

RIGHT TO BE PROUD

History
of the
**65th Division's
March Across
Germany**



by Sgt. Bill Jordy



"In proudly contemplating our achievements, let us never forget our heroic dead whose graves mark the course of our victorious advances, nor our wounded whose sacrifices aided so much to our success."

**GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON, JR.
COMMANDING, US 3RD ARMY**

"You have a right to be proud of these accomplishments for each has given of his effort, energy, and strength, to say nothing of heroic courage, to the common cause, that you and I and our families shall be secure to live in our American way, free from the threat of the enemy domination which has caused such human misery and suffering as the world has never known before".

Major Gen. Stanley E. Reinhart.

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HISTORY
OF THE 65TH INFANTRY
DIVISION'S
MARCH ACROSS GERMANY

by
SGT BILL JORDY

Reprinted from
THE 65TH HALBERT
Division Daily News Letter



MAJOR GENERAL STANLEY E. REINHART



HEADQUARTERS 65TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 200, U. S. ARMY

May 7, 1945

SUBJECT: End of war.
TO

The Officers and Men of the 65th Infantry Division.

Today is a happy day for all of us. And for me it is also a day which I will long remember with pride. I have seen your sacrifice hard work and willing discipline play its important part in bringing to a successful close the war in Europe. A war which could not have been won without an unprecedented degree of teamwork between our officers and men and among divisions, armies and even nations.

I have watched "fillers" become combat infantrymen and untested officers become battle leaders. I have seen our wounded and counted our dead. I feel with you your deep sorrow for your lost comrades, and I now rejoice with you that their sacrifice has brought peace and justice to the western world. But I realize, as you must too, that this is only a temporary respite. Our job is not and cannot be done until Japan suffers the same punishment as was dealt Germany and Italy for the same crime.

Whatever our coming assignment, whether in the Pacific or elsewhere, I know from your past performance that it will be performed willingly, unselfishly and heroically.

A. E. R. [Signature]
Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding.

Acknowledgement is made to the Division PRO for certain information, to Pfc. Melbourne Hontz who designed the large route map folded into the rear cover, and especially to Sgt. Art Noyes who originally saw this series into the HALBERT, and played a large part in the reprint of the articles in this format.

Finally, acknowledgement is made to those who were sufficiently interested in the project to contribute their time for interviews and letters.

Introduction...

The narrative and the diagrams which make up this history originally appeared as a series of nine articles in the Division Daily News Letter, "The 65th Halbert."

In the brief space allotted to it, there was room for two interrelated questions. Where was our front line? How did it move in relation to the broader panorama of ETO strategy?

This booklet, therefore, is concerned, largely, and quite appropriately, with the infantry.

The essential role of the supporting elements in making it possible for the rifleman to advance had largely to be omitted. More technical considerations, such as the magnificent job of supplying between 15,000 and 20,000 man on the move, could be barely mentioned. Even the operations themselves are treated in the broadest terms. Those important from a Division-wide perspective lack detail. Others, tremendously important to those who fought them, but perhaps less significant to the strategy of the Division as a whole, go unnoted.

If the narrative is pointed at the rifleman, perhaps the diagrams reflect too much of the Division Headquarters in that Division CPs mark the route. But obviously, the path of the

65th could be laid out only in terms of this single series of command headquarters. The progression of the Division CP symbolizes the relative position and the rate of movement of the Division as a whole.

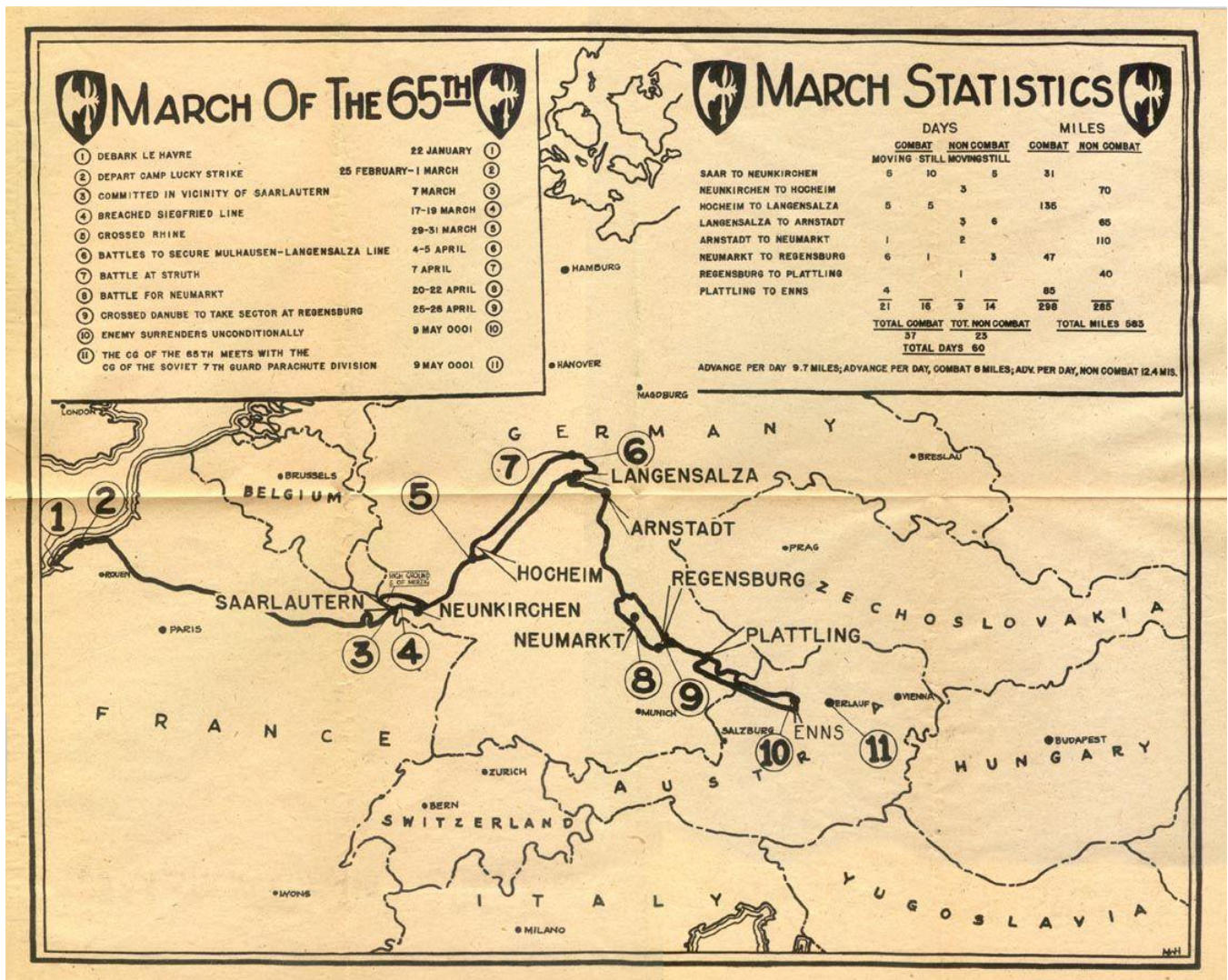
These deficiencies can only be remedied by a more ponderous history. But there is a place for just such a pamphlet-history as this one.

Briefly, this booklet is designed as a guide on which to hang your own combat experiences.

This is, then, a skeleton. It is purposely lean, just as it purposely follows the battles from the abstract perspective of the operations map, rather than from the personal after-action yarns of those who participated in the fighting. The fat, the guts and, in large part, the life to this frame will be supplied by you. For, once the plan is set, a battle is what happens to men under stress -- the sights, and sounds, and smells, the inner struggle of fortitude against fear, of weariness against the unextinguishable determination to push on.

These things could not be recorded here. When superimposed over the operations blueprint, they make up the ultimate history of any battle.

B. J.

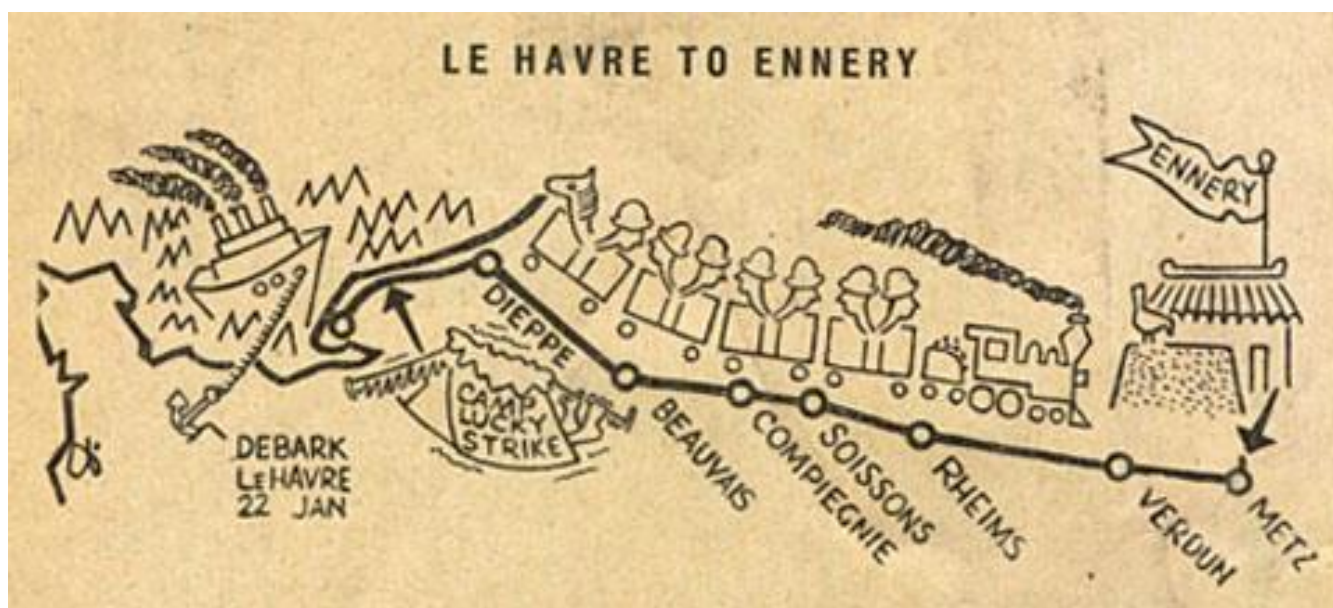


MARCH OF THE 65TH

1	Debark Le Havre, France	22 January
2	Depart Camp Lucky Strike	25 February – 1 March
3	Committed in vicinity of Saarlautern, Germany	7 March
4	Breached Siegfried Line	17-19 March
5	Crossed Rhine River	29-31 March
6	Battles to secure Mulhausen-Langensalza Line	4-5 April
7	Battle at Struth	7 April
8	Battle for Neumarkt	20-22 April
9	Crossed Danube to take sector at Regensburg	25-26 April
10	Enemy surrenders unconditionally	9 May 0001
11	The CG of the 65 th meets with the CG of the Soviet 7 th Guard Parachute Division in Erlauf, Austria.	9 May 0001

MARCH STATISTICS

	DAYS				MILES	
	Combat		Non-Combat		Combat	Non-Combat
	Moving	Still	Moving	Still		
Saar to Neunkirchen	5	10		5	31	
Neunkirchen to Hocheim			3			70
Hocheim to Langensalza	5	5			135	
Langensalza to Arnstadt			3	6		65
Arnstadt to Neumarkt	1		2			110
Neumarkt to Regensburg	6	1		3	47	
Regensburg to Plattling			1			40
Plattling to Enns	4				85	
Total	21	16	9	14	298	285
	Total Combat		Total Non-Combat		Total Miles	
	37		23		583	
	Total Days			60		
Advance per day 9.7 miles – Advance per day combat 8 miles – Advance per day non-combat 12.4 miles						



Across France...

The 65th Infantry Division stepped onto French soil on the 22nd of January 1945. The boats which brought the GIs across the Atlantic from New York Harbor in ten days, had slipped inside the outer breakwaters of the Le Havre harbor during the previous day. Ship-sick doughs, forbidden for security reasons to go topside, squeezed around port holes and open hatchways to get a first glimpse of the twisted ruins of what had been the great transatlantic port which docked most of the steamers bringing Americans to Paris.

The next morning the Division struggled down the swinging catwalks under the still dark green barracks bags, to stand tightly packed in the battered landing craft which were now assigned to the placid job of ship-to-shore loading. The 65th witnessed the bleak desolation which comes in the wake of the bomber attacks.

Cold

The Division was impressed. A month later it was already inured to rubble. Perhaps, the wreckage seemed particularly bleak because it was a cold day and grew colder as the trucks moved across Normandy farmland. For the first time the GIs saw French thatched farmhouses surrounded by a rectangle of tall poplars. For the first time too, they rushed through the narrow-stoned streets of French towns. But a snowstorm blew up, and mostly, they huddled down in the trucks.

"Cigarette pour papa," was new too. It seemed unmilitary, but not unreasonable, therefore, that their destination should be christened Camp Lucky Strike. Some of the inmates of the Camp, out logging along the road, shouted, at the passing 65th GI's, "You'll be sorry." And the Division was.

"No Nothin"

The trucks pulled into a treeless field, littered with ward tents as far as one could see. The tents were crowded with snow; they bellied and flapped in the cutting wind. The 65th soon learned that Lucky Strike's partial completion was a product of the Bulge, when the engineer battalion responsible for setting up this staging area was called away to hold an inactive sector of that front. Food, fuel, and blankets were scarce, so there was a cold, cheerless period, when the most frequent topic of conversation switched from girls to the relative size of the slices of bread which one could get in the various mess tents. Gradually, the supplies came in, K-rations, coal, sleeping bags. Many of the tents acquired improvised doorways; most of the mud was channelized into a network of trenches; the weather turned

warmer. When the Division left, the doughs justifiably felt that they had "built" their segment of Lucky Strike.

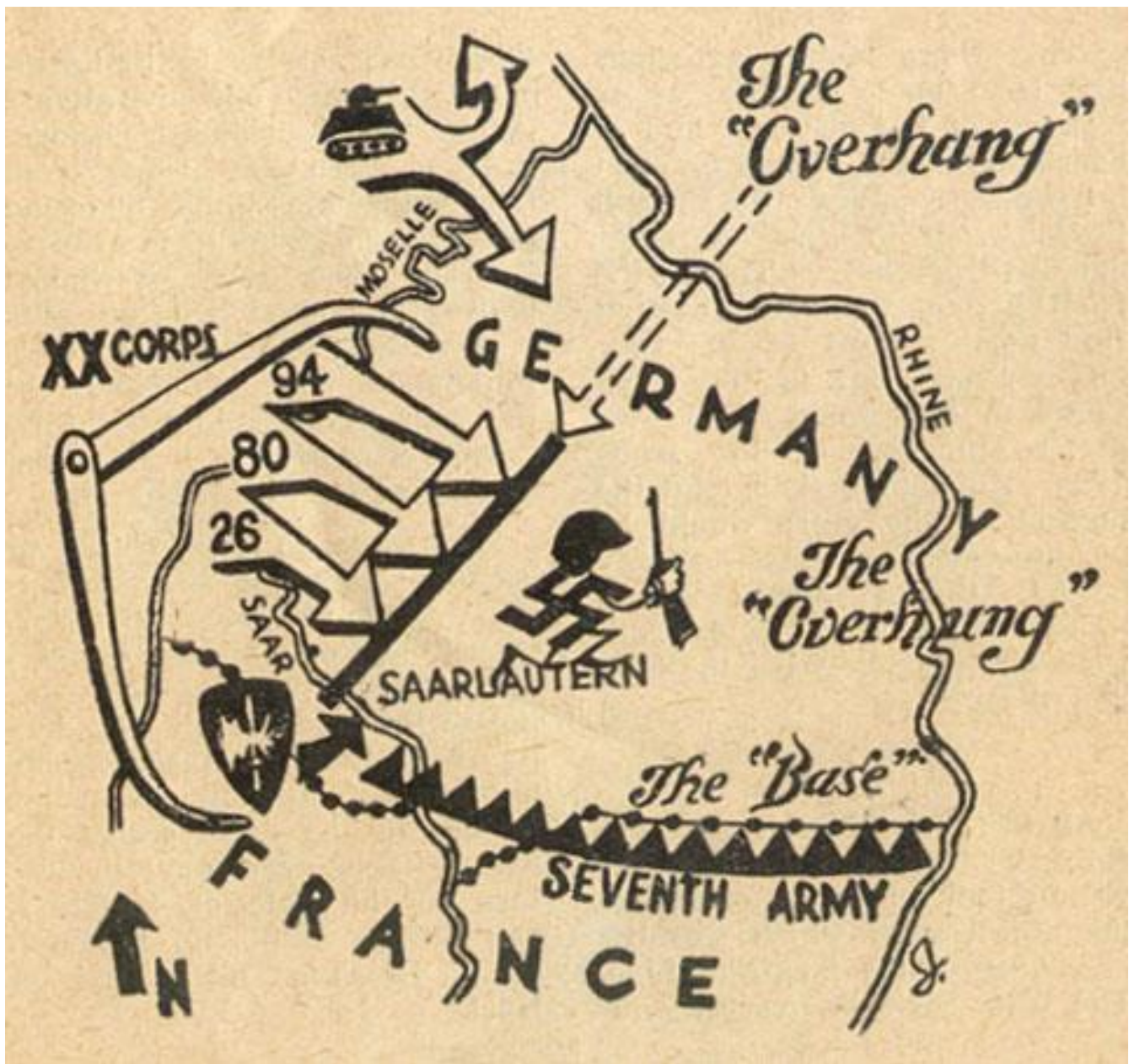
To Ennery

The Division pulled out of Normandy between February 25 and March 1. So vast are the supply problems of the modern infantry division, that the last shipload of T/O equipment had not yet touched Europe, although the Division had been in Normandy for more than a month. The 65th pulled out, across France by truck and train -- Beauvais, Compiègne, Soissons, Metz, past the battlefields of World War I -- to an assembly area midway between Metz and Thionville. The Division CP was set-up in the tiny hamlet of Ennery. The rest of the units were scattered about in similar farm towns. For the first time, the 65th learned what it was like to live with a manure pile in one's front yard.

Saar Pincers...

The 65th Infantry Division had assembled in the vicinity of Ennery by March 4. On this same day advanced parties of some of the Division's units reconnoitered corresponding unit sectors of the 26th Division in the Saarlautern bridgehead area. The initial mission of the 65th was that of relieving the 26th, and of continuing the aggressive defense of the Saarlautern area. Major General Stanley E. Reinhart took command of the sector on March 7. The entire relief was completed by March 9. On this date the 65th Division, as a whole, was a "frontline" outfit, although some units had already been in combat for four days.

The Division went into the line at a time when the great "spring offensive" was already well underway on the northern end of the Western Front. Four Allied armies had closed the enemy into a series of narrow pockets along the western bank of the Rhine. This offensive steadily spread southward to reach the Third Army at a time when Gen. Patton's troops were already advancing slowly on a broad 50 mile front from Prüm (on the north) to Saarburg (on the south). The key city of Trier fell two days prior to the commitment of the 65th Division. Seventy-two hours after the capture of Trier, armored units pushed across the Kyll River to advance swiftly to the west bank of the Rhine north of Koblenz.



Patton Moves

From this time on, the headlines spoke of amazingly rapid progress by Gen. Patton's tank units, both northward drives parallel to the west bank of the Rhine, and southward, across the Moselle River, to swing behind Siegfried Line defenses. Three days prior to this armored drive across the Moselle, the XXth Corps, of which the 65th was a part, opened up a frontal attack on the Siegfried Line.

The front line of the XXth Corps was roughly a northeast-southwest diagonal during this assault. At the beginning of the attack, it generally ran along the west bank of the Saar

River except where some crossings had been made in the upper segment of the diagonal and at Saarlautern. To visualize what happened, picture the XXth Corps' front line as an overhanging precipice. Then, the front line of the 94th Division (the northernmost of the four infantry divisions in the XXth Corps at that time) would represent the top of the overhang. The 65th Division, (at the bottom of the cliff) would be in the position, most deeply buried, should the overhang topple. The 80th and 26th Divisions were between the 65th and the 94th.

This is It

At 0300 on March 13, the 94th, the 80th, and the 26th Divisions took off in an offensive, the objective of which was the breaching of the Siegfried Line. The 65th Division, on the southern flank of the XXth Corps, initiated limited objective attacks within the Saarlautern bridgehead to keep the enemy from reinforcing the units opposing the other divisions in the Corps. For five days the "overhang" above the 65th Division was pushed out further and further. Finally, at 0600 on March 18 the 65th Division joined in the Corps' offensive, in a smashing assault of the Siegfried Line.

Meanwhile, to learn what had been happening in the Saarlautern sector between March 7, when the Commanding General of the 65th Division took over the sector, and March 18, when the 65th took its place beside millions of GIs in six Allied Armies in the drive across the Rhine, it is necessary to return to the date of March 7, and retrace events up to March 18 -- this time on a Division level.

Saarlautern Plan...

The aggressive defense of the Saarlautern sector marked the baptism by fire for the 65th Infantry Division. At Ennery there was "peace." A few miles up front -- abruptly -- there was "war." Suddenly, training, and men, and fortitude met their first test. Almost immediately, the Division shed its first blood. It was especially hard to think of a man coming so far for one, two, or three days of combat.



The frontline ran along the west bank of the Saar River, from a point five miles north of Merzig, south to a point approximately two and a half miles below Saarlautern. The 260th Infantry moved into a small bridgehead which had previously been forced across the river at Saarlautern. The 259th and the 261st Infantry went into the line below and above the bridgehead respectively. The 65th Reconnaissance Troop protected the north flank of the Division in the 261st zone.

The period March 7 until 18 was characterized by aggressive holding action, intensive patrolling, and the extensive use of artillery, fire against the enemy personnel and installations on the east bank of the river. During these twelve days, the 65th DivArty fired approximately 1,275 missions, with almost 19,000 rounds expended. Air OPs carried out extensive combat and reconnaissance missions over enemy territory. Patrols actively probed across the Saar, particularly in the 261st Infantry sector, where one patrol consisting of four EMs captured a German pill box and returned with its twelve former occupants on March 10 to merit the Division's first battlefield awards.

On both March 13 and 14 the 260th Infantry opened up with limited objective attacks inside the Saarlautern bridgehead in conjunction with XX Corps' three-division offensive to the north of the 65th Division. Both times several city blocks were taken, but both times the 260th was forced to withdraw in the face of strong enemy resistance. However, from the larger perspective of the Corps' offensive, these attacks must have confused the enemy. He undoubtedly miscalculated their limited nature because orders for both days from the German High Command spoke of repelling fierce offensive action in the vicinity of Saarlautern.

On March 17, the active probing of the east bank of the Saar River by 261st reconnaissance patrols enabled the Regiment to put parts of two battalions across the river at the little hamlet of Menningen, about two miles south of Merzig and capture the dominating hill mass immediately south of this town.

The next morning, the Division joined the XXth Corps' offensive to breach the Siegfried Line.

The Plan

At midnight on the 17th the plan for the dawn attack of the next day was ready. The 65th Division was to smash through the Siegfried Line in a wedge-shaped area between the southeastwardly advancing 26th Division to the north, and the northeasternly advancing 70th Division to the south. The base for our attack had been decreased by a southward advance of the 26th which captured Merzig. As originally planned, each of the three regiments was to have a diagonal slab of the wedge which ran from its takeoff positions along the Saar to a dead-end against the southern boundary of the zone of the 26th Division.

The 261st slab was cut south of Dillingen, and northeast to Primsweller. The 259th slab included the southern half of Saarlautern, all of Fraulautern and Saarwellingen, to about

the 26th Division at a point about a mile southeast of the 261st boundary. The narrow sliver in the middle included the northern half of Saarlautern and Saar-louis-Roden. It was given to the 260th Infantry.

For this attack the 1st Battalion, 260th Infantry, and the 65th Reconnaissance Troop were attached to the 259th Infantry, while the 3rd Battalion, 259th Infantry, became the Division Reserve. The 1st Battalion, 261st Infantry, went to the 260th for this operation. The infantry battalions with the 259th were concentrated in the Saarlautern bridgehead area. The 65th Reconnaissance Troop was assigned the bulk of the sector to the south of Ensdorf and north of the 70th Infantry Division.

260th Zone

The main drive was to be in the 260th zone. The initial objectives of the assault on the Siegfried Line were the towns of Dillingen and Saarwellingen, and three areas of high ground which lay along the rim of a semi-circle between 3,000 and 5,000 yards out from the Saarlautern bridgehead.

This, briefly, was the plan as of midnight, March 17. But a battle is full of unpredictables. Events were to alter the plan.

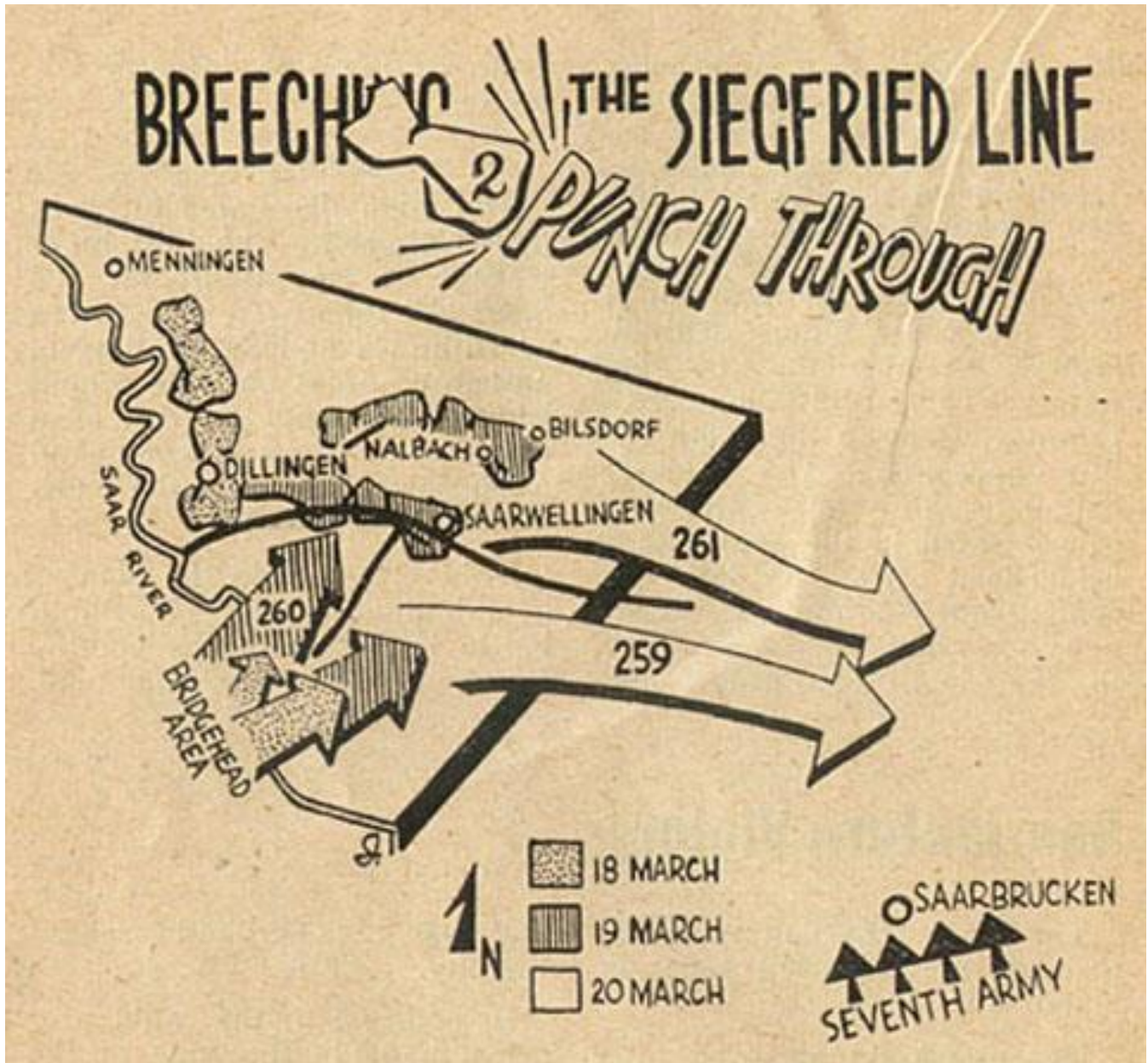
Saarlautern Victory...

The 65th Division punched through the Siegfried Line on March 19.

The attack on Siegfried Line positions by the 65th Infantry Division jumped off at 0430, March 18, in the 259th and 260th sectors. One and a half hours later, at 0600, the 261st pushed southward from positions below Menningen, with elements of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions rapidly advancing through fields where mines and booby traps were almost as great a menace as the relatively light enemy opposition. By 2400, the 261st had seized Dillingen and the high ground east of the city.

In contrast to the rapid progress made in the zone of the 261st Infantry, the main effort in the Saarlautern bridgehead met with fierce enemy opposition. At the end of D-Day, the 259th (with the 1st Battalion, 260th Infantry, attached) had advanced only 1,500 yards. The 260th (with the 1st Battalion, 261st Infantry, attached) had seized a few city blocks inside Saarlautern. Therefore, at the close of the first twenty-four hours of the attack, only the 261st had reached the objective designated for it under the initial plan. Furthermore, its

units were in an excellent position to continue the attack to the east on the following morning.



The plan was therefore altered.

In accordance with the new plan, the 1st Battalion, 261st Infantry, was returned to Regimental control. Thus augmented, the 261st would cut across the zone of the 260th to seize Saarwellingen, and high ground to the east of this city. The 260th would thereby be pinched out and revert to Division Reserve. The 259th would follow a parallel zone to the south of that of the 261st.

Siegfried Breached

The Siegfried Line was breached the following day.

By 2400 of D-Day-plus-1, the 261st had swept through Saarwellingen, and seized the villages of Piesbach and Bilsdorf to the northeast of the town. The 260th Infantry was pinched out after clearing Saarlautern and Saarlouis-Rodin. Meanwhile, below the 260th, the 259th Infantry fanned out northeast and southeast of Saarlautern to take Fraulautern and Ensdorf. The 65th Reconnaissance Troop was relieved of its attachment to the 259th and passed through infantry units to reconnoiter routes to the front of the Division.

The enemy now gave evidence of thorough confusion. He retreated rapidly across the Saarlands to escape the gigantic pincers movement which the Third and Seventh Armies were closing around the Saar Basin. The 65th Division followed in rapid pursuit; its infantrymen motorized with unit transportation. The chase ran a course which was roughly from the apex of the angle formed by the two-Army pincers, east through an ever narrowing corridor in an escape route which roughly passed through Neunkirchen.

During D-Day-plus-2, the 65th Division captured or killed such delaying groups as had been left behind by the enemy. Once the Wehrmacht turned tail, there was nothing for it to do, but to continue scampering until the Rhine was put between the conquerors and the conquered. The "overhang" was toppling towards the "base," and in the military avalanche Germany lost her third greatest industrial area.

The Division was halted and ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Neunkirchen on March 21. It was then moved eastward to two more assembly areas in the vicinity of Bockenhausen on March 27 and Schwabenheim on the 28th. In effect, the 65th was awaiting its turn to cross traffic-laden bridges at Mainz and Oppenheim which had been previously established by other divisions. Beginning on the 29th, unit by unit the Division pulled through the shattered Rhine cities of Mainz and Oppenheim, to crawl across the treadway bridges. The broadly curving arc of the bridge at Oppenheim represented the longest pontoon bridge in military history.

Five Weeks Before Us

By the last day of the month, appropriately enough, the 65th Division, along with a vast part of United States' striking power, had attained the overall objective of the "spring offensive" -- the east bank of the Rhine. It was charged with the mission of continuing the

pursuit of the enemy, in a zone which ran northeastwardly from the Frankfurt area, to bring the 65th to the bitter battles at Langensalza and Struth.

Behind our armies lay Germany's Frontier defenses and two of her greatest industrial areas. Ahead lay the heart of the country -- and little more than five weeks of fighting for Major General Stanley E. Reinhart's now-tested division.

"Spearhead Division"...

For part of the first week in April, the 65th Division was the infantry organization closest to Berlin.

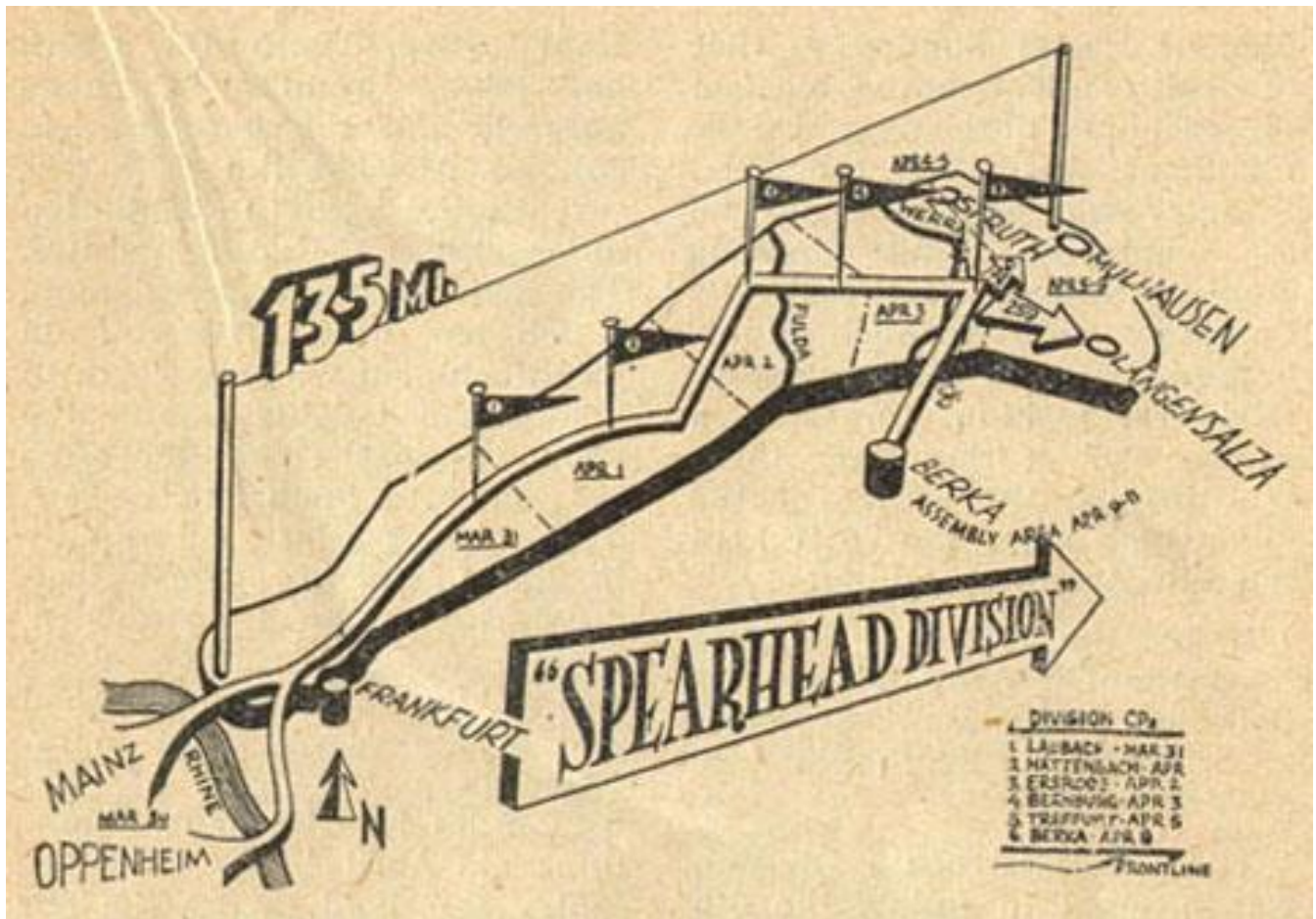
The Halbert Division had moved so rapidly in its zone that some of the newspapers in the States had dubbed it the "Spearhead Division." Of course, most GIs doubted that we were headed for the German capital; even so, those who knew about it felt a little proud.

The 65th Division, like the rest of the divisions on the Western Front, was rolling through Germany. The last five weeks of the war against Germany were fought as much with 2 1/2 ton trucks as with weapons. Tough battles were fought to be sure, and men died up to the eve of victory. But the overall impression is that afforded by the newspaper headlines, where, day after day, one after the other, the roster of Germany's greatest cities was checked off as "kaput."

In thirty-nine days, the Division traveled 500 miles. It was a continuous battle of transportation. The "4"-sections were concerned about gasoline and C- and K-rations which were frequently as much as 100 miles to the rear of the Division. The "3"-sections argued priorities on roads over which everyone wanted to move simultaneously, and worried about getting personnel from one point to the next. For information on the enemy, the "2"-sections relied less on foot patrols, and more on aerial and motor reconnaissance, and the hordes of prisoners which taxed the facilities of PWEs. For the 265th Engineers it was a battle of Bailey bridges. For the 565th Signal Company it was a battle of laying wire, of picking it up, and of laying it once more. Each unit had its own problem in the continuous battle of transportation, which can be the toughest fight of all.

The battle of weapons was far from continuous. It was sporadic. One day it was a battalion which had some difficulty in taking a sizeable town. Another day it was a company or platoon savagely attacked by a determined band of SS troops left behind in the

rapid advance. Or, on some dark night, on some lonely road, it might be a driver from the 65th Quartermaster Company ambushed by a sniper, miles behind the frontline.



However small the skirmish on an operations map, the most important battle for any given GI in the Division is the one in which he participated. It is difficult to ascertain which operations and battles are the most important from the point of view of the Division as a whole. Only a few of the outstanding battles from among the many fought across the Rhine can be treated here -- among them the fighting for Langensalza and Struth, the capture of Neumarket, and the crossing of the Danube with the subsequent entry into Regensburg.

With 6th Armored

On crossing the Rhine at Mainz and Oppenheim the 261st Infantry (with attached units) was detached from the 65th to push ahead with the 6th Armored. While with the 6th

Armored the 2nd Battalion took a bridge over the Fulda in the vicinity of Malsfeld and held it against sharp opposition during the night of March 31 and the morning

of Easter Sunday so that the entire 6th Armored reached the east bank of the river. On the night of April 3-4, the 261st Infantry was given the mission of capturing and holding another bridge. This time "C" Company tore through Muhlhausen streets in 2 1/2 ton trucks, wild-west fashion, to seize a bridge over a tiny river flowing through the center of the city. Once more the 261st kept the 6th Armored rolling.

Before the 261st was detached from the 6th Armored, the 1st Battalion had already advanced to Schlotheim, ten miles east of Muhlhausen.

The remainder of the Division was ordered to follow the 6th Armored and the 3rd Cavalry Group in a zone running northeastwardly from the Frankfurt area into the heart of Germany. The 65th was to be prepared to pass through both these units on Corps' order, to take the lead position in the assault of the XX Corps' objective, the central German cities of Weimar and Erfurt. The order to pass through the 3rd Cavalry came when the Division reached its assembly areas west of the Fulda River in the vicinity of Hattenbach on April 1.

Attack

The next morning, at 0600, the 65th attacked through the 3rd Cavalry Group to cross the Fulda River, with the 259th and 260th Infantry Regiments abreast, and the battalions in column. At 2400, the 260th was seven miles, and the 259th ten miles, east of their crossing sites. The 65th Reconnaissance Troop, which had been released from an attachment with the 259th to secure the heights across the Fulda while the infantry crossed, was even further to the east.

The attack continued rapidly to the northeast against scattered, but frequently stubborn, enemy opposition. By 2400, April 3, the Division had pushed east of the Werra River to register an average gain of thirteen miles for the day's operations. On April 4, the 260th Infantry was held up by the 6th Armored Division which had a priority on all roads in the Regimental sector. Meanwhile, the 259th was ordered to proceed to Langensalza. When the movements of 6th Armored permitted, the 260th was to seize Muhlhausen. On reaching the Muhlhausen-Langensalza Line, the Division was to regroup and prepare to proceed further eastward towards Erfurt and Weimar. Although the 65th had advanced so rapidly in its zone that it was the closest infantry division to both cities, it was to enter neither of

them. Orders from higher headquarters gave both to other divisions. The 65th was to move south, to a new sector.

But there were two stubborn battles to be won in the four days during which the Division remained in this zone -- Langensalza and Struth. Both were fought during the 65th's thirteen day attachment to the VIII Corps. The Division was assigned to the VIII Corps at 1030, on April 4. It reverted to the XX Corps on April 17, to fight with this latter organization until V-E Day.

Langensalza...

The battle at Langensalza was a stubborn battalion action. It was more than the average city fighting operation. It had an element of daring in that a sizeable city was virtually captured through seizing, and skillfully holding, a single thoroughfare which wound from a suburb to the hub of the city.

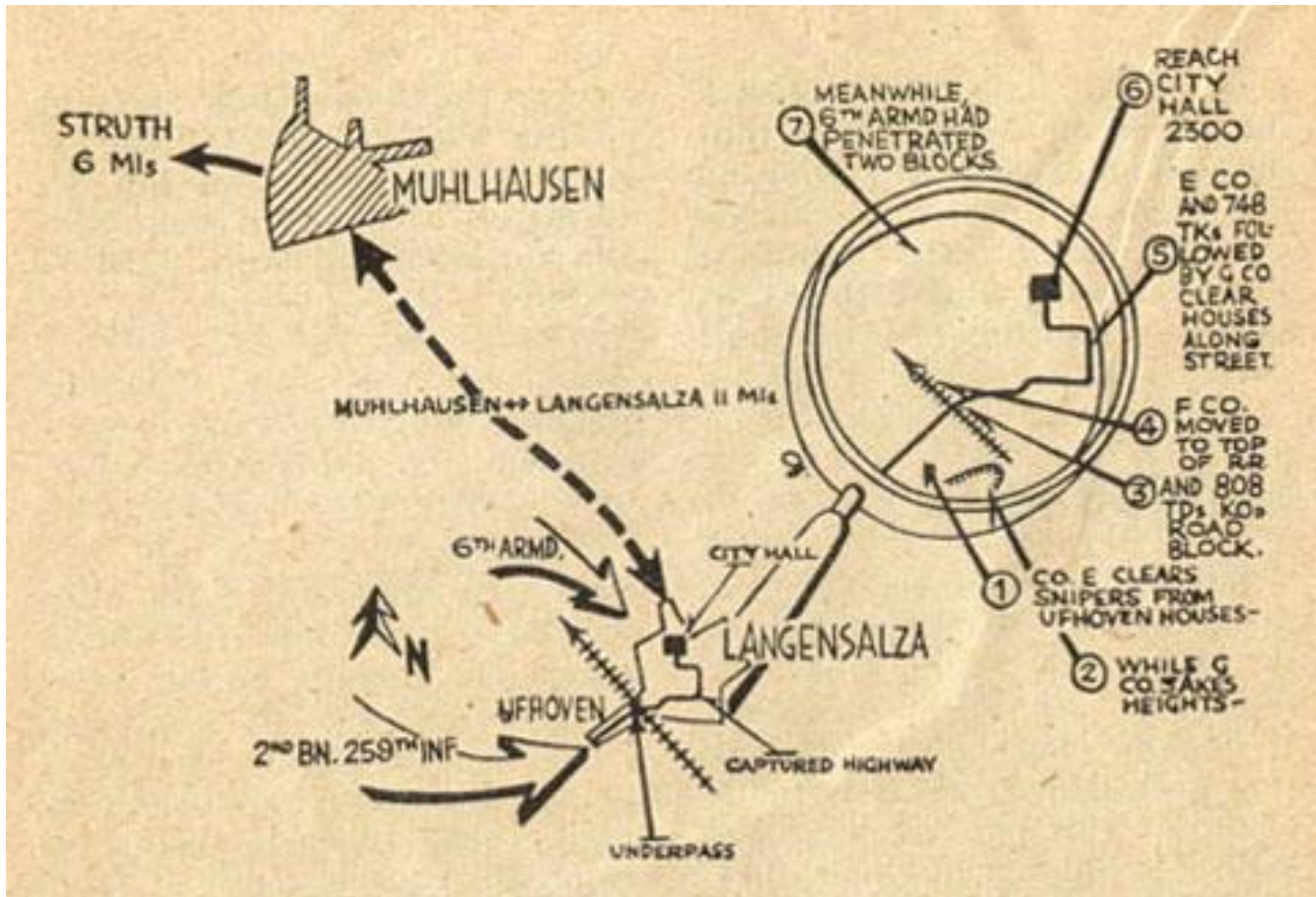
The 2nd Battalion, 259th Infantry, approached Langensalza from the southwest on April 5. It entered by way of Ufhoven, a suburb which abuts the city proper. Railroad tracks laid on a high embankment mark the dividing line between Ufhoven and Langensalza. The defenders of the city had completed this separation with a substantial barricade across an underpass which acts as the principle gateway to Langensalza from the southwest.

Sniper Fire

The main highway through Ufhoven was lined with houses from which the GIs received their first sniper fire as they advanced to the blocked underpass. The doughs in the street were covered by "G" Company, from heights to the southeast of the highway. When Jerry had been flushed from his suburban quarters, TDs from the 691st Tank Destroyer Battalion, attached to the 259th, furnished the keys to the city. Riflemen from "E" Company, treading warily beside tanks from the 748th Tank Battalion, led the way through the rubble barricade. "F" Company deployed on top of the railroad embankment, from which vantage point they overlooked the southern half of Langensalza. Company "G", meanwhile, descended from the high ground south of Ufhoven, to follow the assault company through Langensalza's shopping district.

The battle was also a race against darkness, for the 2nd Battalion had pulled into Ufhoven at 1500. Because of the approaching darkness, the Battalion had time to capture only the single, broad, street running east across the southern half of the city, then north to

reach the square fronting the city hall in the extreme northwest portion of the city at 2300. Tanks from the 6th Armored Division had attacked from the northwest but were stopped by enemy roadblocks after a short advance.



The bent finger which pierced Langensalza was skillfully defended at every road intersection against a possible counterattack. But none came. The enemy, which had been stopped by a terrific daylight artillery and mortar barrage, was able to disappear under the cover of darkness. In the morning, there was mopping-up -- but there were also white flags.

Struth Counterattack...

The battle of Struth was more important than the size of the town involved. Approximately 1,000 enemy, led by armor and SP guns attacked the exposed left (north) flank of the 65th Division at Struth, where the 3rd Battalion, 261st Infantry had located its CP the previous day. The objective of the drive, as revealed later through documents and prisoners, was the retaking of Muhlhausen.

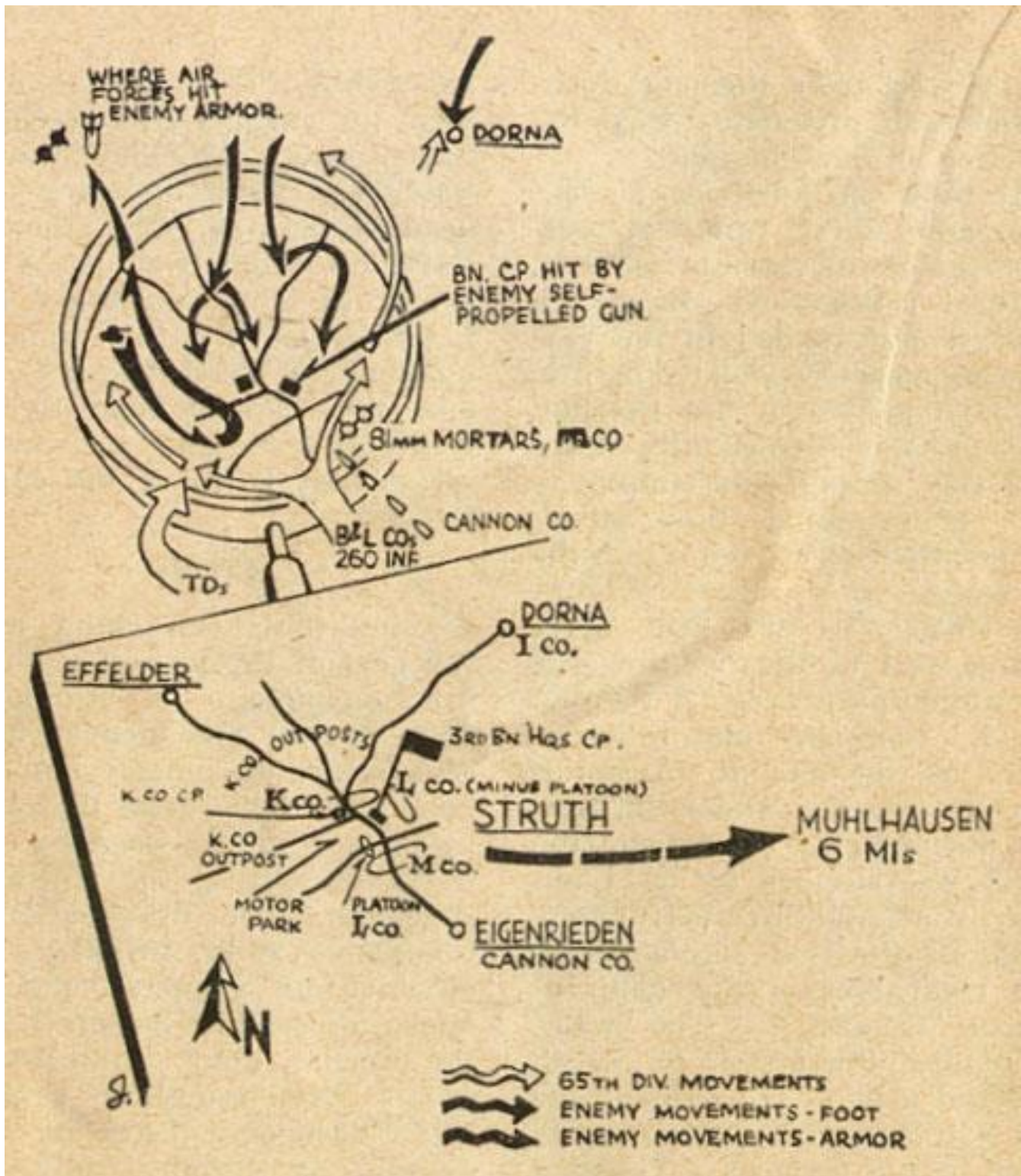
At 0230 on April 7, a "K" Company, 261st Infantry, outpost north of Struth fired a BAR at a shadowy figure; a hand grenade landed in the foxhole of another. Isolated battles, of the type which the Division was to wage constantly until V-E Day, began this simply -- with men asking how many opponents were out in the darkness.

At 0500, a tank-led drive swung west of the town towards the motor park area. A platoon of "L" Company met the first shock of the assault. A simultaneous infantry attack infiltrating through the town from the north was stopped by "K" Company. The Battalion called for help.

Among the first arrivals were two companies of the 260th Infantry, "B" and "L". The tactics to repulse the attack at Struth centered around the action of the 3rd Battalion units remaining in place in the town as a resisting core to the enemy assault. Meanwhile, "L" Company, 260th Infantry, enveloped the enemy from the west, as "B" Company, 260th, swung east of the hamlet, and the 1st Battalion, 261st Infantry, attacked the town from the south. "L" Company, 260th, captured a field-full of German parachutists hiding under piles of hay, by machine-gunning the mounds. Meanwhile, "I" Company, 261st, held up enemy reinforcements near Dorna. By 1000 the 1st Battalion, 261st Infantry, had been committed, and the 3rd Battalion, 259th, was on its way to Struth from positions near Langensalza. By this time the outcome of the battle was certain, even though much fighting remained before a charred Struth was freed of the enemy.

Credit

Many units can claim credit for part of the victory at Struth. For example, "M" Company, 261st, mortar men opened up so effectively on enemy mortars northeast of the town that Jerry never got these weapons into operation during the entire engagement. Fire of the Cannon Company, 261st Infantry, was effective in stopping the advance of hostile infantry from the north. Four artillery battalions were especially valuable after the enemy began its withdrawal, as initially, ally and enemy were too intermingled for precise long-range artillery. Liaison planes of the Div Arty furnished observation, and effectively brought fire on tanks assembling above the town. Fighter bombers, coming in at 0900, bombed and strafed enemy infantry and tanks near the town. Along with the 808 Tank Destroyer Battalion, they accounted for eleven enemy tanks (of an estimated sixteen), a large part of the air tally obtained as the tanks retreated northeast from the battlefield about 1300.



To a TD parked beside "K" Company's CP, however, goes the honor of revenging the most dramatic enemy gesture. During the morning, a self-propelled gun rumbled up to the 3rd Battalion CP, 261st Infantry, to fire point-blank at the building indicated by Struth

citizenry. The 808 TD made certain that the enemy gun never attacked another American CP.

The battle of Struth, which started out as all infantry engagement, ended as a striking example of the power of combined arms.

Danube Crossing...

On April 9, the day following the Struth engagement, the Division began its movement to an assembly area in the vicinity of Berka, 12 miles southwest of Langensalza. There it went into VIII Corps Reserve behind the 87th and 89th Infantry Divisions in a zone which ran south of Erfurt.

The Halbert Division remained in this capacity, mopping up behind the assault divisions, until April 16. During this period, the 65th advanced from Berka, southeast to successive assembly areas near Waltershausen and Arnstadt. At this latter town, on April 17, the Division reverted to the XX Corps. The shift in Corps marked a change in direction of attack, not only for the 65th, but for the entire Third Army. The northernmost part of General Patton's army was driving across central Germany in an area where concentrations of First and Ninth Army forces were building. The XX Corps was accordingly lopped from the top of the Third Army, and sent to southeastern Germany, where there were rumors of possible tough opposition in the Redoubt area. The 65th took the long ride southward, through Coburg, to assemble, first in a group of farm towns outside of Bamberg, then to the vicinity of Altdorf where it relieved the 14th Armored Division. Here the Division was given a new zone which ran southeast through Neumarkt across the Danube to Regensburg.

The prophecies of a last ditch stand in the Redoubt area never materialized. But the rugged territory was ideal for holding operations, and ardent remnants of the Wehrmacht made the best use of its defensive possibilities. Much of the reason for the swift advance of the doughs through this zone could be attributed, not only to the fact that Division Artillery played a big part in transporting them (as was the case in all such Division movements), but that artillery proved a speedy and inexpensive method of reducing these pockets of resistance to the proportions of tough, but local, skirmishes.

Neumarkt assumed its importance from a Division standpoint primarily because the enemy put up more stubborn resistance here than he had in other places. Actually, the 3rd Battalion, 259th Infantry, with Co "A", 748th Tank Battalion and elements of the 808th Tank Destroyer Battalion attached, was to move through the town from north to south,

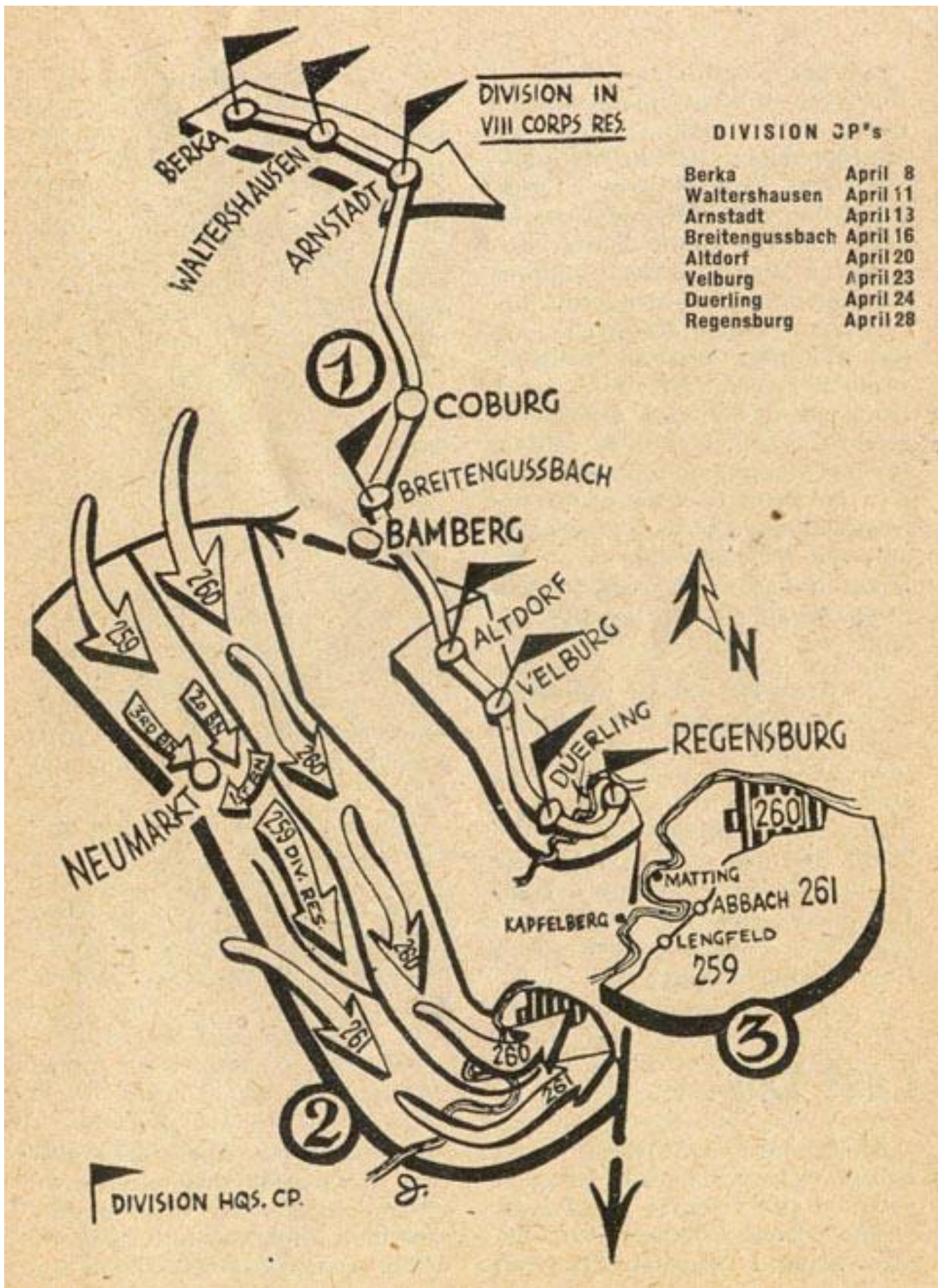
simultaneously with an advance by the 260th Infantry through the north portion of the Division zone. The only foreseeable obstacle was that Neumarkt's size offered better opportunities for defense than the smaller towns. The 3rd Battalion hit the northern outskirts on April 20. The first third of the way was relatively easy. Then the Battalion was stopped by SP, nebelwerfer and artillery fire. The next day the 1st Battalion, 259th Infantry, which had advanced their front-line southeast of the city, moved to positions below Neumarkt, to catch the retreating defenders which the 3rd Battalion was to push out of the town. The enemy continued to resist in Neumarkt until the town was burned over their heads and individual snipers were dug from their biding places with bayonets and grenades. Neumarkt was cleared on April 22.

Danube

The crossing of the Danube (or Donau), at the southern end of this zone, was a large-scale operation in which all units of the Division participated. The 65th moved into forward assembly areas on April 25, to start crossing the swiftly-flowing Danube by boat beginning at 0200, April 26.

The plan called for 65th Division units to cross the river west of Regensburg, then swing around behind the city to enter it by the back door. Meanwhile, the 71st Infantry Division was to cross east of the city in a comparable operation.

The 260th and 261st Infantry were to cross the river abreast, the 260th on the left flank of the Division, the 261st on the right. The 261st had squeezed past the 259th in the latter's zone south of Neumarkt, to place the 259th in Division Reserve. At 0200, the 2nd Battalion, 260th, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 261st, began the crossing, while Engineers of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion rushed treadway bridges forward to the bridge site. In the 260th sector, the crossing caught the enemy by surprise. Their outposts awakened to find bayonets pointed at their throats. The assault battalions fanned out rapidly from the landing site in the vicinity of Matting, to run into heavier opposition later in the day.



The 261st Infantry, however, met heavy fire from entrenched enemy troops immediately on landing opposite Kapfelberg. The eastward drive of the 261st through Lengfeld towards Abbach was a bitter one. It increased in intensity during D-Day, while the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 260th Infantry, the 2nd and parts of the 1st Battalion, 259th Infantry, and some of the 808th Tank Destroyer Battalion crossed the Danube. Meanwhile, the remainder of the Division lined the quagmired road net on the east bank of the river, to cross the following day. From behind these assembly areas, Division Artillery, the 808th Tank Destroyer Battalion; the 94th Chemical Battalion, and the 546th Antiaircraft Artillery very effectively supported the doughs. During this operation, the 265th Engineer Combat Battalion worked continuously ferrying endless columns of troops and vehicles across the river and repeatedly rebuilding ferries which had been knocked out by 88 fire. At 2100, the treadway bridge was completed and the heavier vehicles of the Division began to cross to join their organizations on the far bank.

On April 27, the 1st Battalion, 260th Infantry, went to the assistance of the 261st Infantry, to take Abbach. Thus, a road was opened between the two regiments. The remainder of the 259th Infantry crossed the river to protect the Division's right flank, so that the other two regiments could move east towards Regensburg.

Regensburg

The fighting abruptly ceased shortly thereafter, when it was learned that a retired German General, who had taken charge of Regensburg after the regular commander took to his heels early in the morning of the 26th, desired to surrender the city. Brigadier General John E. Copeland, Assistant Division Commander, and Colonel Frank Dunkley, Commander of the 260th Infantry, accepted the surrender of Regensburg at 1030. By the end of the day, 260th doughs were patrolling the cathedral city. The 261st was assigned the protection of an area to the south, while the 259th remained in position on the Division's right flank. These positions were held until other elements of the XX Corps passed through to continue the attack.

The 65th went into Corps Reserve once more. But not for long. It was to fight in one more zone, which was to bring Major General Stanley E. Reinhart's men to the Enns River -- and V-E day.

Last 125...

There were 125 miles to go before victory. The 65th Division sprinted the distance in six days.

The Division occupied the area around Regensburg from its capture on April 28 until May 1 when it was once more ordered to advance to the southeast in a zone the left flank of which was the south bank of the Danube. The 65th was to move behind the 13th Armored Division to cross the Isar River at Plattling, and then to pass through the 13th Armored, to continue the drive to the Enns River. The crossing of the Isar was completed about 2400, May 1. With the 259th and 261st moving abreast and followed by the 260th. The Inns River was reached on May 2. Several skirmishes took place enroute but did not delay the advance. By-passed enemy groups, so harassed units moving behind the assault regiments, that the 2nd Battalion, 260th, was sent to the rear on May 3 to clear a wooded area which contained several hundred diehards.

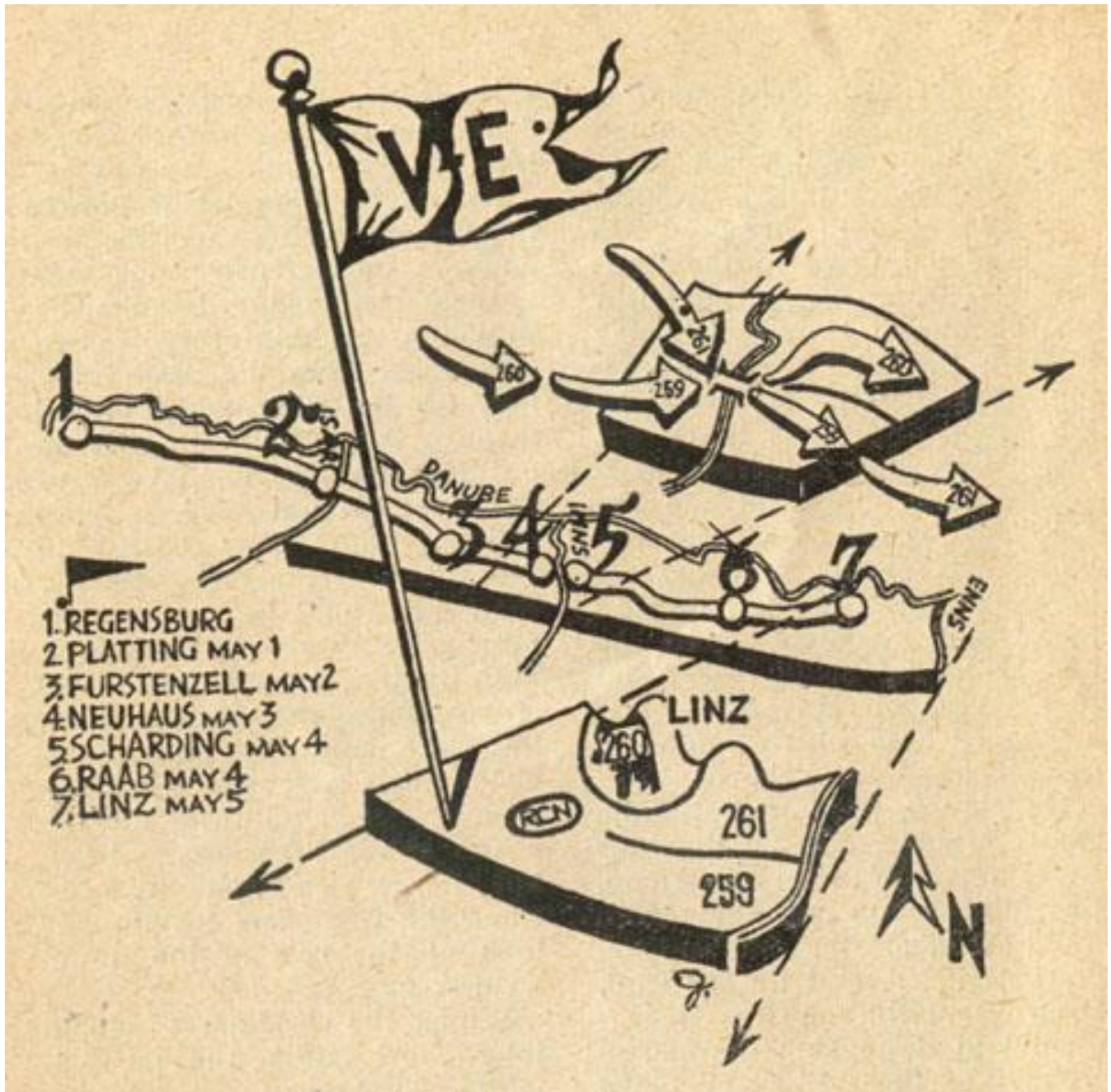
On May 2, the 2nd Battalion, 261st Infantry, entered the Inns River town of Passau. There, the joint action of the 868th Field Artillery, the 546 Antiaircraft Artillery, and the 808 Tank Destroyer Battalion was instrumental in destroying the 300 SS troops and three Mark IV tanks which had held the town. Passau surrendered at 0030, May 3, but was not cleared until later in the day.

While the 2nd Battalion remained in Passau, the 1st Battalion, 261st Infantry, was on the Inns River at a point eight miles south of Passau, opposite Scharding. Reconnaissance patrols, which had been sent ahead of the Battalion, arrived on the east bank at 0515, May 2, to have the long Neuhaus-Scharding bridge blown in their face.

By 1200, the 1st Battalion reached the vicinity of Neuhaus, and set up defensive positions in and behind the town. The Battalion was reinforced by two companies from the 265th Engineer (C) Battalion, which moved through the infantry to take up positions on the north bank of the river. About 1430, a 261st officer, who had crossed to Scharding to ascertain whether the town would be surrendered, returned with a negative answer. The Engineers immediately set up machine gun positions along the river and had just completed their defenses when the enemy opened up from the opposite side. There was a brief, but fierce, exchange of fire when the Engineers temporarily took up the role of the infantryman.

While the Engineers fought their short battle, the 1st Battalion, 261st, sent out scouting parties to look for boats and a fording site.

They returned with the Judge Advocate Generals of both the German Army and Navy, who, like the GIs, had been stranded by the blown bridge. They also produced one large-sized rowboat in which the 2nd Battalion, 261st Infantry, started across the river.



Not a shot was fired at the boats, although 88s aimed at our artillery positions arced the river throughout the night. The enemy had been blasted from intrenched positions in

Scharding by an artillery and heavy weapons barrage between 1500 and 1730. They were battered once more by a ten minute preparation before the rowboat took off.

After the initial rowboat crossing, four engineer assault boats increased the flotilla. "A" and "C" Companies had crossed by midnight. The rest of the Battalion reached the west bank between 0430 and 0800 in a number of assault boats rushed to the Inns during the night. The next morning, the Wehrmacht woke up in Scharding cellars, where they had hidden since the barrage, to find Americans on top of them.

By 2400, May 3, the 3rd Battalion, 259th, and the 1st, 3rd, and elements of the 2nd Battalions, 260th Infantry had crossed on ferries with part of the 65th Reconnaissance Troop. The remainder of the Division crossed on the bridge, which was completed at 0900, May 4. The 3rd Battalion, 259th, was attached to the 261st. Thus reinforced, the 261st Infantry moved rapidly southeastward out of the bridgehead on the Division's right flank. The 260th turned north from the Scharding bridgehead, advancing along the Inns River, to reach a parallel zone on the Division's left flank. Then, it too took off in a southeastwardly direction. These zones were to apply until the 260th entered Linz.

Objective Linz

On May 4, the 65th was given Austria's second city as its principle objective, with the Enns River, eight miles to the southeast of the city, as the restraining line between troops of the United States and those of the Soviet Union.

The Division drove forward on the last lap of its march through the Reich, meeting only small delaying forces enroute. About 1200, May 5, elements of the XIIth Corps, on the left, reached Linz which had been declared an open city. They were relieved by the 260th which entered the metropolis between 1700 and 1730 on May 5.

The 261st Infantry arrived at the Enns River, overrunning the city of Enns itself without a battle, at 2245. On May 6, the 259th Infantry advanced to positions abreast of, and to the right of, the 261st zone, to complete the holding of the Enns River line.

Twenty-four hours before V-E Day became officially effective the German troops opposing the Division surrendered unconditionally.

Twelve hours and forty-six minutes before the specified time for this surrender, the 869th Field Artillery sent a volley of 105's sailing into the narrow pocket still remaining to

the enemy. For the 65th Division, these shells marked the end of the war against Germany. They exploded about 1115, May 7, thus completing the demonstration of the power of an American infantry division.

Just as the halbert was the shock weapon of the medieval knight, so its silhouette on the shoulder patches of the 65th Division symbolized the striking power of the modern infantry division. But the Krauts seemed in little need of explanation. Long before 0001, May 9, the unarmed Wehrmacht tramped through our front lines by companies, regiments and divisions, glad to relinquish the title of superman for the safety of the PWE.



Major General Stanley E. Reinhart, 65th Division Commanding General and a Russian general compare watches at 0001, May 9th, the minute the unconditional surrender of Germany took place.

The name of the Soviet leader was censored for Russian security reasons.

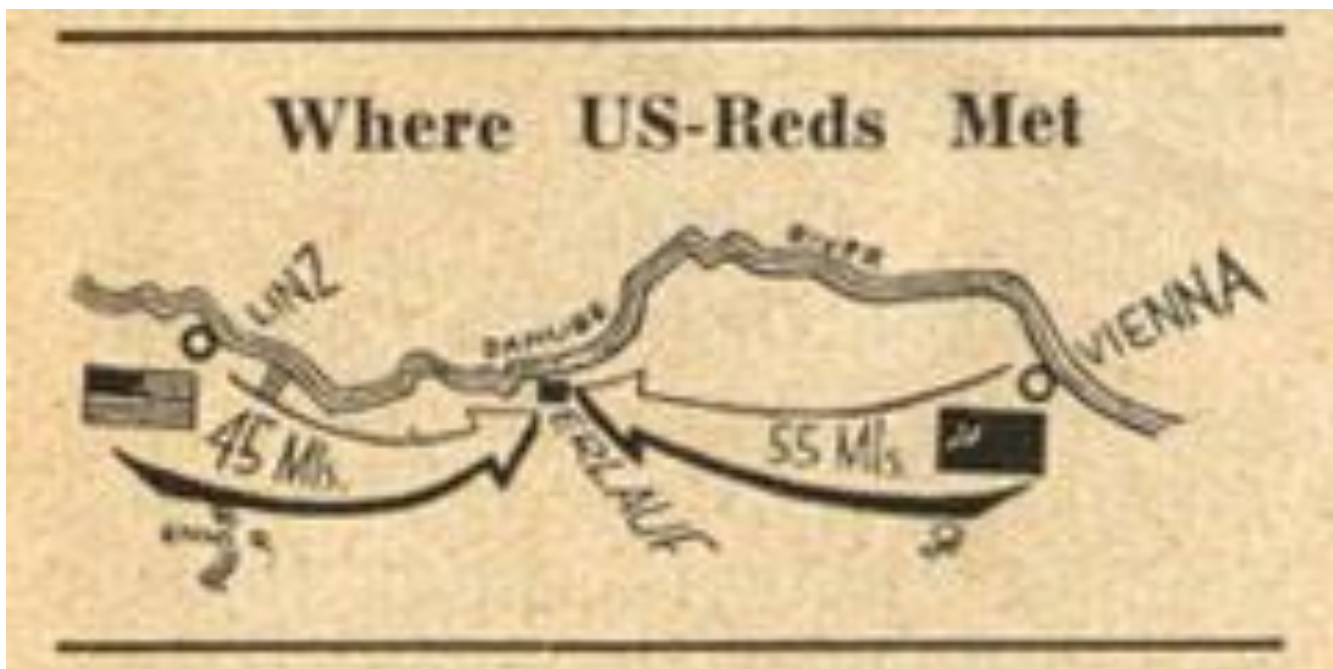
V-E Day...

Message number 6 for the morning of May 7 went like this:

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED AT ZERO SEVEN ONE ZERO FIVE ZERO BAKER FROM ROMAN TWENTY CORPS PAREN LT COL DUNGAN CMA GEORGE DASH THREE SECTION PAREN BY TP CLN

THE GERMAN HIGH COMAND SIGNED AN AGREEMENT FOR UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF LAND CMA SEA AND AIR FORCES AT ZERO SEVEN ZERO ONE FOUR ONE STOP ACTIVE OPERATIONS WILL CEASE AT ZERO NINE ZERO ONE STOP EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY ALL TROOPS WILL STOP MOVEMENT AND ACTIVE OPERATIONS STOP DUE TO THE FACT THAT COMMUNICATIONS ARE SO POOR THERE WILL PROBABLY BE SOME ACTION ON THE PART OF THE ENEMY AND WE WILL HAVE TO REMAIN ON THE DEFENSIVE

Translated from Signal-ese, the message said that the 65th Division received word by telephone from Headquarters XX Corps at 1050 on May 7 of the signing of unconditional surrender terms by the German high command. The terms were to become effective as of 0001, May 9.



For the 65th Infantry Division the abbreviated date-time, 090001, has another significance, Major General Stanley E. Reinhart, Division Commander, Brigadier General John E. Copeland, Assistant Division Commander, and Colonel William J. Epes, Chief of Staff, traveled through darkness to Erlauf to meet with the Russian General whose troops faced the 65th. A Division which had moved east from Saarlautern met with another which had come west from Stalingrad in a tiny town 45 miles east of Linz and 55 west of Vienna.

War in the ETO was over.

"The Day When..."

Now that it was past, there was time for reminiscing. Each regiment, each battalion, each company, each platoon, each squad, every GI could look back to "that day when we ..."

In general, the best anecdotes were those of the infantry regiments and the artillery battalions. They were closest to the biggest action. But the battle could never have been won, could, in fact, never have taken place, without the 265th Engineer Combat Battalion, the 365th Medical Battalion, and that Division miscellany lumped together as "Special Troops."

One of these Special Troops appeared beside the Infantry and artillery on every G-3 overlay. The 65th Reconnaissance Troop had pulled up ahead of the front line to reconnoiter or to screen the infantry advance. It had rushed to the rear to aid in the mopping up of by-passed enemy pockets. It had been spread thin along the Division flank to outpost infantry activity.

Engineers

In the war of movement, the 265th Engineers had the tremendous job of maintaining battered road nets which were often pitifully inadequate for Division transportation. The signs along the highways -- Mines Cleared To The Ditches -- did not come with the newly conquered routes. Frequently, the highways came bridgeless too. Then, the Engineers ferried the infantry across the Saar, the Danube, the Inns -- over and back, over and back, and often under intense enemy fire. Finally, there was the tough and dangerous work of bridge building. The Engineers were also responsible for furnishing the troops with pure water.

Medics were up front too. Side by side with the combat units they went into battle, and side by side, their names appeared on the rosters of battlefield awards. The details were different; the citation was usually the same: aiding the wounded "under intense enemy fire," where one never knew whether the Red Cross was to be respected or used as an aiming point by some enemy sniper. Despite its having one of the largest installations in the Division, the 365th Medical Battalion, with the 3rd Platoon of the 60th Field Hospital, trailed behind the front lines. Instead of the usual twenty miles, the operating tables were within a mile of the Danube during the crossing.

MP's

The 65th Military Police platoon with additional assistance from the 65th Division Band, was responsible for getting the traffic through, and for guarding the ever increasing numbers of prisoners which this traffic overran.

Ordnance

The 765th Ordnance Company kept the 2 1/2-tonners rolling and the weapons firing. Whereas the training manuals claim that a light ordnance company is responsible for only 30 per cent of the division repair work, the 765th undertook over 60 per cent, to eliminate the time-consuming system of sending disabled vehicles further back for mending. Meanwhile, the 65th Quartermaster Company filled the trucks, and brought them over round trip runs of as long as 250 miles, to supply the front with food, clothing and gasoline for further advances. How QM drivers discovered their destinations without adequate maps is still an unsolved mystery.

To keep communications abreast of the front, the 565th Signal Company laid over 800 miles of new wire, and re-layed hundreds of miles of old. When the Division was sprawled over a quarter of the distance through Germany, the 185 miles from the forward CP at Treffurt to the rear CP at Schwabenheim was bridged by radio. If all else failed, there was still the messenger, who called on his rifle when the speedometer would not bring him through enemy pockets.

Finally, there was the Division CP itself -- the clerks, the draftsmen, the planners, and the complex of specialists which, thrown together, make up Division Headquarters Company personnel.

These troops had their reminiscing on V-E Day too. Most of it was centered on the overall pattern of the Division's operations. The 65th Infantry Division had come into the battle for Germany when Allied Armies were in the last stages of breaking through the Reich's final defensive line, when our Armies rolled from one tough encounter to another.

850 Miles

For the 65th, this meant 850 miles from Le Havre, France to the Enns River, Austria. It meant traveling with the fastest moving Army in the ETO, and more than this, moving, from the upper flank of the Third Army, where it touched the First, to the southern flank, where it abutted the Seventh.

It was therefore a battle of wheels as much as a fight with weapons. It was what the Wehrmacht had heralded as "blitzkrieg" in the fat days for the Reich. In the lean days of 1945, it was the Allied armies which put on a blitzkrieg performance.

Right To Be Proud

The 65th Infantry Division ably played its part in the return engagement. Of its record as a unit and as individuals, the 65th has a "right to be proud."

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Linz -- Upper-Austria
1945

"Right to be Proud: History of the 65th Infantry Division's March Across Germany" was a pamphlet printed in 1945 during occupation duty for distribution to the officers and men of the 65th Infantry Division.
