

SMOKE AND DUST MAKE SCENE UNREAL

By HOLBROOK BRADLEY
Sunpapers War Correspondent

With U. S. 30th Infantry Division, March 26 (By Radio-Delayed)—All over the flat stretch of land running back of the high ground east of the Rhine was evidence of the terrific artillery bombardment our gunners had thrown into the area in preparation for our crossing.

Over the whole area hung a mixture of smoke and dust rising from dirt roads, for, although the recent dry weather has made the ground excellent for the operation of armor and other vehicles, at the same time it has turned the atmosphere in the battle area into a semblance of those dust-ridden Carolina maneuvers.

At a farmhouse captured only a few hours before, the task force "Hunt", named for its commander, Lieut. Col. Richard J. Hunt, of Bethesda, was in the process of forming up for a further push toward interior objectives within the Reich.

White Flags in Evidence

The force, composed of an infantry battalion commanded by Lieut. Col. James W. Cantey, of Columbia, S. C., a light tank battalion commanded by Colonel Hunt, and other elements, was to take off shortly to pursue its initial success in driving the Germans back and chopping up elements encountered in front of it.

Along the dust-laden road stretching toward the high ground a mile or so away, doughboys of the 120th Infantry already were mounting their tanks for a combined operation.

There still were a few civilians, mostly women, children and old men, grouped in the doorway of the farmhouse, over which hung the white flag which all German families now throw out to meet the advancing Americans.

The afternoon was almost hot, for the spring weather of the last few weeks has dried up the ground, which in places is already baked hard.

Dogs Run Beside Tanks

Through the small towns in their path, groups of German civilians stood, apathetic to the show of American strength, but at the same time evidencing friendliness, and apparently wondering how the conquerors would treat them. A couple of German dogs ran noisily beside the tanks for a few moments, then turned away, not quite sure of what was happening.

Some fifteen minutes later, as the lead tanks reached the first stretch of an uphill grade, the column stopped in its tracks. Up ahead we could hear the sounds of the rapid exchange of small-arms fire.

A hot March sun still blazed in the sky above as we sat and waited for the next move. Somehow, that moment, the war seemed far away, as cattle grazed quietly in fields on both sides of us, a few civilians wandered about the usual task of spring planting, and the only sounds of battle were distant ones.

They Sweat It Out

Then the scene changed. There was the quick, high-velocity whine of an incoming shell and almost immediately an explosion a hundred yards to our right. Then came a series of rounds in quick succession, slamming into the fields on both sides of the road.

An enemy battery evidently was near by, for we could hear the sound of a shell leaving the gun and then the almost instantaneous explosion.

Our forces had been held up for the better part of a half hour when the signal came to move again, just as Thunderbolts went into action a mile or so ahead to strafe and bomb Jerry positions. As the silver P-47's screamed down thousands of feet in a power dive, we were glad they bore the blue star, not the black swastika, and even from a distance the ground under us shook as the bombs exploded.

Guns Moved Recently

From evidence gathered from the later trend of the battle, it was apparent that guns had been moved in shortly before we arrived, or even as the first tanks were on their way up the hill, for there was none of the usual camouflage, no sign of prepared positions. In a ditch on one side lay the bloody body of a German gunner, felled as he attempted to man his gun.

At a T-shaped intersection 500 or 600 yards ahead a Heine half-tracked vehicle that had attempted to stop the push was burning fiercely. Even from a distance there was an acrid smell of burning bodies, and as we drew up to it we could see a driver and gunner killed by a direct hit by one of our tanks.

In the semi-darkness, infantry already was deploying out right and left to cover the flanks preparatory to moving on through the woods or setting up a perimeter defense for the night.

Krauts Caught By Surprise

Suddenly there was the sharp chatter of a German "burp gun" down the road to the right. Although it may have been 50 yards away, it sounded next to us as its spray of lead sent twigs and branches flying overhead and we flattened to the ground. For a few minutes a fire fight blazed as the doughboys tangled with the Krauts. Up at the main intersection, north of the left-hand road, Lieutenant Colonel Hunt and the tankers were attempting to break through the last

Civilians At Magdeburg Nerve Lot

By JOHN MacCORMAC
N. Y. Times

WITH 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION—When this correspondent entered Magdeburg this afternoon the city had already been cleared of active resisters though prisoners were still being brought in and shells from the German artillery on the other side of the Elbe were coming in.

The Reichsbank, a square brown stucco building of modernistic architecture, was being guarded by men of the 117th Regiment and so was a warehouse stocked with German champagne. This was not only to protect champagne from the men or, better say, the men from the champagne but the champagne from the Germans who have shown themselves ready looters of such property on occasion.

Of Magdeburg's 310,000 inhabitants 200,000 still remain. They have stayed through bombings and artillery fire which have laid one third of the city flat and seriously damaged at least another third.

CIVILIANS CALLOUS

It must be admitted that these German civilians have strong nerves. According to unconfirmed reports, 25,000 of the city's inhabitants are dead or missing since yesterday's 3½ hour bombing.

A German medical officer complained today that the American troops were not rescuing thousands whom he said, must be suffocating under piles of new rubble created by that attack. Yet Lt. Col. Ben T. Ammons of Jackson, Tenn., commander of the Second Battalion of the 117th said that the citizens had to be shooed off the streets today while the fighting was in progress so curious were they to see it.

According to Lt. Col. Robert E. Frankland of Jackson, Tenn., commander of the First Battalion, it had been a strange sort of fighting in which Hitler youth would rush at Americans from behind roadblocks, firing wildly until they were mowed down. — (Copyright 1945)

strip of forest to open ground beyond. As we came up there was the sound of heavy guns going into action, then the sharp rattle of machine guns and small arms.

Things were getting stiffer, but it was evident the Krauts had been taken by surprise, for at the intersection were three mobile 150-mm. guns left behind by the enemy, who had retreated so fast he was unable to salvage these highly valuable pieces of equipment.

Arrogant Captain Captured

A few moments later, one of the more valuable prizes of war came down the road guarded by doughboys—a captain in command of a battalion of the 116th Panzer division. Apparently out on reconnaissance preparatory to moving his unit into a position against us, the Nazi was the arrogant type who would speak only after he saw the amount of supporting men and material we were employing.

A crowd of German prisoners was moving off down the road through the column of our tanks when the screaming, high-pitched whine of German rocket guns broke over the other sounds of battle. It sent us diving to the dirt again, but with a sigh of relief as the explosive tore through the skies to explode well behind us. Then the column began to move forward slowly again.

Near 7 o'clock a few more prisoners straggled in, this time a mixture of both the division against us, varying from nondescript Volksturm troops to arrogant Nazi armored corpsmen. They were a general cross-section of what we seem to be up against in this bridgehead across the Rhine.

Nazi Vehicle Explodes

Half an hour later, the tanks were ordered buttoned up for the night and the infantry commanders instructed company and platoon leaders to deploy men throughout the area for a perimeter defense against counterattacks. As we walked back through the still-blazing forest, there was a terrific explosion back at the corner, where a German tracked vehicle had been hit, and we could see a shower of sparks, metal, ammunition and pieces of Krauts showering through the air as the vehicle exploded.

By noon, the companies moving forward to drive the enemy from the woods had all reached their objectives and reported the enemy falling back to positions in the open ground beyond. As we left, the armor again was on the move up, and already elements had reached the edge of the wooded area.

Seen about the area were:
CAPT. CHARLES H. BROWN, 311 East Thirty-first street.
LIEUT. JOHN V. RICKLE, 2920 Riggs avenue.
TECH. 5/g EARL BROOKS, 3801½ Woodbine avenue.
LIEUT. COL. JOSEPH E. REYNOLDS, Hopkinsville, Ky.
MAJOR EZEKIEL GLAZIER, Palm Beach, Fla.
PFC. NEVIN CRONISE, Hagerstown.
LIEUT. GEORGE W. TERRY, Elmhurst, L. I.
LIEUT. RAY E. ELVAN, Clifton, N. J.
LIEUT. JOE SULTAN, Youngstown, Ohio.

HOLIDAY ATMOSPHERE MARKS DAS OF INFANTRY THROUGH RHINELAND

By JAMES WELLARD

Times Staff Correspondent Copyright, 1945, by The Chicago Times, Inc.

With Ninth Army Across Rhine, March 26 (By Wireless). The field commander of this forward unit several miles east of the Rhine told his men today he believed there was scarcely anything left between the Ninth Army advance troops and Berlin.

All last night and again today the 30th American infantry division, which made the initial crossing of the river in this sector, has surged forward against resistance which has changed hourly from moderate to light.

More than 1,500 prisoners have been taken in 24 hours by this division.

Prisoners were still coming in while I was at this outpost—so fast there were not enough guards to watch them. One group of 200 was left to fend for itself until it could be transported toward the rear.

I wandered around among these Germans, who were the lowest type of Wehrmacht soldier I yet have seen.

Odds and ends from "ear and stomach" battalions, punishment companies consisting of men who previously had been withdrawn from the line for disciplinary action, replacements who have never fought before, engineers and stragglers make up these thrown-together battle units. Given rifles from the last war, they were told to "hold to the last."

SMOTHERED BY YANKS

These defense units have been smothered by fresh American troops and now we are through the crust of them and almost out into the clear.

A typical prisoner was a German who'd celebrated his 50th birthday yesterday. He had fought in the last war and was called back into service a year and a half ago. He had served in the west as a headquarters sergeant, and then two days ago was given a rifle from the last war and put in command of a squad.

When you see prisoners like this and listen to reports coming in from patrols, and ride

across this east bank of the Rhine without seeing a German shell, the war begins to take on a fantastic and unreal aspect.

You have the impression you can step into a jeep, cross the Rhine, and drive all the way towards Berlin—and perhaps be welcomed with flowers and kisses.

Today I took part of this ride which hourly will become longer.

LIKE A CARNIVAL

You race down to the Rhine along a fine concrete road with all traffic spinning along at a 30 MPH clip.

As you near the river things take on a carnival atmosphere. Over the river fly little silver balloons once familiar around British ports. These are balloon barrages manned by the RAF.

You top the dike which runs along the west bank of the Rhine and look down onto a wide river.

Today it was sparkling in the sun and across it runs a heavy pontoon bridge beautifully firm and sinuous.

Under clouds of smoke you roll across at the end of a convoy with nothing to impede the advance—no shelling, no air attacks. Overhead, glimpsed through rifts in billowing white smoke, fly our fighters.

Even infantrymen tramping towards the front along dust-hidden roads have a holiday aspect. They are carrying a few personal possessions like portable radios, little suitcases, and one had a string shopping bag over his back with an orange parachute and a book in it.

Civilians already are emerging and going about their daily routine. Women in farm clothes sort out belongings from the rubble of their homes.

War has passed over this area with a comparatively light hand. Even the Germans did not have time to complete their defenses.

At a farm house a few kilometers behind the front line I sat down with outposts to eat lunch with a group of Amer-

ican officers. They were but happy. The impression they gave me was their war was almost ended. They clearing some woods and ground ahead and then I said "the way was open anywhere the armor was to go."

On a fine mahogany table we ate fresh potatoes, beef hash and fresh oranges.

I learned from officers successful the 30th division operation had been. The mans said they knew we were coming Friday, Saturday Sunday. But they did not know where.

They did not expect the division to cross where it in fact they did not know 30th was in the vicinity.

Opposite the 30th was a of the German 180th infantry division. It had been be mauled in the first day.

The American bridgehead was miles deep in the 16 hours.

EXPECT COUNTER STAFF

So far the Yanks had not received one counter attack. They expect counter attacks tonight but only small and effectual ones.

We had overrun their ground because they had no infantry to protect them. Now the Germans were using flak batteries as ground infantry artillery.

I went outside to take a look at prisoners just brought from fields and holes in ground.

One tall, thin man with thick lenses had his spectacles slipped to the side of his face with a tape.

The Italians and Belgians were thin, shivering, undernourished and broken in spirit. But one Russian, who was years old, had been reduced to the lowest form of humanity I have ever seen.

As I stood talking with the slaves, a German lieutenant in an immaculate uniform, smiling by grinning arrogantly and odd, decrepit soldiers walked like sheep for orders.

823rd TDs 1st 'Pop' Gets To Go Home Soothes Assault Nerve

Stars and Stripes

WITH XIX CORPS—Men of the 823rd TD Bn., claiming to be the first tank destroyers across the Roer, reported comparatively light resistance the first day. But on the second, discovering the 30th Inf. Div. had moved too fast to clean out everything, the 823rd found bypassed strongpoints, machine gun nests and roaming tanks.

The TDs knocked out a pillbox, two machine gun nests and two 20mm guns. Next day the battalion got a Tiger, two certain Mark IVs and one probable and an anti-tank gun.

Meanwhile, the 29th Inf. Div. attacking on the left flank, had pushed back a large number of enemy. They were retreating across the plain to the north when the 823rd thrust out from among the trees. Driving them into buildings, the TD men hurled 125 rounds into the structures, demolishing them. Thus gaining entrance to the plain, the 823rd drove north.

30TH RUNS JERRY SEPARATION CENTER

By ERNIE LEISER

Stars and Stripes Staff Correspondent
PLAUN, Germany, June 6—They were handing out discharges so quick and so slick at this German PW "separation center" that you felt like sneaking into line yourself.

No points were necessary. They didn't care whether you had one or umpteen battle stars, if you'd been overseas or if you had quintuplets. All they required was that you were a German. That you weren't a general or a member of the German General Staff, that you weren't an SS-er, a bigwig in the Nazi Party, or a war criminal and that the CIC didn't find any other flies on you. If you passed those tests you were out like a Kraut.

In its first day's business today, the Plaun camp group processed prisoners, handed them their discharges from the Wehrmacht, and loaded them on trucks headed for a distribution point near their homes where they were to be turned loose.

Maj. Reynold Erickson, of Miles, Iowa, and the 120th Inf. Regt., who runs the place, says that when the kinks which a casual observer can't see are worked out, a thousand walking papers will be issued daily.

The discharge station is under the control of Lt. Ernst Sharpe, of Durham,

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WITH NINTH U.S. ARMY.—Pop was going home.

Less than five hours before Easy Company 119th Inf. was scheduled to shove off across the Rhine, battalion telephoned that Pop was leaving the next morning. That meant he wouldn't be in on the crossing.

Pop was a relative newcomer to the company—hooked on to it in January—but he wasn't a newcomer in combat. He'd been overseas for 31 months, was in on four D-Day operations: Africa, Sicily, Italy and Normandy. No one was begrudging him the 30-day furlough to the States. He had earned it.

But, down in the cellar where the Third Platoon was holed up and waiting to take off, the boys were riding Pop . . . said he was walking out on the company just when they needed him . . . called him a deserter.

Pop—his name is Pfc Delbert Tompkins, of Eureka, Cal.—isn't really old. Only 35. But, he has false teeth and has a fatherly way about him, so everybody just naturally called him Pop.

He just sat there and grinned as they kidded him.

"Hey, Pop," called S/Sgt. Chester Biggs, of Washington. "You're gonna miss all them German cigars on the other side of the Rhine."

N. C., and the 120th, aided by Pfc Mortimer Satter, an ex-lawyer from New York City, who set up a filing system which speeds up the process, but who keeps the help on the ball and is general red tape eliminator. All the "help" in the place are German soldiers.

The station is set up like a big American induction station. Batteries of clerks fill out a long series of papers.

The prisoners undergo a physical, given by German army doctors, and about as thorough as the familiar "He's warm, he's in" test of U. S. draft days. Then they're paid off—the equivalent of 16 bucks for EMs and twice that for officers—their papers are signed, stamped, and delivered, and they're ready to be sent home to till the land and make little Germans.

It's quick and painless, taking maybe a half day. In fact, it's so good that a 30th Div. Joe on guard here muttered a little bitterly: "Ya know, for the first time I wish I was in the German army. They lose the war, they get out. We win, we stay in."

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Pop simply smiled. Pvt. Maurice Swanson, of St. Mont., asked, "How about sending my girl in Los Angeles when get home Pop?"

Someone else yelled across in room, and S/Sgt. Garland Hall Hillside, Va., Pop's squad leader came in and said, "He's quitting, that's what he's doing. I bet you gonna get drunk every night when you get home."

Pop didn't answer.

Sgt. Jack Ward, of Pensacola, and one of the medics, passed around some aspirin, like you would candy . . . just for the hell of it. "I'm not going to even offer any, Pop," Ward said, "You have got the right to have a headache. And then, someone asked how he felt about going home, hesitated, then said slowly:

"Hell, Doc, how would you feel? Everybody was silent. Nobody moved. You could almost read thoughts of every man in the cellar . . . "How would you about going home?"

They stopped riding Pop after a couple of them went outside to watch them bomb across the Rhine. Some curled up on the floor, trying to get some sleep. The rest just there . . . thinking.

Try This When Password Slip

Stars and Stripes

WITH THE 30th INF. Div.—What to do when you can't remember password is a question that has many GI's. But the safest and most efficient seems to have been provided by Pfc. Pedro Gomez, of Orbino, Colo., and Co. H, 119th Regt.

Gomez was seeking his outpost night, but, realizing he had paid it, he turned around and headed back toward his own lines.

"Hall, who is there?" came challenge of an alert sentry.

Gomez, who is still in process learning the English language, who couldn't remember the night password, was very much interested in not being shot. He thought and came up with the right answer: "Kamerad! Kamerad!" he shouted. As he expected he was allowed advance by the wary sentry, taken to the battalion CP, identified and sent back to his unit.