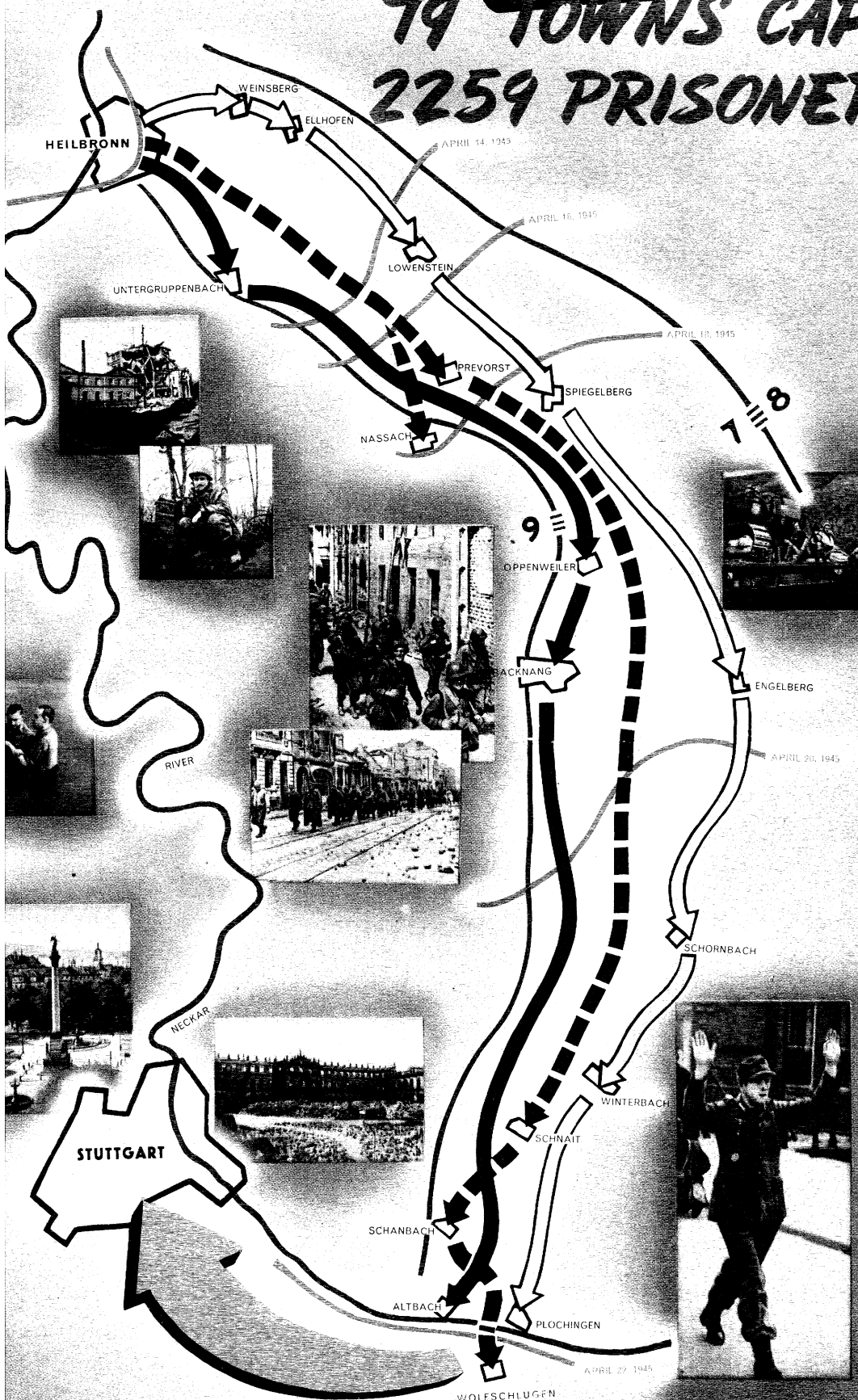


ALTBACH APRIL 14-23

79 TOWNS CAPTURED 2259 PRISONERS TAKEN



- 1ST BATTALION**
- HEILBRONN
 - WEINSBERG
 - ELLHOFEN
 - DENNBRONN
 - VORHOF
 - LOWENSTEIN
 - SCHMELLENHOF
 - HIRRWEILER
 - BERNBACH
 - BUCHELBERG
 - NEUFURSTENHUTTE
 - OBERFISCHBACH
 - GROSSHOCHBERG
 - SPIEGELBERG
 - GROSSERLACH
 - SIEBERSBACH
 - KLEINHOCHBERG
 - BERWINKEL
 - LIFMANNSKLINGE
 - ESCHENSTRUET
 - ZWERENBERG
 - EULENHOFLE
 - WALTERSBERG
 - HORSCHHOF
 - ROTTMANNBERG
 - SECHSELBERG
 - EBERSBERG
 - LIPPOLDSWEILER
 - DAFERN
 - HOHNWEILER
 - ALBERWEISSACH
 - SALACH
 - UNTERE MUEHLE
 - MICHELAU
 - ASPERGLEN
 - METZLENSWEILERHOF
 - SCHORNBACH
 - ENGELBERG
 - WINTERBACH
 - HOHENGEGHREN
 - BALTMANNWEILER
 - REICHENBACH
 - PLOCHINGEN

- 2ND BATTALION**
- OBERHEINRIET
 - UNTERHEINRIET
 - HOOPHBACH
 - FARNERSBERG
 - ETZLENSWENDEN
 - KAISERBACH
 - BILLENSBACH
 - MURRHARDT
 - JETTENBACH
 - KLINGEN
 - STOCKSBERG
 - PREVORST
 - NASSACH
 - KURZACH
 - SIEBENKLEE
 - SCHNAIT
 - AICHELBERG
 - SCHANBACH
 - KRUMMHARDT
 - AICHSCHIESS
 - DEIZISAU
 - WOLFSCHLUGEN

- 3RD BATTALION**
- OBERGRUPPENBACH
 - UNTERGRUPPENBACH
 - STANGENBACH
 - GREUTHOF
 - ALTLAUTERN
 - NE ULAUTERN
 - JUX
 - REICHENBERG
 - OPPENWEILER
 - BACKNANG
 - UNGEHEUERHOF
 - HEININGEN
 - ALLMERSBACH
 - KONNIGSBRONNHOF
 - RETTERSBERG
 - OPPELSBOHM
 - HOSSLINSWART
 - ROHRBRONN
 - HEBSACK
 - GERADSTETTEN
 - GRUNBACH
 - BEUTELSBACH
 - MANOLZWEILER
 - SCHONBUHL

ALTBACH



Heilbronn, like Raon L'Etape, Mouterhouse, Rimling and Bitche, joined the ranks of our past and well remembered duels of warfare while we turned to yet other fields of conflict. Had we dreamed that the overwhelming defeat of the enemy in Heilbronn would mean easier going from now on out, we were due for a rude awakening.

Our three battalions were encountering stubborn resistance on all fronts. The Third Battalion, only after a strong fight against small arms and automatic weapons fire, took Obergruppenbach, then went on to Donnbronn where a fire fight lasting the entire afternoon of the 14th ensued before we secured the town. The Second Battalion battled its way into Oberheinriet, fighting doggedly from house to house, and was only able to stifle the fierce opposition of small arms, automatic weapons, panzerfaust, rocket and 75 mm. fire at 1450 that afternoon. At 1530 the enemy launched a strong counterattack which cut the supply lines and continued relentlessly until 1730. In the main the lines held and the supply line block was cleared. The First Battalion had to move out of its reserve position in Weinsberg in order to drive the enemy from the woods near the Second Battalion and thus relieve the pressure. The enemy had infiltrated to the rear of the Second Battalion and with small arms and automatic weapons fire was preventing the engineers from repairing a deep road crater on the supply route. At great risk a Weasel was taken and it proved to be the only vehicle which could get to the line companies, going across open country. The medics were toying with the idea of dropping medical supplies by parachute from planes. Complete arrangements had already been made.

We knew that Germany's full and unconditional surrender was not far off. We were winding up for the knockout punch. We realized that our advances at this time were not making headlines, but we realized that advancing was part of the job, and a very necessary part, while making headlines was not. Our opponent was on the ropes, back-peddalling desperately.

But he had to be caught, hammered and beaten until the knockout would be counted. We wanted no decision on points and no re-match in a return bout. So our present action, while not delivering more than telling punches, kept the enemy groggy and sorely hurt until he went down for the count. The military lessons we learned from the final phase were few. The experienced fighter knows when his opponent is beaten and ready for the finishing blow and keeps him on the run with no chance to recuperate. The enemy was off-balance and we had to push unmercifully though we were weary and heart sick.

After clearing Heilbronn we had the enemy on the run again. We had to pursue him and render him harmless before he could set up defenses for another bitter stand like the one we had just been through. Speed of movement was essential. We had to be motorized, with armor in the lead, for a quick elimination of sporadic resistance at isolated points. One of these points was right beyond Heilbronn.

Keeping close behind the advancing units on April 15th, the Regimental CP moved into Lehensteinsfeld, and Service Company into Heilbronn itself. The Regimental I & R Platoon, because of the rapidity of our advances, was assigned the task of maintaining contact between us and the adjacent units. Information that was gathered had to be brought back to the S-2 Officer via territory that had been by-passed by our forward elements. This platoon undertook some varied assignments. It made route reconnaissance through enemy-held territory, picking up many prisoners, and ditching snipers all the way.

Antitank Company maintained road blocks and sent out patrols into by-passed sectors to round up aborted enemy. Meanwhile the First Battalion moved to reinforce the Second Battalion which was still slugging it out in vicious fighting near Oberheinriet, with Companies A and C moving southeast after the Second Battalion had advanced toward Unterheinriet. This fire fight against 250 enemy supported by medium artillery and heavy mortar fire delayed the clearing of the town for several hours, and even after we occupied the village, shells continued to fall in with

regularity. Part of the Battalion was then sent to occupy Happenbach.

The Third Battalion continued its push to the southwest



Pinned down by machine gun fire.

toward Untergruppenbach, a village reputed to be entirely clear of enemy. Company A moved out for the attack, east in the direction of Vorhof, travelling through woods and shell fire most of the way. It met resistance on the outskirts of the town while Company B circled around to the rear and succeeded in cutting the roads leading to the southeast. We were still fighting for this little town at the end of the day. Companies F and G jumped off from Unterheinriet at 1700 meeting little resistance on the march



to Etziensmenden which it took at 2115. The success in this engagement was attributed to the excellent tank and artillery support had at command for any and all needs.

The First Battalion launched a full-scale attack to sieze Vorhof on April 16 after which it continued its advance east to attack Lowenstein aided by Company L and supported by tanks. It was a long trek of eight miles to Lowenstein and we contended with slight sniper fire and occasional mortar barrages as we entered the town. We exploited our gains and continued the only reasonable tactic of denying to the enemy an opportunity of making a stand. Company B jumped off from the high ground just outside the town. Despite heavy enemy small arms and artillery fire it succeeded in an encircling movement around the next town. Company C also pushed off relentlessly toward Stangenbach taking the town and remaining there in billets for the night. Company L veered north and siezed Rittelhof, then reverted to Battalion control. The Third Battalion had occupied Frankenhof and Reisoeh. The Second Battalion kept going southward to clear Farnersberg with Company E moving to Kaiserbach where it became pinned down by small arms and automatic weapons fire. After aid had been sent, Companies F and G again were subjected to artillery and direct fire. At the close of the day all elements of the Battalion had reached the outskirts of Bilbensbach.

That day typified in one respect our entire combat experiences. We never ceased to be amazed at the unpredictability of the Germans. One never knew when to expect a heavy fight and when to expect to occupy a sector without resistance. It was like that right down the line.



We would push off toward an objective prepared for no one particular form of resistance but expecting any kind or none at all. As on the 16th of April, the phrases "little resistance," "heavy fire fight," "no enemy encountered," and "last ditch

defense" would crop up in the reports creating a stir regarding their accuracy. Unimportant little towns would be defended to the last man, while other places, which seemed worth fighting for fell to us without a semblance of a struggle. On our approach marches we would be shelled and sniped at, only to enter a city itself with no firing whatsoever. The tactics behind these incongruous operations puzzled us as we attempted to piece together information and figure out what was coming. It was impossible to do so. We had to predict every move as though a battle was to be fought, and act accordingly.

Without encountering any opposition, the First Battalion moved a total distance of six and a half miles to Wüstenrot on April 17th, having cleared Hirtweiler and Bernbach en route. We had gotten used to numerous abatis road blocks and blown bridges that were intended to slow us down. The ease with which we eliminated these soon struck the enemy as hardly being worth the effort. Barrages of Nebelwerfer were laid into Wüstenrot during the afternoon. Continuing with its zig-zag course to cover a larger front, the Second Battalion cleared the woods and small towns in its zone. A temporary road from Unterheinriet to Etelenswedden was opened during these operations. The Second Battalion, following the First, mopped up little pockets of enemy resistance which we had previously skirted in our headlong drive. Company K occupied Schmellenhof, and sent patrols into Greuthof and Altlentern. Company L moved to Löwenstein, as did Headquarters Company and the CP.





We had been constantly taking large numbers of prisoners, especially during the Heilbronn operations, when daily totals always exceeded one hundred, and a tally made on April 17th revealed that our grand total was 4,778. This included some high ranking officers who had surrendered their men in large groups right after we had secured Heilbronn.

The First Battalion was still pushing southward clearing Vorderbüchelberg, Neufürstenhütte, Oberfischbach and Gross-Hochberg on the 18th, never easing up in the slightest degree. The final objective, Spiegelberg, was reached by Company A at nightfall and the men dug in for the night. The night before, patrols into Jettenbach, Stocksberg and Prevorst all made enemy contact, with more than usual activity around Jettenbach. The Second Battalion attacked this city and it soon was in our hands after a tough tussle. Enemy fire however continued for several hours from the hills south and west. Following it's plan of attack, the Battalion swung east to clear Klingen, Stocksberg and Prevorst, meeting only small arms resistance. The groups of by-passed enemy were cleaned up by other units. The First Battalion was meeting some negligible resistance. We



Muzzle blast from 76 mm gun swirls dust around this TD after firing in support of an attack.

captured a document revealing that orders were given each local burgo-meister and district leader to use civilians to construct road blocks and obstacles. We too began issuing orders. These same civilians were to take down the obstacles.

In a rapid-fire advance east of the Sulzbach-Spiegelberg road we met no resistance on the 19th. Jerry was retreating so fast that it was difficult to keep up with him. Attack! Attack! That's all we did. Company H moved south and east from Lowenstein to Jux, clearing that town and securing routes. Our medium tanks knocked out machine gun installations on the outskirts of the town and we were able to move in, without suffering a single loss. Enemy interdictory fire gave a little trouble between 1700 and 1800 but that ceased as we approached too close for comfort and threatened the escape route. In the town of Silabach weak enemy feints were met by our First Battalion. West of Sulzbach, small arms and moderately light self-propelled fire was encountered, as well as many road blocks, each defended by a handful of infantrymen. At the end of the day numerous small villages and larger towns had fallen to us as we smashed ahead faster and faster, gaining momentum as we went.

Company K moved from Stangenbach on the Battalion right flank at 0600, the 19th, with the mission of clearing Nassoch. This town was under mortar and artillery fire and the streets were scenes of resistance at first, but the enemy folded rapidly. Sporadic artillery fire continued for a time. The company had just about finished that mission when orders came at 1400 to clear out a group of farm buildings on the high ground to the south. Severe resistance was met with the enemy using everything at hand; panzerfausts, automatic weapons, self-propelled guns and mortar fire. The men dug in hastily and called for artillery fire. However, when it became dark, the company returned to Nassach where it spent the night covering the town to the south while artillery and 4.2 mortars finished the job of liquidating the foe.

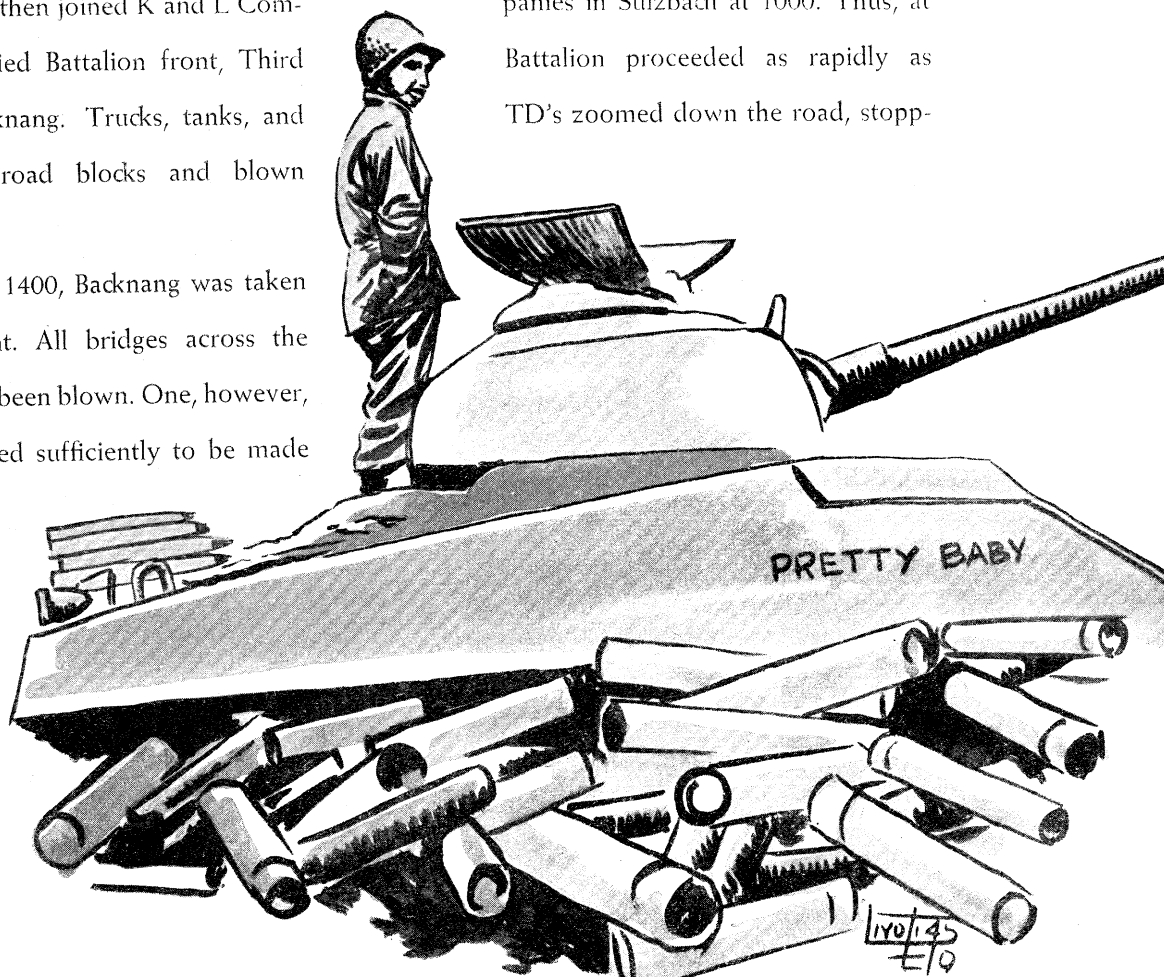
Early morning of the 20th a Volkssturm representative reported to us that Backnang and Oppenweiler were clear of enemy and that the townspeople were willing to surrender their towns. The

ghost of Heilbronn evidently plagued them into folding up in this fashion. We began to reap the rewards of a recent propaganda leaflet campaign we had been sponsoring. We had pictured the contrast between the razed villages that had resisted our advances and the untouched towns of those that had surrendered. The Third Battalion was sent into these towns exercising caution lest a Nazi trick be perpetrated. A very few snipers and moderate 75 mm. shelling in the southern end of Backnang, where a blown bridge held us up for a few hours, was the extent of our difficulty. We continued south, reaching and clearing Allmersbach at the close of the day, suffering moderate small arms and antitank fire. Again we ran up against extensive road blocks and more blown bridges over the main streams and rivers that continually crossed our path.

The Second Battalion crossed the Murr River at Murrhardt, and despite some light shelling, went on as far as Rudersberg. In this area extraordinarily extensive road blocks had been carefully erected, hindering our movement. We had advanced and overrun almost twenty small towns in the one 24-hour period. Keeping on the move at a phenomenal rate, the experiences of the Third Battalion typify our movement for the day.

At 0700 it took off from Sulzbach and sent patrols to the high ground around the Murr River. Company K was pulled back to Prevorst and then proceeded through Neulautern and Spiegelberg to Sulzbach. Company I cleared the woods west of the road running from Spiegelberg to Sulzbach and then joined K and L. Companies in Sulzbach at 1000. Thus, at noon, in a unified Battalion front, Third Battalion proceeded as rapidly as possible to Backnang. Trucks, tanks, and TD's zoomed down the road, stopping only for road blocks and blown bridges.

Arriving at 1400, Backnang was taken without incident. All bridges across the Murr River had been blown. One, however, could be repaired sufficiently to be made





passable for tanks and trucks. Two hours later orders came to move with all possible haste to Einterlach, 16 000 yards south. As the column of companies left Backnang, five members of the Hitler-Jugend fired at it but they were quickly subdued. As the advance continued south toward Almersbach, about one hundred rounds of artillery from the southwest interdicted the

column. Only light casualties were sustained. The Battalion steadily advanced.

An enemy antitank gun north of the town opened fire against the lead tanks as Company I approached Allmersbach, firing about six rounds. The first tank returned the fire knocking out the enemy gun crew with the second round which decapitated the gunner and dispersed the crew. The advance then went on unhindered towards Rettersberg with slight opposition. The objective was suddenly changed from Winterbach to Geradstetten and Grunbach, two towns further west, and eight 1½ ton trucks from the Regimental Antitank Company joined the Battalion. By using tanks, TD's, organizational transportation and the Antitank trucks, the Battalion was fully motorized and went on ahead, deeper and deeper into enemy territory, finally arriving in Oppelsbohm at 0200, April 21. It pushed south through Steinbach and Hösslinswart to Hebsack and then west of Geradstetten. Throughout the entire movement the roads were interdicted by enemy artillery. Apparently it had adjusted on the noise made by the column of vehicles bumping over the rutted roads.

The Battalion captured 70 startled prisoners in the town of Geradstetten. Company I went on to capture Grunbach. From 1600 on the 20th to 0400 on the 21st, the Battalion had covered approximately 21 000 yards, road distance. We were so fatigued by now that we didn't care much what happened to us and weren't fully aware of what did happen either. Our equipment seemed to be more burdensome than ever. Our eyes were heavy as were our hearts. Little did we think that at 1600 this same day we'd move into still further attacks. We had to cut the Auto-

bahn in the vicinity of Köngen about 17 000 yards map distance to the southwest. Because the bridges were blown across the Murr River at Geradstetten it was necessary for us to go west to Beutelsbach, then east to Manolsweiler. The organization vehicles, one platoon of tanks, one platoon of TD's, two 1½ ton trucks from Antitank Company and the eight we received the previous night constituted the extent of our mobile elements.

We moved out with Company K leading, followed by L and I Companies. Company K established liaison with the First Battalion tactical transportation which was held up by a road block near Manolzweiler. At this point we detrucked. Company I remained to guard the stymied vehicles while the rest continued advancing behind the First Battalion elements and after a long hike got to Hohengehren at 2300. Since the First Battalion was astride the route of advance of the Third Battalion and was meeting strong resistance, holding up at Hohengehren for the night was under consideration. However, it was deemed imperative that we drive ahead in order to attain our objective on schedule. The Third Battalion then passed through the First Battalion and proceeded in the direction of Altbach.

Other elements of the Regiment meanwhile had reached the Rems River. The First Battalion met no opposition on entering Schorndorf at 0400. As we crossed the Rems and hit the Fils River there was still no opposition other than by the inevitable road blocks. In the course of the day the First Battalion had captured Oberweissach, Seelach, Untere Mühle, Michelau, Asperglen, Metzlenweilerhof, and Schornbach. After taking Schorndorf the Battalion veered west reorganizing near Winterbach, resuming the attack south across the Rems. The Second Battalion left its assembly area near Grunbach at 1100 to check the towns and roads in the Regimental zone to the rear of the other two battalions. This was a mission fraught with unusual difficulties, knowing what to expect, and often running into groups of enemy which had holed in when the first troops came through.

The First Battalion hit the enemy convoy at about 2100 and destroyed about half of it. The remainder fled. The troops halted there and dug in pending further orders. At 2300 orders were received to pull back 800 yards to await further orders. At 2300 orders were received to pull back 800 yards and hit what was left of the convoy. At 0300 the First Battalion pushed off down the same road toward Plochingen. At the forks the First Battalion went





left, the Third went right. Since the Third Battalion went through at 0100 more vehicles came upon the First Battalion's fork and hit it at about 0430. Company B sat on the roadsides and shot at vehicles from 0430 to 0700 during which time more than two dozen of the enemy were either killed or captured. This was an amazing bit of luck and ample reward for the long hours of marching and fighting that had been going on for the past several days. There was an hour's delay culminating in the taking, without further incident, our final objective — Altbach.

On the 22nd all the elements of the Regiment had attained success and the Neckar River was again flowing before us. It had been less than ten days since we had left the city of Heilbronn in smouldering ruins. The First Battalion maintained its steadily advancing course to the south clearing the wooded area on the route to its objective and becoming engaged in a heavy fire fight consisting of small arms and automatic weapons. The towns of Engleberg, Hohengehren, Baltmannsweiler, Reichenbach, and Plochingen were secured in the interim, while contact was established with the Third Battalion on the right. Crossings of the Neckar River were reconnoitered. The Second Battalion checked and cleared many towns including Schnait, Aichelberg, Schanbach, Krumhardt and Aichschiess, in the rear of and by-passed by the other two battalions. Among towns taken by the Third Battalion were Schönbühl and Zell.

The by-passed enemy was now harassing our rear. As a result of this unexpected development two of our men were killed and several wounded when Hohengehren was raided at 1100 with 40 to 50 Krauts. Our supply routes were harassed by small arms fire necessitating details of tanks

and infantry to patrol them. After dark the enemy began blocking roads behind us by felling trees. Wire crews were pinned down constantly by small arms fire interfering with the wire laying. Each of the battalions accounted for several hundred PW's that day for a record of 1377, bringing



the grand total to 6,501 for the Regiment. It would be all over soon we knew.

At Altbach the Third Battalion caught the foe completely by surprise. Events had moved so fast that the enemy had no recourse except to surrender, 377 to this Battalion alone. Company I had moved west to capture Zell at 0800 with an additional bagging of 77 prisoners, comprising one company complete with three officers. We by-passed pockets of the enemy in the phenomenal strides that took us deeper and deeper like a drill into a decayed tooth.

The 22nd of April was our most important day since our baptism into combat. On this day we found ourselves out of complete contact with the enemy. From November 6th right through to this day we had always been in danger of varied attacks of artillery or sniper, but now we just held up. There were no more operation instructions forthcoming from higher headquarters. We fought all through that 22nd day of April but the end of that day was the end of the horribly pitted road for us.

The part we played in the ultimate surrender of the German Wehrmacht fits only into a larger picture but on our front there were some of the pieces for the whole story of the eventual collapse of the German war machine. We had seen, and indeed been in part responsible for the end of the once mighty army.

The troops of the First and Third Battalions on the 23rd of April, reaping the rewards of a job fast and well done, merely patrolled the north banks of the Neckar River within the Regimental zone and conducted a reorganization. The only enemy activity for the entire day reported was at 1645 when a burst from a burp gun was given by an engineer road guide. The Second Battalion,

clearing up in the vicinity of Aichschiess-Schanbach, found three bridges intact leading from Altbach across the Neckar River, island and canal, enabling the troops to cross without any trouble. This provided the springboard for the jump into and clearance of Deizisau and other localities in the vicinity south of the river. One of the bridges was mined, however, and was cleared by our engineers.

At 1730 a Third Battalion patrol observed thirteen men digging and chopping some of whom were garbed in the uniform of the Wehrmacht, while others were apparently members of the Volkssturm and in civilian clothes. The entire group fled upon the approach of our men. There were no definitely established "front lines" and the only contact with the enemy was in the form of stragglers who stumbled onto our positions unwittingly. No defensive organization had been set up by the fleeing Krauts and its only capabilities seemed to be the harassing of our supply lines and minor acts of sabotage.

Actual combat operations were at a standstill and on the 24th of April we busied ourselves solely with routine patrolling tasks. The First Battalion, billeted in Plochingen, patrolled the north bank of the Neckar River within its assigned zone. Service Company moved into Oppenweiler which meant showers and a change of clothing for most of us. Taking advantage of the lull we spent the day in writing letters, cleaning weapons, and attending church services. We had hot meals and motor patrols covered all the roads in the area. Clearing the area south of the Neckar River and operating from the central point of Deizisau, the Second Battalion mopped up the towns of Unterensingen, Zizishausen, Oberensingen and Wolfschlügen. All woods and trails were reported clear.

The Third Battalion was billeted in Altbach, patrolling the north bank of the river in its zone and awaiting orders. Company L held a physical inspection at 1330 while the whole Battalion policed and serviced combat-worn jeeps and weapons. The day's activity was punctuated by a discovery of three aerial bombs and 1000 pounds of dynamite powder, prepared as a demolition charge but never detonated, at the foot of the concrete bridge which we had been avoiding over the Fils River. It was quite allright to discover the tremendous charge this way.

We suddenly found ourselves out of contact with the enemy and out of combat entirely. While we realized that at any time orders might come down to move someplace where it was still hot, this possibility was remote. The end of the war was in sight, so we settled down to wait.

"What has become of our comrades"

What has become of our comrades?
The boys that we all knew so well,
Who, once filled with the joys of living
Are now dead, from bullet and shell. —

Who helped us fight many a battle
Through the mud, the slime and the dirt,
And who gave their lives in a bitter fight,
That peace might rule the earth.

How well I remember their faces,
As in memory they go marching past,
And the line seems never ending
Of those who gave their all to the last.

There was McCord from "Ole" Alabama,
Whose scouting was quite renown —
He died in a ditch by the roadside
Where a machine gun cut him down.

I remember the death of "Ole" Skinner —
Whose commission was made on the field
He was always admired by everyone,
For his courage and fighting zeal.

And then there was Lindow, the medic,
Who was always quite unafraid —
He was shot in the back by a sniper,
While heeding a call for aid.

There are all of these, and oh! so many,
I can't recall anymore —
Who fought, fell, and sampled hell,
In a long and bloody war.

But now — what has become of our comrades
Whose bones now hallow the earth,
Why, we pray to God, that their spirit
Has returned to the land of their birth.

Or perhaps to the Halls of Valhalla,
Where all good warriors reign,
And we fervently pray to heaven above
That their sacrifice wasn't in vain.

Harry Hillers

