. The necessary craft had been located in aerial photographs.

However, by the time the river had been reached and construction of the bridge was considered feasible, it was discovered that many of the barges had been sunk or damaged. It was at that time thought more profitable to utilize the smoldering remains of a German military bridge north of Mannheim, work was begun on D plus two and completed on D plus 13, placing in commission an 820 foot, Bailey bridge built on the wreckage of the enemy span. The first railroad bridge was built at Mannheim, the second completed at Karlsruhe.<sup>32</sup>

During the period of the river crossing and the

consolidation of its territorial gains Seventh Army was making the necessary adjustments in the composition of its corps and supporting troops. The advance had been so rapid since the breakthrough into the Saar-palatinate that army planning had had to be flexible. On 26 March, as its troops crossed the Rhine, the Seventh Army command post closed at Sarreguemines and reopened at Kaiserslautern in Germany.

As early as 9 March it had been anticipated that the 4th Infantry Division and the 13th Armored Division would be added to Seventh Army troops for offensive operations in Germany. By 19 March the 4th Infantry Division commanded by Brigadier General Harold W. Blakely and composed of the 8th, 12th, and 22nd Infantry Regiments, had been directed to assemble and move to the VI Corps area. On 25 March VI Corps passed the 4th and 42nd Divisions to the control of XXI Corps and assumed control of the 71st and 100th Divisions together with the responsibility for the west bank of the Rhine River. Major General John B. Wogan commanding general of the 13th Armored Division had reported to Seventh Army Headquarters on 17 March. This division upon its arrival in the army area was placed in army reserve. In Operations Instructions No. 107 issued by Seventh Army on 24 March both the 70th Infantry and the 13th Armored Divisions were directed to continue army reserve

missions. Two days later both divisions were placed in SHARP reserve to be employed with limitations by Seventh Army.

On 23 March the 6th Armored Division had been relieved of attachment to XV Corps and Seventh Army and was returned to the Third Army. At the same time the 12th Armored Division, which had served with the XV Corps of Third Army since 16 March, was returned to Seventh Army and attached to XXI Corps. These changes in assignment were restated on the following day to the same purpose. Two days later the 12th Armored Division was transferred from XXI to XV Corps and the 63rd Infantry Division from XV to XXI Corps. On 23 March the 10th Armored Division, which had formerly served with Seventh Army at the end of January and the beginning of February, had been attached to Seventh Army from Third Army for operational purposes only. Six days later XXI Corps had directed the 10th Armored Division to pass through elements of the 3rd and 44th Divisions east of the Rhine prepared to advance on corps order south of the Neckar River.

By the time it had established its bridgehead east of the Rhine Seventh Army had under its control ten infantry divisions, three armored divisions, and two cavalry groups which had been reallocated to the three corps under its command. Two divisions, the 13th

Armored and the 70th Infantry, under army command as SPAEF reserve, were to be used west of the Rhine on occupational duties. By 28 March XV Corps, with the 3rd, 45th, and 44th Infantry Divisions, with the 12th Armored Division and the 106th Cavalry Group, was advancing into the Odenwald beyond bridgehead lines. The XVI Corps, with the 4th, 42nd, and 63rd Infantry Divisions, with the 10th Armored Division and the 101st Cavalry Group, had started its movement across the Rhine prepared to advance on the right flank of XV Corps. The VI Corps, with the 36th, 71st, 100th, 103rd Infantry and the 14th Armored Divisions, held the west bank of the Rhine and prepared to cross the river to its position on the extreme army right flank.



FOOTNOTESChapter XXVII




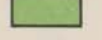

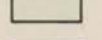
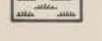



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20. 45th Inf Div Narrative, Mar 45.
21. 69th Signal Company Report, Narrative, March 1945.

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24. 7th Army Engineer Narrative, p.5.
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26. 45th Inf Div Narrative, Mar 45.
27. 3rd Inf Div Narrative, Mar 45; 30th Inf Regt Narrative, Mar 45.
28. 6th Army Group Hist, 26 Mar 45.
29. Seventh Army, G-2 Estimate No. 9.
30. XXI Corps Report, Narrative, March 1945.
31. 7th Army Diary, 30 Mar 45.
32. 7th Army Engineer Narrative, Mar 45.

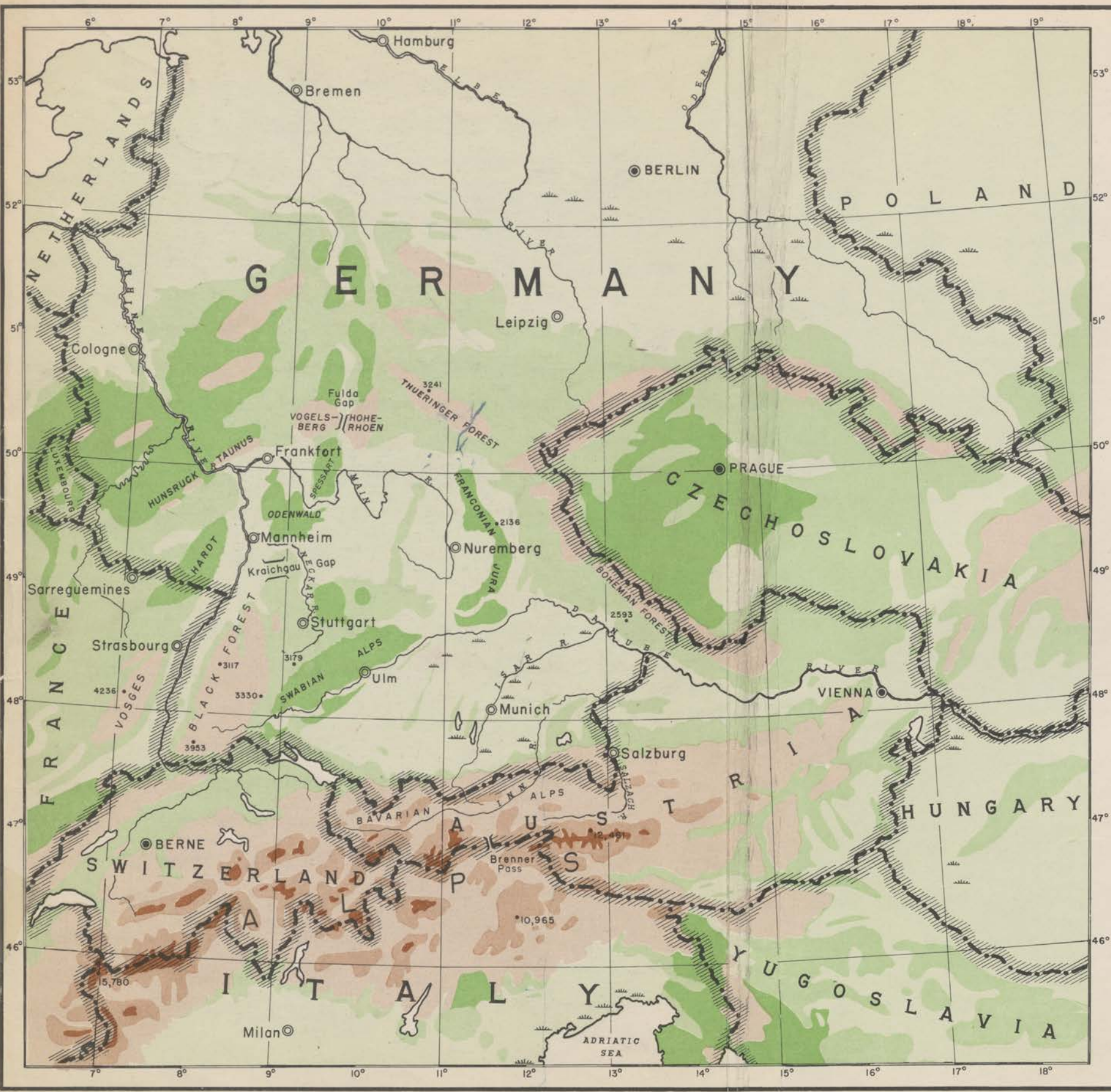
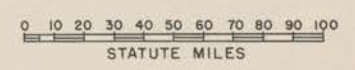


# TERRAIN STUDY OF SOUTHERN GERMANY AND SURROUNDING AREA

## LEGEND:

-  Snow Cap
-  Mountains - Over 6000 Feet
-  Mountains - Under 6000 Feet
-  Tableland
-  Hilly Land
-  Plains
-  Swamp Land
-  Pass
-  1250 Spot Elevation - In Feet
-  International Boundaries as of 1 January, 1938

SOURCE: A.C. of S., G2, Seventh Army





CHAPTER XXVIIITHE APRIL OFFENSIVE

In the four weeks which followed the establishment of the bridgehead across the Rhine, that is, from 28 March to 23 April, Seventh Army drove rapidly and deeply into southern Germany; 120 miles northeast to clear the Hohe Rhoen hill mass, 120 miles east as far as Nuremberg, and 100 miles southeast to the Danube. Most of the time it was a "blitzkrieg". The three corps followed the spearheads of three armored divisions, one of which penetrated so far into the enemy lines that it had to be resupplied by air. Some 20,000 Allied prisoners of war were liberated, as well as many thousands of forced European laborers.<sup>1</sup>

Although the German army rallied from the confusion which the March campaign had created and managed to put up a series of bitter defenses, by the end of the period it was a broken army; and it fled without hope across the Danube toward Austria. During these four weeks it surrendered more than 120,000 men to Seventh Army, which was more than 40 percent of the total number of prisoners taken by Seventh Army in its 34 weeks of operations in France and Germany.<sup>2</sup> By 25 April Seventh Army had taken since the invasion of southern France 291,866 German prisoners, a figure which includes 49,150

taken by the First French Army when it was under Seventh Army command, 3,692 taken by the 1st Airborne Task Force, 379 taken by the 1st Special Service Force prior to 15 September, and 3,765 taken by the 2nd French Armored Division from 29 September to 5 December.

When, on 28 March, the army launched its attack out of the bridgehead, it was opposed by an enemy who showed no signs of being able to brace himself for another stand. He had probably no more than 6,000 combat effectives on the Seventh Army front and was apparently confused as to the exact location of all his units.<sup>3</sup> It seemed impossible that the enemy could stop a thrust northeast from the bridgehead, for that would mean diverting troops from the Ruhr, which he evidently intended to defend.<sup>4</sup> Yet failure to stop such a thrust would further endanger the Ruhr, and it might lead to a separation of northern and southern Germany.

Facing Seventh Army's advance was the abrupt and heavily wooded western face of the Odenwald hills. The enemy could expect an attack northeast around the Odenwald toward Frankfurt, the Main valley, and the Fulda pass; or east through the Odenwald to the main plains; or southeast through the 30-mile wide valley, called the Kraichgau Gate, between the Odenwald and the Black Forest. Although during the early part of the period Seventh Army made its primary effort on the left

through the Odenwald, still it believed that eventually it would find greater resistance and its primary mission to the southeast.

On 25 March G-2 issued a "Study of the German National Redoubt" in which he estimated that the enemy would continue a defense of the area he now held, give ground or counterattack when necessary, and, when forced, abandon northern Germany and the Ruhr to retire to the Alps for a last stand. The enemy must realize, G-2 wrote, that the Alps as a redoubt center "is the only truly defensible area left to him."<sup>5</sup> Troops from the eastern, Italian, and western fronts might find a way back to this most precipitously rugged terrain of all Europe. German communication lines would aid the withdrawal; the road and rail nets of southern Germany run generally north and south and a series of autobahnen or improved speedways run south to the Alps from Frankfurt, Heilbronn, and Nuremberg. It might be that the enemy was already preparing elaborate fortifications in the redoubt, storing materials, and coordinating plans for withdrawing some 200,000 to 300,000 loyal Nazi troops, who would fight there under the leadership of Hitler and Himmler, "to the last man."

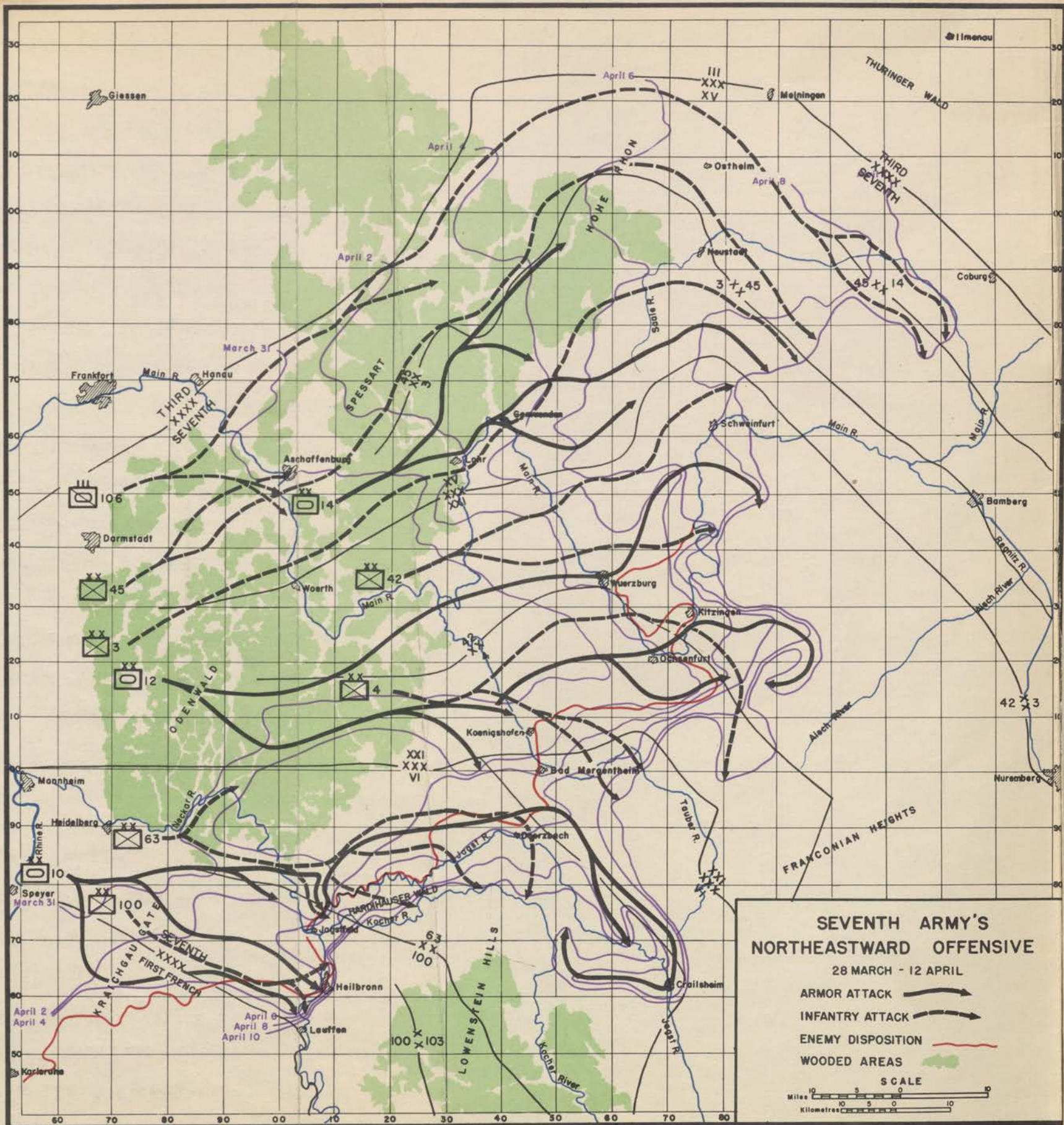
The study went on to describe the outer defenses of that area presently held by the Germans in which the enemy would probably try to stand before withdrawing to

the Alps. The outermost line ran east of the Rhine from the Swiss border up through the Black Forest, across the Kraichgau Valley, and then bent northeast through the hills of the Odenwald, the Spessart Mountains, and the Hohe Rhoen. This was the German left flank. The right flank to be held against the Russian armies ran southeast from the meeting point of the Hohe Rhoen hill mass and the Thuringer Wald, through the Thuringer Wald and the Franconian Alps. With the exception of the Kraichgau valley the terrain favored the Germans.

If the left flank of this outer line should fail to hold, G-2 estimated that the enemy could fall back, pivoting on the Black Forest, to the Swabian Alps and the Franconian Heights. Between these first two lines there appeared to be little likelihood of a strong defense. Through the Kraichgau Gate Seventh Army could enter the relatively flat and open Neckar and Main plains. Once across the Neckar and Main Rivers, it could probably advance rapidly; its chief obstacles would be lesser rivers, the Franconian Heights, and strategic cities.

On 31 March in Paris SHAEF stated that it expected Sixth Army Group to launch a strong offensive on its right toward the Redoubt Center, but only after the Ruhr pocket had been reduced and the German army in western and central Germany had been defeated.<sup>6</sup> In the beginning, when the isolation of the Ruhr was still







the main objective of Allied armies, Seventh Army was to make its main effort on the left, to relieve elements of Third Army south of the Main River, and to drive northeast to protect Third Army's right flank as far north as the Hohe Rhoen. On 27 March Seventh Army had been warned that it might have to release one or two divisions to Twelfth Army Group, which had priority over Sixth Army Group, on SHAEF orders. From as far back as 11 March Seventh Army had expected to make its first main effort across the Rhine to the northeast; and on 29 March it issued its Field Order No. 11, which gave this mission to XV Corps.<sup>7</sup> The Seventh Army direction of advance had swung from the north into the palatinate, to the east, and again to the northeast. Reflecting changes in high level planning as a result of the siege and capture of the Ruhr farther north, Seventh Army's changes in direction were dictated by higher headquarters and necessitated numerous crossings and recrossings of both the Main and Neckar Rivers as Seventh Army divisions advanced.

#### The Drive to the Northeast

After the Rhine bridgehead had been secured, the XV Corps offensive had jumped off on 28 March. The 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions attacked northeast toward the Hohe Rhoen hill mass, while the 12th Armored Division passed through the right flank of the 3rd Division to clear the Odenwald. The 44th Division attacked south along the Rhine and across the Neckar River toward Mannheim and Heidelberg.<sup>8</sup> On the right of the XV Corps point of advance the 12th Armored

Division pushed through roadblocks and lightly defended towns as it advanced through the Odenwald. By 30 March the division had cleared the major portion of the mountains, and on 31 March it passed to the control of XXI Corps.<sup>9</sup>




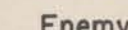
The 44th Infantry Division, ordered to drive south to expand the bridgehead, advanced on Mannheim from the north and northeast. The city fell easily. The acting burgomeister from a civilian phone called the division at the command post of the attached 937th Field Artillery Battalion during the afternoon of 28 March, saying that all German troops had left and that the city would surrender. Negotiations were carried forward, and a place and time were set for a meeting. But when the assistant commander of the 44th Division arrived on time at the designated place, he was met by a mortar barrage. The burgomeister, to maintain faith with the Americans with whom he still had intentions of dealing, had called a few minutes before time for the meeting with the information that the German soldiers had not left and that they would not let him surrender. The next morning the phone rang again and the burgomeister successfully capitulated, the German troops having withdrawn during the night. The city was occupied on 29 March.<sup>10</sup> On 30 March the 44th Division was relieved by the 63rd Division of XXI Corps, which passed through it. The 44th Division then moved to the north flank of XV Corps in reserve and later reverted to Seventh Army reserve.<sup>11</sup>



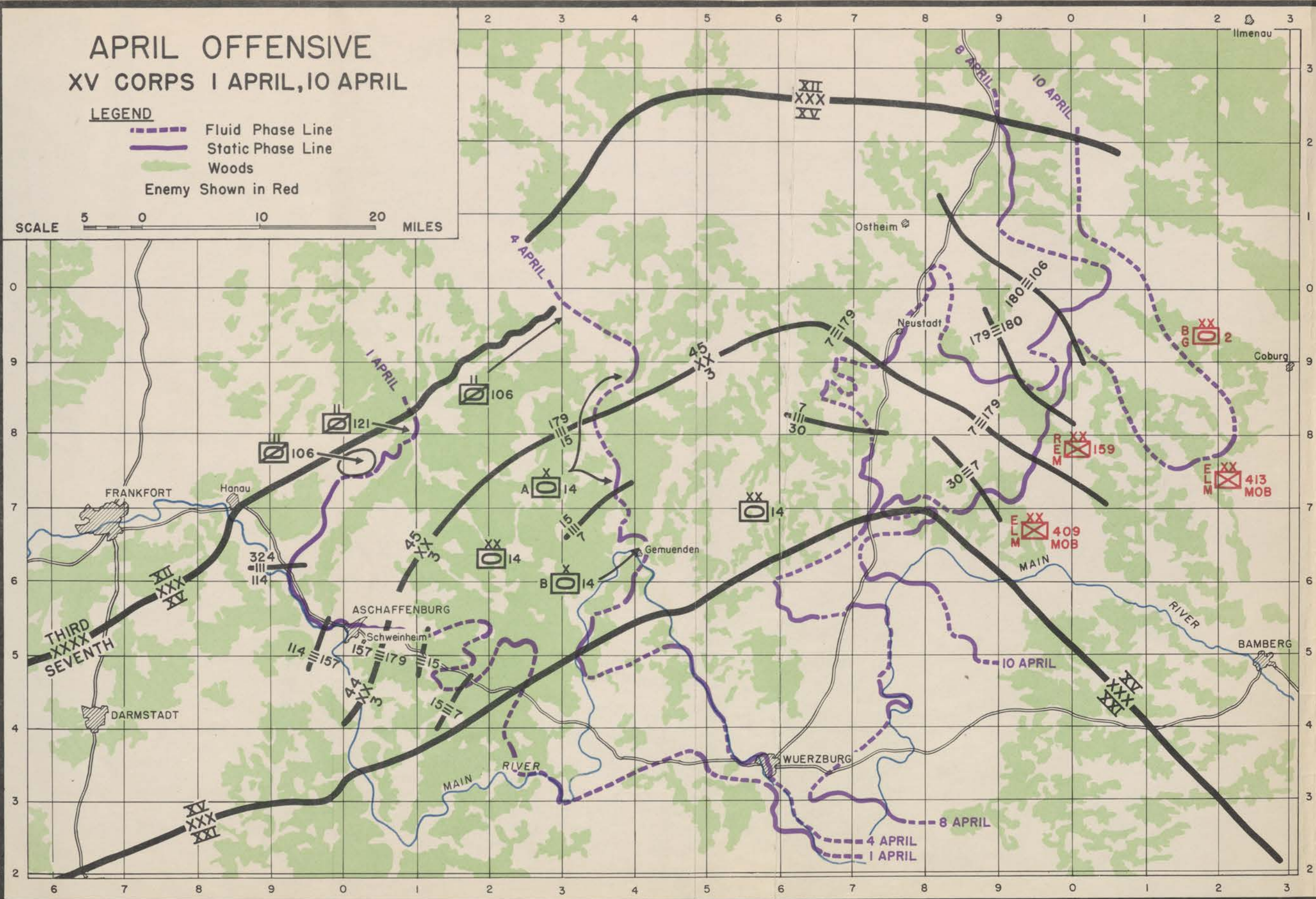
# APRIL OFFENSIVE

## XV CORPS 1 APRIL, 10 APRIL

### LEGEND

-  Fluid Phase Line
-  Static Phase Line
-  Woods
-  Enemy Shown in Red

SCALE 5 0 10 20 MILES

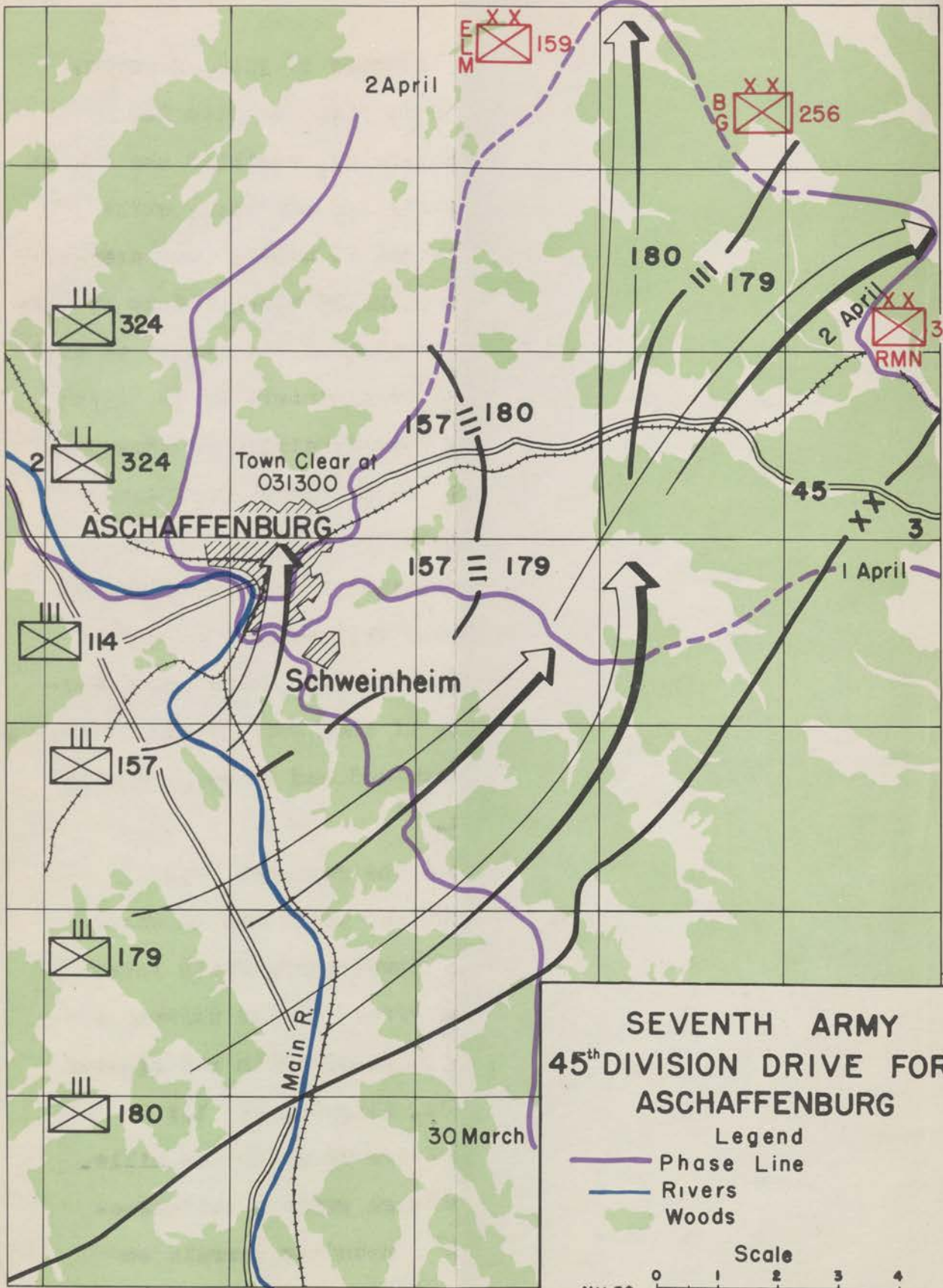




On the XV Corps left flank the 3rd and 45th Divisions advanced swiftly until they reached the Main River on 28-29 March. After clearing Woerth on 29 March the 30th Infantry crossed the Main and held a bridgehead, through which the 7th and 15th Infantries attacked the following day. On the left of the 3rd Division the 45th Division on 28 March reached and crossed the Main River over a railroad bridge which had been captured intact approximately a mile south of Aschaffenburg and plunged northeast into the Spessart Mountains.

Although the actual crossing had been made by the 157th Infantry against little opposition, trouble developed with the enlargement of the bridgehead on 29 March. All three regiments, advancing abreast, with the 157th, 179th, and 180th from left to right, met the first genuine German stand east of the Rhine. Resistance, extremely strong on the left flank, tapered off toward the right; and the 180th Infantry was able to advance against only moderate opposition. The 179th Infantry in the center met strong small arms, mortar, and self-propelled artillery fire from dug-in positions generally east of the Main River and was forced to commit all three battalions to the advance. After a day's hard fighting this part of the enemy stand broke, and the regiment moved rapidly on.

On the division left flank the 157th Infantry fought



from house to house in the vicinity of Aschaffenburg. Aschaffenburg, east of the Main River between the Odenwald and the Spessart Mountains, resisted the attack of the 157th Regiment furiously for six days, while the other two regiments advanced 25 miles. The commander of the 157th Infantry had originally attempted to by-pass the city and to maneuver a portion of his forces to high ground to the northeast to form a pincers on the city; but fanatical resistance in Schweinheim, a southeastern suburb, frustrated the move temporarily. The regiment as an alternative battled into the city frontally. Because civilians without armbands fought as fiercely as did uniformed soldiers, the regiment was compelled to search every house as it advanced. Enemy reinforcements arrived steadily; many of them were 16 and 17 year old Nazis who refused to surrender and had to be killed in their foxholes and trenches.<sup>12</sup>

Against this opposition the regiment kept punching deeper into the city and continued to fight its way to the east through Schweinheim, still intent upon reaching the commanding ground to the northeast of Aschaffenburg. On 30 March Schweinheim was cleared with bayonet and hand grenade, allowing the 1st Battalion to begin anew its drive to reach the hills. Pushing against continued, though weaker, resistance it succeeded in securing the commanding terrain on

13

1 April and so outflanked the city.

Air missions in the meantime pounded the city. Supported by intense artillery preparations, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions continued their grim push deep into Aschaffenburg from the south. Heavily supplied with ammunition, the defenders on 31 March dropped between 1,300 and 1,500 mortar rounds on the attackers, in addition to artillery concentrations, shells from flak guns, and nebelwerfer fire. <sup>14</sup> The enemy persistently infiltrated behind the advance, forcing the regiment to reclear areas many times; counterattacks came daily and were repulsed with stiff fighting.

The 1st Battalion from the high ground in the northeast swung southwest into the city on 2 April and cut the enemy's last escape route. Continuing to inch forward through piles of rubble, the 2nd Battalion called upon self-propelled 155 mm guns to batter buildings, and the two elements of the regiment pushed closer to each other. The battle continued intensely on 3 April until 0700 hours, when the commandant of the city, who had hanged several German soldiers and civilians for advocating surrender, sent a message that he no longer cared to resist. He surrendered himself at 0900 hours at the 2nd Battalion command post. The final mopping up was completed by 1300 hours. <sup>15</sup>



In his first determined stand east of the Rhine River the enemy had employed elements of the 256th, 36th, and 416th Infantry Divisions, several miscellaneous battle groups, and fanatical civilians under the control of the garrison commander of the town. The defense had cost the enemy innumerable lives and had made a rubble heap of Aschaffenburg.<sup>16</sup>

By nightfall on 3 April the 157th Infantry had moved by truck from the smoking, battered city to the east in division reserve. During the battle on its left flank the rest of the corps had continued its northeast drive against occasional roadblocks and had cleared the major portion of the Spessart Mountains. The withdrawing enemy offered only token opposition, and the time was believed to be ripe for an armored thrust to speed the movement into the Rohe Phoen hill mass. The 14th Armored Division, attached to XV Corps on 1 April, had been directed to attack from the vicinity of Darmstadt on the north flank of the corps to the northeast, to cross the Main River, and to advance through the 3rd and 45th Divisions over multiple routes to seize the high ground in the vicinity of Neustadt on the Saale River and Ostheim, then to conduct a reconnaissance to the line Ilmenau-Coburg-Bamberg,<sup>17</sup> prepared to move east or southeast on corps order.

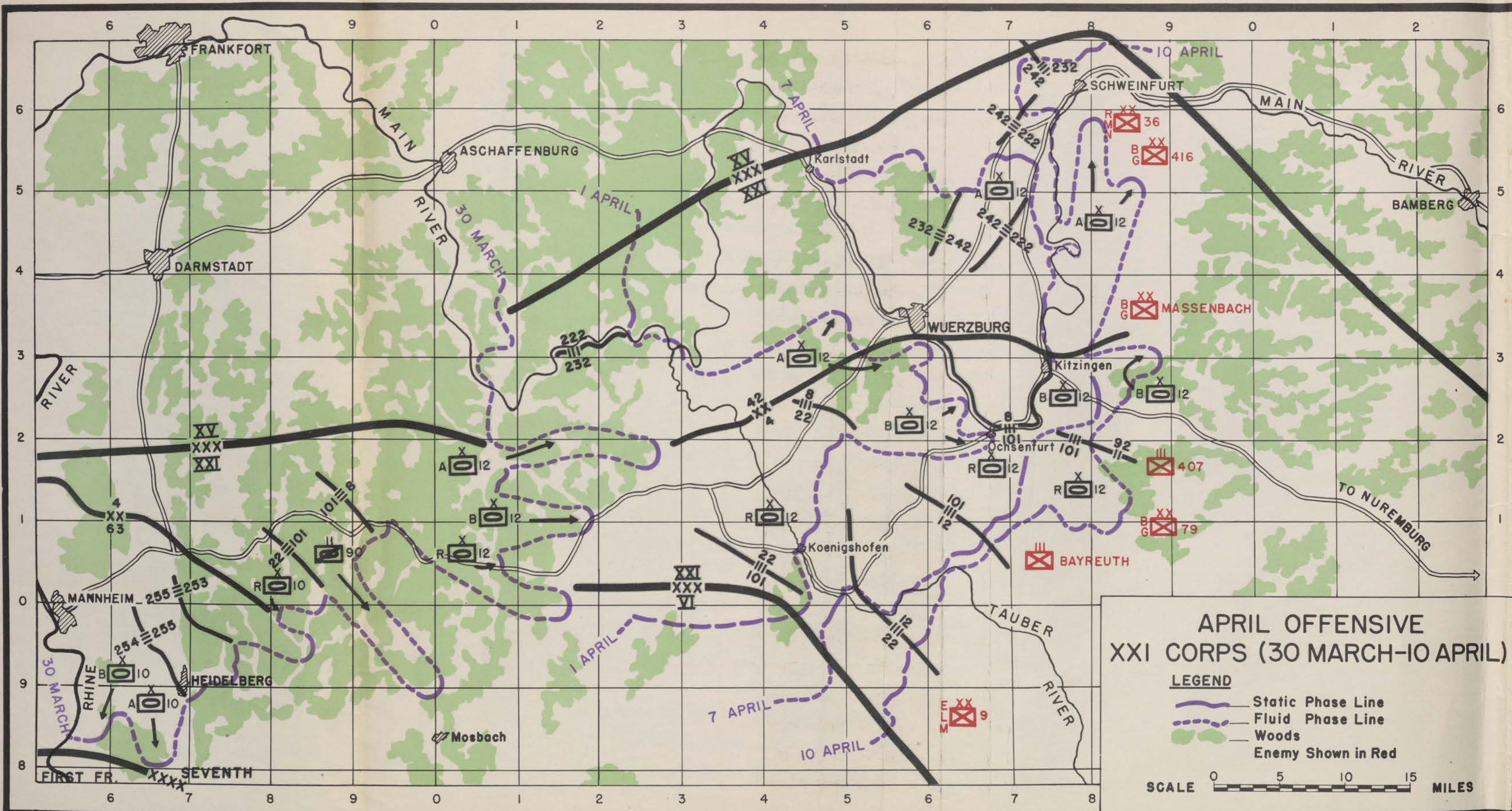
Combat Commands B and R crossed the Main and moved

east of Aschaffenburg to take Lohr on the corps right flank on 3 April, while Combat Command A advanced northeast on the corps left flank. Combat Command B continued its advance against slight opposition and reached the western outskirts of Gemuenden on 4 April, where the enemy put up a determined fight. The 2nd Battalion of the 7th Infantry twice recrossed the Main River without enemy interference and on 5 April attacked Gemuenden from the southeast. The two forces, infantry and armor, met in the town and cleared it. By 6 April both Combat Commands B and R had fanned out on the right flank, where they made slow advances on 7 April. Meanwhile Combat Command A continued to advance to the northeast against sporadic resistance and on 7 April occupied one of the division objectives, Neustadt on the Saale River, opposed only by sniper fire. <sup>18</sup>

The 45th and 3rd Infantry Divisions had continued to clear their mountainous zones, opposed only by occasional enemy strong points. They experienced considerable difficulty, however, in moving over a road net limited at best and now choked with supply trains and maintenance vehicles of the armored division. The terrain, mountainous and cut by steep valleys, was veined with rivers and streams where bridges had been blown by the retreating enemy. <sup>19</sup>





The 14th Armored Division was ordered to clear all





### APRIL OFFENSIVE XXI CORPS (30 MARCH-10 APRIL)

**LEGEND**

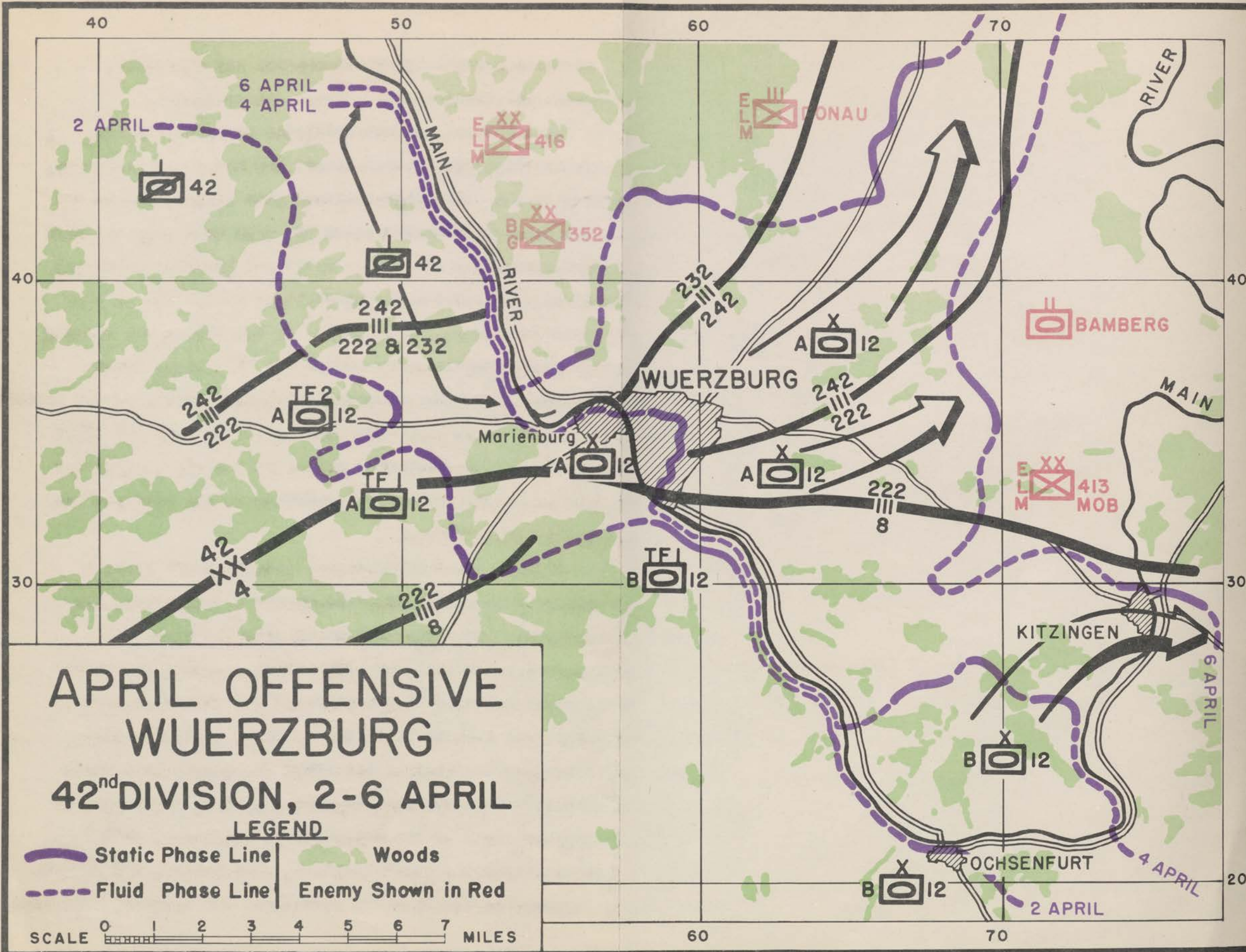
-  Static Phase Line
-  Fluid Phase Line
-  Woods
-  Enemy Shown in Red

SCALE 0 5 10 15 MILES



reads by 0600 hours on 8 April to allow the 3rd and 45th Divisions to pass through the front lines. With the removal of the armored columns which had monopolized the narrow trails, the infantry divisions surged ahead to reach the central portion of the Hohe Rhoen hills, cleared it by 9 April, and mopped up by-passed enemy in rear areas. XV Corps had completed its mission. It had cleared the Hohe Rhoen hill mass except for the small northeastern tip in the Third Army zone, and it had maneuvered into position to attack to the southeast in a zone assigned to it on 4 April. <sup>20</sup> While waiting for Third Army on the left to push off, the divisions and the corps cavalry reconnoitered to the southeast on 10 April. XV Corps was now poised for an assault toward Nuremberg.

At the same time that XV Corps was attacking northeast through the Spessart Mountains, XXI Corps assumed command of the zone on its right. The 12th Armored Division in the Odenwald had passed to XXI Corps on 31 March, attacked to the east, followed by the 42nd Infantry Division on the left and the 4th Division on the right. <sup>21</sup> The corps objective, as assigned by Seventh Army was the Wuersburg-Schweinfurt-Kitzungen area on the great bend of the Main River south of the Hohe Rhoen Mountains. To reach this objective the corps moved without much difficulty through the low eastern foothills



# APRIL OFFENSIVE WUERZBURG

## 42<sup>nd</sup> DIVISION, 2-6 APRIL

### LEGEND

- Static Phase Line
- - - Fluid Phase Line
- Woods
- Enemy Shown in Red

SCALE 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 MILES

of the Odenwald. As it approached its objective, opposition stiffened and became consolidated.

The first seriously contacted enemy strongpoint to be met by XXI Corps east of the Rhine was Wuersburg, a large, densely populated, and much bombed city on the northeast bank of the Main. To take this city the 42nd Division crossed the Main River and launched a frontal assault directly into the built-up area. The initial crossing was made by surprise in two canoes the morning of 3 April by elements of the 2nd Battalion, 222nd Infantry, and was immediately followed by the entire battalion in small river craft and assault boats. The battalion hewed out a 43-block bridgehead in the city, which was further exploited by the remainder of the regiment and by the 232nd Infantry.

While the 242nd Infantry patrolled the banks of the Main River ten miles northwest of Wuersburg, the 222nd and 232nd Infantries methodically wiped out resistance in the city. The 222nd Regiment pushed off to the south from its bridgehead and with excellent artillery support drove the strongly resisting enemy from block to block. The 232nd Infantry pushed north out of the bridgehead, supported by tank destroyers on the west bank of the river and by artillery, then turned to the east. Civilians, city police, and firemen joined enemy soldiers in defense of the battered buildings,



retreating to tunnels when overrun and reappearing again in the rear of attacking forces, utilizing bomb<sup>22</sup> shattered buildings and rubble piles as defenses.

While the attack was in progress two bridges were thrown across the Main River, and the supporting armor of the 42nd Division crossed to hasten the end of the battle. The final spasm of resistance before all defenders had been killed or captured was a 200-man counterattack launched the morning of 5 April from the northern section of the city. It reached to within 100 yards of the northern bridge before it was snuffed out by the 232nd Infantry.<sup>23</sup> There was no mass surrender. The city of Wuerzburg fell on 5 April after the last defender had been liquidated.

Originally the XXI Corps plan had been for the 42nd Division to assume the main effort in the reduction of Schweinfurt, northeast of Wuerzburg, with the assistance of one combat command of the 12th Armored Division; and on 3 April Combat Command A was ordered to attack on the Wuerzburg-Schweinfurt axis with that mission. This plan, however, was changed because of the strong opposition met by the infantry in Wuerzburg and the realization that several days must elapse before the 42nd Division would be in a position to concentrate on Schweinfurt.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly Combat Command A alone was given Schweinfurt as its objective and was ordered

to swing southeast of Wuerzburg, by-pass that city, and attack toward Schweinfurt.

Exceedingly strong defenses and delaying actions throughout the area between Wuerzburg and Schweinfurt, however, delayed the swing of armor to the northeast, and the day after the fall of Wuerzburg elements of the 42nd Division overtook the armored attack. <sup>25</sup> With infantry now available strategy was again changed on 7 April and Combat Command A was attached to the 42nd Division for the attack against Schweinfurt. The ball-bearing manufacturing center of Schweinfurt lies on a bend of the Main River where it begins a long sweep to the southeast before turning north again to Wuerzburg. The strategy of attack called for a bridgehead to be established across the Main below Schweinfurt and a subsequent advance northeast along both banks of the river. The objective of the attack on the west bank was to secure the dominating ground north of Schweinfurt and the city itself, while the attack on the east bank when it reached a position to recross the Main River was to cut the Bamberg-Schweinfurt highway.

The 222nd Infantry with some difficulty established a bridgehead across the Main River some 15 miles south of Schweinfurt on 7 April, while the other two regiments attacked northeast into stiffening resistance. To carry out the maneuver west of the river the 232nd



Infantry on the left made a wide sweep into the XV Corps zone and then swung south to take the high ground overlooking Schweinfurt from the north. Meanwhile, the Main, then moved north in a smaller circle inside the large envelopment of the 232nd Infantry. The 222nd Regiment, after its bridgehead had been exploited by armor, pulled back and took up the attack on the river west bank. On 9 April Combat Command A had crossed the Main River at the point of the 222nd Infantry bridgehead to attack northeast to cut the Schweinfurt-Bamberg highway.

As the city had been an important manufacturing center and a target for air raids, it was strongly defended by anti-aircraft guns, which were now turned on the ground attackers. Each small town in the path of the 42nd Division was held as a fortress, and hills and wooded areas were stubbornly defended. Youths not more than 17 years old fanatically contested each inch of ground, as the division moved day and night to positions from which to attack the city.

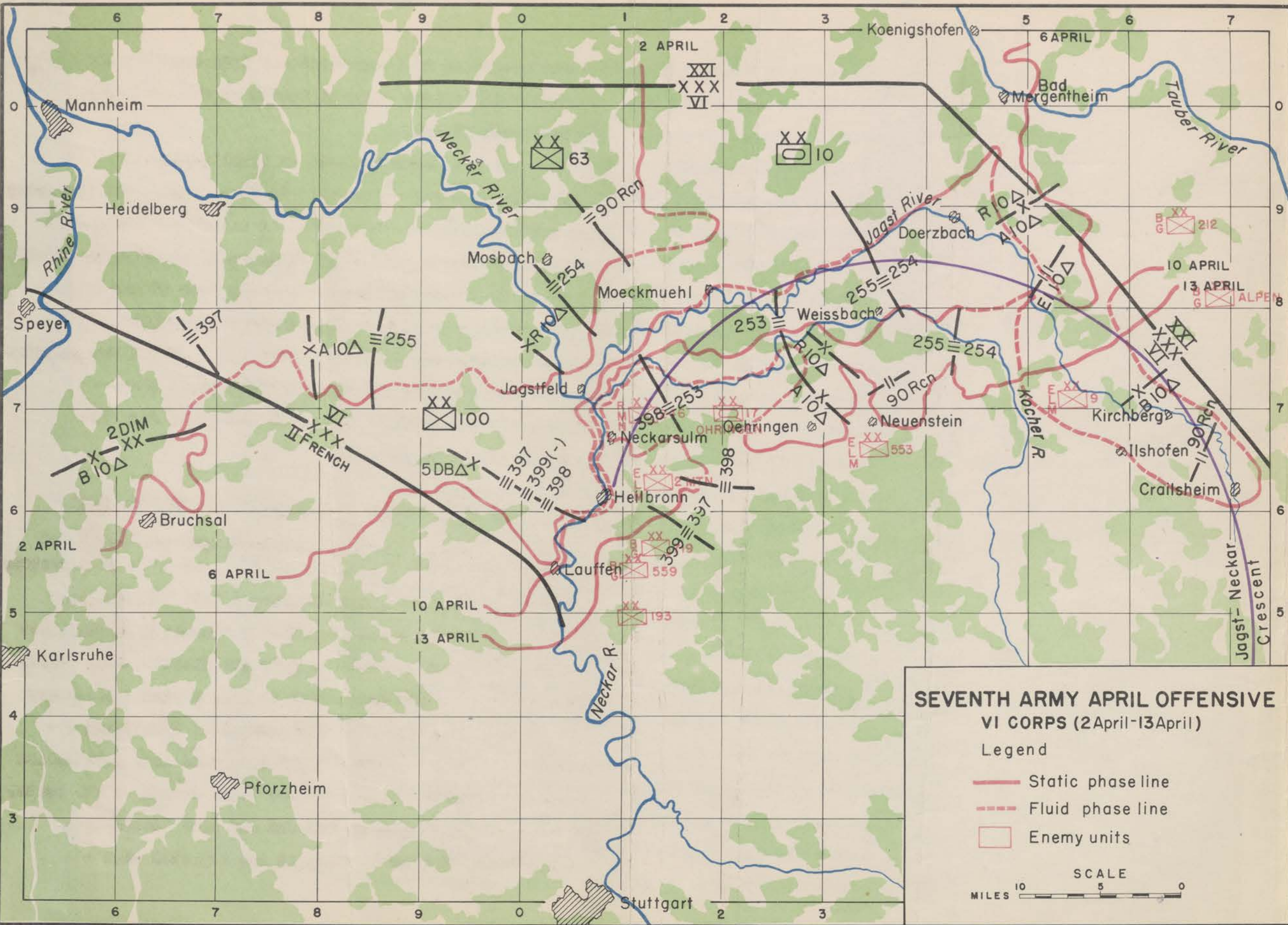
The push into the city itself, however, was no more strongly contested than had been the moves of the division as it shifted into position. When high ground above the city had been taken, all three regiments on 11 April drove into Schweinfurt from the north and west. On the next day the city fell. It had been pounded day

after day by flights of medium bombers and by division artillery and the artillery of two corps, with XV Corps guns and howitzers in the north complementing those of XXI Corps. Farther east Combat Command A cut the Schweinfurt-Bamberg highway on 12 April, too late<sup>26</sup> effectively to seal it off as an escape route.

The boundary of XXI Corps had been changed on 6 April to bend the attack to the southeast inside the turn made by XV Corps, in accord with the general plan of Seventh Army to attack to the southeast. The corps swung the turn after taking Schweinfurt, generally keeping abreast of the right flank of XV Corps. By 14 April it had advanced to the Aisch River, where a nebulous German line was reported to be developing.<sup>27</sup>

Pulling the pivot of the turn on the XXI Corps right flank was the 4th Infantry Division, which had met stiff opposition as it moved slowly to allow the outer elements of the corps to wheel to the southeast. While the corps main effort was being directed against Wuerzburg and Schweinfurt, the 4th Division and two combat commands of the 12th Armored Division had encountered determined resistance on the corps right flank in the Koenigshofen-Ochsenfurt area. One of the columns of Combat Command R met considerable opposition when it bridged the Main River at the bottom of its southern loop at Ochsenfurt on 1 April. Another column



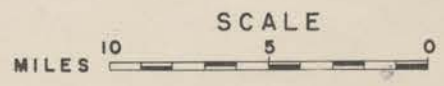


**SEVENTH ARMY APRIL OFFENSIVE**

**VI CORPS (2 April-13 April)**

Legend

- Static phase line
- - - Fluid phase line
- Enemy units



was prevented by a counterattack from entering the Tauber River town of Koenigshofen on the corps right rear until 2 April.

The 4th Infantry Division finally cleared Koenigshofen with two regiments on 6 April. The remaining regiment crossed the Main in the Ochsenfurt bridgehead and aided the 12th Armored Division in clearing by-passed enemy from the pocket formed by the loop of the Main River as it swings from Kitzingen to Wuerzburg. On 7 April elements of the 4th Division took Bad Mergentheim. After 7 April the corps right flank moved slowly southeast, marking time to pull the pivot for the remainder of the corps.

#### The Expansion of the Bridgehead in the South

While the XV and XXI Corps attacked northeastward on the army left flank, the VI Corps attacked southeastward on the right through the Kraichgau Gate. On the army right flank the First French Army crossed the Rhine near Speyer to attack southward into the Black Forest. SHAEF had ordered Sixth Army Group to make a strong secondary effort on its right for the purpose of protecting the northeast drive of XV and XXI Corps and as a preparation for the eventual blow in force to be struck to the south. Once the Ruhr had been reduced and more forces were available to Seventh Army, it was expected that a



powerful blow would be struck by Sixth Army Group to cut off the German Nineteenth Army in the Black Forest and to drive rapidly south toward the Redoubt Center.<sup>28</sup>

On 31 March the 100th Division of VI Corps crossed the Rhine near Mannheim. On 1 April the 10th Armored and 63rd Divisions joined the corps; and the attack jumped off along both sides of the Neckar River, the weight of the attack to the southeast. The city of Heidelberg surrendered without a fight. Spearheaded by the 10th Armored Division, which was followed on the left by the 63rd and on the right by the 100th Divisions, the corps made rapid progress for three days against only isolated and small, although sometimes stubborn, delaying parties. Three combat commands led the advance.

On the corps left flank Combat Command R and reconnaissance troops drove through the hills of the lower Odenwald up the Neckar River Valley to the vicinity of Mosbach some 15 miles above Heilbronn. They then turned southeast and against resistance that grew markedly stiffer approached on 2 and 3 April the Jagst River, which flows into the Neckar from the northeast seven miles north of Heilbronn. They found all bridges blown as they reconnoitered the river from its confluence with the Neckar some 40 miles to the northeast. Part of Combat Command R blocked in the northeast while the cavalry maintained contact with the enemy on the

high southern bank by observation.

The 63rd Division had followed Combat Command R. Although it too ran into increasingly stubborn delaying parties as it moved through the Neckar Valley, it cleared them up and spread its three regiments along the north bank of the Jagst. By 4 April it had secured the country north of the river as far as Bad Mergentheim and the bend of the Jagst at Doerzbach. Heilbronn was outflanked on the north, and the forces of XXI Corps battering at the Tauber River defenses were supported on their right. The 63rd Division was ready to attack across the Jagst to the southeast.

While this maneuver on the corps left flank had been progressing, in the corps center Combat Command A of the 10th Armored Division, followed by elements of the 100th Division, had been driving straight from Heidelberg toward Heilbronn. This force also met increasing resistance on 2 and 3 April, as it once again came up to the Neckar River where it flows from south to north before turning west through the Odenwald. But by the night of 3 April it had cleared enough of the western bank before Heilbronn to plan a crossing to take the city on the following day.

On the corps right flank Combat Command B, followed by the 399th Infantry of the 100th Division, had driven south along the Rhine. As it approached Bruchsal on

2 April, it was heavily counterattacked by infantry and armor. It repelled the enemy, took 300 prisoners, and swung east to come up to the Neckar just south of Heilbronn. On the VI Corps right flank were elements of the II French Corps. On 5 April one team of Combat Command B made a contact with forward elements of the French near Lauffen, a town on the Neckar five miles south of Heilbronn, where both forces were looking for an intact bridge.  
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The French had been ordered to send a corps across the Rhine in the Speyer area, to drive south between the Neckar and the Rhine, to seize Karlsruhe, Pforzheim, and Stuttgart.  
30 General de Lattre took advantage of the fact that German forces were being pulled out of defensive positions along the Rhine to meet the threat of the imminent VI Corps advance and crossed on the morning of 31 March to take by surprise what few Germans remained in the area. The main force immediately began the southern drive, while one column drove eastward to the Neckar to protect the VI Corps right flank. Now with forces up against the Neckar and Jagst Rivers at the Heilbronn arc it was planned that, while the French attacked southward, VI Corps would cross both rivers and drive swiftly southeast.  
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So far the going had been fast and comparatively easy, similar in pace to the northeast drive of XV

Corps. Against delaying parties in towns, and against demolitions, roadblocks, and minefields, VI Corps had moved so fast that the infantry divisions were pressed to keep up with the armored division. All infantry divisions in Seventh Army during the month of April were forced to regard mobility of troops as their major problem. In the 63rd Division, for example, under conditions of rapid advance one battalion from each regiment in contact was motorized and sent forward to maintain the pursuit. The other battalions advanced on foot, mopping-up and consolidating by-passed areas. Motorized battalions were transported not only in organic vehicles but in trucks borrowed from division artillery. Tanks of the attached armored units also carried infantrymen at the head of motorized columns during relatively uncontested advances.

Maintenance of communications was also difficult. Often it was impracticable to lay wire. Consequently most messages were sent by radio, and to handle the increased volume of radio traffic a special priority system was developed. Frequently during the month of April advancing columns were stopped at rivers where the bridges had been blown, and it was necessary to ferry foot troops across in assault boats. They then established a large enough bridgehead to protect the engineers who were putting in bridges, after which armor



crossed and the column continued to press forward. Many times the advance was so rapid that lead infantry as well as armored units by-passed enemy strongpoints, leaving them for later elements to mop up. During the first days of April Seventh Army front had had a mushroom growth east of the Rhine. On 2 April the army command post opened at Darmstadt east of the river.

### The Enemy Rallies

This rapid advance was, on the VI Corps front, brought to a sudden halt on 4 April. The enemy reformed and built up a strong crescent-shaped defense line, which ran from its anchor at Heilbronn north along the Neckar, then northeast along the Jagst to its southward bend. This the enemy managed to do in spite of the shattered condition of his units, his acute need for more troops, and the diminished power of both artillery and air force.

During the first seven days of the advance from the bridgehead, 28 March to 3 April, the enemy had failed to put up more than isolated delaying actions; and only a few of these had shown signs of strength. His armies were apparently unable to coordinate their forces to establish a line. The German Nineteenth Army in the Siegfried Line along the Rhine and in the Black Forest was threatened with being outflanked by the French and

American drive. It had, it was estimated, only 10,500  
33  
combat effectives available. The German Seventh Army  
was falling back in confusion before the attack of the  
American Third Army and the XV Corps; its combat  
strength was estimated at only 4,000. Facing VI and XXI  
Corps was the German First Army with an estimated 7,500  
combat effectives. Practically weakened, each of these  
armies needed replacements at a time when the  
highest priority for reserves went to the eastern front  
and when it was impossible to extricate divisions from  
34  
the now practically encircled Ruhr.

The enemy was forced to improvise and make  
economical use of what divisional strength he had and  
what replacements were available in southern Germany.  
The replacement and training camps were combed for men,  
as was every other available source; induction center  
detachments, barrage balloon battalions, maintenance  
groups, horse pack companies, air signal regiments,  
airport general detachments, labor battalions, and the  
35  
Volkssturm. These men were thrown into already  
organized divisions or were placed in battle groups,  
which were given temporary missions, then perhaps to be  
disbanded. Survivors of one operation might turn up  
as stragglers at the next point to be defended; there  
they would be reorganized into a new battle group named  
after the officer in command. Besides remnants of

divisional units and these small battle groups, ranging from company to battalion size, the German army also organized several quickly-formed name divisions:

Divisions Alpen, and later, Donau and Bayern. These were simply large battle groups, given names for morale purposes, and as quickly formed and disbanded as their smaller counterparts. With such forces the enemy formed his defense line on the Jagst and Neckar Rivers.

The enemy made as economical a use of his remaining armor and artillery and air power as he did of his manpower. Small groups of tanks appeared at the most heavily defended strongpoints, after the infantry and artillery had checked the American advance. With his artillery the enemy chose to defend only certain

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sensitive areas. For close-in support he used light pieces, anti-aircraft guns, and nebelwerfers firing on infantry. The Panzerfaust or German bazooka was distributed widely, and sometimes seemed as common as the machine pistol. During the period from 2 to 8 April the German air effort was "greater than anything that the army has seen since its entry into France," according to Seventh Army

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intelligence. Thirty-three missions were flown by German aircraft against carefully selected targets. Possible explanations for this rejuvenation of the Luftwaffe was that the German high Command preferred

to expend its planes and its available fuel rather than to have them captured or destroyed. This seemed to be the only alternative.<sup>38</sup>

It had been expected that the German leaders in the last days of the war would resort to terror to keep their war-weary people in line and to harass the advancing Allied forces in the rear. In Lohr on the Main River, an area taken over by XXI Corps, SS men hanged six of the town's most influential citizens, whom they suspected of "defeatism".<sup>39</sup> There were, however, some evidences of German opposition to the terrorists. In Ansbach southeast of Lohr a copy of the following leaflet was found on a man who had been hanged in the square.

Citizens of Ansbach

Defense of the city spells your complete destruction. Our city is one of the few places in the Reich which are relatively not destroyed. We want to keep it for ourselves. Resistance cannot halt the Americans; it can bring our doom. Put aside the tank obstacles; hinder the defense! Let us save the city and life for ourselves and Germany.<sup>40</sup>

In many towns the terrorists were able to keep the civilian population under control, but only for short periods of time. On the night of 1 April the German radio had summoned all German men, women, and children to become "werewolves", to sabotage the Allied armies

and murder its soldiers, and to wreak vengeance on defeatist Germans. But except for a few initial acts, the Werewolf threat came to nothing more than propaganda.

In spite of the weakness of its entire defensive structure the German command during the early days of April was able to establish defensive positions that resembled a coordinated front line. Because the German leaders were especially sensitive to the threat poised against Bavaria and Upper Austria, which now constituted the larger part of the dwindling Reich, it was in the zone of the German First Army that they concentrated their efforts to reform a front. In the XXI Corps zone the formation of a line was slower and less successful than in the VI Corps zone, where the German 246th, 198th, and 553rd Divisions, elements of the 17th SS Division and the 2nd Mountain Division, and numerous miscellaneous battle groups were dug in as early as 4 April. Together they stopped the VI Corps advance for nine days. The defensive positions of these German units did not form a gapless line but rather a series of coordinated strongpoints that ran from their anchor in the city of Heilbronn north along the Neckar River, then northeast along the high and rugged southern bank of the Jagst River. They extended more than 40 miles to the bend of the Jagst at Doerbach and beyond to elements of the German 9th Division which were fighting

the 4th Division of XXI Corps at the Tauber River.

On 4 April Sixth Army Group issued a directive which ordered that the main bridgehead forces of its armies were not to advance beyond the line Karlsruhe-Heilbronn-Kitzingen-Schweinfurt-Koenigshofen-Meiningen until such time as those orders might be changed. Beyond this line only ground reconnaissance would be pushed. The directive had this significance: the XV and XXI Corps would advance only in its support of Third Army; and VI Corps, although it would continue to press its immediate attacks, would not as yet make its anticipated assault in force to the south, for adequate forces were not as yet available.<sup>41</sup>

#### The VI Corps Attack at the Necker and Jagst Rivers

VI Corps had not anticipated a long delay at the Necker and Jagst Rivers. On 3 April it issued orders for the 10th Armored Division and the 100th Division to seize Heilbronn and continue east.<sup>42</sup> One battalion of the 100th Division, the 3rd Battalion of the 398th Infantry, was temporarily attached to Combat Command A to assist it in the capture of Heilbronn.

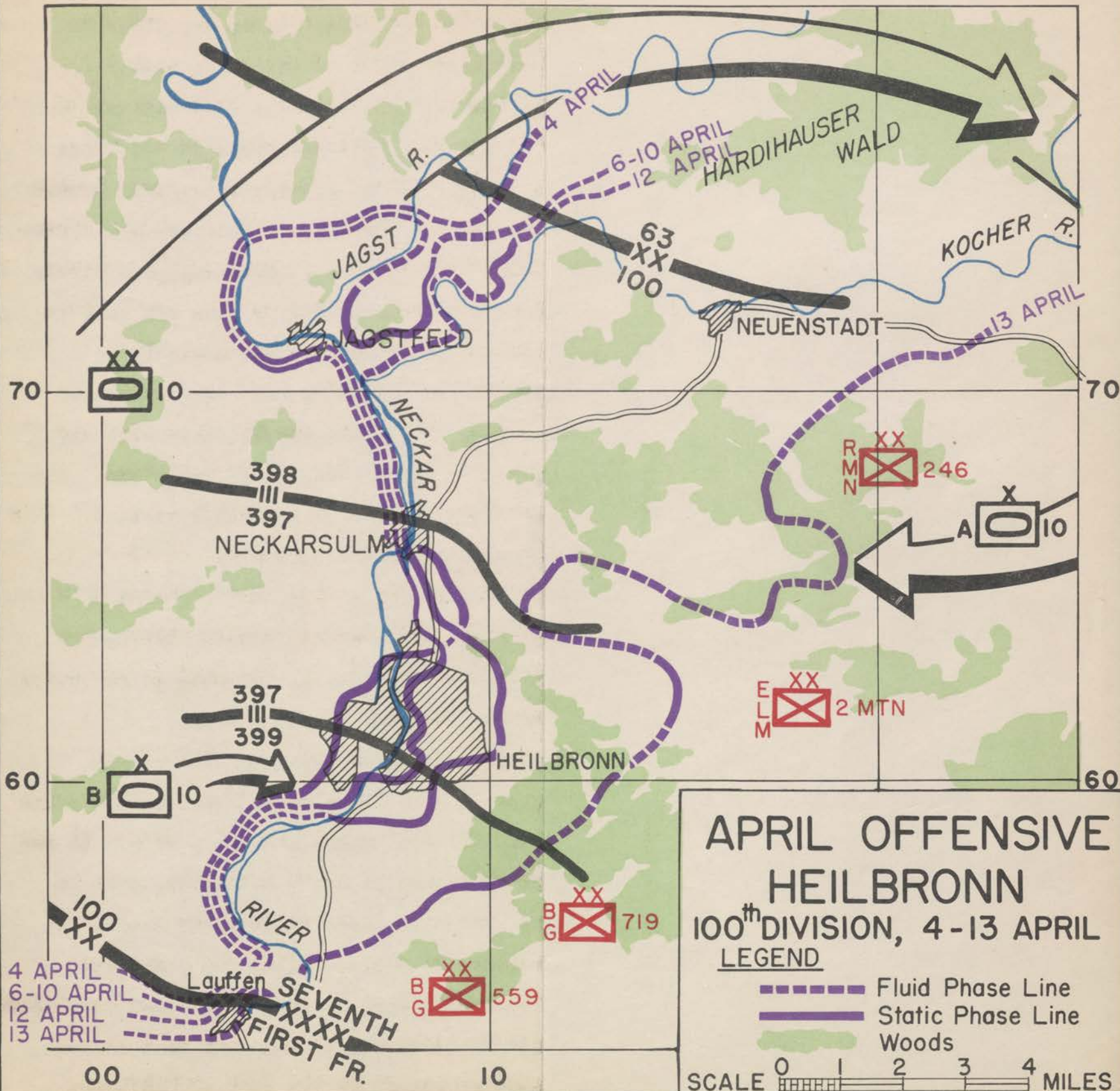
Heilbronn lies on the eastern bank of the Necker, doubly protected by a high ridge of hills on its eastern outskirts and by the river, the bridges over which had been blown. Before daylight on 4 April the 3rd



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Battalion of the 398th Regiment crossed the river in assault boats two miles north of Heilbronn with orders to seize the factory district, which forms the northern half of the city, and the hills in the east. When the bridgehead was large enough, a treadway bridge was to be built over the river for the supporting armor. At first the battalion attack went smoothly, apparently taking the enemy by surprise. But at 0900 hours, when at least a battalion of enemy infantry suddenly counterattacked the 3rd Battalion from the north, the east, and the south, it became sharply clear that the enemy meant to make a strong defense of Heilbronn. The 3rd Battalion was thrown back with heavy losses, and only with great effort managed to attack again to establish a line 1,000 yards from the river. Two platoons were cut off and captured in the German counterattack, one in the factory district and one on the hill to the east. The hills remained firmly in German hands. <sup>43</sup>

Now that the strength of the enemy forces was revealed VI Corps changed its plans. The 100th Division as a unit was to take Heilbronn, while the weight of the 10th Armored Division was to swing northeast, pass in the rear of the 63rd Division's Jagst River lines, and then drive southeast 25 miles between the Jagst and Tauber Rivers to Crailsheim. <sup>44</sup> Once Crailsheim had fallen, the 10th Armored Division was to cut back west to deliver a supporting attack at the rear of Heilbronn

and to pocket the enemy forces resisting the 63rd Division. Thus VI Corps became engaged in a three-part operation: one infantry division attacking Heilbronn, another hammering at the Jagst line, while the 10th Armored Division made a wide and daring hook to support them both.

From 4 to 8 April the attack against Heilbronn made slow and bitter progress. Every morning before dawn the Germans counterattacked the slowly expanding bridgehead of the 100th Division. The 2nd Battalion of the 397th Infantry crossed the Neckar in assault boats on the afternoon of 4 April to attack south into the factory district on the right flank of the 3rd Battalion, 398th Regiment. Its first attack that night was driven back with heavy losses. The following morning division mortar fire drove 37 14 to 17 year old Hitler Jugend soldiers out of the northern edge of the factory district to surrender. They came running and screaming, fired at by their officers, broken in nerve. Throughout the nine days of the bitter house to house fighting in Heilbronn the 100th Division encountered many of the Hitler Jugend who had been in training in the city and had been organized into battle groups. For a time they fought savagely, then broke under the strain.

On the afternoon of 5 April the 3rd Battalion of the 397th Infantry also crossed the river. After a

heavy artillery preparation the two battalions of the 397th Infantry attacked the factory district. During the next three days, while the 3rd Battalion of the 398th Regiment held in the north, these two battalions advanced 1,500 yards to the south, crossing railroad yards and open fields to secure buildings which outflanked enemy strongpoints and then assaulting these strongpoints. After each assault the enemy managed to reform battle groups for renewed defense. The four American companies leading the attack had no heavy direct fire support and no armor, because enemy artillery directed from the hills had prevented the construction of a bridge over the Nekar and had destroyed one completed ferry. Two DD tanks floundered on the river banks as they tried to cross.

On 3 April it was decided that the current attack would not reduce Heilbronn quickly enough, and a plan was devised to establish a second bridgehead in the southern part of the city, to expand both bridgeheads, and to join them in a pincers. The 1st Battalion of the 397th Infantry crossed the river two miles to the south in assault boats on the night of 5 April and on the following day began to attack north into the heart of the city and east toward the residential section. The enemy defended from cellars of bombed-out houses and piles of rubble. He launched small counterattacks with four heavy tanks, which retreated after each sally.

Air-directed artillery knocked out two of them on 6 April. The bridgehead expanded gradually to the east. Company A was harassed by counterattacks and unable to move ahead in its attempt to join the northern bridgehead. Assault troops still had no armored support. On the afternoon of 7 April German artillery scored a direct hit on the treadway bridge which the 31st Engineer Battalion had almost put over to the southern bridgehead. Enemy replacements came in as fast as prisoners were taken. Against an enemy force which never during the nine days of the battle dropped below 1,000 men the 100th Division continued the fight with two isolated, slowly expanding bridgeheads.

The supporting operation of the 10th Armored Division made initially much better progress. The area between Bad Mergentheim and the Jagst River had been cleared by the 254th Infantry of the 63rd Division and the 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Two days after leaving the 100th Division near Heilbronn Combat Command A had passed through this area and had driven, against surprisingly little opposition, 30 miles southeast to Crailsheim, which it entered on 7 April against only scattered and disorganized small arms fire. <sup>45</sup> Combat Command R blocked the shoulder of the thrust in the Mergentheim area, while one task force of Combat Command A held Crailsheim and two others attacked to the west in an attempt to carry out the division mission.

On 7 and 8 April these two task forces advanced west of the Jagst River approximately 12 miles to Ilshofen and Kirchberg.

An enemy counterattack, again indicating concern over the threat to southern Germany, struck at the main supply route which ran down from Bad Mergentheim some 30 miles to Crailsheim and at Crailsheim itself. The main supply route was a secondary road which ran through the heavily wooded hills of the Franconian Heights. During the night of 6-7 April strong German patrols infiltrated through the woods on both sides of the road which they cut temporarily at several points. It was necessary the next morning for the commander of Combat Command A to fly to Crailsheim to rejoin his organization. As Combat Command R moved south to Crailsheim, it was attacked at several points by patrols in the woods, firing panzerfaust and machine guns; and it was bombed and strafed by several German planes. On 8 April the corridor was definitely closed when the enemy succeeded in blocking it at two points. German planes and artillery continued to harass the road, and it was impossible to get either support or supplies through to Combat Command A.

On 8 April Combat Command B rejoined the 10th Armored Division from corps reserve. Together with the 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron it attempted to reopen the road. Clearing minefields and roadblocks and flushing the woods,



it managed to get through to Crailsheim with supplies on the morning of 9 April.<sup>46</sup> The enemy continued to infiltrate, to lay mines, and to harass clearing patrols. The 44th Division, which on 7 April had been transferred from XV Corps reserve to Seventh Army reserve was directed to send the 324th Regimental Combat Team to be attached to the 10th Armored Division. After coming into the line the 324th Infantry drove south along the main supply route into Crailsheim, clearing the towns and the woods on either side.<sup>47</sup> It engaged in heavy fighting against determined isolated groups of enemy.

By the night of 9 April the road was open but still threatened by ambush and it was necessary to resupply Combat Command A in Crailsheim by air. Sixty C-47s of the 441st Group, 50th Wing, 9th Troop Carrier Command, protected by fighters of the XII Tactical Air Command, landed on the captured airfield at Crailsheim between 1700 and 1900 hours that night delivering supplies and removing a large number of wounded. During the operation enemy planes dove in under the fighter cover to bomb and strafe the field.<sup>48</sup> On the morning of 10 April another resupply mission was flown, and on that day the main supply route was effectively secured.

The enemy had during this time been attacking the town of Crailsheim as well as the main supply route. Early in the morning of 8 April some 400 to 700 SS troops

had penetrated the town from three directions. German artillery and aircraft harassed it on the following day. On 10 April some 600 enemy infantry again drove deeply into the heart of the town.

All these efforts of the enemy to squeeze off the Crailsheim salient were overcome, but at a heavy cost in casualties and time. On 8 April the 10th Armored Division had begun to change its plan. The division ordered the two task forces of Combat Command A which had been attacking west from Crailsheim to change their course and, instead of driving west toward the 100th Division at Heilbronn, to move northwest toward the 63rd Division.<sup>49</sup> On 10 April contact with the 63rd Division was established by advance armor. It was then thought that the Crailsheim salient was not worth the effort to hold. The 10th Armored Division was ordered to withdraw to an assembly area behind the lines of the 63rd Division, preparatory to an attack southwest through those lines.<sup>50</sup> The withdrawal was carried out effectively.

The successful evacuation of Crailsheim probably would not have been possible without the air re-supply operation carried out by the 441st Group, 50th Wing, 9th Troop Carrier Command. The superb fighter screen maintained by XII Tactical Air Command was also a decisive factor. For its handling of this mission, the Troop Carrier Group was later awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

By this time the 63rd Division attack had crossed the

Jagst River and had driven some three or four miles south along its 27-mile front. The infantry division was ready with the help of armor to cross the Kocher River which ran south of and parallel to the Jagst. The pressure which the 63rd Division had been exerting on the northern flank of the enemy line had proved effective, but the advance had been slow. The wooded hills between the Jagst and Kocher Rivers had been bitterly defended in the western zone by troops of the 17th 88 Division.<sup>51</sup>

On 4 April it had been discovered that the troops of this German division had moved north to defend the Jagst line, and on 5 April VI Corps had ordered an attack instead of the advance east.<sup>52</sup> The 63rd Division regrouped its forces for a coordinated attack. The 254th Infantry took the left of the line facing south, the 255th the center, and the 253rd the right; the 100th Division sent the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 398th Infantry to support the attack of the 63rd Division on its right.

The attack of the 254th Infantry on the left jumped off on 6 April from the region adjacent to the shoulder of the Grailsheim salient and reached the northern bank of the Jagst with little difficulty. From 7 to 10 April it drove across the Jagst River on both sides of Doerzbach and advanced six miles south to the Kocher River. The Regiment started across the Kocher on 11 April, its progress impeded only by the delaying actions of weakened Volksgrenadier battle groups.

To the west, however, the advance against SS troops, who resisted fiercely, had been slower and more difficult. The westernmost flank of the Jagst River line had been taken over by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 398th Infantry whose mission was to attack to join the 3rd Battalion of the same regiment north of Heilbronn. These troops crossed the Jagst in assault boats on 5 and 6 April and advanced southwest. The 2nd Battalion fought bitterly for four days from 6 to 9 April to take Jagstfeld, the town at the junction of the Neckar and the Jagst and the keystone of the Neckar-Jagst defenses. One factory had to be shelled for an hour before it could be taken; upon entering it troops found the scorched bodies of 58 SS troopers.

On the left flank of the 2nd Battalion the 1st Battalion fought for five days from 7 to 11 April to break the German stand on the hills between the Jagst and Kocher Rivers. The XII Tactical Air Command bombed enemy positions but failed to reduce them. Tanks coming up to support the infantry were driven back by enemy artillery. The 1st Battalion never took these hill positions, for it was moved to another area on 11 April. On 11 April the Germans also withdrew. On the same day the 2nd Battalion of the 398th Infantry crossed the Kocher River; and on the following day it met the 3rd Battalion in the town of Neckarsulm on the Neckar, midway between Jagstfeld and Heilbronn. The

SS troops in the Neckar-Jagst corner had fled.

The routing of the rest of the SS troops in the center positions of the Jagst line required an enveloping maneuver by elements of both the 253rd and 255th Infantry Regiments. The 253rd Regiment, on the flank of the 398th Infantry, sent two of its battalions across the Jagst on 4 April. After crossing they turned east and attempted to enter the Hardihauser Wald, a large forest seven miles long and four miles wide which rises in the center to form a broken plateau. The forest lies under a sharp northern loop of the Jagst River below the town of Moeckmuehl. The 3rd Battalion fought for two days to drive the enemy of Moeckmuehl and then joined the other battalions below the river in their fiercely resisted penetration of the forest. The regiment made very slow progress.

Farther east the 255th Infantry had been attacking strongly held towns and hills on the northern bank of the Jagst. On 7 April the regiment crossed the Jagst seven miles east of Moeckmuehl and expanded its bridgeheads to flank the Hardihauser Wald on the east. On 9 April the 3rd Battalion attacked southwest into the forest, while the 253rd Infantry with three battalions abreast moved into the western half of the forest. From the squeeze of this coordinated pincers the enemy fled southward, and forces of the two regiments meeting in the center of the forest turned

their attack south toward the Kocher River.

The reduction of the Hardihauser Wald, together with the attacks of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 398th Infantry to the west, forced the 17th SS Division troops to retreat south of the Kocher River. In the evening of 9 April the 255th Infantry established a bridgehead over the Kocher at Weissbach seven miles east of the Hardihauser Wald. On 11 April, when Combat Command A of the 10th Armored Division passed through the bridgehead to attack southwest toward Heilbronn, the final phase in the reduction of the German Neckar-Jagst line began.

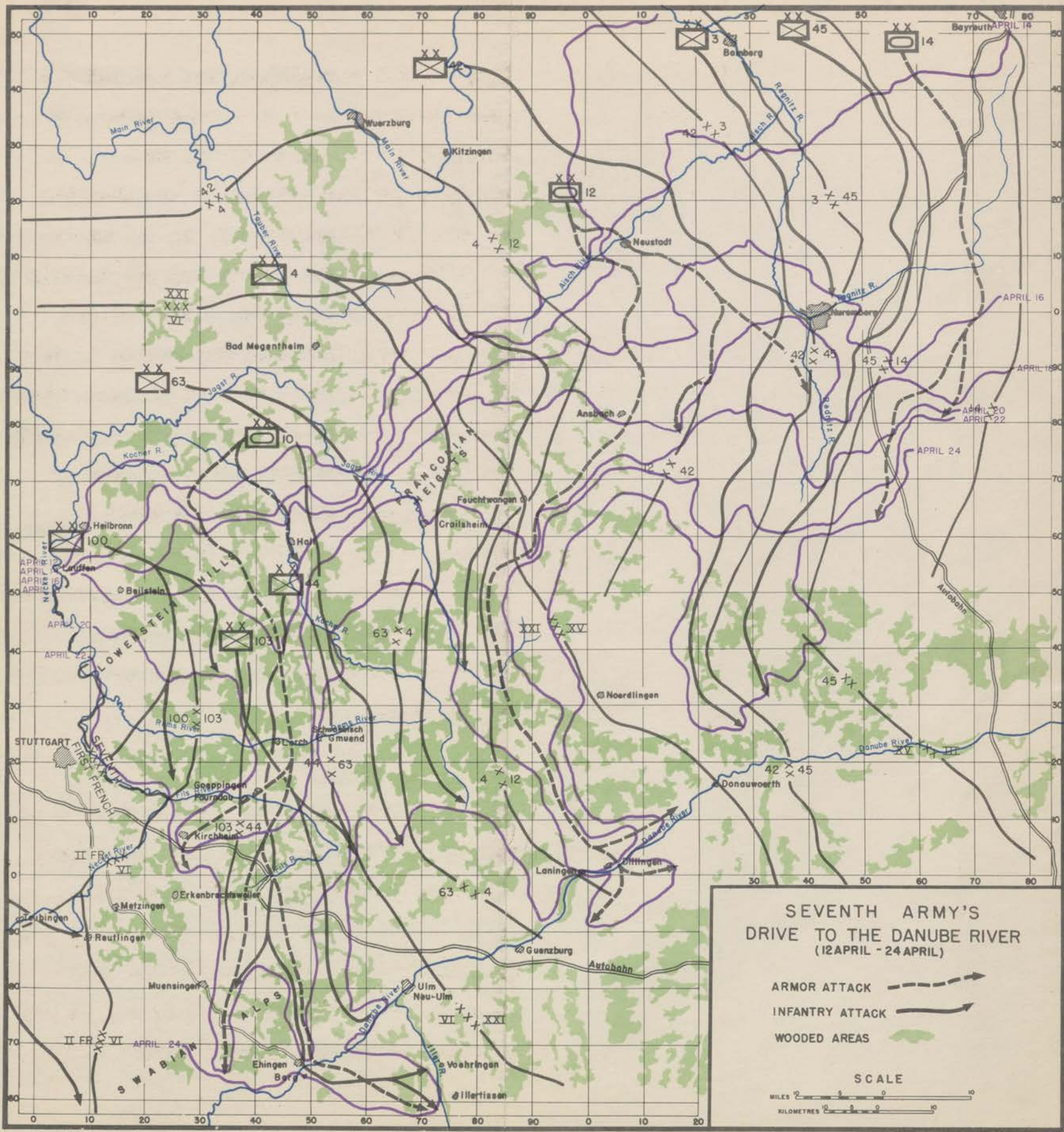
Two task forces of Combat Command A attacked south seven miles to the towns of Neuenstein and Oehringen, which fell only after heavy shelling and repeated armored attacks. SS troops infiltrated back into the towns after initial attacks had cleared them, and in Neuenstein they came back in civilian clothes.<sup>53</sup> By the night of 13 April both towns were finally clear. The 63rd Division followed the armor which now attacked southeast and southwest and mopped up what little enemy resistance remained. On 14 April elements of the 10th Armored Division driving southwest finally made contact with the 100th Division, as had been planned ten days previously.

Another reason for the disintegration of the German Neckar-Jagst line was the dislodging of its anchor at Heilbronn by the 100th Division. After 8 April the battle for the city went forward more rapidly, even though



resistance continued strong up to the fall of the city on 12 April. On the morning of 8 April armored support reached the infantry on the southern bridgehead, over a trestle bridge which the 31st Engineer Battalion kept in operation throughout the morning. It too was sunk at noon by enemy artillery. The armor that got across enabled Company A of the 397th Infantry to clear a large part of the cities factory district. During the night of 10 April it joined the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, which had been trying to cross the railroad tracks which separate the factory district from the city itself. Once the two bridgeheads had been joined, the enemy began his withdrawal from Heilbronn. After seven days of trying to break fanatically-held strongpoints 100th Division infantrymen found themselves resisted only by rearguards.

The division forces in the city, now augmented in the south by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 399th Infantry, regrouped and drove the enemy out of towns north and south of Heilbronn and out of the hills to the east, which had served the Germans as an amphitheater for artillery observation. On 13 April the 3rd Battalion of the 398th Infantry joined the other two battalions of the regiment in Neckarsulm; and on the following day, as the regiment drove east, it met advance elements of the 10th Armored Division. During the battle for Heilbronn the 100th Division had taken over 1,500 prisoners, had



**SEVENTH ARMY'S  
DRIVE TO THE DANUBE RIVER  
(12 APRIL - 24 APRIL)**

- ARMOR ATTACK
- INFANTRY ATTACK
- WOODED AREAS



suffered relatively light casualties, and had reduced the anchor of the strongest line which the enemy was able to make during the last month of the war.

On 15 April VI Corps was ordered by Seventh Army to attack south into the Lowenstein Hills. It was to maintain contact with the First French Army on the right which was advancing south between the Rhine and the Neckar, and to be prepared to assist the French in the capture of Stuttgart. <sup>54</sup> The 10th Armored Division went into temporary reserve, to regroup and repair equipment. The 63rd Division on the corps left flank and the 100th Division on the right advanced to the south. The VI Corps advance met no such coordinated line of defense as it had at Heilbronn and along the Jagst River, but it was slowed down by minefields, roadblocks, steep ascents along narrow roads, and by stubborn delaying parties in towns.

### Nuremberg

In the period 15 to 20 April the First German Army managed to maintain coordination among the fragmentary units and battle groups which stretched along a line from the Lowenstein Hills to Nuremberg. Piece-meal and fluid as this line was, it was nevertheless the only "front line" remaining on the western front; and it was defended by an estimated 15,000 infantry combat effectives,



20 artillery battalions, and 100 tanks or self-propelled guns. On 14 April there was no firm evidence of a thoroughly planned defense in the Redoubt Center, but it was estimated that the Germans were withdrawing slowly to concentrate all their resources in southeastern Germany.<sup>55</sup> It was up to the Seventh Army to pierce the German line and to beat the German Army before it reached the Austrian Alps. By 23 April Seventh Army had struck three crucial blows, which cut the line to shreds and drove what remained of the German army in broken rout to the south. The first blow to fall was the attack on Nuremberg, which the Germans had decided to defend "to the last man", perhaps as much for political as for tactical reasons. It stood as the eastern anchor of the line opposing Seventh Army; it was a communications center through which North-South railways, autobahnen and principal highways pass, especially those from Berlin to Munich; and it was also the shrine of the Nazi Party.

After XV Corps had reached its objective in the Hohe Rhoen hill mass, it began to prepare for a drive that would take it to Nuremberg. On 9-10 April it shifted Combat Command A on the corps left flank, leaving Combat Command B on the right to maintain contact with XXI Corps. The 106th Cavalry Group was free to reconnoiter southeast toward Bamberg and toward Coburg. Waiting for orders to continue its attack to the southeast, the XV Corps maintained its positions on

the Hohe Rhoen Mountains and patrolled vigorously in the direction of its anticipated thrust.<sup>56</sup>

Already reaching far forward with strong patrols, the XV Corps moved out at 1500 hours on 11 April, when it was ordered to advance in conjunction with the right flank of Third Army.<sup>57</sup> The 45th Division on the left and the 3rd Division on the right followed the cavalry. The corps swept rapidly to the south using floodlights to continue the advance at night.

Flights of fighter bombers and tactical reconnaissance aircraft spread searching fingers in front of the advance. P-51s operating in pairs reported by radio to the corps controller who gave them a reconnaissance mission and laid out a route for them to follow. Moving low to the ground, the pilots reported their observations by radio directly to the corps controller, who relayed information on roads, bridges, streams, river banks, enemy troop locations, and friendly front lines. P-51 pilots also directed artillery fire, guided flights of fighter-bombers to profitable targets, and, on request, photographed emplacements, troop concentrations, or terrain. The negatives were flown back to the base, processed, and dropped at the corps command post. Reconnaissance aircraft were dispatched to a division controller when their corps mission was completed.<sup>58</sup>

To feel out the advance on the ground the 106th

Cavalry Group on 12 April was ordered to reconnoiter to the Nuremberg-Bayreuth autobahn. The 3rd and 45th Divisions at the same time were ordered to take Bamberg and the high ground on either flank.<sup>59</sup> Bamberg, lying in the broad valley at the junction of the Regnitz and Main Rivers, was nearly on the boundary between the two divisions; and a combined attack presented no special problems. The 180th Infantry of the 45th Division on the left drove into Bamberg on 13 April from the north, while on the right the 3rd Division dispatched the 2nd Battalion of the 15th Infantry to clear that portion of the city southwest of the Regnitz River. During the day the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 180th Infantry attacked abreast and met moderate small arms and self-propelled fire as they cleared the northeast part of the city. The same type of resistance met 3rd Division troops, and by the end of the day the city had been taken except for an island in the center of the city. It was cleared the next day by the 3rd Battalion of the 180th Regiment which crossed on a footbridge to dislodge snipers.<sup>60</sup>

While Bamberg was under assault other elements of both divisions pushed 15 miles southeast, and Combat Command B rejoined the 14th Armored Division on the corps left flank. After Bamberg had fallen, XV Corps was to continue south to cut the autobahn between Bayreuth







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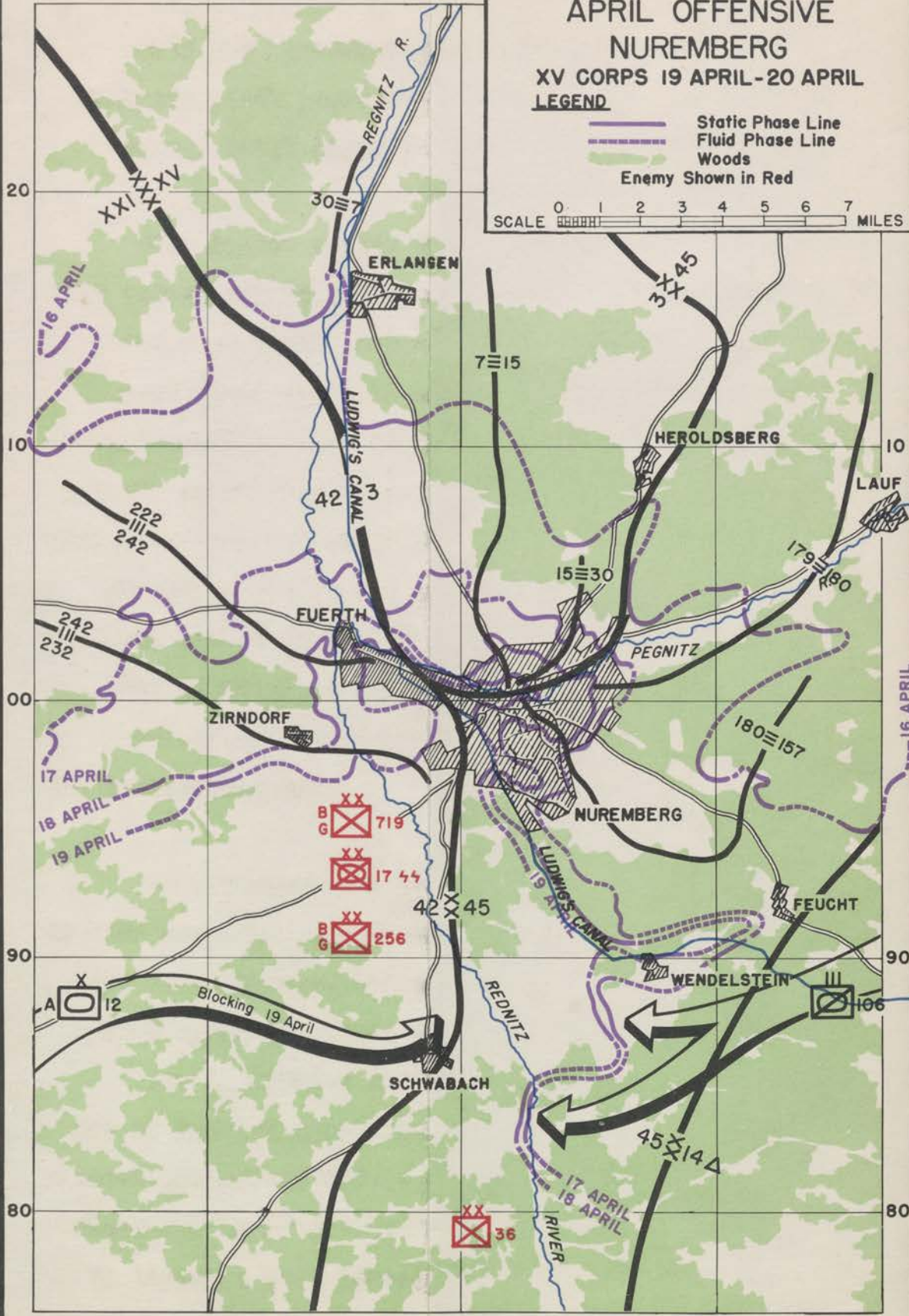
# APRIL OFFENSIVE NUREMBERG

## XV CORPS 19 APRIL-20 APRIL

### LEGEND

-  Static Phase Line
-  Fluid Phase Line
-  Woods
-  Enemy Shown in Red

SCALE 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 MILES



and Nuremberg and to capture Nuremberg. The 14th Armored Division cut out the autobahn, while the 45th and 3rd Divisions advanced on a broad front toward Nuremberg.

Nuremberg lies in a broad valley veined with natural and artificial waterways and at the center of a spiderweb of roads and railroads. From Nuremberg north to the Regnitz River and Ludwig's Canal flow parallel to each other. Ludwig's Canal extends through Nuremberg to the Southeast. The Regnitz River flowing from the south and the Pegnitz River from the east join west of Nuremberg and north of the suburb of Fuerth to form the Regnitz River. A little more than one-third of Nuremberg lies north of the curve formed by the Regnitz River, which provided an excellent tactical boundary the conquest of the city.

The plan for the taking of Nuremberg was an envelopment. The 3rd Division on the right was ordered to continue southeast to cross the Regnitz River and Ludwig's Canal, then to strike south and clear that portion of Nuremberg north of the Pegnitz River. Meanwhile, the 45th Division advancing farther to the left was directed to continue to the southeast, cross the Regnitz River, and attack the city from the south and southeast. Seventh Army stated that elements of

XLI Corps on the right of XV Corps were to assist in the capture of Nuremberg. <sup>61</sup> To shield operations in the city, which would engage the full attention of both assaulting divisions, the 14th Armored Division was ordered to maintain its position on the corps left and swing south of Nuremberg to screen the city at a distance of about 15 miles. The 106th Cavalry Group was directed to perform a similar mission to the south and southwest. The XXI Corps advance on the right would provide additional protection on the same flank.

On 15 April the 3rd Division crossed the Regnitz River and Ludwig's Canal some 15 miles north of Nuremberg in position to attack due south into the city. The 30th Infantry on the division right made the crossing after it had advanced southeast during the day against scattered resistance in the small towns that dot the rolling terrain. The crossing was made without opposition by the 3rd Battalion, and immediately the 7th Infantry followed in division reserve. All combat elements of the division were over on the following day, and the troops drove to within five miles of Nuremberg.

On the corps left flank the 45th Division struck south of the Pegnitz River over a bridge captured intact by the 157th Infantry. Opposition on the river line was negligible, but several defended roadblocks were

encountered as the troops continued to expand the bridgehead. By 16 April the attacking divisions had formed a two-pronged pincers on Nuremberg, one point having already penetrated the northern outskirts and the other in the southeastern suburbs. The 14th Armored Division and the 106th Cavalry Group encountered but little opposition as they moved to form a protecting screen to the east, south, and southwest.

Nuremberg resisted furiously. Fighting continued day and night, during the nights under artificial moonlight furnished by American anti-aircraft searchlight battalions. The city was surrounded by enemy anti-aircraft positions, armed with 88 mm flak guns, which were used against the assaulting infantry with grim effect. As the troops of both divisions broadened their fronts on 17 April and pulled the noose tighter on the city, resistance increased in intensity.

The 3rd Division attacked south with the 15th Infantry on the left and the 7th Infantry on the right, elements of which reached into the outskirts of Nuremberg on 17 April. Both regiments overran many anti-aircraft artillery emplacements, but flak guns scattered through the city and manned by determined defenders caused many casualties. Increasingly strong 88 mm flak fire met the 45th Division as elements of all three regiments attacked from the south and southeast. Five

battalions pushed into the defenses of the city.

XV Corps medium and heavy artillery supplemented the weapons of the divisions by firing into the progressively smaller target area; and air missions throughout daylight hours bombed, strafed, and rocketted the defenders. By midnight of 17 April the attackers had cleared nearly two-thirds of Nuremberg in house to house battles, although anti-aircraft artillery batteries, sited in parks and squares farther within the city, continued to blast the infantrymen and tankers.

The 1st Battalion of the 30th Infantry joined the assault on 18 April. It attacked on the left and pushed the next day to seize the north gate to the medieval walled city in the heart of Nuremberg. This it held as a bridgehead while the 2nd Battalion pushed through and continued the punishing battle to the south. Meanwhile the remainder of the division had crept slowly through smashed and burning buildings toward the Regnitz River. The enemy resisted from fox-holes in parks, from flak artillery emplacements, and from basements. Unless buildings were cleared room-by room, there was always the threat of enemy to the rear. The 7th Infantry, on the right of the division assault, reached the inner city on 19 April. The 15th Infantry, after a bloody fight in the division center during which its

armor was attacked by civilians as well as by uniformed enemy, moved late in the day to push through the gate captured by the 30th Regiment.

Resistance to the 45th Division assault in the south was at a fever pitch as the division drove deeper into the city; and fanatical small arms, rifle grenade, bazooka, and panzerfaust fire met attackers who cleared five square miles of the city and reached the medieval walls in the heart of Nuremberg on 19 April. The 180th Infantry assaulted the walls and forced an entrance to continue its attack within the ancient bastion. The 179th Regiment, having been pulled out, blocked to the rear, and cleared by-passed areas.

West of Nuremberg lies the suburb of Fuerth, which was in the XXI Corps zone until 19 April, when the 42nd Division already in position to attack the town was attached to XV Corps. The whole Nuremberg area came under one command. The 42nd Division on 18 April had been ordered by XV Corps to take Fuerth and early the next day jumped off across the Rednitz River and met moderate resistance as it cleared the town.

Hitler's 56th birthday was on 20 April, and the Gauleiter of Nuremberg had sent a "battle vow" to his Fuehrer:

My Fuehrer: The final struggle for the town



of the Party rallies has begun. The soldiers are fighting bravely, and the population is proud and strong. I shall remain in this most German of all towns to fight and to die. In these hours my heart beats more than ever in Love and Faith for the wonderful German Reich and its people. The National Socialist idea shall win and conquer all diabolic schemes. Greetings from the National Socialists of the Gau Franconia who are faithful to Germany.

KARL HOLZ

The Fuehrer had replied:

....I wish to thank you for your exemplary conduct. You are thereby bolstering the spirit not only of the people in your own Gau, to whom you are such a familiar figure, but also of millions of Germans. Now starts that fervent struggle which recalls our original struggle for power. However great the enemy's superiority may be at the present moment, it will still crumble in the end -- just as it has done before. I wish to show my appreciation and my sincere gratitude for your heroic actions by awarding you the Golden Cross of the German Order.

ADOLF HITLER 62

But on 20 April Nuremberg fell.

As the size of the enemy-held area of Nuremberg decreased, the intense concentrations of anti-aircraft artillery fire slackened because most of the guns had been overrun. The 7th Infantry forced the walls of the inner city in its zone by 1100 hours and attacked south against decreasing opposition. The enemy began to capitulate in large numbers to the 15th Infantry. The 30th Infantry with two battalions abreast drove south and cleared the area north of the Pegnitz by 1400 hours. Stronger opposition met the 45th Division, as it drove up from the south; but by 1800 hours the two assault regiments had eliminated all but 200 defenders in an underground passage, who were finally routed out by

2250 hours. The Gauleiter was found dead in a cellar after the battle. There had been no fight to the last man, for during the five days of the battle more than 17,000 of the defenders had surrendered. <sup>63</sup> On 21 April, the day after Hitler's birthday, XV Corps commemorated its capture of Nuremberg with a ceremony in Adolph Hitler Platz. Representative units of XV Corps, including infantry, artillery, engineers, tanks, and tank destroyers, paraded before General Patch and General Haislip. Fighter-bomber aircraft joined the review by covering the formation from the air.

While the celebration was in progress, XV Corps was regrouping for further attack. Seventh Army Field Order No. 12 was issued on 17 April had confirmed arrangements that had been in progress to shift the direction of the army attack from southeast to south and had announced that Third Army would relieve XV Corps east of the line Wuerzburg-Ansbach. The consequent regrouping was carried out with little delay to XV Corps advance. Third Army moved in behind the corps; the 3rd Division stayed behind to garrison Nuremberg; the XV Corps advanced south toward Munich. There was only one complication. The 14th Armored Division was engaged on the left, but by mutual agreement it was reassigned on 23 April to Third Army in zone. In its place the 20th Armored Division,

commanded by Major General Orlando Ward, was assigned to Seventh Army and sent to the XV Corps. <sup>64</sup> The 20th Armored Division in the lead was followed on the left by the 45th Division and on the right by the 42nd Division. It met only scattered opposition in towns and at roadblocks, as the enemy retreated in confusion. The battle of Nuremberg had broken the right of his line.

#### The Stuttgart Operation

While the battle for Nuremberg was still being waged, another blow was delivered on the enemy left flank. The German 17th SS Division and 2nd Mountain Division had been pulled out of the line and rushed to the Nuremberg front. The 2nd Mountain Division fought near Ansbach southwest of Nuremberg, but the 17th SS troops after racing to Nuremberg got there too late to fight inside the city. Although it fought against the flank of the XV Corps enveloping forces, it could not effectively delay Nuremberg's fall.

Lack of adequate forces and orders to make its main effort on the left in support of Third Army had kept Seventh Army from launching in force its anticipated offensive to the south. Its advance during March and early April had been so extended as to necessitate leaving three divisions behind to occupy captured territory: the 44th, the 103rd, and the 36th, the last

of which was west of the Rhine. The 103rd and the 36th Divisions had been earmarked as SHAEF reserve on 30 March, since which time they had been used as occupation forces. At the end of March the 70th Infantry Division and the 13th Armored Division, which had been in SHAEF reserve under Seventh Army control, were being prepared for transfer to the Twelfth Army Group. This transfer was effective on 1 and 2 April, and both divisions within a short time were sent to the Third Army zone. By 8 April both the 4th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions, attached to Seventh Army for operations, were assigned  
66  
to Seventh Army.

By 17 April SHAEF had lifted some of the restrictions on the use by Seventh Army of its divisions in reserve, the 36th and 103rd, and had responded to General Patch's request that the 36th Division west of the Rhine be presently relieved by units of the Fifteenth Army. Representatives from the Fifteenth and Seventh American Armies had been working together since 3 April in close liaison preparatory to the assumption of occupation duties by Fifteenth Army in the Saar-Palatinate west of the Rhine. Also on 17 April notification was received that the 101st Airborne Division was to return to Seventh Army, replacing the 103rd Division in SHAEF reserve and taking over the Darmstadt-Ansbach-Heilbronn area. Both the 36th Infantry and 101st

Airborne Divisions would not be required to perform occupational duties after 21 April.<sup>67</sup>

Now Seventh Army had greater hitting power and greater depth for its offensive. By the middle of April Third Army had been turned south and the direction of Seventh Army advance was also turned south. The relief of Seventh Army units in the east by elements of Third Army narrowed its prospective front by about 25 percent. It became less of an adjunct to Third Army and freer to strike out independently in its own zone. General Patch's Command Post, which had moved from Darmstadt to Kitzingen on 16 April, was off-center for the new zone, especially when the army's main effort was to be made on the right. Plans were made to move it southwest and on 27 April after the offensive had made good progress the Seventh Army Command Post opened in Schwabisch Gmuend.<sup>68</sup>

With the Ruhr pocket effectively reduced (it was declared wiped out on 19 April) and with the Third Army drive speeding toward Salzburg, General Eisenhower told General Devers on 15 April that the time had come for the Sixth Army Group to push the offensive to the south.<sup>69</sup> The initial objective of the offensive was the capture of Stuttgart and the cutting off and the destruction of the Nineteenth Germany Army in the

# APRIL OFFENSIVE

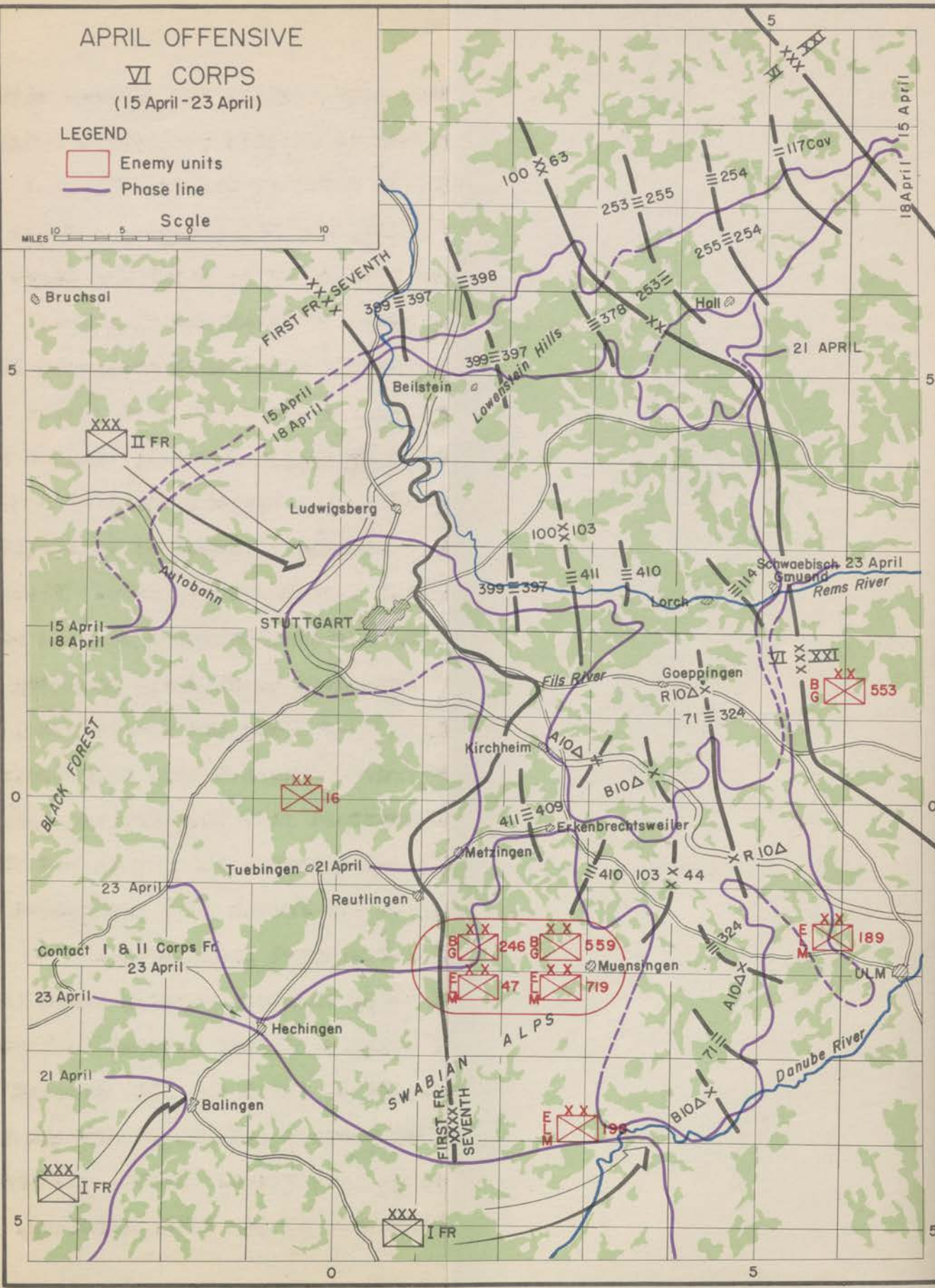
## VI CORPS

(15 April - 23 April)

### LEGEND

- Enemy units
- Phase line

Scale  
MILES 10 5 0





Black Forest. VI Corps, coordinating its advance with the First French Army, was to envelop Stuttgart, seize the communications centers south of Stuttgart in the area of Tuebingen, Balingen, and Sigmaringen, between Stuttgart and the Swiss border, up to which the corps was then to exploit in order to block the Nineteenth Army in the Black Forest while the French destroyed it. 70

An airborne operation for the planned offensive which had been designated Effective was contemplated for the taking of the communications centers south of Stuttgart, an important target also because a number of scientific laboratories and factories were situated there. Plans had been made to use the 13th Airborne Division in this maneuver, but this operation was cancelled on 20 April as being no longer necessary. <sup>71</sup> Sixth Army Group had warned that, in order to prevent the German Nineteenth Army from escaping from the Black Forest southeast into the Swabian Alps, careful timing would be necessary in the French and VI Corps envelopment of Stuttgart. The French were instructed specifically to avoid attacking Stuttgart prematurely. <sup>72</sup>

Since 13 April VI Corps had been pushing south into the Loewenstein Hills, which stretched between Heilbronn and Schwaebisch Gmuend. On 16 April the 10th Armored Division was taken out of reserve and passed through the 63rd Division on the corps left flank. Combat Command B, supported by the 2nd Battalion of the 254th Infantry,

fought for two days to take on 18 April the town of Hall on the Kocher River. On the corps right flank the enemy indicated acute sensitivity to the 100th Division approach toward Stuttgart, when he counterattacked fiercely near the town of Beilstein, about 20 miles north and a little east of Stuttgart. The 3rd Battalion of the 399th Infantry approached a hill just north of Beilstein on the morning of 18 April. Forward elements crossed the open draw below the hill, climbed its open northern face, and reached the wooded crest. The rest of the battalion was still climbing out of the draw when German mortars and artillery opened up on them. Seventeen were killed and 101 wounded. When the battalion had once gained the top of the hill, it was counterattacked for an hour by some 60 Germans who climbed the southern slope, heedless of the fire that met them.<sup>73</sup> The rest of the way through the Loewenstein Hills was relatively easy for VI Corps. On 18 April the rapid drive south began, as elements of the 10th Armored Division on the corps left flank advanced nine miles.

On 19 April the 44th Division, attached to VI Corps two days before, moved through the 63rd Division to follow the advance of the 10th Armored. The 63rd Division passed to XXI Corps and continued its attack to the southeast.<sup>74</sup> The 103rd Division, attached to VI Corps

after its release from SHAEF, was ordered to attack between the 10th Armored and the 100th Division on the right, which was moving slowly because of stiff resistance to its approach to Stuttgart.<sup>75</sup>

During the morning of 19 April the advance of the 10th Armored Division was held up by steep hills and boggy valleys, but in the afternoon it raced ahead for a gain of 17 miles which brought it to the Rems River, holding in the Loewenstein Hills on the south, Combat Command B seized two bridges intact just west of Schwaebisch Gmuend, which it by-passed, and crossed the river. Farther west Combat Command A carrying a power saw to clear roadblocks, had been hitting a 40 mile an hour pace. That afternoon it seized another bridge over the Rems intact at Lorch, five miles west of Gmuend. Combat Command A came so suddenly into Lorch that it scared away any enemy planes and an enemy train that were just pulling into town. It took prisoners the astonished Volksturm who had been left behind as a rearguard. The 44th Division, whose task it was to protect the exposed flanks of 10th Armored Division as well as to mop up in the rear, reached the Rems the same day and blocked at the bridges to permit the armor to lunge ahead southwest to the Fils River, which runs parallel to the Rems some six miles to the south. Combat Command A captured intact a bridge over

the Fils at Faurndau near Goepfingen.

On 20 April, while Combat Command R and the 114th Infantry of the 44th Division mopped up in the by-passed Gmuend area, Command Commands A and B crossed the Fils River and drove, still southwest, to the town of Kirchheim. The town fell easily to the two enveloping columns. The 114th Infantry blocked on the left of the armored spearhead, while the 324th Infantry blocked on the right. Several energetic enemy attempts near Schwaebisch Gmuend to cut through the main supply route of the extended salient were repulsed. Early in the morning of 21 April elements of Combat Command R, which had come down to Kirchheim, cut the Autobahn just south of the city, reaching the first objective of the division. The enemy had been fleeing from Stuttgart and the Black Forest down the Autobahn to the Swabian Alps. The XII Tactical Air Command had been combing and strafing columns for several days. Now the enemy was forced to use secondary roads to the south. On 22 April the 10th Armored Division was ordered to swing southeast to pursue the fleeing enemy to the Danube. <sup>76</sup> The 44th Division was to continue to flanks.

When forces of the 10th Armored Division reached Kirchheim, they had come within 15 miles of French forces which had swept southeast to Reutlingen below the Autobahn. Stuttgart was virtually encircled; the corridor

of escape was narrowed and attacked on the ground and from the air. The breakthrough of the 10th Armored Division formed the first and outer arm to reach out to pocket the fleeing Nineteenth Army. Meanwhile within that arm the 103rd Division on the right flank of the armored division and the 100th Division along the Neckar each pressed in on the escape corridor.

After 18 April resistance to the 100th Division advance decreased as the enemy fled from the Stuttgart area. Against minefields, roadblocks, and panzerfaust-armed delaying parties the division made steady progress. On 22 April it captured 1,000 prisoners in the pocket formed by the Neckar north and east of Stuttgart, and it made contact with the French just across the river from the city. On 23 April the division captured an equal number of prisoners as it drove to the east bend of the Neckar River below Stuttgart where it is joined by the Fils. One battalion of the 397th Infantry moved south of the Neckar River to cut the Autobahn below Esslingen.

The 103rd Division, between the 10th Armored and the 100th Divisions, ran into bitter fighting on 23 April as it hit the most sensitive part of the escape corridor below the Autobahn. It had joined the VI Corps attack on 20 April, and against only moderate resistance it had swung down through the lanes that tanks had cleared across

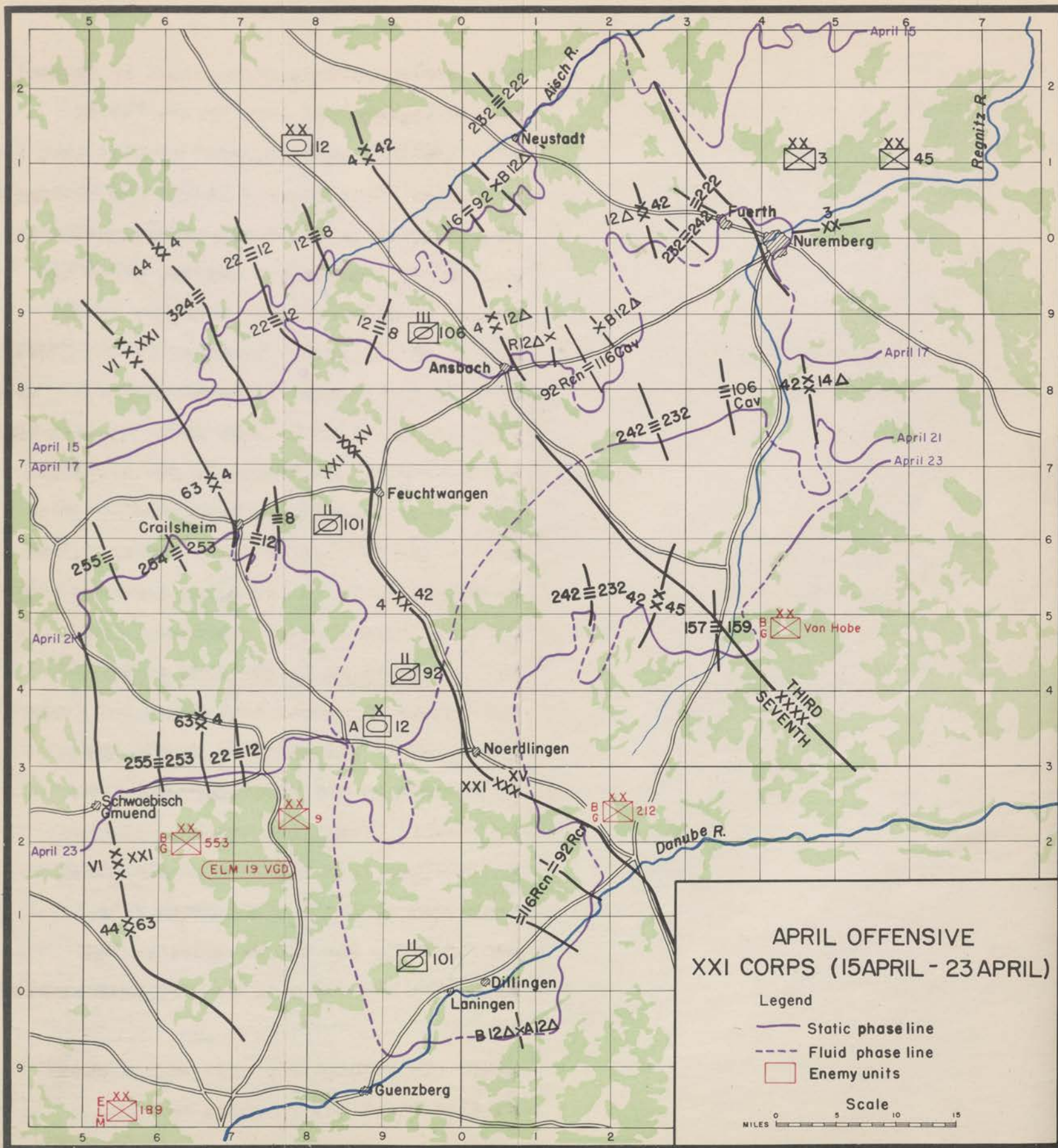
the Rems and Fils Rivers. On 22 April it drove southwest from Kirchheim some five miles south of the Autobahn where it threw back a counterattack. The next day its attack was to the south toward the Metzingen-Muensingen road which runs through the Swabian Alps, now the most important remaining escape route for the Nineteenth German Army. In the hills that shield the road on its northern side the 103rd Division met desperate opposition. Here the 2nd Battalion of the 410th Infantry attacked the town of Erkenbrechtsweller, which lies on top of a broad plateau. After G Company had taken two-thirds of the northern part of the town and had lost 17 men as prisoners, an SS officer marched down the main street carrying a white flag, accompanied by a captured American infantryman. He presented an ultimatum to the company commander: surrender or panzerfausts will wipe you out. At the time the entire 2nd Battalion, the other elements of which were fighting in the woods outside the town, was believed surrounded by five German infantry regiments and miscellaneous troops. The fighting continued and by evening the town was cleared of the enemy. The next morning the surrounding German troops had disappeared in flight. The 103rd Division pressed on to the Metzingen-Muensingen road and drove to Reutlingen to join up with French Forces.



On 23 April the Stuttgart corridor was closed. On the same day the city of Stuttgart fell to the French. French forces continued to mop up numerous enemy pockets in the Black Forest, and VI Corps turned southeast toward Ulm and the Danube in pursuit of the broken columns of the German Nineteenth Army.<sup>78</sup> On 24 April the main effort of Seventh Army was directed southeast toward Ulm, and a new boundary was set between the French First and American Seventh Armies.<sup>79</sup>

Because the rapid drive of the French below Stuttgart had extended so far east of the Neckar River which had been the boundary between the armies and because there was a danger of French and American units becoming entangled, General de Lattre and General Patch had agreed on 21 April on a new boundary between Reutlingen and Sigmaringen.<sup>80</sup> It then was decided by Sixth Army Group that when Stuttgart had fallen and the VI Corps attack had turned southeast the boundary would run along the Metzingen-Muensingen-Ehingen road. This would leave to the French the area south of Stuttgart to be mopped up and would presumably keep French forces from becoming entangled with the VI Corps attack toward Ulm and the Danube.

This last boundary change also provided that American forces would occupy Stuttgart after the French had taken it. On 26 April the 100th Division, having been relieved from line duty on 24 April, moved into Stuttgart.<sup>91</sup> The French 3rd Algerian Infantry Division was still there.



## APRIL OFFENSIVE XXI CORPS (15 APRIL - 23 APRIL)

### Legend

- Static phase line
- - - Fluid phase line
- Enemy units

### Scale

MILES 0 5 10 15

When on 27 April General Devers, accompanied by General Patch, visited Stuttgart and ordered that French forces evacuate the city, the local French commander replied that he was under orders to remain. News reports linked the Stuttgart question with the larger question of French participation in the assignment of occupation zones. The matter, which had obviously become one for consideration at a higher level, passed amicably and without incident. On 30 April the 100th Division left the city to the French and moved to another area. It had been determined by this time by Army Group liaison that many reports of disorders by French troops in Stuttgart had been exaggerated and that they could be attributed largely to displaced persons and the "native criminal element", and to the fact that French procedure in occupying a German city is traditionally different from that of American forces. <sup>85</sup>

#### The Breakthrough in the Army Center

Shortly after the enemy right and left flank had given way, his center weakened under the pressure of the XXI Corps attack and was pierced by the breakthrough of the 12th Armored Division in the Franconian Heights. As the XXI Corps had swept southeast from the Main to the Aisch River, it had been deployed across a broad front with the 42nd Division on the left, the 4th Division on the right, and the 12th Armored attacking in columns interspersed across the front.

At the Aisch River the Germans had made only a minor delaying stand. The 42nd Division, in whose zone

the major portion of the river line was located, had pushed across the stream at Neustadt on 16 April, after a prior reconnaissance to feel out weak points. The division had continued its rapid advance southeast, veering toward Fuerth, which it had been directed to take to assist in the XV Corps capture of Nuremberg. <sup>86</sup> When it had come into position to attack Fuerth, the 42nd Division had passed to control of XV Corps on 19 April to place the Nuremberg operation under a unified command. At the same time XXI Corps assumed command of the 63rd Division from VI Corps on the right flank of the 4th Division.

The 4th Division, initially on the corps right flank, had driven southeast against only weak delaying actions, and the columns of the 12th Armored Division had met the same type of opposition. The advance surged forward day and night between 18 and 20 April. The 12th Armored Division took Ansbach and Feuchtwangen. The 4th Infantry Division retook Crailsheim, which VI Corps had earlier yielded, against only sporadic resistance. On the new corps right flank the 63rd Division pushed southeast, reached Schwaebisch Gmund, and set up roadblocks to protect the corps flank. <sup>87</sup>

XXI Corps was now well within the low hills of the Franconian Heights. Prisoner interrogation revealed that enemy units larger than battalions were the exception. Hastily organized groups of stragglers were thrown into

the line to do what they could to delay the advance.

XI Corps was engaged in what SHAEF termed "the <sup>88</sup> disarming, by battle, of the German armies."

With the passage of the 42nd Division to XV Corps and the taking over of the 63rd Division, the corps left boundary had been shifted to the line Ansbach-Noerdlingen, and XXI Corps attacked directly south toward the Danube river with the mission of crossing it. Meanwhile its positions west of Nuremberg had shielded that city while it was being assaulted by XV Corps. When Nuremberg had been taken, XXI Corps began in earnest its drive south. The 12th Armored Division had been given a zone on the left flank of the corps; and it was here that the greatest advances were made, although the remainder of the front moved rapidly.

The 12th Armored Division launched a spearhead from Feuchtwagen toward the Danube River on 20 April, and in two days it pierced 40 miles to capture and cross the 600-foot bridge over the river at Dillingen. Reinforcements were poured across the river, and the bridgehead was held against only slight opposition. Moving rapidly, the 4th and 63rd Divisions reached the Danube and bridged it on 25 April, the 4th against slight resistance at Lavingen and the 63rd with stronger opposition at Guenzburg, both west and south of Dillingen. One battalion of the 63rd Division stopped on the way to eliminate a pocket

of some 600 SS troops.

With the enemy's last line broken at both flanks and in the center, Seventh Army continued south on its next mission; to block the passes into Austria and to seize the Innsbruck-Brenner Pass area. The Wehrmacht fled without hope before its advance. The German Nineteenth Army was practically destroyed; the First and Seventh German Armies were torn by American armored breakthroughs. Enemy troops in pockets of resistance surrendered in mass; commanders issued discharges to their men by the hundreds. On 21 April word was received at Seventh U.S. Army Headquarters that the German government had agreed to leave in their present camps all Allied prisoners of war and not to try any longer to evacuate them in the retreat. <sup>89</sup> Seventh Army advanced beyond the Danube, to the last natural defense line before the Redoubt Center.



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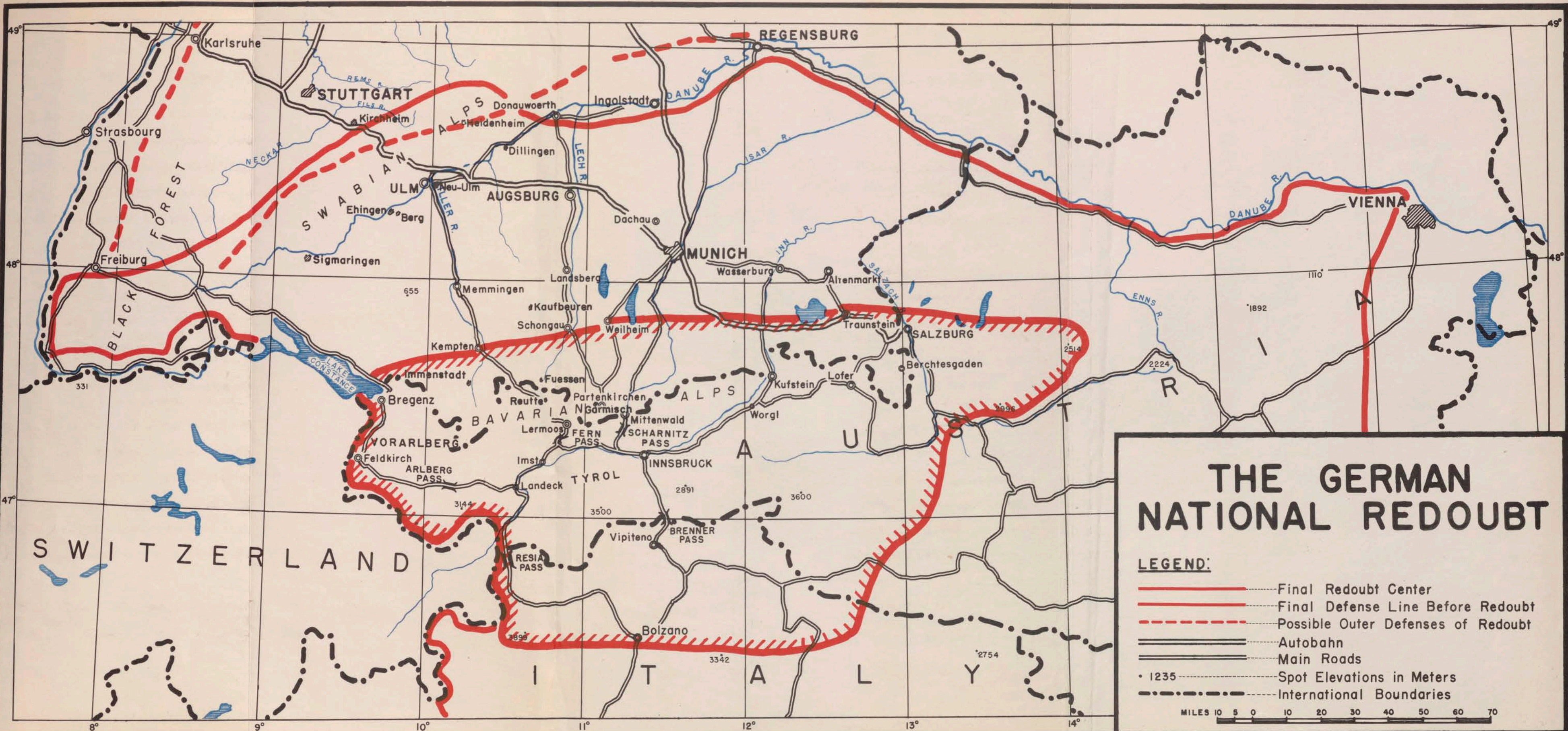
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  47. 44th Inf Div Narrative, 8-10 Apr 45.
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  49. 10th Armored Div G-3 Report, 8 Apr 45.
  50. 10th Armored Div G-3 Report, 10 Apr 45.
  51. 63rd Inf Div Narrative, Apr 45.
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82. 7th Army Diary, 26 Apr 45.
83. 7th Army Diary, 27 Apr 45.






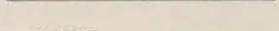

84. 7th Army Diary, 28 Apr 45.
85. 6th Army Group Hist, Apr 45.
86. XXI Corps Narrative, Apr 45.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. 7th Army Diary, 21 Apr 45.





# THE GERMAN NATIONAL REDOUBT

## LEGEND:

-  Final Redoubt Center
-  Final Defense Line Before Redoubt
-  Possible Outer Defenses of Redoubt
-  Autobahn
-  Main Roads
-  Spot Elevations in Meters
-  International Boundaries





## CHAPTER XXIX

THE MYTH OF THE NATIONAL REDOUBT

The catastrophe which had finally overtaken the German military forces was almost complete. When the city of Nuremberg fell to the Seventh Army on 20 April, it had become clear that the war was entering its last stages. An intelligence report from General Eisenhower's headquarters issued on 15 April stated the case:

From every viewpoint it is only a matter of time before the organized resistance in Hitlerite Germany collapses completely....Nothing can alter the inescapable fact that the enemy is on the verge of a defeat. Nothing now can rectify the mistakes of Hitler and his staff officers in order to prolong the war or even partially retrieve the situation. Enemy capabilities are in fact nil. No steps he can take with the present means of conducting warfare are such that they will influence and hardly delay the outcome.....<sup>1</sup>

Nor was the intelligence that the war was lost unavailable to the highest German command. In the early evening of 22 April, according to various accounts of the briefing in the Fuehrerhauptquartier, Adolph Hitler became convinced that the end was near and that all hope was to be abandoned. Several diary entries picture the situation:

The Fuehrer has collapsed; he considers further resistance useless, refuses to leave.....All present (Keitel, Jodl, Bormann, Himmler, Goebbels, and the

Grand Admiral over the phone) have tried to sway the Fuehrer.....Everything was in vain.....He now speaks of treason from all sides, of failure, corruption, and that the SS is now lying to him....the troops are not fighting, the roadblocks are opened and are not being defended.....soon we will have no ammunition and gasoline.....The Fuehrer has given no orders, he only said the others should go wherever they please.."2

This abdication of the high command in late April coincided with the disintegration of centralized enemy combat leadership. Along the Seventh Army front General Paul Hausser had been relieved from command of German Army Group G, which had been cut and virtually destroyed by General Patch's divisions on both sides of the Rhine. His new assignment was the consolidation of staffs fleeing south, the organization of battle-groups from among surviving remnants.<sup>3</sup> More than a dozen divisions were identified in the sectors of the American VI, XXI, and XV Corps; but their numbers were little more than a bookkeeping convenience.<sup>4</sup> They were wanting in infantry, in artillery, and in armor. They were in receipt of no coordinated orders and were committed to defensive positions which formed no semblance of a front line. Thousands of troops were disappearing, redeploying themselves as self-discharged veterans; and as one German division commander confessed, "everybody was highly sensitive to any report which held any inkling of the words 'clearing out'....."<sup>5</sup>

This battered and hopeless enemy force, consisting of the First and Nineteenth German Armies, withdrew in almost total confusion before the onslaughts of Seventh Army.

General Patton's Third Army, which had been driving due east toward Prague and Dresden, had begun to change direction to move down the Danube River for a junction with the Russians.<sup>6</sup> General Patch, accordingly, instituted a general swing of the army toward the heart of Bavaria and the Tyrol.<sup>7</sup> With General Brooks' VI Corps on the right, General Milburn's XXI Corps in the center, and General Haislip's XV Corps on the left, Seventh Army was to strike quickly over the Danube and into the Bavarian foreland making decisive southern thrusts for the Alpine routes into the Inn River Valley and to the Brenner Pass.<sup>8</sup> What little order General Hausser, now operating from Field Marshal Kesselring's headquarters, could fashion from the chaos of the German army was not to be given an opportunity to recover combat efficiency for the defense of mountain positions in the so-called "National Redoubt". The hope was to dissolve the projected ultimate concentration area before it could be used. It was also hoped to uncover quickly the infamous German concentration camps which lay in the path of Seventh Army.<sup>9</sup>

### The Redoubt: Myth and Mystery

Whether the German High Command or the Fuehrer's inner circle ever believed in the Redoubt Center or in some fortress of the Alps is a question. There appears to be no evidence that any substantial planning or serious preparations were made for an historic last stand.<sup>10</sup> The

Alpenstellung or Gebirgsstellung, which in American documents became "redoubt" from the French intelligence about the reduit, was less a military stratagem than a piece of political propaganda. It did not revive much hope or morale, but it perhaps gave some geographic point to all the frantic movements of overrun German elements.

During the Rhine-crossing period Seventh Army G-2 had, as aforementioned, issued a long range study of the German National Redoubt, reviewing the factors involved in a formidable defense of mountainous pockets in the area of common German, Austrian, and Italian frontiers.<sup>11</sup> The Alpine high ground loomed as the last battlefield. The extreme Bavarian relief, with narrow abrupt valleys and sheer winding roads, was admirable for a determined defense by a minimum force well-armed with modern equipment. It was suspected that considerable stockpiles of arms, munitions, and rations, and even underground industrial facilities, had been prepared; and a new elite force was envisioned, comprising hundreds of thousands of SS and mountain troops, well-equipped, trained for mountain warfare, and thoroughly imbued with the Nazi spirit. At the source of this estimate of enemy capabilities were two reasons: First, that the Nazi elements which controlled Germany had the will and imperative need to continue to resist; second, that the German army and people, incapable of disobedience, would follow Nazi orders.

Happily, the army estimate of the enemy's military and political strength was a cautious one. The three Seventh Army corps were prepared for the worst contingency; but, less than two weeks after the outer ring of the Redoubt had been penetrated at the Danube, the National Socialist regime had been destroyed. The American assault could not be contained or even delayed. The German will to resistance was broken. Flagrant violations of discipline disorganized the military from within, and there were many instances of widespread and extensive civil disobedience.<sup>12</sup>

By 21 April Seventh Army had completed its turning movement for the campaign against the redoubt. Before it was the Danube River, and a long wide, flatland which stretched to the mountains. Within two weeks Seventh Army had driven into the mountains, had broken through the effective wall across southern Germany, and had seized control of the Inn and Salzach Valleys. VI Corps, on the right, held the massive lateral terraces from Innsbruck to the Brenner Pass. XV Corps, on the left, had overrun the Salzburg-Berchtesgaden area. XXI Corps, in the middle, dominated Kufstein and the central Alpine positions. The National Redoubt was no longer a mystery.

### The Fall of Ulm

The main effort of Seventh Army was to be made on the right.<sup>13</sup> Within 48 hours the breakthrough which VI Corps

had achieved near Lorch on the Rems River on 19 April had assumed major proportions. Two combat commands of the 10th Armored Division were "running wild", and at times the armor was hitting a 40-mile-per-hour pace. Behind the tanks moved the infantry of the 44th and 103rd Divisions, straining to keep up with the tempo of the motorized advance, to clear by-passed pockets of resistance, and to prevent infiltration behind the speeding combat commands.<sup>14</sup>

The Stuttgart-Ulm autobahn had already been cut and troops blocking to the west were still picking up miscellaneous groups trying to escape the Stuttgart pocket. Opposition along the whole front was spotty and disorganized, although battle groups continued to fight moderate delaying actions. Principle obstacles were engineer-contrived, road-blocks and minefields, covered by fire from infantry trying to make strongpoints of towns and favorable terrain.<sup>15</sup> The armor, for the most part, avoided such points. "Keep on going" General Brooks had instructed General Morris, commanding the 10th Armored Division, "don't fight with them as there will be plenty of infantry behind you..."<sup>16</sup> The tanks were racing for the Danube and all possible intact crossings between Ehingen and Ulm.

The city of Ulm on the Danube River appeared to be the next concentration point for the haphazard improvised defensive efforts of General Foertsch's First Army. The river line itself was possibly the best available position in the



so-called "final defense" area before the redoubt; and, more than that, the Himmler-Keitel-Bormann decree which had dictated the fanatical defense of Nuremberg would probably prompt the same type of resistance in this traditional Danube Valley bastion. The directive from the German High Command had been unequivocal:

Cities are situated at important traffic junctions. Therefore, they must be defended and be held to the utmost, no matter what promises or threats are carried....For the execution of this command the Battle Commanders appointed in every town are personally responsible. Should they disobey this soldierly duty and task, they will be sentenced to death like all civilian officials who try to prevent the Battle Commander from doing his duty or even hinder him while fulfilling his tasks....

The signature indicated the support of the army, the party,  
<sup>17</sup>  
 and the Gestapo.

The army decision to attack Ulm involved a complete change in plan on the corps level. VI Corps was now to be turned off to the southeast instead of the southwest, which had been the course dictated by developments in the Stuttgart operation.  
<sup>18</sup> A considerable portion of the German Nineteenth Army had eluded the Stuttgart trap and had hastily made its escape to the southeast; and Seventh Army troops, forced to move in quickly to stop the Kirchheim corridor,  
<sup>19</sup> became entangled with the French. Elements of the 100th Division and the 103rd Division were committed in this action. Early on 23 April, as a result of the change in VI Corps plans, the 44th Division on the corps left flank

was directed to follow the armor to Ehingen and at the same time "spill over in the direction of Ulm....."<sup>20</sup>

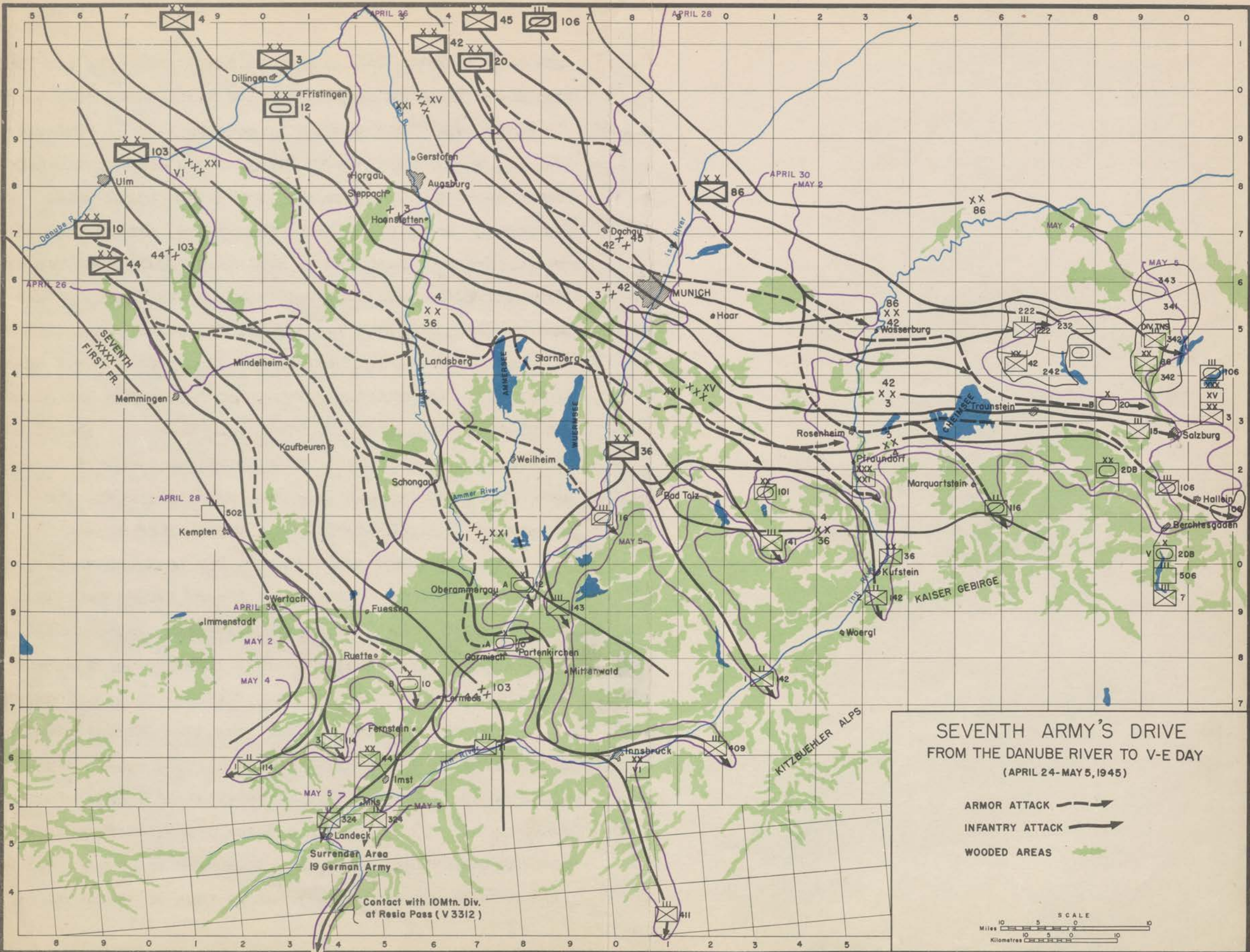
On 22 April both Seventh Army and First French Army had reached the Danube River. The French I Corps made several crossings in its zone and took the town of Sigmaringen from the south.<sup>21</sup> Elements of the 10th Armored and 44th Infantry Divisions farther north had established an American bridgehead in the Ehingen area, and by morning armor was across the river moving into Berg.<sup>22</sup>

French advance elements were out of communication with their commanders and were pursuing down all routes. Moreover certain commanders among the French desired the prestige of capturing Ulm because of its Napoleonic tradition. This caused some infiltrations across the Seventh Army boundary, and at Berg the 44th Division became involved with French columns moving northeast from Sigmaringen. A principle factor in the slowdown of advancing forces at this time was the shortage of gasoline, which was coming in almost exclusively by air transport to nearest available fields.

The boundary difficulties were settled with expedition and affected the progress of the operation very little, if at all. For reasons of prestige, the French were permitted to maintain a guard of honor in Ulm for a period after its capture.

On 24 April Seventh Army troops struck for Ulm. Two regiments of the 44th Division, combined with elements of





SEVENTH ARMY'S DRIVE  
FROM THE DANUBE RIVER TO V-E DAY  
(APRIL 24-MAY 5, 1945)

- ARMOR ATTACK 
- INFANTRY ATTACK 
- WOODED AREAS 



Surrender Area  
19 German Army

Contact with IOMtn. Div.  
at Resia Pass (V 3312)



the 10th Armored Division, moved northeast along the Danube. The 324th Infantry advanced on the north bank; and the 71st Infantry, which had previously made an assault boat crossing and had erected a treadway bridge downstream from Ehingen, moved along the river on the southern or right bank.<sup>23</sup> The troops met moderate to heavy resistance, facing considerable small-arms and sniper fire, artillery, flak, and 88mm shelling. Some infantry made their way riding on tanks and trucks; others dismounted and fought through the streets of Ulm. Between the 71st Regiment and Neu-Ulm ran the swift and not inconsequential Iller River, running north and into the Danube which bisects Ulm. The Germans held the east bank of the Iller from its confluence with the Danube south to a small bridgehead held by American armor at Voehringen, then south to another bridgehead held by armor at Illertissen.<sup>24</sup>

By the afternoon of 24 April the American forces, assisted by elements of the First French Armored Division which had appeared, were cleaning out the last remnants of opposition in old Ulm.<sup>25</sup> By evening the 71st Infantry was making its crossings of the Iller for the assault on Neu-Ulm. The current was too swift and boats turned over. One company crossed on cables, hand over hand. Progress by hand-spans continued, while heavy logs were thrown across blown bridges for catwalk crossings.<sup>26</sup> In general the Germans conducted an organized defense east of the Iller River and a disorganized withdrawal west of the river. Pockets and columns of the enemy were

trapped in the rear, and one group even attempted to cross the Iller at one of the 10th Armored Division crossing sites. On 25 April the artillery, the mortars, and self-propelled guns were silenced. The city of Ulm had fallen. It was completely desolate; the medieval buildings that once had crowded around the cathedral and stretches of the city beyond them had been bombed to ruins.<sup>27</sup>

The fall of the historic city of Ulm prompted a special message from General De Lattre, Commander of the First French Army.

It is my desire to express to you the joy we feel in returning in brotherly union with your army to Ulm which is so full of historical memories particularly precious to French soldiers. I wish to express my feelings at this moment when armored detachments of First French Army, in liaison with their Seventh Army comrades, are reaching this town. It is my wish to renew the expression of my most friendly and faithful combat comradeship to you.<sup>28</sup>

### The Danube Front

The Danube River front in the Seventh Army zone wound its way northeast for some 80 miles from Ehingen to Neuburg, just west of Ingolstadt, which fell to the Third Army's III Corps on 26 April.<sup>29</sup> The break in the Danube line at Ulm was matched by another deep and decisive penetration in the central sector. By 22 April both the 10th and 12th Armored Divisions were at the Danube River. In front of XXI Corps, Combat Command "A" of the 12th Armored Division, far in front of the infantry divisions, seized a bridgehead

at Dillingen.<sup>30</sup> The day before, 21 April a long German horse-drawn column had been overrun. As American forces reached the Danube River, bridges were being blown. The 600-foot Dillingen bridge was captured intact at noon on 22 April. Bombs in and around the structure were deactivated; and by early afternoon elements were across the Danube extending the bridgehead to Fristingen, less than 20 miles northwest of Augsburg, against disorganized<sup>31</sup> oppositions.

Seventh Army exploitation of the Dillingen bridgehead was rapid and immediate. The 4th and 63rd Infantry Divisions, on the left and right respectively of the armor's shifting advance, were ordered to move with all possible speed to the Danube and secure the river crossing. The 3rd Division, which had been garrisoning Nuremberg, was attached to XXI Corps, ordered to cross at Dillingen through the other two divisions and strike for Augsburg.<sup>32</sup> The rout into which the enemy had been thrown by the advance of armored spearheads was apparent to the infantry moving up behind. Withdrawal everywhere was chaotic, and there was no determined attempt to make a stand. The 3rd Division was involved only in brief fire fights in towns and villages, with only scattered contact elsewhere at roadblocks and with by-passed groups. The difficulties of the 63rd Division amounted to delays of its motorized columns by mines and abatis. The 4th Division ran into snipers but



no enemy front lines. On 25 April the 4th Division reached the Danube and caught up to the armor at Gundelfingen five miles southwest of Dillingen. Farther south and west along the river the 63rd Division had moved into the Guenzburg-Leipheim area to establish its own bridgehead.<sup>33</sup>

The desperate character of the First German Army's plight was revealed in its own field order, later captured, which dictated all-out defensive efforts to hold both flanks simultaneously. The right army boundary held by the 17th SS and Division Nibelungen was to be reinforced in the Regensburg zone; at the same time General Foertsch's troops were to "prevent the enemy by repeated attacks of mobile battle groups against his flanks from further penetrations in the Dillingen area".<sup>34</sup> On the nights of 22 and 24 April, out of sight of the Allied air force which had long since converted daylight movements into suicide maneuvers, the prospective battle groups scrambled across the Danube. This evacuation from the Heidenheim vicinity was protected somewhat by the block at Neu-Ulm along the Iller line. Division trains made their way across the river, first, according to the German traffic control officer, the 553rd Volksgrenadier Division with 1,500 men, then the Volksgrenadier 19th Division with 1,500 men, the 198th Infantry Division with between 800 and 1,000 men, and the 168th Infantry Division with 1,200 men.<sup>35</sup> The enemy had managed a skillful withdrawal in an

apparent effort to delay the American forces at the river and regroup scattered elements for a stand before Augsburg or Munich.<sup>36</sup>

The German reaction to the assault on the Danube was sharpest in the central sector of the Seventh Army advance. The Luftwaffe reappeared on 24 April, and some 15 to 25 planes in eight separate attacks struck at the Dillingen bridge. The mission of the 553rd Volksgrenadier Division, in conjunction with the German aerial blows, was to make flanking attacks from the southwest to push the American forces back to the north bank of the river.<sup>37</sup> At Guenzburg the 63rd Division had found a bridge intact, and one platoon had raced into Leipheim before the bridge was blown. The demolition was incomplete and the advance was continued over boards on the remaining uprights. Most of these elements from the 254th Regiment, however, were caught across the Danube without heavy weapons and were hit by a number of heavy German counterattacks all of which were finally repulsed.<sup>38</sup>

All American bridgeheads expanded rapidly; and the German losses in killed, wounded, and captured mounted. Only the 168th Infantry Division and the 19th Volksgrenadier Division withdrew according to plan to escape encirclement. They were considered by the German command as essential for the defense of Augsburg and Munich. Garrisons stationed at both cities had been seriously depleted.

Further defensive efforts could be based only on the strength of troop collecting points and the fanaticism of town commanders who were authorized to gather all stragglers for the formation of alarm defense units.<sup>39</sup> Many of these units were already giving up in surrender to Seventh Army. In several cases commitment became capitulation when it developed that the battle staffs had withdrawn from their own sacrifice orders. In others an entire group simply gave itself up in spite of the German secret order that all deserters were to be hanged publicly on all roads leading to the rear.<sup>40</sup>

With the XV Corps turn in the Seventh Army pivot the 42nd and 45th Divisions, which had moved almost directly south of Ansbach, began their drives southeast to the Danube River on a wide front. The army front was now oriented for the assault of the outer redoubt ring. German resistance was for the most part confined to a passive defense by preparing roadblocks and blowing bridges, but generally the enemy was somewhat less disorganized in this sector than in others. He succeeded at times in controlling sufficient infantry, supported by a limited amount of artillery and antitank guns, to withdraw behind effective delaying actions. The 2nd SS Mountain Division used mines, defended roadblocks and strongpoints on key terrain features and villages. In places the 45th Division ran into strong and stubborn resistance. In Mohheim a quick thrust had intercepted an enemy artillery tank convoy and the Germans

were forced to stand and fight. A six-hour battle resulted. In most of the villages, too, there were sharp fights; but these isolated small-unit actions against the overwhelming American force were ineffective. By 25 April the 45th Division and the 42nd Division on its right had closed to the north bank of the Danube.

The river line in this sector of the Seventh Army zone constituted an effective barrier only for the briefest period. Donaauorth, the river valley's key defensive city since the days of the Roman Empire, proved to be the main delaying obstacle. The bridges across the Danube were blown some five minutes before a column of tanks and infantry of the 42nd Division reached the shore; and the trapped German units fought fanatically in the city, holding up the progress of special task forces by a house to house defense. When Donaauorth was finally cleared after a six-hour fight only 16 of the 700 defenders had been taken prisoner.<sup>42</sup>

On 26 April two infantry regiments of the 42nd Division crossed to the south banks of the Danube just east of Donaauorth. They made the crossing before daylight in assault boats and DUKWs against resistance that varied from moderate to slight, expanded their bridgehead, and by the close of the period had crossed the Lech River from west to east. At 0045 hours the 242nd Infantry had moved across at Schaefstall, suffering difficulty only with the

swift current. To the east of this crossing the 232nd Infantry pushed out from Altisheim; and with the aid of the 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion, which crossed with the assault waves and constructed an improvised wooden span across the Lech, the regiment continued its progress.<sup>43</sup>

What few heavy weapons the German troops had managed to salvage remained concentrated in front of the 45th Division on the XV Corps left flank. Three regiments abreast had closed to the Danube on 26 April between the confluence of the Lech and Neuburg but throughout the morning and most of the afternoon were held to the northern bank by a combination of obstacles: the unsuspected bridging difficulties; the surprising amount of coordinated fire which included nebelwerfers, 20 mm flak guns, and even effective counter-battery; and the confused pockets of stranded enemy units cut off by the demolition of the Neuburg bridge late on the previous day.<sup>44</sup> Boats were capsized and swept downstream by the swift current, floats were damaged and broken, cables snapped. The project for the construction of footbridges was abandoned, but hopes for a treadway bridge were hardly more certain for the current which was found to be as high as 12 miles per hour far exceeded what is considered maximum for treadway bridging.<sup>45</sup> Sufficient troops, however, made their way over the Danube between 1500 hours and nightfall to establish and expand bridgeheads across the river from Marxheim. The swift

current had caused footbridge equipment to disintegrate even though secured by cable, made the operation of infantry support raft impracticable and the use of assault boats and DUKWs extremely difficult. The crossing was attended by heavy losses of equipment as well as some loss of personnel; but by midnight, after extensive shuttling with high-powered motor boats, the 45th Division had eight battalions of infantry across and had secured its bridgehead about two miles deep on a 12 mile front.<sup>46</sup>

Seventh Army had now completed its assault of the Danube River; and XV Corps, like XXI and VI Corps on its right, prepared for what was hoped to be the ultimate drive across the Bavarian foreland to the mountains. Armor was to succeed mechanized cavalry patrols in running the gauntlet of medium and long-range sniper fire and setting the pace of the offensive.<sup>47</sup> The 20th Armored Division, which had taken the place of the 14th Armored Division in XV Corps, began its move into the redoubt operation on 23 April, but it was almost a full week before it was in position to be committed in accordance with plans for a coordinated large-scale tank-infantry assault. It had assembly difficulties, aggravated by long marches in the rain and mud over poor road nets.<sup>48</sup> On 27 April XV Corps issued instructions for the entrance of the armor into the thrust for Munich. The 45th and 42nd Divisions were to continue their present missions of clearing routes of advance for the 20th Armored



Division. Each division was to be prepared to follow the armor closely with one motorized regimental combat team when passed through. The next day Combat Commands A and B moved over the Danube, made their way through elements of the infantry, and were ready for the advance on a broad front generally between the two great autobahns converging on the city of Munich.<sup>49</sup>

### The Road to Austria

Unlike the positional warfare encountered in France, where front lines existed and most of the enemy regarded the issue as not yet settled, the fighting which involved Seventh Army in Bavaria had taken on a new form -- that of isolated groups, scattered and without organization, fighting with varying degrees of resistance. Inadequate distribution of what remained of his troops and scarcity of transportation forced the enemy to defend fiercely at points where he could organize, leaving other and sometimes more important points lightly held. The result was armored spearheads slashing deep into the enemy's rear through these lightly-held corridors and the formation of more pincer movements than he could ever conceivably contain. Infantry on tanks and behind tanks and the mopping-up of small by-passed units characterized the advance. As a report of the 10th Armored Division put it,

Consecutive front line overlays...had the appearance of an irresistible molten mass spreading southward over the maps. Armored rivulets moved ahead suddenly, were slowed and outdistanced by other rivulets with which they joined. Pockets of resistance were left in the armored wake and overrun....<sup>50</sup>

Following receipt of gasoline stocks and the disentanglement of American and French elements at Ulm, there was little delay in bringing the bulk of VI Corps armored and infantry forces across the Danube toward the Tyrolean Alps and the Brenner Pass. From the river line south to the passes into the mountains tank columns of the 10th Armored Division, followed by the 44th Division on the left and the 103rd Division on the right, roared along, striking at will, breaking up the last cadres of General Brandenberg's Nineteenth Army.

Forward American elements moved out of Ulm quickly, leaving behind wild, disorderly celebrations by Allied prisoners of war and displaced persons and the usual civilian rumors that the Nazis would return to complete the destruction of the area with Luftwaffe and SS troops because the people had displayed white flags.<sup>51</sup> By 26 April, three armored spearheads were making their thrust toward the Memmingen-Windelheim-Landsberg line. Infantry elements were being motorized and kept moving throughout the night to close up on the armor. As General Brooks, commanding VI Corps, told his division commanders, "push on and push hard,....this is a pursuit, not an attack."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> At times the pursuit seemed more like a fantasy of violence and speed and extravagant incident. Armored columns were rolling 20 and 30 miles a day. Weakly-manned strong points were destroyed by fire and huge enemy groups shipped to the rear in bulk prisoner formations. <sup>53</sup> Task forces wreaked havoc on German vehicles and personnel. One tank column ran across a large camouflaged airfield and engaged in target practice on jet planes getting ready to take off. <sup>54</sup> Dug-in enemy infantry offered feeble or no resistance; one patrol of the 103rd Division reported: "they have women with them, evidently in their holes, our machine guns opened up on them and we dropped a little artillery, and they ran from their holes dragging the girls by the hand after them...." <sup>55</sup>

The assault sped through little countryside villages which, according to orders, were taken under fire if there were no white flags flying. When evidence was found of civilian sniping and of German soldiers who had changed into civilian clothes, the town was destroyed. The orders had been: "If you run into any resistance in the towns, particularly the big ones, I don't want you to take casualties. Use phosphorous, TDs and everything else and chew them to pieces...." <sup>56</sup> Little resistance was encountered. This was very far from General Jodl's dream of a hinterland possessed with a fanatical will to fight. <sup>57</sup> The troops ran

into burning concentration camps, with smouldering corpses, caches of gold dental fillings, a synagogues crowded with airplane motor parts, American secret agents who a short while before had been parachuted deep into the redoubt lines and now found themselves in prisoner of war cages. <sup>58</sup>

An infantry school, which had been training recruits with sticks for rifle drill and water cans to simulate the noise of machine gun fire, was overrun; and the commandant formally surrendered his entire command of 200 students, insisting that his sabre be kept as a token of the surrender. <sup>59</sup>

A civilian telephone exchange was captured intact, and a call was put through to Innsbruck offering surrender or destruction.

Armor in multiple columns moved down to dominate the road-nets, with Combat Command B into Memmingen, Combat Command A in the center into Mindelheim, and Combat Command R on the left lunging for Landsberg. <sup>60</sup> Infantrymen followed closely to eliminate small and disorganized pockets and round up hordes of prisoners. In the evening of 26 April the 411th Regiment of the 103rd Division entered Landsberg. Tanks had already cleared out and remained entrenched on the east side of the Lech River which divides the city. The bridge crossing had been destroyed, and from the east shore came heavy sniper fire. The next morning 103rd Division troops were across the river and the eastern half of Landsberg was cleared. A garrison of Hungarian troops was discovered by

one platoon which found the entire command of some 918 officers and men lined up formally. The garrison commander called his troops to attention, did an about-face, and surrendered his men. The garrison, fearful that it might be fired upon, had stacked all weapons prior to the arrival of the American troops.<sup>61</sup>

The fall of Landsberg was not without its larger political significance. It was in the local prison-fortress that Adolph Hitler served his sentence following his failure in the Munich putsch. American troops moving through added to their collection of war trophies a huge Nazi memorial flag and a bronze plaque which read: "Here a system without honor kept Germany's greatest son a prisoner from 11 November 1923 to 20 December 1924. In this cell Adolph Hitler wrote the book of the National Socialist Revolution MEIN KAMPF."<sup>62</sup> On the route out of the city a concentration camp was overrun. Some barracks were on fire and shriveled smoking corpses were lying about. Thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews from various European countries, were found herded in huts, weak and emaciated and in a state of almost complete physical and mental degeneration.<sup>63</sup>

The armored thrust for Memmingen reached south on both sides of the Iller River. The German forces which had been committed to hold some kind of organized line to the west were upset and had to face attacks from three directions.

West of the Iller disorganized trapped troops were quickly mopped up. On the east bank the enemy opposed the advance with fire from small arms, antitank weapons, and occasionally some artillery. Each town became a brief strongpoint, and panzerfaust and artillery fire was taking its toll of the tanks of Combat Command B. More rapid and cheaper successes were achieved by playing for surrender rather than by direct simple assault. Local burgomeisters were dispatched ahead to convey issued ultimata, and leaflets were prepared and dropped. The seizure of Memmingen was practically complete some two hours before the columns rolled through the streets. 64

The surrender was effected by the chief medical officer of the garrison. The city was clear of German troops, but in the surrounding hills there were troops who had already refused to obey cease-fire orders. The officials of the city requested another hour to permit them to apprehend the fanatics who refused to abide by surrender terms. After some delay the commander of Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division, sent his final message to the mayor of Memmingen through an interpreter. He stated that his troops would march into town immediately, that they would be met by the mayor, that there would be white flags over all the big buildings in town including the church and the city hall, and that there was to be no firing of any kind. In the event of any opposition or fire it was promised



that tanks and artillery aided by bombers would destroy the city.<sup>65</sup> There was no resistance in Memmingen. All de-  
fending forces had withdrawn.<sup>66</sup>

The assault continued without pause, as Seventh Army columns ranged southward over successive approach lines to the mountain redoubt: Kempten-Kaufbeuren-Schongau, Immenstadt-Fuessen-Oberammergau, and finally Landeck-Imst-Innsbruck. This last line brought army troops up to the Resia, Fern, and Brenner Passes. The armor and the infantry moved down together in the very model of blitzkrieg tactics. On 27 April Kempten surrendered without a fight. On 28 April Schongau was taken. The tactical problems involved in the critical bridging of the Lech and Ammer Rivers were solved to the mutual satisfaction of tank and foot soldier. Task forces made up of about one-half a combat command followed by a battalion of infantry kept supporting troops together during river crossings.<sup>67</sup> These columns continued to push through a chaos of destroyed German positions, by-passing burning vehicles and scattered pockets of resistance. Troops of the 44th and 103rd Divisions followed in the rain, cold, and snow of late April, sometimes on trucks, more often on foot, flushing the towns, cleaning out the countryside.<sup>68</sup>

On 29 April Seventh Army encountered its first Alpine difficulties. General Patch's instructions had been to take Innsbruck with all possible speed, but speed and even

movement became a serious problem. Early that morning the VI Corps Commander discussed the situation with General Morris, commanding the 10th Armored Division, whose offensive had come to a halt on the approaches to Austria. A blown bridge over a swift-rushing mountain stream was a more serious obstacle than it would have represented on the flatlands of Bavaria. Here the road-net was extremely limited. Enemy troops on top of the hills above the road, although they were few, could hold up an armored advance by well-directed bazooka fire. This they did. It became necessary to wait for sufficient infantry troops coming up behind the armor to clear the Germans from the high ground. Both Generals Dean and McAuliffe of the 44th and 103rd Divisions, were given instructions to make certain that, whenever the movement of armor was checked by enemy from high ground, infantry troops were to move out and clean it up fast. General Brooks had told them, "I want to make speed today. The armor will take care of the roads and you take care of the hills when they are bothered."<sup>69</sup> However, the advance was comparatively slow that day, 29 April, and the next. Elements of the 44th Division ran out of gas.<sup>70</sup> Resistance was organized at strategically centered roadblocks studded along the main road nets. Armored and infantry columns were forced to move along the steep and narrow snow-dotted Alpine passes, constantly coping with craters, mine-fields, overturned vehicles, blown bridges, and at one point a 200-yard man-made avalanche. In the mountainous defiles

the tanks became perfect crawling targets. The supporting troops routed the Germans directing protecting fire on the obstacles from the overlooking heights; but the armor, having sped more than 100 miles in less than five days, soon reached terrain which prevented further vehicular advance. <sup>71</sup>

Combat Command A, driving east from Partenkirchen, ran into a large crater which completely obstructed the road. The crater was filled in by a tank dozer, and a short distance beyond a 50-foot bridge over a gorge was found blown. This was by-passed by the tanks which then ran into a mine belt protected by sniper fire with more blown bridges ahead. Combat Command B was halted at a hairpin curve where a road-block, consisting of an avalanche of boulders, gravel, and logs extending for some 200 yards, proved to be a formidable barrier. <sup>72</sup>

At this point Seventh Army forces had already reached into Austria. The 71st Infantry of the 44th Division captured Fuessen on the Lech River where the glacier-fed stream emerges through a gorge from the Austrian Tyrol. Across the river from the lower slopes of the great mountains of the old German border looked down the imposing castles of Bavarian royalty, Neuschwanstein and Hohenschwangau. The blown bridge across the Lech prompted a maneuver to the southwest over steep and densely-wooded terrain to enter Vila in Austria. Then the infantry moved down again to seize the road nets at Reutte and Lermoos. <sup>73</sup>

By 30 April the proportions of the traffic crisis along the winding mountain roads and narrow ravines had become quite clear. The armor had stopped rolling and the infantry was blocked up behind. At noon the 44th Division was calling corps to find out if the 10th Armored Division could not be moved from out in front of its troops. Terrain made the further advance of armor impracticable. By late afternoon orders were issued to assemble the armor in place. Its mission to clear the Garmisch-Lermoos road was completed, and the division was to move to the Garmisch-Partenkirchen area with the least possible interference with leading advance elements.<sup>74</sup> The end of April saw the dropping of the armor and the entrance of infantry laterals across the Alpine passes into the Inn River Valley from Landeck to Innsbruck.

#### Augsburg and Dachau

The capitulation of Augsburg in the central sector of Seventh Army's final Bavarian operations was one of the strangest stories of the advance through Germany. The city was situated directly in the path of General Milburn's XXI Corps assault, and the 3rd Division was specifically committed from Nuremberg via Dillingen for its seizure. It lies at the confluence of the Lech and Wertach Rivers on a broad cultivated valley floor. Its urban pattern is crowded

with canal spans and innumerable small bridges the destruction of which would have constituted a considerable barrier. On the whole, however, its importance as a military target was comparatively slight. The large Messerschmitt factories in the southern suburb of Haunstetten had been demolished by Allied air raids. There remained in Augsburg a large number of hospitalized German army troops. Augsburg was saved from the utter devastation which had come to Aschaffenburg, Wuerzburg, Heilbronn, Nuremberg, and Ulm, largely because of a unique subversive movement which facilitated the entrance of American Troops.

Seventh Army negotiated the approaches to the Augsburg area without notable difficulty. One night a convoy of trucks took a wrong turn and was demolished at an enemy roadblock; the 12th Armored Division quickly made an attack in this sector to recover what was left. The next morning artillery fire from guns somewhere around the city came into play to support resistance in settlements along the lines of advance. <sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, General O'Daniel of the 3rd Division issued orders to hold up artillery and counter-battery fire: "I don't want you to fire at all into Augsburg unless it is actually observed firing,...Keep your eyes open for white flags or other signs of surrender as we have had many indications..." <sup>76</sup> Early on the morning of 27 April the 4th Division had reported that two industrialists had come through to Horgau to make arrangements for

capitulation and the sparing of the city. Along the roads and in the fields SS's were found with white handkerchiefs and pillowcases fluttering.

A few German troops who had retreated all the way from the Danube had the mission of holding Augsburg. No orders had been given them to retreat to any other defensive line. However, of an estimated 5,000 enemy soldiers in front of the 3rd Division about 4,000 of them had been taken prisoners before the division had reached the outskirts of Augsburg.<sup>77</sup>

Both the Augsburg battle staff and the high command were aware of this critical situation. By 25 April they had seen that no reinforcements were available and understood that a defense with the forces at hand was impossible. Still planning and preparation for resistance went ahead, based on 350 men of various army units plus 300 to 400 men of the Volksturm. At this point pressure from the citizens began to make its disruptive influence felt. With the Americans at Dillingen and already beyond the Danube alarm spread among the civilian population. Representatives of church, business, art, all tried to prevail upon General Fehn, who was in command of the Augsburg defenses, to surrender the city. Underground groups began to organize their elements for a military or political coup. On the morning of 28 April General Fehn, as he himself later confessed, had a force not in excess of 80 men. The German



27th Artillery Replacement Regiment, which was to be committed as infantry, had vanished; other units were out of contact; the roadblocks were not manned; the bridges were only partly prepared for demolition. But General Fehn was an old army man of 41 years service, and he had as yet heard nothing from higher headquarters countermanding his original orders. 78

The 3rd Division struck at Augsburg in multiple columns. The 30th Infantry moved in from the northwest to the autobahn and across the Lech river in the vicinity of Gersthofen. The 7th Infantry attacked from the west, its battalions deployed south of the autobahn toward Steppach and Kriegshaber in the city's outskirts. Late in the evening of 27 April Colonel Edson, commanding the 15th Infantry, received word from his 1st Battalion: "Just got a phone call from Augsburg. People called. Call themselves the 'Freedom Party of Augsburg'. Want to surrender the city. City in dissension....."<sup>79</sup> The 1st Battalion proceeded to attack Goeggingen, and the 3rd Battalion was quickly organized as a task force to push through the 7th Infantry in Kriegshaber and sweep into the heart of Augsburg. Tank-infantry teams were moving toward the city in a wide arc, and spearheads were making their appearances in all the suburbs.

Within Augsburg itself the unrest had come to a focus. Various isolated underground groups discovered each other and joined forces. Real military strength was lacking,

however. A friendly battalion of troops in the Pfersee Kaserne west of the city had been transferred at the last moment. Revolutionary tactics were improvised. Early on 28 April agents were dispatched to spread the news that the city had surrendered and that white flags should be flown everywhere. The appeal was circulated from house to house. Patrols were sent out to meet elements of the American assault and guide them quickly into the town. The 3rd Battalion commander was led up Karolinienstrasse to the command post pill-box of General Fehn, who was given five minutes to surrender. General Fehn made an attempt to call for SS reinforcements south of Augsburg. The deputy Gauleiter committed suicide. His telephone and pistol both forcibly removed, the General was escorted out of his pillbox; and he stared with surprise at the dozen-odd men in three jeeps, a tank, and a reconnaissance car. A white flag was flying from the tower of St. Ulrich, the highest point in Augsburg.

The city had fallen.<sup>80</sup> Dismounted and motorized security patrols arrived to roam the streets, clear underground shelter tunnels, buildings, and sidealleys. Wop-up details were accompanied by armor and loud-speakers. The people complied with the order to open all windows and to display white flags. American troops then cut away to the east toward the Munich autobahn with orders to "barrel down the big Highway".<sup>81</sup>

To the right of the 3rd Division, which was to return as the right flank of XV Corps for the attack on Munich, the 4th Division crossed the Lech River and was making steady progress in its zone. The 36th Division, which was attached to XXI Corps to relieve the 63rd Division, attacked south and southeast from the vicinity of Landsberg, mopping up behind 12th Armored tanks. Task forces were blocking the northern approaches to the Bavarian Alps and cutting the road net extending southeast from Munich. According to Seventh Army intentions, the infantry was to be prepared to move into the Inn River Valley, the armor, with one Combat Command of the 2nd French Armored Division attached, was directed toward the Brenner Pass. VI Corps was striking from Schongau and XXI Corps from Weilheim. It was understood in forward headquarters that the corps which hit the road junction at Mittenwald first would drive on through Innsbruck. XXI Corps moved along sweeping the Ammersee-Wuermsee area; there were no enemy front lines with which troops were in contact. The terrain, blown bridges, a few defended road-blocks formed the principal obstacles to progress. The countryside roads were choked with masses of unescorted captured German prisoners and lines of Allied liberated personnel.

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North of the Augsburg-Munich autobahn Seventh Army elements were driving for the capital city of Bavaria.

In the center of the XV Corps zone troops of the 42nd and 45th Infantry Divisions moved consistently forward despite enemy delaying actions. Before them lay the 2nd Mountain Division, retreating cleverly, the 17th SS and 25th SS Divisions, always protected by withdrawal orders which guaranteed them security for a day or two. Also in front lay the town of Dachau.<sup>83</sup> In Dachau the Nazi regime had established its first and largest concentration camp; and on Sunday afternoon, 29 April, when the first American soldier broke through the gates there were more than 30,000 prisoners of every nationality, religion, and political allegiance.<sup>84</sup>

Dachau was entered by both the 42nd and 45th Divisions. It was reported that I Company of the 222nd Regiment entered the camp at 1313 hours, and that the 2nd Battalion of the 157th Infantry entered the camp at 1445 hours and cleared it at 1705 hours.<sup>85</sup> The first entry was made by a special forward patrol, led by General Linden, assistant commander of the 42nd Division. It was met only by some SS sniper fire. General Linden reported,

It was unbelievable. Freight cars full of piled cadavers no more than bones covered with skin, bloody heaps at the rail car doors were weakened prisoners, trying to get out, were machine-gunned to death by the SS....rooms stacked almost to the ceilings high with tangled human bodies adjoining the cremation furnaces... rooms where lay the dying survivors of the horror train limp under filthy blankets, laying in human excreta, trying to salute our officers with broomstick arms, only to fall back....<sup>86</sup>

Some two weeks before, in reply to the Dachau commandant's request that the camp be turned over to the Allies, Heinrich Himmler had written that such a procedure was not to be considered. The camp was to be evacuated immediately and no prisoner allowed to fall into Allied hands alive. Himmler, who signed himself as SS Reichsfuehrer, warned that prisoners had behaved barbarously to the civilian population at Buchenwald.<sup>87</sup> In spite of these orders only one large-scale transport leaving Dachau was organized before American troops overran the area.

According to the account of the 157th Regiment, which was attacking past Dachau on the divisional boundary line, a German woman cycling north on the road was stopped for questioning and revealed that she had just come from Munich, crossing a bridge in the town of Dachau itself. Company L mounted tanks and raced for Dachau. The armored column sped into town. When the lead tank reached a point just 20 yards from the bridge, the structure blew up raining debris on all the riders. Reconnaissance located a nearby<sup>88</sup> footbridge, and the concentration camp was assaulted. The battle was a singular encounter with the SS, who had previously been held as a threat and never committed. Some 300 guards and troops were eliminated after a stiff fire fight.

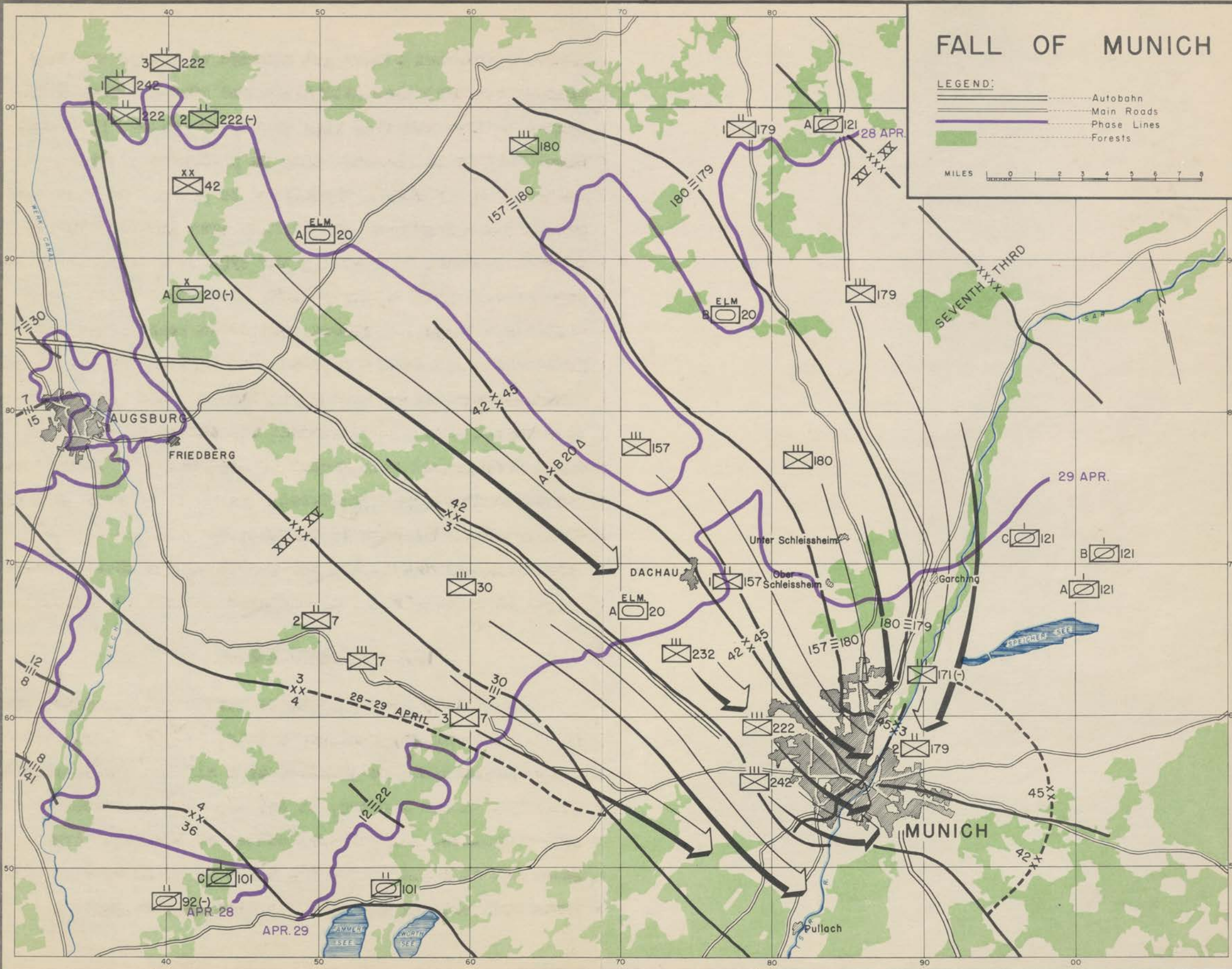
The prisoners were overcome with joy. Some had rushed the electrically charged wires for their freedom. Many were



# FALL OF MUNICH

LEGEND:  
----- Autobahn  
----- Main Roads  
----- Phase Lines  
----- Forests

MILES 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8





electrocuted, but others got through to hunt down their wardens and beat them with fists and stones. They even seized weapons and shot many guards to death. Prisoners identified SS men masquerading in prisoners clothing and killed them. Violence threatened to get out of hand, and eventually infantrymen had to fire over inmates' heads to quiet them down. <sup>89</sup> Guarding the typhus-infested camp, became an important military task. But the hysteria soon subsided. Flags and colors, which had been improvised from sheets and scraps of cloth and buried in barracks and rafters, were raised throughout Dachau. Men sang songs of their homelands; others danced; and others wept. A few whose spirits had been broken by long years of imprisonment stood petrified and stonefaced. The camp underground, an "International Prisoners' Committee", assisted in the maintenance of order; and the combat troops moved forward to participate in the four-division assault of Munich. <sup>90</sup>

### The End of Nazi Munich

Seventh Army had its entire left flank in motion for the drive on Munich, Germany's third largest city. With a population of three-quarters of a million Munich ranked after Berlin and Hamburg; it was also the political, administrative, and cultural center of Bavaria. Armor moved out in front during the night of 27-28 April. All three regiments of the 45th Division were completely

motorized in order to follow closely the advances of the 20th Armored Division. The 106th Cavalry Group was attached to give the infantry more mobility and striking power. The 42nd Division farther west was closing in behind the armor in its zone. Following the capture of Augsburg, the 3rd Division on the XV Corps right flank moved out along the autobahn and Highway 2 south of the autobahn, driving motorized columns through roadblocks and scattered German bands. Continuous truck convoys were scarcely enough to keep supplies available for the speeding offensive, and in the next few days an airborne load of some 400,000 gallons of gasoline was landed and managed to relieve the major shortages.<sup>91</sup>

There was no little rivalry and competition among Seventh Army forces for the prize of the city of Munich. Just east of Augsburg in Friedberg, which was surrendered by the burgomeister without a fight, General O'Daniel had issued orders to push toward Munich as fast as possible. It was reported that a Freedom Movement had sprung up within the city, that along the autobahn between Augsburg and Munich there were only a few troops with perhaps roadblocks and blown bridges.<sup>92</sup> When intelligence of the internal dissension in Munich reached headquarters of the 12th Armored Division, a squadron of the 101st Cavalry Group was moved around the southern tip of the Ammersee and up Highway 12 to the northeast toward Munich.<sup>93</sup>

General White, Army Chief of Staff, informed the units under army command that Seventh Army had received a

delegation from Munich which expressed a desire to have Munich spared in the same way as Augsburg. Three infantry divisions were converging on the city. The 42nd Division was making a relatively slow advance. Blown bridges were in its way, and armor crowded all the roads. Infantry troops were banked up waiting for the traffic confusion ahead to clear, when finally General Collins' request for a clear passage was answered with the removal of all elements of the 20th Armored Division.<sup>94</sup> Late on 28 April General O'Daniel indicated his concern that some other division might reach Munich first, if his units did not put out the necessary speed.<sup>95</sup> When at long last the city of Munich fell during the next two days, three infantry divisions, two armored divisions, and a cavalry group all claimed the prize and submitted reports of early entries and special agreements with the mayor, the governor, and private revolutionary groups.<sup>96</sup>

Within the city itself there had been a limited civil war. These last days of April were an opportunity for the German underground to express itself in action. The rapid advance of American troops, the helplessness of the German army, and the growing disaffection of whole sections of the civilian population created a revolutionary situation. As Seventh Army approached Munich, plans to strike a blow against the Nazi regime were made by a variety of groups ranging from sincere anti-Nazi underground workers to war-weary burghers

and common opportunists. Some of them were coordinated by a centralizing leadership; others worked alone and were caught up in the natural course of the violence which broke out during the night of 27-28 April. The simultaneity of the little revolts and rebellions in the city of Munich and throughout the bavarian countryside gave a formal appearance of unified direction to what was really a number of disconnected events.

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The armed cadre of the Munich putsch consisted of three platoons of the Dolmetscher Kompanie (Interpreter Company) of Wehrkreis VII, commanded by Captain Rupprecht Gerngross. A substantial auxiliary force to this group was supplied by a panzer replacement battalion stationed at Freising and nearby units with sympathetic infantry personnel. The putsch had a limited, temporary success. The Nazi Governor of Bavaria, General Ritter von Epp, was taken into custody; and the Munich radio station was seized and converted into an anti-Nazi propaganda agency. But the main assaults proved inadequate, and with the failure to take the offices of the party in the city and the army headquarters at Pullach, the rebellion began to lose ground. Although the word had been spread sufficiently to touch off independent street activity, the signal for the revolt had been issued too soon for it to be effectively coordinated with the American offensive. Nevertheless, when elements of Seventh Army made their way

into the city some 48 hours later they could report that the anti-Nazi underground movement was of considerable help in the taking of Munich and that all bridges were intact. <sup>98</sup>

The half-encirclement of Munich by the 45th Division moving in from the north, the 42nd Division from the north-west, and the 3rd Division along the Isar River from the south was almost complete on 29 April, although it was not until the next day that the city was wholly clear. Some time before noon on 30 April forward troops of the 3rd and 42nd Divisions poured into the metropolitan area, meeting no resistance, only small groups of cheering civilians waving both white and Bavarian flags. The 45th Division met a less friendly reception. Some resistance was contributed by several SS battalions entrenched in prepared defensive positions centered around their college and barracks in the northern outskirts of the city, known in the Hitler era as the Hauptstadt der Bewegung. <sup>99</sup>

The 45th Division had been moving forward with three regiments abreast. On 29 April the 180th Infantry, following the armor, had attacked toward Munich at 0630 hours. Enemy fire at the railroad underpass north of Schleissheim stopped the tanks to the immediate front of the infantry. Dismounted troops proceeded to reduce the resistance and cross the Schleissheimer Canal. The 179th Infantry had cut its way to the Ingolstadt-Munich autobahn, but its advance was halted abruptly when strong artillery and small

arms fire opened up on Garching. One company was forced to withdraw. Air strikes were requested but denied because of inclement weather and other employment. Early plans for a task-force coup, involving a German-American commando seizure of the SS staff, fell through.<sup>100</sup>

Finally the division organized its three-pronged assault which carried it into the heart of the city. The 157th Infantry attacked from Dachau at 0700 hours on 30 April, uncovered another concentration camp, and moved through light opposition to reach the Isar River and secure the bridges. The 179th Infantry cleared Garching house by house and sped down into the city to the river. In the middle the 180th Regiment still found determined and coordinated resistance on the part of SS troops. Enemy activity was being slowly snuffed out by barrages from 240 mm howitzers. Infantry companies, however, were forced to advance under the cover of smoke screens; and one battalion attacked and withdrew three times across open ground burning with intense flak, mortar, and machine gun fire. During the assault white flags were going up. One command post reported that there was a large white streamer on top of the biggest building in Munich. The SS troops remained to be driven out window by window and wall by wall. The purging of the SS college and barracks was complete by 1500 hours, and before midnight all the battalions had closed to the final phase line along the Isar.<sup>101</sup>



On 1 May General Eisenhower, in a special order of the day, wrote: "The whole Allied Expeditionary Force congratulates the Seventh Army on the seizure of Munich, the cradle of the Nazi beast."<sup>102</sup> General Patch detailed the 45th Division to garrison the city, which was little more than a massive shell, and instructed XV Corps to prepare for further action after a two-day rest period. VI Corps was faced only with Innsbruck and Landeck, the Brenner and Resia Passes, deep in Austria. XXI Corps was about to enter the Inn River Valley.<sup>103</sup> The feeling was widespread that the war was almost over, the campaign against Germany drawing to a close. The Seventh Army G-3 noted, "there is a growing need for maps of the Pacific area."<sup>104</sup>

FOOTNOTESChapter XXIX

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CHAPTER XXXLAST DAYS

On 1 May Seventh Army faced an enemy force scattered from Innsbruck to Salzburg in an arc of confusion. General Foerthsch's First German Army had no semblance of organization. Some ~~sixteen~~<sup>11</sup> of its divisions, which included six Volksgrenadier, two Infantry, and the 2nd Mountain, had been destroyed, their ranks decimated to less than 500 combat infantry effectives. The SS troops alone were in a position or a condition to hold. The 38th SS Grenadier Division, under LXXXII Corps, was responsible for the right flank; and on the left, under the XIII SS Corps, the 407th Mobilization Division and the 17th SS were, making organized withdrawals, still threatening to commit their combat infantry strength which amounted to about 7,000. Farther west new elements, including the 1st Indian Legion, were being absorbed by General Brandenburg's Nineteenth Army. For a long period the Twenty-fourth German Army had been guarding the Swiss frontier east of Basel against the eventuality of an Allied thrust; but this was only a skeleton force of low-grade miscellaneous outfits, most of which the German Command had always been wary of committing to action. General Brandenburg himself had not a

single division capable of effective defensive combat. The total strength of the 47th, 189th, 246th, 257th and 559th Volksgrenadier, plus the 465th Mobilization Division, came to 3,000 men.

The enemy facing Seventh Army had neither an order of battle nor a front line. A top-secret telegram which ordered the assumption of the Befehlshaber Nord command by General Jaschke was the last instance of coordinated defensive instructions. His primary mission, as stated, was to occupy the north front of the Alps fortress and to block the entrance to the mountains as a main effort. Fortification of strongpoints was to be carried out with the utmost effort using unarmed soldiers of dissolved units. Very few of the commanders and Gauleiters to whom the directive was addressed ever received it. By 2 May the picture of dissolution was clear. At noon on that day the surrender of the German forces in Italy became effective.

### Into the Valley

The Inn Valley is isolated from Bavaria on the north and from Italy on the south by two great ranges of precipitous mountains which constitute the classic Alpine block of difficult military terrain. The parallel ranges run roughly northeast-southwest; and

the walls are pierced by a number of roads leading to the water-shed of the Inn River, which flows out of Switzerland through the heart of the Austrian Tyrol past Innsbruck, the Tyrolese capital and age-old cross-roads of commerce. These entrances, however, scarcely formed effective avenues of approach, subject as they were to commanding ground on front and flanks.

These almost prohibitive conditions of combat had stooped the 10th Armored Division in its headlong advance; vehicles had been bottle-necked, and the terrain precluded the maneuver necessary for the proper employment of armor. Infantry patrols alone proved able to manage, and the 44th and 103rd Divisions proceeded to push south toward VI Corps objectives on the Seventh Army right flank, the passes into and out of Austria. The almost vertical walls of the valleys, rising in forested slopes to the bare, solid rock of the peaks above, crowded invading troops into corridors served only by narrow, twisting roads. The few spring-like days of the last week in April had given way to a return of winter. Snow and sleet were falling, while heavy clouds filled the narrow valleys and canyons from wall to wall, "like the ceiling of a room". To the west the First French Army was fighting south into the Austrian province of Vorarlberg. On the VI Corps front the 44th Division reached out toward the Fern

and Resia Passes via Imst and Landeck, while farther east the 103rd Division approached the Inn Valley through the Mittenwald Pass with Innsbruck and the Brenner Pass in zone. To the south the Fifth Army was moving up through the Italian Tyrol for a junction of American forces.<sup>2</sup>

For the infantry of the 44th Division the first days of May were a series of engagements for key mountain passes. The tortuous terrain rendered by-passing tactics almost impossible, requiring the search for additional axes along which to press the attack and avoid road-blocked defiles.<sup>3</sup> German resistance centered at the Fern Pass, the better of the two passes in division zone leading into the Inn water-shed. The fire-fight at this point lasted for 48 hours on 1 and 2 May before positions were overpowered by a well-executed envelopment of the rear. The out-flanking movement to the east cut the road behind the Germans and linked up American forces for the final drive on Imst and Landeck.

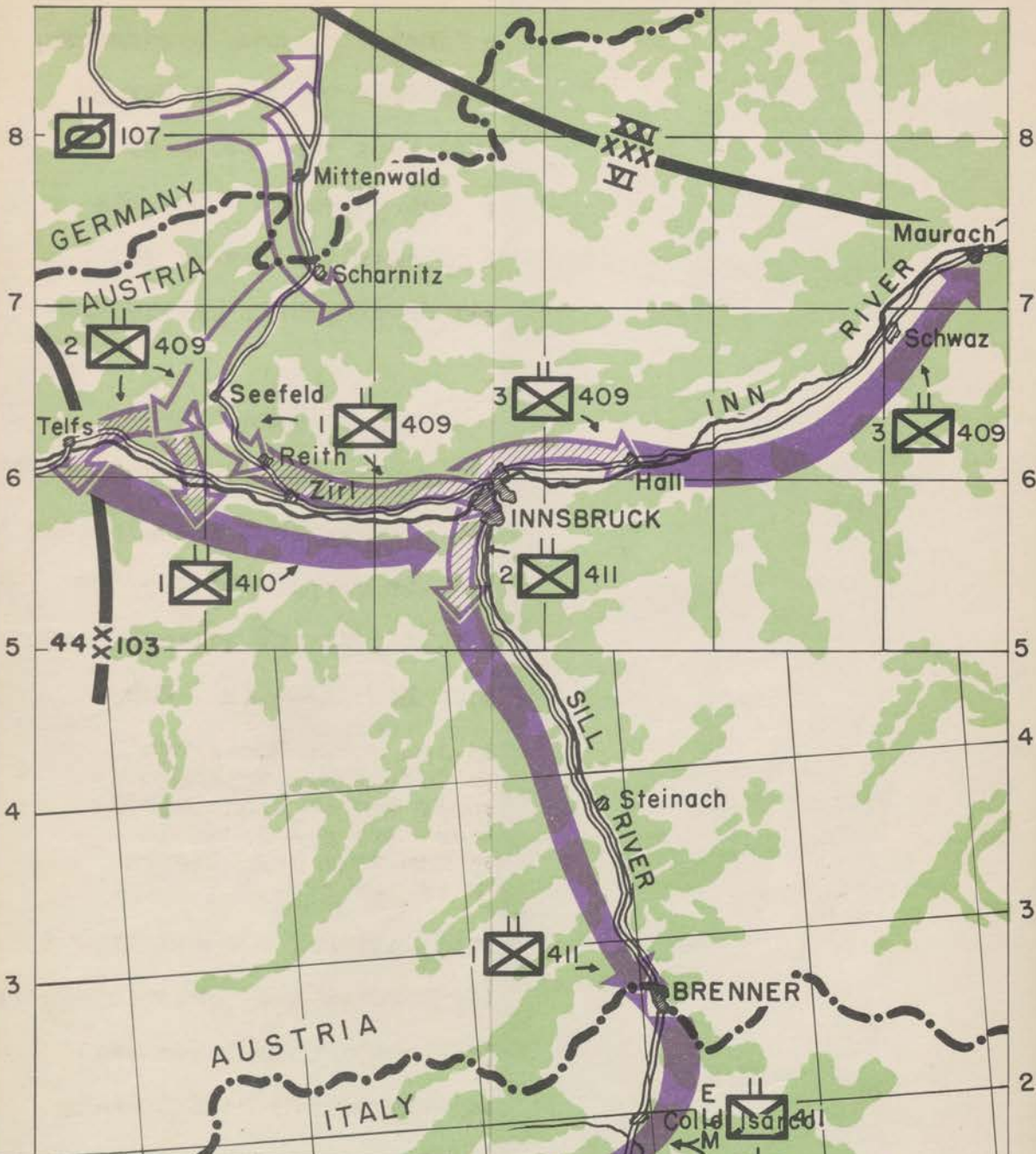
For a day and a night the 71st Infantry had made no progress against several hundred entrenched enemy employing small arms, machine guns, mortars, and panzerfaust fire to cover the series of road craters in the vicinity of Fern. One battalion had fought past a landslide and a road-block to face the last

holding force at the pass itself, when another battalion advancing in the rear was approached by a band of mountaineers. This party of five, an officer and four enlisted men of an Austrian partisan organization, offered to guide the Americans over the mountains. There was apparently a little-known route to the east of and around the pass to Fernstein, lying just to the south at a point where a deep gorge was bridged. The offer was accepted, and while the battle to the north continued Fernstein to the south was secured. Elements moved up the highway to take the defenders from the rear by surprise.<sup>4</sup>

The drive was resumed, but not without further resistance from natural obstacles. Huge snow banks blocked the roads, and troops were exposed to freezing weather.<sup>5</sup> The war, however, was now simply a matter of a few more uncomfortable hours; and when news of the end came at 1705 hours on 5 May the keeper of the 71st Regimental Journal scrawled the entry "all hostilities will cease" and added in the margin "about time!"<sup>6</sup> On 4 May the 44th Division had cleared Imst and had come into sight of Landeck. The troops moved on toward the little town of Mils where the division fought its last battle.<sup>7</sup>




Landeck ahead and the Resia Pass beyond were the final objectives, and both now were American targets. The town of Mils was left burning; and in the local

6 7 8 9 0



# INNSBRUCK LINK WITH 5<sup>th</sup> ARMY

## LEGEND

-  2 May Advance
-  3 May Advance
-  4 May Advance



0 1 2

truce arrangements made with Nineteenth Army commanders, represented by several colonels from the 257th German Infantry Division, a withdrawal to a line south of Landeck was agreed upon. <sup>8</sup> By 1900 hours on 5 May the city of Landeck was occupied by American forces who now awaited news of the larger developments involving surrender and peace.

Farther east on the VI Corps front the 103rd Division had faced the city of Innsbruck, Seventh Army's primary objective in the Tyrol. Operations instructions to the division had made clear its responsibility for spearheading through the Inn Valley to the Brenner Pass. General Brooks had told General McAuliffe on 1 May:

All my chips are on you now. The other people have run into a 500-ft chunk of blown road on the side of a cliff and it will practically stymie them....so we have got to do it with you. So drive hard and toss your blocks out on all these roads that you pass.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the day one regiment was out beyond Mittenwald and had practically cleared the Scharnitz-Seefeld highway. But it was not before evening on 3 May that troops entered Innsbruck, and only on the next morning that formal surrender of the city was taken.

Moving through Scharnitz division intelligence discovered that the local commercial telephone exchange still had communications with German-held territories to the south. A call was put through and conversations were begun with the Innsbruck military command, which seemed anxious to negotiate. At some time during the



four hours given the Germans to consider the demand for surrender the telephone lines went out. There was, however, every indication that resistance was crumbling and that enemy commanders were in a receptive mood for any kind of ultimatum. One commander had come forward under a white flag and propped an armistice pending the completion of negotiations one way or the other. The American battalion commander refused the request. His orders had been to continue the attack. Fighting was resumed in the vicinity of Seefeld and Reith. <sup>10</sup>

Further threats to the German command, the immediate aerial and artillery destruction of the city of Innsbruck, brought agreement to capitulation. Papers were prepared for the surrender of the entire Tyrol-Vorarlberg area, and parliamentaries were dispatched for American emissaries passing through the lines. Blindfolded, carrying white flags, the American mission climbed eight miles down the mountain from Reith into the Inn Valley. Members of the surrender party arrived at the headquarters to find themselves prisoners. The German Army negotiator was seized and told that armed Austrians had taken over the town and were in control everywhere. That afternoon the underground resistance movement had managed a successful coup. <sup>11</sup>

This new complication proved to be very confusing. <sup>12</sup>  
There were at that time other resistance groups in the area, as well as groups of fanatical German defenders

whose sniper fire from the Alpine heights slowed down the infantry advance. Nevertheless, the issue was only a matter of hours, or a day; and General McAuliffe on his own responsibility called off the scheduled destruction of Innsbruck.

The Tyrolean resistance movement was of the same partisan cut as the forces which had sabotaged the German defense in Augsburg and Munich. Here in Austria there was an additional nationalist factor, and this served further to divide the loyalty of the troops at the disposal of the gauleiter. Most of the main targets of the partisan putsch had been seized during the afternoon and evening of 2 May. The Gestapo camp and archives, the barracks of an SS Kaserne, the gendarmerie and police barracks, the local concentration camp, and the German Army headquarters were all taken, although not without a number of sharp fire-fights. An American impression of the Innsbruck revolution had;

heavily-armed Austrians swarming all over the place, and the whole set-up looked like a Class C Hollywood movie....Some were in German uniform, some in civilian clothing, all wearing the white and red arm-band of the resistance movement. They all seemed excited and keyed up....Their attitude was very friendly....The halls were stacked with cases of MG and SA ammunition, and there were long rows of panzerfaust layed out. The men were loaded with 2 or 3 weapons each and hand grenades stuck in their belts...all seemed excited and apprehensive that SS troops were coming in.

According to information received by 103rd Division

intelligence, the partisan chief had about 800 armed men at his disposal, 300 from a battalion of Wehrmacht troops and 500 armed civilians. They had not only taken over most of the military installations but were preparing to take over the city's radio station. Threatened by SS troops east of Innsbruck, they had requested the entry of American troops as soon as possible. Unfortunately resistance forces had no control over the enemy still fighting against the 103rd Division north and west of the city.

During the morning of 3 May the 409th Regiment continued its attack from Seefeld. One battalion moved out to the west toward Telfs; another advanced to clear Reith and Zirl in the face of some small arms and mortar fire. The intelligence filtered through that Innsbruck was an "open city"; and tank-mounted infantry moved east from Zirl, found the highway clear of all obstacles, and entered the city of Innsbruck late in the afternoon. By 1945 hours Americans had crossed the Inn River bridges and were moving through the Tyrolean capital. The weather was bitter cold with swirling snow; but there were crowds everywhere wildly cheering, waving red and white banners. People clogged the streets and held up military traffic along the Maria-Theresien Strasse.

For the troops, however, there was time for neither politics nor liberation ceremonies. VI Corps, its

objective the Brenner Pass, urged the division on.<sup>16</sup>  
That night Seventh Army's last combat mission on this front was dispatched. The 411th Regiment, motorized, moved out to race for the Italian border. With full head-lights shining brilliantly, the column made for the Brenner Pass. The full illumination was to increase the speed of the advance; lessen danger from mines and curving, slippery, mountain roads; and also to disconcert whatever enemy there might be. Peace rumors were abroad everywhere, and the long, lighted,<sup>17</sup> 175-vehicle column might be deceptive. Brenner was taken at 0150 hours on 4 May. Later in the morning, at a point between Colle Isarco and Vipiteno in Italy, advance parties of General Patch's Seventh Army and General Truscott's Fifth Army met and joined. The task forces, which included a handful of jeeps, tanks, and armored cars, were from the 103rd Division's 411th Regiment, and the 88th Division's cavalry reconnaissance. The junction of American forces from Germany and Italy was completed on the highway where<sup>18</sup> Mussolini and Hitler had met in former days.

After futile efforts to arrange some kind of official large-scale surrender, the American mission with its white flags and parliamentaires carrying it safely back and forth over friendly, allied, and enemy lines found its way to Hall, a short distance

down the Inn Valley. There Major West, G-2 of the 103rd Division located Gauleiter Hofer, Reichskommissar for the defense of the entire area and governor of Tyrol-Vorarlberg. Whatever hopes there were for a surrender agreement were precluded by the news that Hofer had been stripped of his military responsibilities the day before. A telegraphic message had been received from Kesselring, dated 2 May, specifically excluding Gauleiter interference in the further conduct of the war. This apparently was the Field Marshal's own preparation for surrender maneuvers. Hofer confessed that there were neither organized bodies of Wehrmacht or SS troops in the area, that there were no defenses from Innsbruck to Brenner and to Salzburg, that the Redoubt or innerfestung was a dream. Of his own Standschuetzen forces which had numbered 56 battalions, only three were left and he was no longer in touch with them. He denied that he had weapons in his home; a search revealed 3 high-powered rifles with telescopic sights, 3 pistols, a short-wave radio. Gauleiter Hofer was removed as a prisoner, and he bade goodbye to his household with a Nazi salute and a "Heil Hitler!"<sup>19</sup>

#### The Surrender of Tyrol-Vorarlberg

At the conclusion of the Innsbruck incident, the surrender of the German forces facing Seventh Army in

west Austria proceeded according to a detailed "scenario". According to a VI Corps memorandum of 4 May on the ceremony for surrender, there were to be a motor escort, a guard with flags and colors, and a time schedule with all participants to be at their posts at 1130 hours on 5 May and the German commander to arrive at 1200 hours. The conference room was to be set up around a long table in accord with an appended diagram, specifying flags and positions of orderlies, interpreters, generals, and the German delegation.

Published plans detailed the development of events from the meeting of the escort with the German commander at the edge of town to the coming to attention of the guards and the dismounting, including the procession to the conference hall. No salutes were to be given or returned. The occasions for standing were listed, as were the order to be seated and the identification procedures. Then there was the reading of the terms of surrender. Germans were permitted to enter a side room for discussion among themselves if they so desired. Then came the signing of the documents; a total of 12 copies, 1 copy each in English, French, and German, distribution to the Sixth Army Group, Seventh Army, the First French Army, and VI Corps. Finally, the German delegation was to leave with no handshaking, no returning of salutes. The guard was to come to attention and present arms to

the Commanding General, VI Corps; and finally there was to be the playing of the Marseillaise and the Star Spangled Banner.

There were only insignificant departures from the Script. Lieutenant General Erich Brandenburg, Commanding General of the Nineteenth German Army, motored into Innsbruck from the Brenner Pass road, arriving at the Landsrat building in Innsbruck at 1320 hours, a little late. The prepared drafts of unconditional surrender were read. A few problems were raised. Obviously the effective hour of surrender was dependent upon radio communication facilities. The Innsbruck radio was operational; and the scattered remnants of the Nazi army could, thus be organized. A request was presented to allow the arming of German guards, necessary for the effective protection of dumps and other installations. This was granted. A request that the draft of surrender be further modified to allow German general officers to retain their arms was refused. The rest was less significant. The Commanding General of the Nineteenth Army objected to the reference to him in the French translation of the surrender papers as a Lieutenant General, asserting that the equivalent in the French Army is General. The German emissaries were directed



to present themselves without further delay. At 1500 hours General Brandenburg with aides returned to the conference hall. Present among others were General Brooks, General McAuliffe, General Morris, and General Dean. The unconditional surrender of the German troops was taken. Hostilities, for the United States VI Corps, and for the First French Army<sup>21</sup> were over.

According to the Innsbruck surrender terms, all forces, including para-military forces would cease unconditionally all acts of hostility toward forces of the United Nations not later than 1800 hours, 5 May 1945. The Germans were to disarm themselves and remain in their present areas; the concentration of all equipment and personnel was required. Arms, weapons, ammunition were to be collected at dumps; and all military equipment, telephones, radios, vehicles, and all movable military impedimenta were to be assembled. A troop list and a detailed catalog of minefield information was to be prepared. Instructions for the surrender of prisoners of war, political prisoners, hostages, deportees, were to be complied with immediately. The display or wearing of Nazi party badges, brassards, flags, and decorations was strictly prohibited. The Waffen SS was segregated from the Wehrmacht.

There was still anxiety over the possibility of a guerrilla resistance. Disorganized bands of enemy, well

armed, were still roaming the mountains. Members of Nazi organizations, high and low ranking, were at large. The heights teemed with displaced persons of many nations. Seventh Army units moved out quickly to complete the occupation of assigned areas. Troops moved up the mountain valleys, town by town, village by village, until they reached the mountain walls and glaciers that marked the limits of human habitation. Patrols penetrated even into the snowfields in these fastnesses, seeking the hiders-out in lonely huts of German Alpine clubs. Road-blocks and check stations were set up at strategic points along the roads. VI Corps, which at the end of operations found itself back in Italy where it had fought on the beaches of Anzio some ~~twelve~~<sup>12</sup> months before, completed the occupation of its zone as far south as the Austro-Swiss and the Austro-Italian frontiers. Contact was maintained with elements of the Fifth United States Army at Brenner Pass and at Resia Pass where American elements met on 7 May. German commanders proceeded with the disarmament and administration of their units, and no incidents were reported during any of the security and police missions. 22

To the west in Vorarlberg, French and German troops became involved in a new burst of hostilities after the Innsbruck surrender. The difficulty apparently was that General Schmidt, commanding the Twenty-fourth German Army, had originally made contact with the First French Army. A truce had been arranged, but General Schmidt never appeared at the French headquarters and the Twenty-fourth

Army had at the last moment been attached to the Nineteenth German Army.

General DeLattre in a message to General Devers objected strongly to the fact that General Schmidt had surrendered his forces to the Americans with those of the Nineteenth German Army. The French commander requested that General Schmidt and his staff be turned over to French authorities for disposition. The request was disapproved by the Sixth Army Group Commander. A new cease fire order was issued on 7 May and fighting ceased shortly thereafter..

Officially, however, all resistance along the VI Corps front west of Imst ceased at 1800 hours on 5 May in accordance with the negotiations for unconditional surrender by the Nineteenth German Army. It had been learned that negotiations were in progress with General Foertsch for the surrender of the entire German Army Group G, and that General Patch, concerned to prevent further casualties, had ordered Seventh Army troops frozen in place. Intelligence was immediately dispatched that VI Corps occupational task forces were already moving into their assigned places on the right flank. The army commander's approval was passed to VI Corps through General White, his Chief of Staff, and the separate arrangements made by VI Corps were credited and approved within the framework of the larger negotiations with Army Group G.

The final touch to the surrender of Tyrol-Vorarlberg was this coordination with the surrender schedule which had been completed by representatives of XV Corps, Seventh Army, and Sixth Army Group in the Salzburg-Munich sector. General Brooks was advised by General Barr, Sixth Army Group Chief of Staff, that the surrender to VI Corps, effective 1800 hours on 5 May, gave an advantage over the army group surrender, effective 1200 hours on 6 May and that he should insist upon compliance with the extra 18-hour deadline. General Barr added; "I think everything is in the bag. Gen Devers and Gen Patch were working with XV Corps. <sup>23</sup> By the end of the day there was peace on the Seventh Army front.

#### To Salzburg and Berchtesgaden

Final movements on the Seventh Army center and left flanks remain to be considered. The Inn River flows east in the Tyrol and curves gently north to the frontier to emerge out of Austria into Germany. Between the Inn River and the Austro-German border stand great ranges of Alpine mountains which are best approached from the northeast in a southwesterly direction. In the middle of the Seventh Army front General Milburn's XXI Corps was attacking from the northwest in a southeasterly direction. These central forces were thus denied easy access to the Inn valley by rugged mountains running parallel with the river. The 36th and 4th Infantry Divisions struck directly at the valley objective; the 12th Armored Division

moved east and around to seek natural entrances.

This swinging movement in the center unbalanced the course of the Seventh Army offensive. XXI Corps pushed over on the line of advance of XV Corps, which, on the army left flank, was now no longer facing south but pointed directly at the Salzburg Gap. The city of Salzburg itself was in the zone of the Third Army; and General Patton, because of his long, exposed, lightly-held left flank, was unprepared to advance on the Salzach River corridor until sufficient infantry had been brought up to assist and protect adequately his armor. There was considerable anxiety over the possibility that German troops, fleeing in front of the Third Army, might pour into the Alpine Redoubt area through the Salzburg Pass. The zones were quickly changed. General Patch was to strike for the city of Salzburg. The whole transaction, which involved among others General Devers, General Bradley, and General Eisenhower, was handled over the secret telephone, and some of the final details were expedited by plane. The major decision was cleared within twenty-four hours. In the opinion of Sixth Army Group, the decision which gave the Salzburg area to Seventh Army probably brought about the collapse of forces in South Germany. General Milburn and General Haislip were able to move into the former zone of the Third Army by an open flank and get to Salzburg with no loss of time.

As of 1 May General Patch had halted all units on the left flank for an estimated two-day rest. The 45th Division was left to garrison the city of Munich. Cavalry units were ordered to reconnoiter; and elements of the 3rd and 42nd Infantry and 20th Armored Divisions were to do no more than send patrols out to the front and flanks. Troop commanders, however, had difficulty slowing down the combat momentum which the April offensive had accumulated. By noon of 2 May all SHAEF approvals had been received for the drive to Salzburg. In telephone conversations that afternoon General Haislip relayed the information to his commanders.

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Seventh Army troops sped for Salzburg and Berchtesgaden with enthusiasm and incidental confusion. One report of a traffic jam had five individual columns trying to get through a single by-pass. Light resistance in wooded areas, mostly from boys, was brushed aside. In the city of Rosenheim a few platoons slipped through some four battalions of enemy and secured a pair of bridges over which both XXI and XV Corps were to pass. The German regiment in Rosenheim, prematurely celebrating the end of the war with the news of Hitler's death, was effectively bluffed; and an American company commander accepted the surrender of the garrison. Counter-bluffs on the part of the enemy failed to bring him any advantage. One

German colonel came through under a flag of truce and threatened resistance in his poison-gas dump area, unless he was given 24 hours to evacuate. The advance continued without regard for the threat. <sup>26</sup> In the early evening of 2 May elements of the 106th Cavalry Group took the surrender of General Ferenc-Loskaz and some 8,000 men and officers of the Hungarian Army's 9th Infantry Division. <sup>27</sup>

Villages and towns all along the route of the Seventh Army attack were flying white flags; only a few bursts of machine-gun fire were needed to prompt the display. <sup>28</sup> Individual task forces moved with such rapidity that they sometimes found themselves isolated. The 17th Armored Infantry Battalion of Combat Command R, 12th Armored Division, had jumped off from Starnberg on the Wurm See at 0645 hours on 2 May. At 1550 hours the armored infantry, whose half-tracks traveled two abreast down the Salzburg autobahn, halted their column beyond Pfraundorf some 60 miles away. Behind these spearheads of Combat Command R, SS engineers blew up a large autobahn bridge. <sup>29</sup> Hour by hour the main roads became increasingly choked by the mass formations of surrendering Germans and their straggling columns of motor and horse-drawn vehicles. <sup>30</sup>

American armor and infantry were striking freely in every sector of the mountain area. The 103rd Division,



moving toward Innsbruck and the Brenner Pass, sent another force some 30 miles down the Inn River valley to make contact with XXI Corps, now dominating the Kaiser-Gebirge and the Kitzbuehler Alps. <sup>31</sup> XV Corps, operating with the 20th Armored Division and the 106th Cavalry Group, the 3rd, the 42nd, and the 86th Infantry Divisions, swept through the autobahn area over Wasserburg and Rosenheim around both sides of the Chiem See and toward the Salzach River. <sup>32</sup> The 86th Division, picked up from the Third Army flank, had been attached to Seventh Army effective <sup>33</sup> 1900 hours on 2 May.

The attack on the city of Salzburg was less a combat problem than a motor march. The prize was not only Salzburg but Berchtesgaden, the retreat of Adolph Hitler lying in the shadow of the Obersalzburg mountain. There was virtually no resistance en route; and the long lanes of the autobahn, conceived as great strips for Nazi military maneuver, served the American Army well. The German forces were without transport, without armor, and, since the loss of the Munich positions, without artillery. A few rounds of small-arms fire defended an occasional road-block. American divisions, which had seized everything on wheels for rapid movement, including all the trucks of the unemployed supporting artillery battalions, rolled out of Bavaria. There were some difficulties in

Rosenheim as civilian riots broke out. There was no trouble before Salzburg. The city was being shelled when the garrison commander dispatched a delegation which crossed the space between on foot and offered unconditional surrender to elements of a cavalry squadron. General O'Daniel authorized the 106th Cavalry Group to accept the surrender. General Haislip then authorized General O'Daniel, upon his request, to accept the surrender in the name of the 3rd Division. <sup>34</sup> This was on the morning of 4 May; the countryside was being blanketed by a post-seasonal snow, as a cold, damp wind whipped up and across the highways from the Tyrolean Alps. XV Corps troops now hooked back into Germany through the Salzburg pass toward Berchtesgaden, some ten to fifteen miles south and a little west.

General Milburn had already committed elements of both the 101st Airborne Division and General LeClerc's 2nd French Armored Division to a XXI Corps lunge for Berchtesgaden. The 2nd French Armored Division, which had been a part of Seventh Army operations at various times since its first assignment with XV Corps in the Luneville sector, had rejoined the army for its final drive after operations against the German pickets on the French Atlantic coast.

During the night of 3-4 May, however, General Patch, cutting in on the wires of a telephone conversation between Generals Haislip and O'Daniel, found immediate

capture of Berchtesgaden as feasible as it was desirable and gave the go-ahead signal to the 3rd Division. <sup>35</sup> The progress toward the "eagle's nest" on Obersalzberg was closely watched, from the new Seventh Army Command Post, which had opened in Augsburg at 1200 hours on 3 May, the last of its moves from the beginning of Operation DRAGOON to victory in Europe. Early in the afternoon of 4 May 3rd Division elements were reported about two and a half miles from Berchtesgaden. Plans were made to turn searchlights and headlights on for a night march. <sup>36</sup> The 3rd Division was, of course, entirely out of zone, to which XXI Corps called attention. The reply was that the Army Commander had personally directed the capture of that area and it would be turned over shortly. <sup>37</sup>

The Obersalzberg mountain was still smoking and smouldering from Allied bombing missions of the preceding days and from local fires started by desperate SS guards. The difficulty in closing into Berchtesgaden was due largely to the clogged condition of the roads. As one message reported, "everybody and his brother are trying to get into the town." Motorized task forces entered the mountain hide-out at 1558 hours on 4 May. During the night came the rest of the 7th Regiment, the rest of the 3rd Division, tank columns of the 2nd French Armored Division, and patrols of the 101st Airborne Division. The next day American troops were tearing down banners and insignia. A ceremony attended

the raising of the American flag. Airborne patrols were moving in, trying to establish law and order. The mountain retreat which Adolph Hitler had built was now destroyed.

### The Surrender of Army Group G

After the capitulation in Italy, Field Marshal Kesselring had asked General Wolff, who was in command of the surrendering SS troops in North Italy, to find out with whom he should deal regarding his own capitulation. The information was forwarded. SHAEF informed General Devers of Kesselring's request, and through AFHQ the German High Command headquarters learned that a conference with Sixth Army Group would be arranged. Instructions were included as to how the enemy representatives were to approach American lines and where they might come through. During the night of 3-4 May drafts of surrender terms were being drawn up in American command posts.

Seventh Army units in the Salzburg sector were alerted for the approach of the Kesselring party. The emissaries were to arrive in a vehicle with a white covering over the hood and a white flag displayed four feet over the frame. During the night of 4-5 May the 3rd Infantry Division made contact with the surrender delegation headed by General Foertsch, First Army Commander, acting for General Schulz of Army Group G. The plenipotentiaries were brought to a large estate near Munich, where on a gray, rainy Saturday in May the terms of unconditional surrender for the German

armies on the southern front were dictated.

The Thorak Estate at Haar was a formidable gray stone structure with granite steps, marble floors, and massive doors and windows. <sup>41</sup> The large rooms of the studio-mansion were crowded with white plaster statues and nude figures on horse-back. On one side the Germans had their own conference room. On the other at the far end of the table and facing the door, General Devers waited with General Patch, General Haislip, and the various staffs. The two parties had met in the courtyard. The Germans came to attention. No salutes were exchanged. Only a small number of details remained to be settled and incorporated in the final draft. At noon, as Lieutenant Colonel Henry Cabot Lodge, of Sixth Army Group, has recorded, General Foertsch

mounted the few polished black marble steps and stood in the open door. He wore the polished black boots and light field grey uniform of the German Army. Around his neck was the Iron Cross.... He was followed by the officers of his party, similarly dressed, although with less ornamentation.... General Menoher (XV Corps Chief of Staff) presented General Foertsch to General Devers and General Foertsch in turn presented his officers, each of whom stood and bowed when his name was called.....

General Foertsch began to speak, taking up the paragraphs of the surrender document one by one. He spoke in a clear deep voice, very slowly and distinctly, so that every word could be understood by anyone having even a smattering of German. He never argued. He knew, of course, that he was beaten. He would often begin his statements with the sentence; "I deem it my duty to point out...." and then would show, for example, that the German troops were so scattered that it would take more than the contemplated number of hours to get the news to them. Or else, coming to the dumps of German weapons which were to be established, he asked that they be guarded by armed men, lest

disorderly elements in the country steal the weapons and thereby threaten law and order. He hoped that officers and military police could keep side-arms in order to maintain tranquility. His suggestions were all of that type. He stressed the number of refugees and the lack of food in his area.

General Devers would respond, asking questions and giving his views. After brief discussions, each point in turn was taken up. Boundaries were settled, the time schedule was established, General Devers was insistent that there be no misunderstanding on the big points -- there was to be no 'armistice' -- this was unconditional surrender.....

The point had to be made quite clear. At the will of the Allies all commissioned and enlisted personnel of Army Group G, including General Foertsch and General Schulz, would become prisoners of war. Foertsch sat stiffly at attention. It was a full minute before he said anything. The man was manifestly suffering from the impact of emotion of the most violent character.. Finally he bowed his head slightly, flushing a little, and replied, "I understand it. I have no choice. I have no power to do otherwise....."

There was perhaps no choice, but throughout these last days there was another alternative, and the German General Staff was anxious to have the issue settled. "Does the American High Command intend," Foertsch inquired at one stage, "to hand over any prisoners made by the American troops to Soviet Russia?" The answer was noncommittal. The enemy apparently considered the point significant. It had become increasingly clear that the German High Command wished to accomplish the maximum degree of surrender to the western

allies before acknowledging the simultaneous victory of the Red Army. The few days' lapse between local surrenders in the west, and the final conclusive capitulation to all the Allies, enabled many German troops to move westward and give themselves up to Britons or Americans rather than to Russians.

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The meeting was adjourned at 1430 hours. An hour or so later the surrender document was complete with the signatures of General Devers and General Foertsch, General Patch and General Haislip. Effective at 1200 hours on 6 May 1945 all German military and para-military forces under the command of Army Group G were to cease unconditionally all acts of hostilities toward forces of the United Nations. All enemy elements were to disarm themselves immediately, remain in their present areas, retaining all mess and transportation equipment, food and forage necessary for self-maintenance and subsistence. All equipment and personnel were to be concentrated. The terms, or "specifications" which was found to be semantically preferable since the Germans found an implication of "conditions" in the word "terms", detailed the requirements for such enemy elements as were to remain armed, the technical disposition of weapons and ammunition, the character of necessary troop lists, and minefield markings. The German army relinquished nearly 100,000 square miles of territory, south of Allied lines to the Swiss and Italian borders and from the Rhine eastward to about 20 miles beyond Salzburg.

43



The surrender proceedings at Haar were clipped and systematic, businesslike, and military according to the book; but there was little order or arrangement by map on the front lines. Even the formalities of the capitulation were not without their measures of confusion. It has been stated that on 5 May General Brooks of VI Corps was completing negotiations with representatives of the German Nineteenth Army at Innsbruck to accomplish the surrender of the enemy in Tyrol and Vorarlberg. The instrument of surrender of the Nineteenth Army, in fact, was signed after General Foertsch had already surrendered the entire Army Group G to General Devers.

Neither side had been able to maintain full liaison. Communications between the German Army Group G and its component armies had broken down completely. <sup>44</sup> American commanders, too, in the rapid pace of the final offensive became separated one from the other for short periods of time. In the mountains some Seventh Army divisions became engaged in protracted negotiations with isolated enemy units, and the local proceedings were not without interest. The SS apparently considered itself divorced from any commitments the Wehrmacht command might register, and German surrender delegations found SS troops uncooperative. Representatives of Army Group G passed back through the American lines after the surrender at Haar but could get no German safe conduct. SS patrols blew a crater in front of the delegation, establ-

ished two roadblocks behind it. General Foertsch went on ahead alone and managed to get through. The others turned back and found their way to the 3rd Division command post some time during the night of 6-7 May.<sup>45</sup>

In the meantime high in the mountains some enemy troops were surrendering, some were fighting on, and in a castle near Woergl a minor civil war broke out. The Itter castle, situated on a high knoll, was the prison of Edouard Daladier and Paul Reynaud, former premiers of France; Generals Maurice Gamelin and Maxim Weygand; a sister of General DeGaulle and a son of Georges Clemenceau. The original capitulation of the garrison by the German commander was nullified by an unexpected onslaught from SS formations. Within the castle American and German soldiers fought side by side. The SS troops were trapped and the German defenders helped eliminate them. The German garrison commander was killed.<sup>46</sup>

A message from General Patch, as of the afternoon of 5 May, had read; "All troops of German Army Group which oppose the Seventh Army have been ordered by their commander to surrender at 061200B. Forward units of Seventh Army are directed to remain in place and cease further combat at once." Still there was firing in the hills, although American patrols tried the public-address system and a distribution of peace pamphlets. Late at night on 6-7 May three American paratroopers, wandering around their motor pool and barracks area, were seized by German patrols

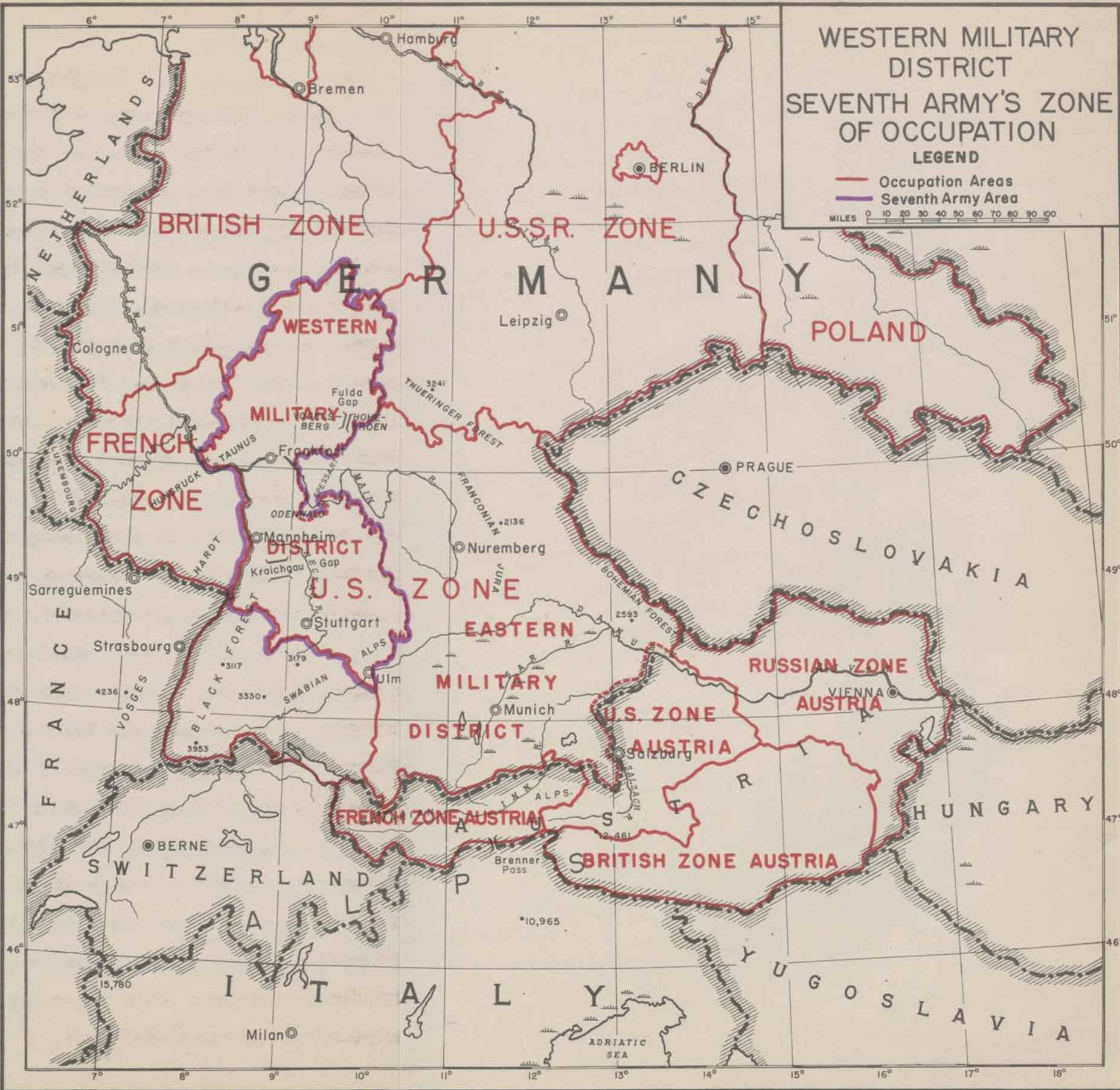
and taken prisoner. In the morning they were dispatched back to Berchtesgaden with the request to return with officer representatives for surrender. SS units were beginning their own series of capitulations.

There was some lingering lower-echelon fanaticism; in one sector two German officers were killed for bringing American emissaries through. But on the instructions of General Telsdorf patrols were escorted through roadblocks, mined cliffs, snipers in position; and arrangements were made for the surrender of the LXXXII SS Corps. Points were designated for the disposition of arms and ammunition, effective the next day, 8 May. That day, too, on the main highway a little south of Marquartstein American elements were halted by an SS officer. He bore a flag of truce but insisted that the Schutz-Staffel was not under the command of Army Group G and was therefore not bound by the terms of surrender. The intelligence was forwarded that Obergruppenfuehrer and Waffen-SS General Gottlieb Berger, second only to Heinrich Himmler in SS rank, wished to negotiate for the capitulation of his forces. Berger commanded a Battle-Group comprising General Max Simon's XIII SS Corps with remnants of the 17th SS, the 35th SS (Nibelungen), and the 2nd Mountain Divisions. General Berger's surrender was accepted by the 101st Airborne Division. The last enemy formation had now disintegrated.

WESTERN MILITARY DISTRICT  
SEVENTH ARMY'S ZONE OF OCCUPATION

LEGEND

- Occupation Areas
  - Seventh Army Area
- MILES 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



### Transition

During the last days of the campaign in Europe the attention of Seventh Army was directed both toward mop-up operations and toward preparations for occupation. The end for the Seventh Army was also a beginning. Detailed planning for occupational duties had been in progress at the headquarters since January, although prior to its execution Operations Plan ECLIPSE went through rather far-reaching modifications. The second draft of plan ECLIPSE, published by Headquarters, Twelfth Army Group on 27 February, had indicated that Seventh Army would initiate the organization, occupation, and military government of the Eastern Military District comprising the state of Bavaria. Elaborate planning and research had been carried through by army on this basis, particularly by the G-2 staff.

On or about 11 April rumors reached the Seventh Army command post that ECLIPSE plans were being changed to give Bavaria to Third Army and Wuerttemberg, or the Western Military District, to Seventh Army. High level occupational planning was being carried on by Twelfth Army Group. Seventh Army pointed out through an intermediary, Sixth Army Group, that the change would involve a loss of three months planning and would entail a complete readjustment.<sup>48</sup> The decision was that Seventh Army would occupy the Western Military District. Hence on 8 May the Army was far to the east of its occupational zone.



Adjustments were being made from the command post at Augsburg during the last days of the war. Of the 14 divisions under army command at the close of the campaign some had been designated as occupational troops, others were scheduled for immediate or eventual redeployment to the Pacific Theater. The 4th Infantry Division had been sent to Third Army on 4 May in exchange for the 86th Division which had been received. Two divisions, the 63rd and 100th, were garrisoning rear areas in army reserve; and on 3 May the 12th Armored Division had also been ordered to army reserve. The other 11 divisions were in corps areas.

During the eventful period from 5 through 8 May, the attention of units in the line was given not only to their own occupational or redeployment problems but to the personalities of World War II who remained in their sectors to be liberated or to be apprehended as prisoners. A dragnet was stretched across southern Germany.

By 8 May Generals von Runstedt, von Leeb, and von List had already been seized by Seventh Army troops; and the French political and military prisoners of prestige, who had been held in the castle near Woergl, had been liberated. On 7 May the 106th Cavalry Group with its command post in Salzburg had sent out reconnaissance to the east. Troops reached the villages of Strobl and St. Wolfgang on the Wolfgang See to discover that King Leopold

of Belgium was under guard in a villa near Strobl. Unresisting guards were disarmed by the reconnaissance party; and on the day before victory in Europe Leopold, King of the Belgians, was liberated.<sup>49</sup> The hunt continued, however, for such individuals as Field-Marshal Hermann Goering, Baron Oshina and his Japanese Embassy staff. There was also a systematic search for the treasures in looted art, jewels, and gold that the Germans had cached away in the Tyrol. SHAEF had cabled questions regarding the Goering collection of emeralds. Some 25 Hungarian freight cars were taken in the Seventh Army area, containing a staggering fortune in oriental and persian rugs, oil paintings, tapestries, and cases of gold and diamond jewelry.<sup>50</sup> The search was persistent.

Cavalry patrols combed the mountains seeking out high-ranking German officers. Field-Marshal Kesselring turned up at the headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division and there, through General Winter, made clear that he could scarcely be expected to hold conferences with some local commander. Through 3rd Division communication facilities he announced himself to the Supreme Allied Commander. "Besides my activity as Commander-in-Chief West I am also, as ranking General, Feldmarschall of the Southern District at the disposal of the High Command of the Wehrmacht which authorized the staff with the command of the Southern District...." He was anxious to facilitate an easy settlement of all questions. On 10 May Admiral Doenitz and



General Jodl requested an American plane for Kesselring. It was refused. A few hours later he was removed from command of the southern armies. A few days later he was placed under arrest.

51

After his capture Goering was under guard of the 36th Division. On the morning of 8 May Colonel von Brauchitsch, his aide de camp, had presented two letters from Goering to the command post in Kufstein. They constituted offers of surrender, and pleas to the Supreme Commander for an interview in which they could talk "as one soldier to another." The letters declared:

I request of you to grant me free passage...and to place my entourage and family under American protection. I make it, remembering the time when the aged Marshal of France, Petain, in a situation equally difficult for his country, asked me for a similar interview which then actually took place....Your Excellency will understand how I feel in this my most difficult hour, and how much I have suffered through my disability, due to my arrest, to do everything possible a long time ago in order to prevent further bloodshed in a hopeless situation...52

The word went out to pick up Goering. He was not in his castle, which was guarded by fully armed SS troops of the 'Florian Geyer' Division. Brigadier General R. I. Stack, of the 36th Division, found the whole Goering convoy parked along a road a few miles from Radstadt, Austria. The party proceeded out of the German sector into the American lines. One of the SS officers became unmanageable and had to be shot. Goering was affable.

53

The war in Europe was over. At 0816 hours on 7 May Seventh Army received the message:

1. A representative of the German High Command signed the unconditional surrender of all German land, sea, and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command at 0141 hours Central European time, 7 May, under which all forces will cease active operations 0001B hours 9 May.

2. Effective immediately all offensive operations by Allied Expeditionary Force will cease and troops will remain in present positions.....54

Divisions again listed care and cleaning of equipment, calisthenics, and close-order drill in the day's program. The elaborate machinery of simultaneous redeployment and occupation had begun to function before the firing was over. The news of the cessation of hostilities came as no great surprise and consequently was not the occasion for hilarious celebration.

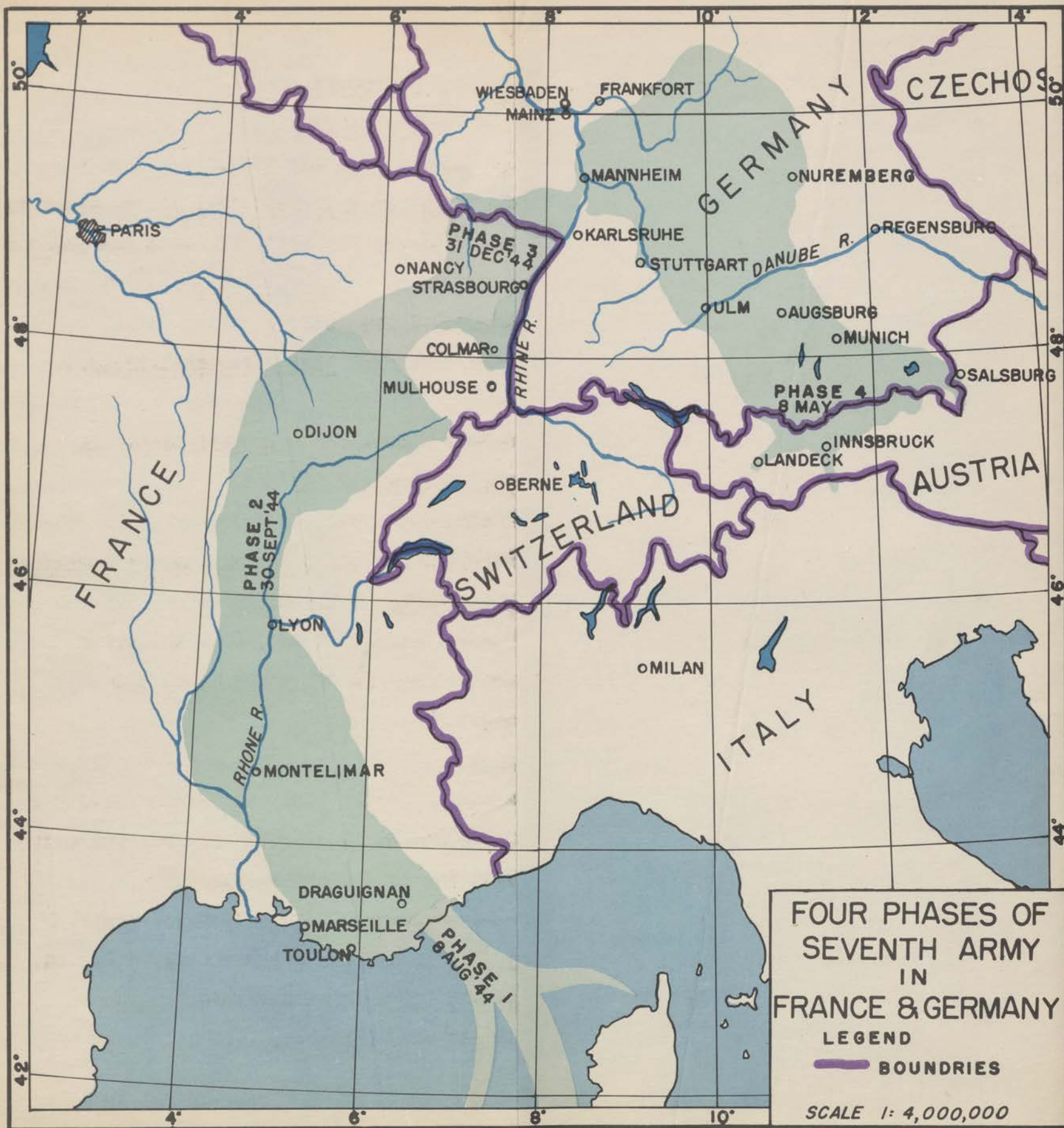
Officially 8 May was the day of victory in Europe. General Patch issued an order of the day on Thursday, 10 May 1945, in which the Commanding General of Seventh Army expressed his praise and appreciation to the troops under his command;

55

1. I have just received the following cable from the Secretary of War: 'I join a grateful nation in applauding the heroic part you and your men have taken in our triumph. Each soldier of the Seventh Army shares in congratulations for success gained through magnificent courage at the front. You can be proud of a distinguished accomplishment.'

2. Observe, you glorious men of the Seventh Army, our efforts and exploits are not unrecognized in our country. To you who have done the fighting I send my deepest and most patriotic thanks.

ALEXANDER M. PATCH  
Lieutenant General  
United States Army  
Commanding



FOOTNOTESChapter XXX

1. Sixth Army Group, History, May 1945.
2. Seventh Army, Target Area Analysis No. 16, 22 April 1945; 44th Division, History, May 1945; 7th Army G-2 and G-3 Reports, 1-3 May 1945.
3. VI Corps, History, 1 May 1945.
4. 44th Div History, May 45; 71st Regimental History, 3 May 1945.
5. VI Corps War Room Journal, 3 May; 44th Division.
6. 71st Regimental Journal, 5 May 1945.
7. VI Corps History, 4 May 45.
8. 44th Div History, 5 May 45; 324th Regimental Narrative and Journal Memorandum, 5 May 1945.
9. VI Corps War Room Journal, 1 May, 0905 hours.
10. Statement prepared by Lt. Col Bland West, G-2 of 103rd Division.
11. Ibid.
12. VI Corps War Room Journal, 3 May 45, 0745 hours.
13. Special document on the negotiation for the surrender of Innsbruck by Lt. Col. Bland West.
14. VI Corps War Room Journal, 3 May; VI Corps History 3 May 45; 103rd Div, G-2 and G-3 Periodic, 3 May 45.
15. 411th Regimental History, 3-4 May 1945.
16. 103rd Div G-3 Journal, 5 May 45, 1820 hours.

17. 411th Regimental History, 3-4 May 45.
18. Ibid.
19. VI Corps G-2 Journal, 5 May 45; 103rd Div, G-2 periodic, 6 May 45; 103rd Division, Historical Narrative, 3 May 1945; 103rd Division, G-2 Journal, 4 May 1945. See also: SAIC/19, 24 May 1945, "Hofer, The Exponent of Peace."
20. VI Corps History, Memorandum on "Ceremony for Surrender", 4 May 1945, especially point 5, "Scenario".
21. Special VI Corps Report, May 1945, Surrender of the German Nineteenth Army.
22. 44th Div History, May 45; VI Corps History, 6 May 45.
23. VI Corps History, 5 May 45; VI Corps War Room Journal, 5 May 45.
24. 6th Army Group History, May 45, pp. 318-219; XXI Corps, Narrative, May 1945.
25. Seventh Army G-3 Periodic Report, 1-2 May 1945; XV Corps, Narrative, May 1945; 3rd Division, War Room Journal, 1-2 May 1945.
26. 3rd Div War Room Journal, 1-3 May 45; 6th Army Group History, May 45, p. 336.
27. 106th Cavalry Group, Narrative, 2 May 1945.
28. 20th Armored Division, Narrative, 3-4 May 1945.
29. 12th Armored Division, Narrative, 2 May 1945; XXI Corps, History, May 1945.

30. 42nd Division, Narrative, 1-2 May 1945.
31. VI Corps History, 3-4 May 45.
32. 86th Infantry Division, Narrative, 3 May 1945;  
3rd Inf Div History, 1-4 May 45; 20th Armored Div  
Narrative, 1-4 May 45; XV Corps, History, 1-4 May 1945.
33. 7th Army Diary, 3 May 1945.
34. 3rd Div War Room Journal, 2-3 May 45; 4 May 45 (0900 hrs)
35. XV Corps Narrative, 3 May 45.
36. XV Corps G-2 Journal file, 4 May 1945; 3rd Div War  
Room Journal, 4 May 45.
37. XV Corps Narrative, 4 May 45; 7th Regimental Narrative  
(15 March-10 May 1945), 4-5 May 1945.
38. 3rd Division, Narrative and War Room Journal, 3-5 May 45.
39. 6th Army Group History, 1-5 May 45; 7th Army Diary,  
2 May 45, p. 686.
40. XV Corps Narrative, 3 May 45.
41. The details of the surrender have been extracted from  
narratives of Lt. Col. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., and  
Brig. General R. E. Jenkins; both prepared separate  
documents for Sixth Army Group.
42. Seventh Army, G-2 History, May 1945, p. 3.
43. The complete text of the surrender is given in 6th  
Army Group History, May 45. See also; 7th Army  
G-2 History, May 45.
44. 6th Army Group History, May 45, p. 326.

45. 3rd Div Narrative, May 45; See also G-2 Periodic for 6 May 45.
46. 36th Div History, May 45; 142nd Regimental Narrative, May 1945.
47. See Narratives of the 101st Airborne Division and 506th Parachute Regiment for 7-8 May 1945.
48. 7th Army Diary, 15 April 45.
49. 106th Cavalry Group in Europe, published history, pp. 131, 152.
50. 7th Army Diary, May 1945; 101st Airborne Division, History, 1-10 May 1945; XXI Corps G-2 periodic, 2 May 45.
51. 7th Army Diary, 7-13 May 45; 101st Cavalry, History, 7-8 May 45.
52. Letter of 6 May 1945 to General Eisenhower. See also: XXI Corps G-2 Periodic, 9 May 45; VI Corps G-2 Journal for text of 36th Division Broadcast, approved by Seventh Army.
53. 36th Division, History, 1-10 May 1945. See especially: Headquarters Special Report, office of Assistant Division Commander, 1 June 1945.
54. 7th Army Diary, 7 May 45, p. 692.
55. 7th Army Diary, 10 May 45, p. 696.



## CHAPTER XXXI

SUPPORT FOR THE DRIVE INTO GERMANY

Although this narrative has placed emphasis upon the operations and intelligence sections of the Seventh Army staff, and upon the combat units, it must be borne in mind that the other staff sections and the services of supply had an equally vital role in the success of the campaign.

One of the most important army functions, particularly after the entry into Germany, was the prompt release of combat units from responsibility for newly acquired territory, its administration and its use as a base for operations. The job of infantry and armored divisions and reconnaissance troops was to speed the advance. The job of controlling and managing to the military advantage of the army the territory which had been won was the responsibility of G-5, Civil Affairs and Military Government.

Civil Affairs

During the Seventh Army Advance through southern and eastern France problems of civil administration were normally controlled by the French themselves. The Civil Affairs Staff was concerned primarily with liason, with giving aid and supplies to the local governments, and in guaranteeing tight civilian control in the army area for reasons of military security and the expedition of military operations. When the Seventh Army reached the approaches to Germany in Alsace, it was necessary for Civil Affairs to exercise stricter

supervision of all civilian activities. There were, of course, large numbers of German nationals who had to be interned as a security precaution. Refugees and displaced persons became a problem.

In the months of readjustment on the Seventh Army's Sarre and northern Alsace front the responsibilities of Civil Affairs increased. It was important that withdrawal and limited advance be made without violating security or precipitating a mass exodus. The strength and deployment of units might have been readily revealed to the enemy by permitting uncontrolled civilian circulation. In January there were 29 Civil Affairs detachments operated by army, more than double the number required in November.

As Seventh Army crossed the German border, Civil Affairs became Military Government. Divisions and corps took the first steps toward setting up military government. Initial proclamations and primary regulations were posted and enforced. Army military government detachments closely followed the tactical units. With the aid of counter-intelligence each detachment sought the immediate removal of Nazis from public office. It concerned itself with the protection and support of Allied nationals and displaced persons, the reestablishment of services and facilities to the extent necessary for allied forces, the locating and safeguarding of supply stocks and sources, and in general the relief of tactical units from the responsibility for civilian problems. The first step was for

the detachment commander to appoint or confirm as burgomeister a non-Nazi. The rest of the administration stemmed from him under the supervision of military government.

One of the major problems was the control, housing, and feeding of large numbers of displaced persons in each area. Health conditions required particular attention. The ideal DP camp organization included a military government detachment, a welfare team of five, a doctor, and a liaison officer of the nationality of the personnel to be handled. Displaced persons were diverted to collecting points and thence to camps, disinfected, given medical attention, and organized for camp administration. The provision of shelter, and a daily ration of 2,000 calories gradually reduced foraging expeditions. Every effort was made to speed repatriation, especially of French and other western Europeans whose homelands were readily accessible.

In all operations military Government detachments were handicapped by small size and the lack of functional specialists who were to come later with regional groups. The important job of keeping order and guarding installations was done initially by the 36th Division west of the Rhine and by the 103rd Division east of the Rhine. In view of the anticipated critical food shortage among civilians, local military governments encouraged farming and made available agricultural machinery.

During the last month of the war military government officers tapped some anti-Nazi sentiment which was of help

in administration. In Starnberg a delegation of prominent professors and scientists called on the detachment, denounced the burgomeister, and offered themselves as anti-Nazis willing to help in any way. The government was built around this group. In other areas some 20 Nazi burgomeisters had been replaced in the last days of the war. Resistance leaders in Austria, as representatives of the Free Austria movement, made determined efforts to assist military government officials.

Most of the German civilians were obedient and docile, so well-disciplined and regimented that they responded to orders without question. Publication of sentences to individuals who violated curfew and other restrictions had a salutary effect. Public relations improved as the war came to a close. Civilians, particularly women, became convinced that the war would soon be over; and they did not want their town devastated. No important evidence of subversive or "werewolf" activities came to light.

Tactical units continued a policy of screening the population to uncover German soldiers, suspects, civilians without proper identification papers, and firearms. New police were located, screened, and given armbands. Looting became the chief problem in the preservation of order. Large concentration camps containing political prisoners were uncovered in the army area: Keisheim, Aicbach, Harlaching, Dittersheim, and Dachau. These camps had close to 50,000 inmates at the time of liberation.

Only those German industries of primary importance to military and civilian needs were permitted to continue operations. Sabotage of power installations was small, with civilians in some cases refusing to carry out the orders of the retreating German army. Railroad rehabilitation was made difficult by the large numbers of Nazis among workers. Stern measures and a strict screening process eliminated subversive employees. The banking situation was satisfactory, records and cash in most buildings intact. All wages and prices were frozen at pre-occupation levels, but a small black market did exist in food and clothing.

Memoographed news bulletins, improvised loud speakers, newspapers published by Army Group, and radio stations disseminated information on the progress of the war. Clergymen were asked to encourage food production to prevent shortages during the coming winter. The synagogue at Augsburg was reconditioned and services held. Works of art were sought out; important collections found at Heilbronn, Kockendorf, Fuessen, and elsewhere; and military protection given them.

At the close of the war military government turned its attention from the problems of following up the rapid tactical advance. Better integration was secured in the removal of Nazi officials. The surrender of German forces brought a notable release of tension in the relationships between civilians and the American forces.

### Personnel and Liaison

Other army functions which had become accentuated in the final campaign against Germany were those of personnel and liaison. In January and February the problem of securing infantry replacements or reinforcements was still acute. At least three of the infantry divisions under Seventh Army command, the 42d, 63d, and 70th, had been milked of their personnel for infantry replacements to be sent to units on the Ardennes front. Even the acquisition of new men would not solve their personnel problems completely, since team-work has to be built up over a period of time. Messages to higher headquarters emphasized Seventh Army's need in the request to reconsider allocation of reinforcements. One such message stated:

As of 2359 (hours), 10 January, Seventh Army shortages totaled 508 officers and 15,104 enlisted men, of which 343 officers and 12,098 enlisted men are infantry. Battle and non-battle casualties are now running in excess of 1,000 per day. We need help if we are to maintain efficiency of fighting units.

After the crossing of the Rhine the Seventh Army casualty rate dropped considerably, and the need for infantry reinforcements became less acute. During the month of April, however, the army was confronted with a shortage of armored replacements. The Seventh Army G-1 was instructed to investigate together with armored divisions and reinforcement depots the possibility of requisitioning men of other military branches for "on the job" training with divisions. Armored

Force officers at this time could be secured only by combat appointments.

During the winter and spring months of 1945 it became particularly important to provide rest centers, recreation, and leave for the troops who had been in the line so long that they were close to combat fatigue. Leave quotas to the United Kingdom were secured and administered by G-1. Rest and recreational centers were set up at Grenoble, Lyon, Cannes, Nice, Nancy, and Vittel. Rest Areas were variously assigned to corps, and the opportunity for a "break" in continuous combat became a significant morale factor.

Among the many problems which confronted army administration and personnel policy were those connected with German prisoners of war and the increasingly large number of liberated Allied prisoners. At Homburg, for example, a Russian prisoner of war camp was overrun. Every attempt was made to evacuate and repatriate Allied prisoners as rapidly as possible. As the war in Europe moved into its final stages, redeployment became the most significant and far-reaching problem. By 24 April discussions were under way with War Department G-1 representatives. Closely connected with redeployment were the requirements for adequate occupational personnel.

The efficient functioning of liaison sections within the structure of Seventh Army under G-3 supervision gave added force and coordination to the army's combat operations.



The closest communication and representation by qualified liaison personnel were maintained with all units under and adjacent to Seventh Army. Particularly significant in the combined operations of Seventh Army and the First French Army was the early establishment and efficient operating procedure of the French Mission at Seventh Army Headquarters. The French Mission was headed during most of the campaign by Colonel Jean L. Petit, who periodically brought back from First French Army Headquarters last minute information on location of troops and future plans. Liaison officers from subordinate and adjacent units briefed the Commanding General at 1800 hours daily during the period of combat operations.

In army support of front line operations one of the most significant functions was bringing up to the line the supplies to be consumed there, the vehicles, the guns to be turned against the enemy. Supply operations fell into these general divisions during the final phase: (1) the retrograde movement, (2) the period of supply build-up, (3) the offensive. The first period was relieved during the last week in January when it became apparent that the German drive had been blunted. The completion of operations in the Colmar pocket area on 9 February marked the beginning of a static period along the army front that lasted until 15 March, when the build-up of supplies was termed adequate to support the offensive operation. The third period that began with the offensive and included the crossing of the Rhine found

Seventh Army contending with ever-lengthening supply lines that stretched deep into and across Southern Germany. The final period ended with the cessation of hostilities on the Seventh Army front.

#### Supply During Defensive Operations

In the opening days of 1945 Seventh Army supply installations effected a retrograde movement anticipated in the latter part of December. Personnel had been alerted and dumps prepared for quick evacuation in the event of a strong and successful enemy drive. When the attack broke on the army's northern front on New Year's Eve, a rearward movement of supply positions had already begun. This was to mean an increase in the hauling distance between installations and using troops.

Since the middle of October supply had kept pace with tactical moves, maintaining a minimum distance between divisions on the line and main supply points. Rail transportation had been advanced to points beyond Haguenau and included a line from Saverne through Strasbourg to Molsheim. Third Army rail facilities from Nancy had been coordinated to deliver supplies to the Seventh Army left flank along Chateau-Salins, Hampont, and Haboudange. Main supply routes emanated from Epinal, Luneville, and Sarrebourg and were correlated for a minimum of traffic confusion in moving balanced tonnage to division supply dumps in the Vosges Mountains.

Inventories had been reduced in the forward supply dumps to the lowest possible level commensurate with evacuation should the retrograde movement be ordered. A strain was placed on transportation to accomplish the safeguarding movement to the rear. How successful the move was, may be judged by the fact that no supply installations of an echelon higher than division level were lost to enemy action.<sup>1</sup>

In returning the main supply points to the rear Seventh Army was forced to substitute a safety factor for flexibility. Selection of the previously used installations in Epinal and Luneville outweighed the distance factor, since covered storage space was not to be found in other areas. The intermediate points of Sarrebourg and Saverne were utilized as forward supply points with the bulk of forward stocks of food, gasoline, and ammunition carried in the Saverne installations. Bad weather and enemy action made it extremely difficult for the supply services to maintain a balanced flow of supply and equipment. The addition of supporting divisions combined with the high rate of expenditure in Seventh Army defensive action increased the amount of supplies needed and made balanced tonnage essential. However, receipt was not entirely satisfactory. Delay of rail shipments by the weather, unbalanced tonnage from Continental Advance Base Section, and a high rate of attrition of equipment in combat combined to make the supply picture critical during the month of January.<sup>2</sup>

At the division level, the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions described the month of January as the most difficult and critical for supply of any they had experienced. Lack of ammunition in the division dumps forced regiments on the line to re-supply from the basic load of the regiment in reserve. Specifically short were mortar and machine gun ammunition. During one period in the early part of January the forward army supply point was without 60 mm mortar and .30 caliber machine gun ammunition for a period of 24 hours, and other small arms ammunition was critically short for a period of four days.<sup>3</sup>

Another major supply shortage occurred during January in gasoline. This was caused by several factors including heavy troop movement, cold weather, and the fact that available stocks were spread thinly over six main distributing points to cover the wide front. To offset the deficiency, rationing was put into effect on 7 January which limited units to 75 percent of their drawings of 5 January. Units forward of corps boundaries, however, could exceed this limitation under operational necessity. The reserve supply was considered inadequate to cover any sudden change in the tactical situation, particularly sudden moves of armored divisions. Base Section responded with immediate shipments of gasoline to army and increased daily issues to permit the build-up of a more nearly adequate reserve.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of rations and availability of food stocks appeared satisfactory on paper with better than half the authorized supply in army dumps. But most of this percentage was of the hard ration variety, and the issue was predominantly B rations. Cold weather caused a loss in certain items due to freezing in transit. Shipments of fresh potatoes and fruit became impracticable because shipments had to be made in unprotected boxcars that resulted in a loss as high as 50 percent of perishable items.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the supply services of Seventh Army entered the final phase of the campaign with the three "must" items of rations, gasoline, and ammunition in a status of unpredictable availability. Termed critical by the individual supplying services, shortages did not remain in the acute stage for more than short periods. Necessary expedients were initiated to relieve the most acute conditions, and readjustments were made whenever necessary to insure the flow of supply.

Availability was dependent on Base Section's ability to supply and transportation ability to deliver. Base Section was responsible for transportation to the rear of army dumps. As a result of a recognized German concentration on the Seventh Army left flank during the latter part of December, a command decision was made involving the shortening of army lines. This necessitated a reversal of the flow of supplies after a virtual

three-day cessation in movements. At the time of the expected German attack the reverse flow was already in effect.<sup>6</sup> However, the limitations of rail transport made it necessary to coordinate the withdrawal of supplies from the forward supply points with incoming shipments already consigned to go forward. Supplies coming back and those coming forward congested in the army area. Although the supplies were still needed, there was insufficient storage and manpower to handle the incoming flow of supplies from CONAD and the returning flow of supplies from forward installations that were being closed.

The necessity of using engineer regiments and battalions as combat troops had stopped work on nearly all railway bridge repairs during January. One exception was the bridge south of Saverne, the completion of which opened the route from Saverne to Molsheim on 15 January. This eliminated the necessity of routing trains from Saverne to Molsheim through Strasbourg.<sup>7</sup> The heavy troop movements in the latter part of January, as well as heavy snowfalls, taxed the rail facilities and tied-up equipment that normally would have been used to move supplies. Representatives of all supply services of Seventh Army met on 19 January to devise means of alleviating the situation. Certain remedial efforts were to be put into effect, including a 24-hour

unloading limit for cars at railheads, the use of four trains daily split between rations and gasoline, and only one-tenth of the ten-day allocation of ammunition to be moved each day.

Weather created unforeseen delays, stalling trains in deep mountain passes and backing up supplies. Seventh Army and Military Railway Service personnel worked long hours to open the tracks, and railroads were finally able to render some form of normal service. Truck shipments, however, served as the bulk carriers of supply during this period. Within army boundaries it had been necessary on 7 January to establish a reserve pool of 175 trucks near Saverne under the control of VI Corps. At times this left a large number of trucks idle, but it was considered an operational necessity in order to coordinate the tactical movements which depended largely on speed in execution for success. By 23 January it was possible to disband the pool.

To keep motor transportation moving it was necessary to emphasize preventive maintenance. But ordnance units in division and army levels performed more work in January than in any previous period. The scarcity of major assemblies and replacement motors deadlined a large number of vehicles at a time when they were badly needed. In the 3rd Infantry Division during the middle of January the ordnance record showed 120



two and one-half ton trucks deadlined.<sup>9</sup> The supply routes from Epinal and Luneville to Saverne were the main routes travelled by trucks and, added to rail deliveries, supplied ten reinforced divisions. The forward installations in Saverne issued the bulk of supply. Sarrebourg was the forward point for certain quartermaster items and toward the end of January was also a ration and gasoline point.

In the operation to clean out the Colmar Pocket, Divisions from SHAEF reserve were attached to Seventh Army and XXI Corps, which was placed under the operational control of the First French Army. However, the supply of these divisions remained the responsibility of Seventh Army. To decrease the long supply haul between Epinal and Luneville and the new sector of XXI Corps an intermediate installation was put into St. Die for rations and gasoline.<sup>10</sup> Ammunition was still drawn from the army supply point at Bayon with lesser draws from Saverne. Both points involved a 200 mile turn-around for the transporting units.

The shortage of gasoline during most of January was relieved by the return to more normal rail operations. But there were periods during the month when the level of available stocks in army dumps was extremely low.

On 13 January, gasoline on hand in army was totaled at 1.1 days of supply as compared to the authorized level

of seven days.<sup>11</sup> During the first two weeks of January issues were consistently greater than the receipts from Base Section. During this time Seventh Army consumed an average daily gallonage of 363,678, but receipts averaged only 335,678 gallons.<sup>12</sup> Heavy troop movements and increased use of armored divisions accounted for army's high rate of consumption and prevented buildup of a reserve. Pipelines were not operational to Sarrebourg during January, although preliminary work had been completed. By 20 February a 2,000,000-gallon storage tank was operational in Sarrebourg. This was part of the pipeline project and materially aided army's attempt to establish a large reserve for future operations.<sup>13</sup>

Need for winter clothing was intensified by the addition of SHAEF reserve divisions to Seventh Army command and by the loss of considerable organizational equipment in the Bitche sector. Supplies were short.<sup>14</sup> Temporary relief was obtained from stocks under control of ETOUSA. Local procurement of white cloth was initiated by the quartermaster for use as material for camouflage. Seventh Army received an allocation of 6,000 snow suits which were distributed among front line divisions.<sup>15</sup>

Other shortages were felt during January, particularly in engineer and signal equipment. Plans for defensive positions increased requirements for engineer field

fortification material, including wire, pickets, and concertina. By the end of January it was estimated that only 20 percent of the demand was available.<sup>16</sup> Strict rationing of field wire needed by combat units to maintain communications created some difficulty. The ordinary requirements of 250 miles of wire per day for each division had to be satisfied by a quota of less than 30 miles per day. Only by rigid economy and recovery of wire were divisions able to maintain their communications.<sup>17</sup>

The shortage of combat radio sets was not relieved until late in January, and tended to reduce the efficiency of special units, such as engineer battalions which had been committed as infantry. The long distance from front lines to the signal depot at Thaon made it advisable to open a forward depot on 27 January in Heming, which facilitated supply to divisions.<sup>18</sup> A critical shortage of signal personnel occurred with the addition of XXI Corps. As a result of the transfer of units, Task Force Herren was at one time temporarily without signal contact with army.<sup>19</sup>

During January approximately 20,000 long tons of supplies were moved in the Seventh Army area each week. With this flow of materiel, normal though it was for the increased size of Seventh Army, the number of supply installations had to be held to an absolute

minimum to insure the maximum effective use of available supplies. The coordination of supply services to give the greatest possible support to the divisions fighting under the uncertain conditions of defensive warfare was a Seventh Army responsibility fulfilled by the quartermaster, engineer, signal, medical, and ordnance sections. Increased use of civilian labor facilitated to some extent the work of these special staff sections.

#### Ammunition and Ordnance

The supply of ammunition and maintenance of ordnance strength constituted what was probably the most serious service problem confronted by Seventh Army during January and early February. Bad weather and heavy fighting, together with the closing of forward supply points, complicated both the supply and issue of ordnance materiel. Close coordination between transportation and army and division ammunition officers was necessary to insure that available stocks would be readily accessible to the units. This was essential because of abnormally high expenditures by all troops. For example, expenditures of machine gun ammunition, increased from 200,000 rounds per day to approximately 600,000 rounds per day. To take care of immediate needs of Seventh Army, trucks were dispatched to supply points of the First French Army and the Third Army. Inter-army cooperation of this

nature relieved shortages until Base Section could make delivery. <sup>20</sup> New allocation systems by SHAEF and Sixth Army Group were developed to cover the deficiencies of Seventh Army ammunition supply.

A specific illustration of ammunition expenditures in Seventh Army may be shown by examination of a VI Corps action. As a result of heavy engagements on this front, more ammunition was expended in January by VI Corps artillery than by either XV or XXI Corps. Expenditure for all weapons were heavy: that for the 105 mm howitzer, for example, reached 35 rounds per day, or five rounds over the SHAEF rate. Although there were single periods of action when the rate of expenditure exceeded the allocation, such as one artillery battalion using 18 days' allowance in one 48-hour period, firing was controlled to such an extent that the monthly expenditures did not constitute a dangerous excess. <sup>21</sup> At the end of January Seventh Army was supplying 18 divisions.

Losses in ordnance were heavy during January. Top priority was given to the repair of items in maintenance, both in army and in base section shops. The extent of loss in the first week of January in VI Corps, the army's most active front, was especially heavy; 12 armored reconnaissance vehicles, 35 half-tracks, 68 jeeps, 6 tanks, 13 trucks, and 38 trailers. Losses in medium tanks for the first 18 days of January in VI Corps were 83 with

22 replacements received. There were 319 operational tanks in the corps as of 18 January, and an additional two days of operations reduced this to 309. By the end of the month, medium tanks operational had dropped to 271.<sup>22</sup>

Army reserve of major items for an authorized 15 day level was based on the total quantity at hand times one-half of the latest War Department monthly replacement factor. Besides losses due to enemy action, the arrival of a number of divisions from SHAEF reserve, plus supporting troops, and the necessary re-equipping of those divisions gravely depleted army reserves.

During this period the loss in VI Corps exceeded the War Department replacement factor and theater reserve scale. However, all losses were not attributable to enemy action. The 79th Infantry Division on 23 January listed losses due to icy conditions of the roads which necessitated the destruction by our own troops of equipment, including small arms, tank destroyers, armored cars, and tracked vehicles, to prevent enemy recovery.<sup>23</sup>

Only by the most careful supervision by the Seventh Army Ordnance Officer were the needs of front line divisions in ammunition and weapons met at the end of January and during the following month.

#### Build-Up for the Last Offensive

From the time the Colmar Pocket was declared liquidated on 9 February until 15 March, emphasis was placed

on the build-up of supplies to support a major offensive that was aimed to sweep the Germans out of the area west of the Rhine, establish bridgeheads across the Rhine, and exploit any breakthrough that might result after the crossing had been completed. It was this goal that the supply services sought to fulfill in developing a sufficient back-log of materiel; and, with the exception of certain classes of ammunition unavailable in base sections, the goal was reached in time to support the offensive.<sup>25</sup>

Gasoline continued to be a critical item during the first few days of February. However, the necessity for rationing on the 75 percent basis was rescinded on 4 February since receipts were by this time higher than issues. The placing in operation of the pipeline between St. Jean De Losne and the La Forge installation at Sarrebourg during the first week in February realized a potential source of gasoline for army of 180,000 gallons per day. Increased shipments from Base Section during this same time removed gasoline from the short supply column. As shipments increased during late February, it was possible to shift the La Forge bulk storage plant to Base Section control. As a result army supply was held to a desirable level with a substantial supply available in Base Section for emergency needs. Warm weather, an important factor in increasing shipments from Base Section, also served to decrease the demand for diesel fuel and



removed this item from the short supply status. <sup>26</sup>

Rations flooded into Army dumps in ever increasing amounts, from five days supply in the last week of January to a surplus during the latter part of February of over 16 days on hand in army installations. <sup>27</sup> It became possible to make unrestricted issue of B rations completely balanced through sorting and re-issue. The flow from Base Section was halted temporarily to bring the supply on hand down to the desired level of seven days. Fresh meat became more readily available, and through newly opened cold storage facilities at Dijon and Epinal front line troops were supplied. The relatively warm weather improved the quality of the bread, and increased issue was possible on full authorized allowances. Fresh fruits and vegetables were once again available to troops, as warmer weather made possible shipment of perishable items <sup>28</sup> into army ration dumps.

As of 5 February ration dumps were operating at Hampont, Machwiller, Saverne, Luneville, Sarrebourg and St. Die. At the conclusion of activity in the Colmar Pocket it was no longer necessary to maintain the installation at St. Die, which was closed on 15 February. To facilitate the handling of supply from Base Section to Nancy a non-issuing installation was maintained at Chateau-Salins. The 3rd Infantry Division while operating as SHAEF reserve drew rations and gasoline directly

from base installations at Nancy. To furnish the closest possible support for the 15 March offensive rations dumps were opened in the forward areas of the XXI and XV Corps.<sup>29</sup>

The third of the three "must" classes of supply, ammunition, was the most serious item during the period of build-up. Partially because of the heavy expenditures during January and the continued heavy firing to eliminate the Colmar Pocket, allocations were very limited. This was necessary to achieve reserve stockage for the impending offensive. With the exception of a limited offensive in the Saarbruecken-Forbach area by the XXI Corps, expenditures were light. Average daily issues at Army amounted to 39 percent of the receipts, or approximately 534.6 long tons. Compared to the average daily issue of 1,200 long tons during the Colmar Pocket fighting, the decrease in the expenditure may be seen.<sup>30</sup>

An ammunition analysis by Sixth Army Group on 1 February indicated the status of ammunition in relation to anticipated expenditures by Seventh Army and the development of sufficient resources for the future major offensive.

There will be insufficient ammunition available to properly support a major offensive by Seventh Army until at least 30 days after the elimination of the Colmar Pocket. Then the ammunition available in the heavy calibers will be insufficient unless augmented from outside Sixth Army Group. Operations during the saving period must not require ammunition more than 1/2 of SHAEF's rate.<sup>31</sup>

Seventh Army was issued the SHAEF rate for the period

1 February to 10 March but established its own build-up at army supply points. In compliance with the wishes of the Commanding General, Sixth Army Group, Seventh Army limited its daily expenditure of artillery ammunition to 50 percent of the daily quantity allocated for the period. The limitation did not apply to ammunition for the 3-inch gun, 75 mm howitzer, and 75 mm tank gun.<sup>32</sup> For the month of February tonnage increased from 26,000 to 48,000 tons as a result of increased shipments from Base Section and stringent restrictions on expenditures. With the exercise of great care, Seventh Army finally was able to consider its ammunition supply sufficient for the 15 March offensive.

The physical delivery of materiel, although not as difficult as during January, was impeded by extensive thaws in the Seventh Army area which resulted in road deterioration. In January French civilian highway engineers had assured the Seventh Army Engineer that roads in the army area were not subject to thaw damage, and army highway maintenance plans had been based on the necessity only for normal repair. Preliminary information was found to be in error. Rapid disintegration of the road nets required major repairs and the use of all available engineer troops to keep truck supply operative. On 9 February the Army Engineer advised General Patch that it would be some time before appreciable improvement could be expected.<sup>33</sup> Regulations

issued by Seventh Army in February eliminated all unnecessary traffic, set the speed limit at 25 miles per hour, reduced the 100 percent overloading of vehicles to the rated capacity, and required a maximum use of rail transportation. These restrictions, which helped bring to a halt road deterioration, were lifted on 26 February.<sup>34</sup>

The burden of carrying the bulk of Seventh Army supply was absorbed by rail as the result of the partial highway breakdown. Steady build-up of supplies in all installations was possible in spite of extremely heavy troop movements that included the return of attached divisions to other armies. Restrictions were placed on movements by infantry divisions, which usually required two trains for vehicles and from four to five trains for personnel and equipment, and by armored divisions which required approximately 12 trains. These inter-army troop movements were scheduled from railheads that would not interfere appreciably with the movement of army maintenance supplies.<sup>35</sup>

Expansion of the rail network was held to a minimum during the build-up period, since most of the available engineer troops were employed on highway repair. Operative lines, however, had not been greatly affected with the retrograde movement in January. The two main rail lines ran from Nancy through Hampont and Haboudange to

Sarralbe and from Luneville through Sarrebourg to Sarralbe, although the latter line was not in operation between Sarrebourg and Sarralbe until 1 March because of damaged bridges and track north of Fenetrance. Work was then continued on the line from Sarralbe to Sarreguemines, since it was contemplated that the offensive would be in this direction and that the line would be needed to carry the bulk of Seventh Army supply. The proximity of the front line to Sarreguemines did not permit reconnaissance beyond this point.<sup>36</sup>

On 28 January there were 61,995 long tons of all classes of supply on hand in Seventh Army. The highest point for materiel on hand was attained on 24 February when the total amounted to 113,886 long tons. At this time shipments from Base Section of those supplies which army possessed in excess were curtailed to effect a more evenly balanced figure in all classes of supplies. During February rail and truck transport had increased proportionately. Beside the movement of supplies five divisions were moved out of and three divisions into the Seventh Army area during February. There were 187 other units moving to different locations. By 15 March all classes of supply had been brought up to a satisfactory army reserve, although signal and ordnance equipment were the last to be considered adequate. Table of Equipment shortages of medium tanks had been replaced by the

middle of February, but accessories had in many cases been lost in transit prior to arrival in the army area. It was at times necessary to cannibalize deadlined tanks to put the new tanks into operation.<sup>37</sup>

Preparation for the Rhine River crossing by DD-tanks created singular problems of supply. Special rubberized canvas shrouds for tanks, manufactured in Paris and delivered to Luneville, were received only a very short time before they were needed. Seventeen DD-tanks were processed for the crossing. Tests were conducted with cargo carrying DUKWs to determine what loads could be safely carried. Preparations were made to supplement the facilities of army depot companies supporting the operation by the addition of Continental Advance Section units should they be required.

The addition in February of five SHAEF divisions had made the problem of service troops very acute. It was necessary to shift available service units to handle urgent requests, until appropriate service troops to support the newly attached divisions were received in army area. Reshifting was again necessary when these divisions were returned to the Twelfth Army Group and the supporting service troops detached from Seventh Army control. With the addition to Seventh Army of three divisions, prior to the 15 March offensive, the supporting service units were closed in the army area

at an earlier date. A number of service units were permanently assigned to Seventh Army during this supply build-up period, and were the culmination of long-standing requests for such units. Ten quartermaster truck companies received during the week the offensive began were needed to facilitate army movement of troops and supplies to support any extended advance. Rear installations were being operated by an increasing number of civilian personnel to free army troops for the operation of supply installations inside Germany.

#### Operation Undertone and Supply Services

Engineer troops with combat divisions played a significant part in breaking through the Siegfried defenses and in the crossing of the Rhine River. The requirements of explosives for breaching the Siegfried Line were calculated in advance by the army engineer, and troops were supplied with the necessary materiel between 15 and 20 March. Preliminary planning for the crossing of the Rhine River had included a long program of training for engineer troops. It was apparent from the speed of the river that mechanical equipment and trained personnel would be needed for the assault crossing. It was also necessary to devise substantial anchors for ponton bridges and some form of mine barrier capable of standing up in a fast current. So well

trained were engineer personnel that of the 400 motors in assault craft started, simultaneously the morning of the crossing only one known failure occurred. River crossing equipment had been assembled and the assault carried through according to plan.

In order to transport enough pontoons for the construction of a heavy ponton bridge which would support medium tanks, a quartermaster truck company equipped with ten-ton trailers was attached to each heavy ponton battalion. In this way 132 pontoons were transported in one trip. The motor column of each river-crossing group comprised about 600 vehicles, was 35 miles long, and required over nine hours to pass any given point in column.

One part of the over-all engineer plan included the long-term logistical support of the army after the crossing had been completed. To insure the necessary timber needed for bridging and rail reconstruction procurement plans had been formulated in October, and by the time of the Undertone offensive sufficient materiel was at hand. Plans for bridging the Rhine had been carefully laid in advance. First priority was given to the construction of a highway bridge to be started between D plus 4 and D plus 10 and to be completed by D plus 24 or D plus 30. Second priority was given to a railroad bridge to be started upon completion of the



highway span and to be finished by D plus 40. Additional structures planned in advance included a second highway bridge and a second railroad bridge. At a later date another highway bridge, the responsibility of Communications Zone, was to be built. Construction of a Bailey bridge on barges, as an interim measure, was considered feasible and a design approved on 19 March.

In addition to the crossing equipment provided by the two engineer groups, sufficient treadway units were distributed to XV Corps, making the crossing, to permit the construction by corps troops of a treadway bridge behind each assault division.<sup>38</sup>

The crossing of the Rhine on 26 March focused attention on the necessity for a close follow-up of supply installations. Support for army in its rapid forward movement was essential. Adequate supply had been developed within army, and there were no shortages of major items of equipment existing that would hinder the tactical plan. Rations, gasoline, and ammunition were sufficient to support the offensive operation. However, at the end of March the quartermaster Class II and IV dump was still located in Sarrebourg and the engineer II and IV dump in Luneville. The long haul between divisions operating east of the Rhine and supply installations heavily burdened transportation units. Motorized movement of troops jeopardized the haul of supplies, since it was necessary to use army transportation

as well as corps and division trucks to maintain the  
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pressure on the disorganized Germany army.

Once the Rhine was reached the physical crossing became the responsibility of the engineers. The crossing was made on a front of a little over nine miles. Although overall opposition was not strong, at points of concentration it did considerable damage to the storm and assault boats. During one regimental crossing every boat received at least one bullet or shrapnel hole, and another regimental crossing resulted in the loss of two-thirds of the boats involved. In the first 30 minutes of the crossing, eight assault battalions were ferried to the east bank of the Rhine, and the assault regiments were across one hour later. Field artillery battalions crossed the river three and one half hours after H-Hour, and all the artillery of the assault regiments had been crossed by H plus ten hours. During the first 24 hours after H-Hour rafts transported over 1,000 vehicles across the river, including 50 tanks. The reserve regiment of one division was completely across the river by H plus 11 hours and the reserve regiment of the other division by H plus 15 hours.

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The heavy ponton and treadway bridges were constructed in good order, the first being finished by the middle of the afternoon of D-Day, a construction time of nine hours and 12 minutes, believed to be the shortest construction time for any floating bridge ever put across the Rhine River.

The first tank crossed the bridge at 1515 hours of D-Day. During the next ten days 38,923 vehicles used the bridge. The two assault divisions were completely across the river by H plus 22 hours. All Seventh Army divisions, excepting those in army reserve, approximately 350,000 men with supporting vehicles, were across the river in less than a week, Army headquarters crossed on D plus 7 days. On 28 March two dummy heavy ponton bridges were constructed at Mannheim over which crossed several divisions of the First French Army. A total of 30,670 vehicles<sup>41</sup> used this bridge the first week it was in operation.

Previous long-term logistical planning for the support of Seventh Army had included two timber highway bridges, a Bailey bridge on barges, and two railroad bridges to be built for the main supply routes. Materials and equipment for the construction of the first four bridges had been assembled as close behind the front lines as possible, prior to the assault on the Siegfried Line. The first highway bridge constructed was 1,048 feet long, 30 feet wide, and had a capacity of 70 tons. Work was started on D plus 3 and completed ten days later. Erected from materials procured locally, including 340 piles that had been cut during the winter in the Vosges by Seventh Army personnel, it was a two-way, timber pile-bent, steel stringer bridge. Materials and equipment were transported entirely on engineer organic

vehicles 85 miles from the assembly area to the site of the crossing. The heavy equipment, including two 70-ton pile-driving rigs, was routed over back-roads so as not to interfere with the essential supply convoys of ammunition, gasoline, and rations.

Opening the rail line to the Rhine was also an engineer function. Two routes were to be finished at the same time the rail bridge across the Rhine was ready for use. The route from Pfaffenhoffen, near Haguenau, through Wissembourg to Worms followed the drive of the VI Corps. The second route from Sarreguemines through Kaiserslautern to Worms followed the XV Corps push. Single-track rail facilities were completed on both sections by 3 April. The first rail bridge over the Rhine at Mannheim was completed on 23 April and a second at Karlsruhe on 28 April. Construction was completed in 15 days and ten days respectively.

In the construction of the Bailey bridge on barges, the engineers took advantage of existing bridge conditions. Immediate reconnaissance had disclosed that many barges near the crossing had been sunk. Plans were then made to utilize the still-smouldering remains of a German military trestle bridge near Frankenthal, three miles north of Ludwigshafen. The German bridge originally consisted of trestle approaches with floating navigation bays totalling approximately 400 feet. Although 300

feet of the superstructure of the trestle bridge had been destroyed, many of the pile-bents were still usable. All navigation bays had been sunk or were missing. By cutting and recapping existing bents and by driving additional bents as required it was possible to erect a continuous double-single Bailey bridge to span the gap. The 820 feet continuous Baily bridge was started on D plus 2 and completed on D plus 13.<sup>43</sup>

Transportation continued to be the key to the supply availability for Seventh Army with Base Section resources adequate for army requirements. A short time after the offensive was begun, combat units had progressed so rapidly that existing railheads were no longer far enough forward. Completion of the rail bridge across the Sarre River at Sarralbe made it possible to open a railhead at Sarreguemines. This new railhead with another nearby at Sarreinsming handled 31,024 tons of supplies during the first seven days of operation. Rear installations at Epinal and in the Chateau-Saline sector were turned over to CONAD, permitting the use of army regulating personnel at forward locations and releasing additional service troops for new supply points. Some 125,000 tons of supplies were moved into army area by rail during the period from 15 March to the end of the month.<sup>44</sup>

Although repair of rail facilities was accomplished as rapidly as possible, army was nevertheless forced to

depend on truck operations, as the forward supply installations were extended to the Rhine River. The turn-around time was increased to nearly 24 hours and appreciably decreased the potential lift. To increase the supply haulage capacity six truck companies were attached to Seventh Army, making it possible to use a daily average of 1,253 trucks for over-the-road hauling. Troop movements, which included the additional divisions returned to army control to support the offensive, and small unit moves resulted in a total of 46,168 vehicles moving in convoy over the road network during the month.

#### Beyond the Rhine

Once the Rhine had been crossed and the assault divisions had pushed east, distances for supply transportation lengthened accordingly. The consumption of gasoline increased, as three armored divisions spearheaded the advance. A shortage in five-gallon gas containers required conservation measures to insure the availability of packaged gasoline. During the last week in March an average issue of 647,752 gallons of gasoline was made. During the remainder of the campaign daily issues were consistently over the 600,000 gallon mark with a peak average issue being made during the week of 29 April to 5 May of 690,000 gallons. An emergency measure during the first week in April resupplied gasoline

by air at Wertheim, 28 miles west of Wuerzburg, for the advance of combat troops. A total of 721,443 gallons<sup>46</sup> was brought in by this method over a four-day period.

Construction of a 10,000 barrel storage tank was completed early in April at Sarreguemines, an extension having been completed of three four-inch lines from the La Forge installations at Sarrebourg. Along the Rhine captured storage facilities at Frankenthal and Ludwigs-hafen were repaired, with 30,000 barrels capacity at the former and 4,800 tons at the latter. A four-inch pipeline, strung across the Rhine on a Bailey bridge from Frankenthal to Sandhofen, was operating on 12 April with the gasoline feeding into a 5,000 barrel tank. By the end of the month the main pipeline from Sarreguemines was feeding into<sup>47</sup> this same reservoir.

When the direction of Seventh Army attack was changed to the south toward the Swiss border, operations entered a sector that had not been given a thorough study by the Seventh Army Engineers. Hurried reconnaissance was made of the area, and rail and main supply routes were laid out from whatever information was available. Months of study had been devoted to the routes in what it had been supposed would be the Seventh Army axis of advance. The change of direction placed the engineers at the disadvantage until available maps of the area and other pertinent data could be compiled for supply planning. Rapid determination

of the condition of bridges, rail and highway capacity, and alternate routes made it possible to keep the supply flow moving without interruption.

Before the rail line crossed the Rhine on 24 April, army and CONAD vehicles hauled from west of the river to forward areas. CONAD heavy vehicles, 10-ton vans, carried supplies to the several transfer points which had been set up at Ulm, Munich, and Augsburg. Army vehicles picked up their loads at these points and made redistribution to forward supply dumps. This arrangement materially aided the tonnage allotment of each supply agency through fixed commitments and specialization of cargo runs. <sup>48</sup>

The first rail shipments over the Rhine were made to Heilbronn on 24 April. Forward elements of army, however, were operating in the Munich area by this date and were dependent on truck shipments for a supply. A secondary line was placed in operation on 1 May for VI Corps troops from Kleinkötz-Krumbach to Schongau. This line moved approximately 300 to 600 tons daily of Class I and III supplies. Upon completion of the rail bridge at Ulm and the opening of an additional line from Augsburg to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, this secondary line to Schongau was closed. <sup>49</sup>

Troop movements were exceptionally high in the army area during April, 11 divisions being moved, exclusive of the forward progress of units in combat. These 11



moves accounted for 14,906 vehicles on the army road network. In addition, 385 other convoys moved into or within army area. A scheduled rail movement of the 2nd French Armored Division was cancelled and a recommendation made that the unit not be sent to the Seventh Army until such a time as the supply and transportation situation made it feasible. This recommendation was necessary since the allocation of available rail tonnage for critical class I, III, and V supplies left only 100 tons per day for combat vehicles, spare parts, bridging, hospital trains, replacements, and other transportable items. Movement of the division would have required about 37 trains of 450 tons each which would have seriously hampered the movement of necessary supplies. 50

There was one tactical movement that was blunted because the main supply route was not adequately maintained. The breakthrough of the 10th Armored Division in the Crailsheim area left the division stranded in Crailsheim without a flow of supply. The Neckar River and Jagst bridges had been blown and temporary bridges were under enemy fire. Although the airfield was under enemy fire, it was possible to deliver by air 20,000 gallons of gasoline, 7,000 rations, 1,000 rounds of 105 mm and 100,000 rounds of small arms ammunition with the loss of only one C-47, destroyed as a result of a direct hit from enemy artillery. A later breakthrough

into this area was maintained through the expedient of motorizing one RCT of the 44th Division which kept pace with the armor and guarded the critical points along the main supply route. <sup>51</sup> The fanatical defense in the Heilbronn area during the early part of April also threatened to upset supply delivery. As result of enemy artillery action, it was impossible to maintain a treadway bridge over the Neckar River at this location; and a general re-routing of supplies was made through Mosbach.

Air resupply was used again for VI Corps near Goepfingen, which had Class I, II and V installations. On 26 and 27 April, 400,000 gallons of gasoline and 150,000 rations were delivered by air. Cargo planes, 280 C-47's, were used to make the deliveries. Under the provisional supply set-up, corps quartermaster could deliver only 100,000 gallons of gas by truck, which was approximately 65 percent of corps requirements. The balance was delivered by air shipments until truck transportation was available. Bad weather made uncertain the regularity of air supply, which, however, fulfilled the emergency need.

The issue of rations during the period following the Rhine crossing was relatively good. With the exception of the period 15-21 April, B rations were readily available in army ration dumps. During the above period, however,

the on-hand supply dropped to 0.5 days. The feeding of Allied prisoners of war who had been liberated by the army advance, German prisoners, and many displaced persons created new problems for the army. Planning prior to the movement into Germany offered some precedence for the method of handling.

Since the feeding and clothing of displaced persons would normally be taken care of through military government channels, it was difficult to determine how long divisions over-running such camps would need to supply them from division stocks. An unanticipated drain on army and division reserve supply was the result. Vast numbers of German prisoners in army stockades, estimated at 150,000 on 1 May, made the collection and re-distribution of captured enemy food stocks a major problem. Feeding and evacuating prisoners did not reach a critical stage until the end of April. Evacuation by supply trucks making the return run to railheads became insufficient because of the large number of prisoners. Special enclosures had to be built and personnel had <sup>be</sup> to/fed, until  
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evacuation could be made.

The seriousness of the food supply within the German Army at the time of its capitulation is illustrated by an analysis contained in a Seventh Army radio message to ETOUSA, dated 11 May, outlining the problem of feeding German prisoners:

It is difficult to comprehend the manner in which the German Army supplied itself from such meager reserves even to the extent of short supplies of grain for bread. In view of the shortages of food supplies the army has initiated action to establish a basic emergency menu built around bacon, bread (German), and fresh potatoes. There is apparently an appreciable quantity of fresh potatoes stored in the ground but they are in small quantities and in isolated places and are difficult to locate.

Air evacuation of Allied prisoners of war was made whenever the health of the soldiers would permit. Displaced persons were segregated and became the responsibility of the G-5 section. Seventh Army continued to supervise and guard the defeated German Army, and through a central collection point all available food supplies were exploited.

Although there were some shortages in food and gasoline during the final phase of the war in Germany, the supply of ammunition was not termed critical at any time following the beginning of the operation on 15 March. Two reasons account for this: the tremendous build-up that had been accomplished prior to the major offensive, and the general disintegration of the German defense. At the beginning of the offensive the daily expenditures were in excess of current allocated daily rates but remained within the overall accumulated credits and savings of the army. Rapid advance by the Seventh Army once the Rhine had been crossed reduced the necessity for heavy expenditures, although individual towns and cities offered resistance and were heavily shelled.

The original plan for ammunition supply points was to establish one near each corps with a main supply point for army in the vicinity of the railhead. When the change in direction of Seventh Army attack was made, it was necessary to consolidate all stock in one army supply point from which the three corps had to draw. Ammunition shortage in individual units was usually restricted to the lighter types of shell and did not indicate an army shortage but merely non-availability at forward supply points. Expenditures of 75 mm and 76 mm tank ammunition were heavy, since tanks were often used as artillery support for infantry troops. The period 8-21 April marked the last major resistance on the part of the German Army and materially increased ammunition expenditures. Shipments in the latter part of April were reduced, and by 1 May only replacement of actual expenditure was being made by Base Section.

Shortages in certain items of ordnance equipment became apparent as the period of army operations drew to a close. Many vehicles were deadlined because of the lack of replacement parts. The replacement of combat vehicles and weapons was temporarily held up, but sufficient shipments were received by the middle of April to make essential replacements. The full-time use made of all general purpose vehicles, however,

accelerated its rate of deterioration and continued to deplete the reserve stocks available in army. Shortages of tires and tubes were somewhat relieved by the use of captured German rubber, which was substituted on front wheels and spares.

Signal and medical supplies were adequate during this last phase of operations. Medical organizations had been well-equipped prior to the 15 March offensive and were in a position to maintain operations without resupply for a 10 to 20 day period. Recovery of German medical equipment made it possible to utilize captured supplies for over-run German hospitals and relieve any strain on army reserve.

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The problem confronting the service troops assigned to army increased with the lost working time which resulted from the necessity for close follow-up of the rapid advance of the combat units and the consequent loss of time involved in frequent moving. Guarding and handling captured enemy materiel further depleted the available manpower. Some relief of personnel shortages was secured through the hiring of displaced civilians, although the ETOUSA ruling that French civilian labor would not be moved into Germany made necessary employment readjustments and the hiring of many Poles, Russians, and Italians.

### Campaign Review

The cessation of hostilities on the Seventh Army front did not eliminate the supply problems that had confronted the army during the final phase of fighting in southern Germany. Of the three critical items, ammunition was the only one that could be removed from the overall picture. Food and gasoline were needed in great quantities. But the transition period from operations to occupation must remain as a separate period of historical interest. Some review of the Seventh Army campaign through France and Germany is more appropriate to a report of operations.

While the German Army still opposed Seventh Army in France and Germany the emphasis of supply was upon the bullets and shells to be directed against the enemy. Statistics of the entire Seventh Army campaign include a total ammunition tonnage issued to combat troops of 235,585.7 long tons. A proper figure for the handling of tonnage would be to multiply this figure by three to include the receipt, issue, and the second unloading within army area. The tonnage issue figure does not equal the total amount received since this included 12,670.5 tons on hand in army supply points at the end of the fighting and credits available for the army of approximately 90,000 tons from ammunition turned over to Base Section as the army moved forward. During the

campaign several new types of ammunition were introduced and employed. All issues to troops were for replacement of basic load ammunition. Seventh Army did not have an established basic load for units but left determination of the amount to unit commanders based on the carrying capacity of available transportation. This proved to be a most satisfactory method, since in many instances it allowed combat units to continue fighting during critical periods without exposing troops making deliveries.

To summarize the participation of supply agencies in the campaign it is necessary to return to the pre-planning days in December of 1943 in Algiers and Oran, when operation ANVIL was still a paper project awaiting final authorization from higher headquarters. Lack of decision tended to confuse the necessary logistical planning. The actual operation, changed in name to DRAGOON, was a successful Army-Navy landing operation in the harbor areas adjacent to Marseille. German destruction of the harbor of Marseille had made this large port entirely unusable at the date of its capture; however, two months later, berths for 29 Liberty ships were available as well as coaster berths, tanker berths, and LST hards. Coincidental in time, the harbors of DuBouc, Toulon, Cannes, and Nice were reopened, each involving clearing of mines, removing wrecked hulks,



and rebuilding the extensive facilities. During the last two weeks of the Seventh Army campaign, the port of Marseille was operating at a capacity of 25,000 tons per day. During the entire campaign some 2,500,000 tons of cargo, 180,158 vehicles, and 491,000 personnel had passed through its facilities.

The tremendous problem of transportation was the focal point throughout the Seventh Army's campaign. Directly integrated with all tactical moves, the movement of supply hinged first on Base Section availability and secondly on the rail and truck services delivering the necessary quantities of materiel within the time factor allowed by the operational movement of the army. It was necessary for army to support itself by truck hauls supplemented by air-drops until the capture of Grenoble, 172 miles inland. Rail rehabilitation commenced as soon as the troops moved inland from the beaches with the first locomotive going into operation on 23 August, eight days after the landing. Rail service was opened into Lyon, Dijon, and Besancon by 21 September; and a system of 1,166 miles of line was open for operation by 1 November serving both the First French Army and the Seventh Army at the time the tactical situation had stabilized itself in the Vosges Mountains.

The rapid forward movement of Seventh Army had been retarded in October as the result of three related

causes. Transportation was unable to place sufficient supplies in Seventh Army installations to insure a safe margin in the event an offensive operation met expected stiffening resistance. The German retreat had been precipitous but, nevertheless organized, and had placed the enemy in advantageous defensive positions. Finally, the condition of men and equipment of the Seventh Army showed the strain of the rapid advance and soon would require rest. The month of October and the first part of November became a period of build-up of all classes of supply to support the November offensive that was aimed at clearing the area west of the Rhine and exploiting a possible Rhine crossing should the opportunity present itself. Transportation facilities met the requirements of the army for the desired level of supply and, subject to physical limitation in Base Sections, had sufficient reserve to maintain the Seventh Army drive.

Winter weather was first experienced in October in the High Vosges where deep snow and damp, cold weather produced a non-combatant casualty loss. The successful penetration through the Vosges in November and to the Alsatian Plain in December was halted by the German counter-offensive against <sup>another</sup> ~~the~~ Allied front. An adjustment of fronts was made between the Third and Seventh Armies which enabled Third Army units to be employed in the Ardennes sector. When an expected secondary thrust by the German

Army against the Seventh Army front called for defensive measures that included a planned retrograde movement of supply, Lunegille and Epinal became the main rear installations and Saverne and Sarrebourg the forward dumps, with St. Die opened for support of troops fighting in the Colmar Pocket area.

The transfer of supply in January from forward points to the rear and from Base Sections to rear caused a concentration of materiel within army not readily available to the using troops. As a result of the long distances involved and unsatisfactory road nets a serious condition existed in all classes of supply. Army was able to contain the German thrust with relatively little loss of tactical ground and assumed a static defensive role that included a closely controlled expenditure of ammunition. Future offensive planning required supply to build substantial reserves as well as to fill all table of equipment shortages of combat units. On 15 March Seventh Army mounted a major offensive aimed at Germany.

During the first 11 days of the last major offensive up to the Rhine crossing supply had been able to move forward in relatively close support. Following the crossing, the distances between combat units and supply points became relatively greater. Rail was of practically no assistance within army area for the movement of supplies from the Rhine eastward until late in April. Trucks

of CONAD and army were coordinated to keep the level of supply sufficient to maintain the army drive.

At the end of hostilities on the Seventh Army front on 8 May, a distance of over 1,000 miles had been traveled, that included the opening Rhone Valley push and the closing thrusts into the last points of resistance in the Austrian Alps. Supply had been sufficient to maintain all the operations mounted by army, even though in some cases such operations might have been delayed until a satisfactory supply build-up could be attained. Service troops, from the medical ward attendant in a rear hospital to the signal corps linesman laying wire under shell fire, had supported combat divisions to the full extent of their drives.

\* \* \*

FOOTNOTESChapter XXXI

1. Seventh Army Transportation Section Report, Narrative, January 1945.
2. Seventh Army, G-4 Weekly Reports, January 1945.
3. 45th Infantry Division and 36th Infantry Division, G-4 Reports, January 1945.
4. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 7-13 Jan 45.
5. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 21-27 Jan 45.
6. 7th Army Trans Sect Narrative, Jan 45.
7. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 14-20 Jan 45.
8. 7th Army Trans Sect Narrative, Jan 45.
9. 3rd Infantry Division, G-4 Report, January 1945.
10. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 28 Jan-3 Feb 45.
11. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 7-13 Jan 45.
12. Ibid.
13. 7th Army Trans Sect Narrative, Jan and Feb 45.
14. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 7-13 Jan 45.
15. Seventh Army, Quartermaster Report, 27 January 1945.
16. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 28 Jan - 3 Feb 45.
17. Seventh Army Signal Section Report, Narrative, January 1945.
18. Ibid.
19. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, Jan 45.
20. Seventh Army Ordnance Section Report, Narrative, January 1945.

21. VI Corps, G-4 Report, January 1945.
22. Ibid.
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24. Seventh Army Official Diary, 9 February 1945.
25. 7th Army G-4 Report, Feb and March 45.
26. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 28 Jan - 17 March 1945.
27. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 28 Jan - 24 Feb 45.
28. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 28 Jan -17 Mar 45.
29. Ibid.
30. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 28 Jan - 3 Feb 45.
31. Sixth Army Group, Ammunition Report.
32. 7th Army Diary, 28 Feb 45.
33. 7th Army Diary, 9 Feb 45.
34. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 4 Feb - 3 March 45.
35. 7th Army Trans Sect Narrative, Feb and March 45.
36. Ibid.
37. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 27 Jan - 17 Mar 45.
38. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Reports, 28 Jan - 17 Mar 45.
39. VI Corps G-4 Report, Mar 45.
40. Seventh Army Engineer Report, Narrative, March 1945.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. 7th Army Trans Narrative, March 45.
45. Ibid.

46. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 17 Mar - 6 May 45.
47. 7th Army Trans Sect Narrative, March and April 45.
48. Ibid.
49. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report, 29 April - 12 May 45.
50. 7th Army Diary, 19 April 45.
51. 10th Armored Division Report, Narrative, April 1945.
52. 3rd Inf Div G-4 Report, April 45.
53. 7th Army G-4 Wkly Report 18 March - 12 May 45.

ANNEX A

Supplies Received and Issued at Seventh Army Dumps  
1-31 January for all Classes of Supplies in Long Tons

<u>Class of Supplies</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>Issued</u>	<u>On Hand at</u> <u>Close</u>
QM	25,830.4	29,866.04	6850
QM II, & IV	2,866.	2,676.	3530
Ord II & IV	19,325.27	17,590.95	8788
Sig II & IV	2,429.	2,713.1	2943
Eng II& IV	3,619.	4,523.	6808
Med II & IV	244.2	310.01	319
CWS II & IV	222.	50.	279
QM III	43,672.5	47,902.	4370
Ord V	47,849.7	43,040.1	27091
CWS V	1,389.	1,362.	1021



## ANNEX B

### Rounds per Weapon per Day for Rates Under Which Seventh Army had Operated Since Landing in Southern France

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>U/F</u>	<u>NATOUSA D/S</u>	<u>ETOUSA D/S</u>	<u>SHAEP RATE</u>
Carbine, cal .30	15	1.5	1.5	
Rifle, cal .30 M1	20	3.0	3.	
Gun, Mch cal .30	250	80.	70.	
Gun, sub mch, cal .45	25	6.	6.	
Gun, Mch cal .50	200	25.	25.	
Gun, 37mm anti-tank	30	4.	5.	
Gun, 40mm	144	8.	8.	
Gun, 75mm tank	75	6.	10.	6.9
Gun, 76mm AT, SP		13.	13.	
Gun, 90mm AA	75	7.	6.	6.5
Gun, 90mm anti tank		15.	15.	21.8
Gun, 155mm M17, 18, M1	100	30.	25.	14.3
How., 75mm SP	80	15.	15.	27.7
How., 105mm M2A1	175	50.	20.	26.7
How., 155mm M1	100	35.	25.	19.7
Mortar, 60mm	50	7.5	10.	4.96
Mortar, 81mm	75	15.	15.	10.

ANNEX C

Ordnance Class V Stock on Hand  
Within Seventh Army at End of Period 21-27 January

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>No. of WEAPONS</u>	<u>No. of ROUNDS</u>	<u>Days of Supply ETOUSA</u>
Carbine	151,334	1,793,800	7.9
Rifle, cal. .30 (all types)	121,839	6,223,183	150.3
Rifle, cal. .30 (auto)	3,938	972,950	8.2
Machine Gun, cal. .30	11,931	5,041,500	6.4
Pistol, Cal. .45	10,689	--	--
SMG, Pistol, cal. .45	51,350	1,041,040	6.0
Machine Gun, cal. .50	12,902	4,412,077	13.9
37mm Gun AA	224	58,858	32.8
37mm Gun T & AT	1,026	45,506	8.8
40mm Gun	288	32,277	14.0
57mm Gun	971	26,866	3.9
60mm Mortar	1,502	102,224	6.8
81mm Mortar	1,004	24,831	1.6
75mm Howitzer	185	21,427	7.7
75mm Gun	712	70,965	9.9
76mm Gun	323	51,391	12.2
3" Gun	360	46,498	9.9
90mm gun	132	18,212	32.4
105mm Howitzer M2	896	271,741	7.5
105mm Howitzer M3	204	19,296	4.7
4.5" Gun	48	17,480	13.0

Annex C (Cont'd)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>No. of WEAPONS</u>	<u>No. of ROUNDS</u>	<u>Days of Supply ETOUSA</u>
155mm Howitzer, M17,18, M1	264	79,946	12.0
155mm Gun	78	23,276	11.9
8" Howitzer	72	22,918	15.9
8" Gun	4	358	5.9
240mm Howitzer	18	3,594	28.5
4.2" Chemical Mortar	108	19,919	7.4

**ANNEX D**

**Ammunition Available to Seventh Army on 15 March**

<u>Type</u>	<u>No. of Weapons</u>	<u>Rounds per Gun</u>	
		<u>Min. Desired</u>	<u>Available</u>
105mm Howitzer	817	1200	1133
155mm Howitzer	336	800	892
4.5 inch Gun	36	800	500
155mm Gun	126	660	578
240mm Howitzer	18	500	255
8" Howitzer	72	600	346

ANNEX E

Army Supply Increase from 28 January to 24 February  
Based on  
Weekly Figures of Receipts and Estimates of Requirements

<u>Class of Supply</u>	<u>2/3</u>	<u>2/10</u>	<u>2/17</u>	<u>2/24</u>
QM class I				
Receipts	951.10	1482.7	1172.3	1180.2
Requirements	1050	1000	950	815
QM class III				
Receipts	1989.50	3172.7	2430.5	2060.7
Requirements	1050	1900	1700	1500
CWS class V				
Receipts	62.40	91.8	96.4	79.9
Requirements	60	55	60	50
Ord class V				
Receipts	1300.70	2196.7	1642.0	2130.07
Requirements	1400	1200	1200	1150
QM class II & IV				
Receipts	79.80	201.1	157.14	89.4
Requirements	133	130	135	115
Ord class II & IV				
Receipts	641.80	1068.0	1427.48	654.02
Requirements	700	550	750	700
CWS class II & IV				
Receipts	.40	9.4	5.7	7.0
Requirements	5	4	4	3
Engr class II & IV				
Receipts	39.50	72.1	102.2	206.4
Requirements	150	150	150	150
Med class II & IV				
Receipts	9.60	15.5	2.07	10.32
Requirements	16	16	15	13
Sig class II & IV				
Receipts	111.30	245.0	110.71	87.9
Requirements	125	125	120	120
Total receipts	5186.10	8555.0	7146.50	6505.91
Requirements	5539	5130	5084	4616

**ANNEX F**

**A Comparison of Weekly Tonnage Received by  
Seventh Army by Rail and Trucks 18 March to 12 May**

<u>Week</u>	<u>Rail</u>	<u>Trucks</u>
18-24 March	39,371.22	2,532.8
25-31 March	37,048.16	2,354.21
1-7 April	30,004.34	2,531.17
8-14 April	25,920.23	5,704.36
15-21 April	23,938.7	6,820.46
22-28 April	21,133.56	14,993.28
29-5 May	19,661.62	12,135.83
6-12 May	5,886.50	25,901.58

ANNEX G

Distances Travelled by Army Trucks During the Week  
15-21 April From Railhead at  
Frankenthal (Mannheim) to Advance Supply Installations

<u>Class</u>	<u>Vicinity of</u>	<u>Round Trip</u>
I - III - V	Bad Kissingen	224
I - III	Sennfeld	152
I - III	Bamberg	372
I - III	Rothenburg	360
I - III	Heilbronn	148
III	Friedrichsfeld	60
V	Sulzbach	130
V	Dittigheim	128
V	Rimpar	196

ANNEX H

Army Supply Point Locations 15 March to 8 May

<u>Location - date opened</u>	<u>Location - date opened</u>
New Altheim 3/20	Neustadt 3/27
Lobsann 3/21	Biblis 3/29
Kircheimbolanden 3/25	Gross Ostheim 3/31
Kaiserslautern 3/26	Vierheim 4/1
Dittingheim 4/5	Hartershofen 4/22
Sulzbach 4/6	Holzheim 4/24
Burjos 4/6	Satteldorf 4/25
Lauter 4/7	Hainsforth 4/26
Bamberg 4/15	Witteslingen 4/27
Schwabbach 4/20	



ANNEX I

Breakdown by Weapons of Total Ammunition Issued  
for Seventh Army Campaign 15 August 1944-8 May 1945

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>No. of Rounds</u>
105mm M2 Howitzer	3,452,442
60mm Mortar	1,060,243
81mm Mortar	1,282,630
.30 cal Carbine	31,210,039
.30 cal Rifle (03 & M1)	69,199,162
.30 cal MG	89,847,962
.50 cal MG	21,964,288
.45 cal Pistol & SMG	25,551,460
Grenades, hand	1,038,300
8" Howitzer	84,482
240mm Howitzer	13,818
155mm Gun	234,473
155mm Howitzer	682,654
4.5" Gun	143,385

ANNEX J

Civilian Personnel Hired by Seventh Army  
18 March-12 May

<u>Week</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>Displaced Persons</u>
18-24 March	4,545	
25-31 March	1,835	
1 - 7 April	1,275	403
8-14 April	585	1,225
15-21 April	260	2,524
22-28 April	182	2,425
29-5 May	187	2,424
6 -12 May	238	2,433

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