

UNIT: 319th Inf Regt, 80th Inf Div

PERIOD: 17 Dec - 31 Jan 45

ACTION: Reducing the Bulge

SOURCE: Major Ralph J Wevers, Regtl S-3  
 Capt Harold E Mennen, Asst S-3

PLACE AND DATE OF INTERVIEW: LINTGEN, LUXEMBOURG, 1 February 1945

MAPS: Scale, 1/50,000; France and Belgium Arlon Sheet 137, Wiltz Sheet 138;  
 Luxembourg (sheets 22 and 23)

INTERVIEWER: Capt D G Dayton

INTERVIEW conducted with regimental journals as interview was intended for orientation.

319th Infantry Regiment - 17 Dec 44 - 29 Jan 45

On 17 December the 319th had the mission of outposting HELLBACH (350830). For the previous week the regiment had been rehabilitating, reorganizing and conducting training in the assault of fortified positions. Some time had also been spent on practice in coordinating infantry-tank action.

On the 17th the regiment was given the mission of moving forward into an assembly area in the vicinity of ROHRBACH (657497) and relieve elements of the 25th Cav. The CT and supporting units minus the 905th FA Bn moved by motor at 1045 and closed at 1632 in ROHRBACH. At the latter place liaison was established with the 25th Cav. On 18 December the 2d Bn, 319th, relieved the 25th Cav in the line. Other units of the regiment were also going into position. The following day the CT was ordered to move northwest to the vicinity of BASCHARAGE. Committed units were disengaged, the regiment moved the same day and spent a long, cold night riding. The mission was, at the time, unknown. The regiment arrived at BASCHARAGE early on the morning of the 20th, was placed in division reserve and instructed to be prepared for movement to the north, northeast, or southeast. The CT was also ordered

to be prepared to reinforce the 317th or 318th which were in defensive positions north of LUXEMBOURG. Meantime the regiment was to initiate reconnaissance for and prepare to occupy positions. The regiment began to carry out these orders but on the following day the CT was given the mission of moving to BROUCH (784278), where local security was to be posted, and was instructed to be prepared to advance north in an attack on the 22d. The CT moved by shuttle to the designated area and closed at 1713. Preparations were made for the following day's attack.

On the 22d the attack jumped off at 0600 from the vicinity of BROUCH with the 1st and 3d Bns advancing abreast, the 3d on left, 1st on right. The 2d Bn was in reserve. No contact was gained with the enemy until 0910 when the 3d Bn entered MICHELBUCH (766368). Previously, at 0800, the battalion had contacted elements of our 109th Inf Regt, 28th Div, in VICHTEIN (750350). The 3d Bn cleared MICHELBUCH and prepared to move on MERZIG (755384) with L and K Cos abreast, on the left and right respectively, at 1010. At 1040 a platoon of Co C/702 Tn Bn had moved to positions on the high ground south of MERZIG. By 1100 L and K Cos had reached a point (763376) and had no contact with the enemy.

The 1st Bn had moved forward without trouble and did not hit any resistance until about 1145 when it hit some small enemy patrols at (793300). The 3d Bn had meanwhile occupied part of MERZIG and was receiving considerable small arms fire and artillery. The battalion effectively directed our artillery on an enemy column attempting to reenter MERZIG. The reserve battalion was ordered to VICHTEIN and closed there at 1425. The regimental CP moved to the same place and opened at 1615. Meanwhile, at 1500, the 1st Bn had captured OBERFEULEN (777402) and was currently engaged in an attack on FEULEN (785408) and NEIDERFEULEN (788411) which were captured a short time later. The regiment received orders from the 80th Div to have one battalion advance until stopped, so at 1635 the 2d Bn was alerted.

At 2045 the 2d Bn moved out by motor and detrucked at OBERFEULEN; the 3d Bn was in MERZIG, the 1st in OBERFEULEN, FEULEN and NEIDERFEULEN.

At 2400 the 2d Bn jumped off on a night attack toward HEIDERSCHIED (736446). By 0525 on 23d the outskirts of the town were reached and there the battalion was held up by heavy machine gun fire. While F Co held the outside of the town with heavy automatic fire, E moved into HEIDERSCHIED. The enemy offered stiff resistance in the town but by 1130 the battalion had moved through it and outposted to the north and northeast. The 3d Bn had been engaged in mopping up MERZIG. The town was cleared by 1050. Many Germans were killed, a large quantity of enemy material was captured and 118 PWs taken. The 1st Bn was advancing in its zone but found the going hard through the woods and over the rough terrain. The several inch mantle of snow on the ground didn't help the progress. Supporting the 319th attack were C/708 TD Bn and C/610 TD Bn. After the action on the 22d, C/610 TD was replaced by A/610 TD. (Maj Meyers said half platoon of tanks and a platoon of TDs were attached to each of the assault battalions while the remaining platoons of TDs were held as reserve and used wherever needed.)

At 1215 on the 23d the 2d Bn received a heavy counterattack by infantry and tanks against their positions north and northwest of HEIDERSCHIED so 3d Bn was sent to assist them. The 1st Bn met heavy resistance at 772452. The counterattack against the 2d Bn was stemmed and the enemy suffered heavy losses in the action. The 1st Bn maneuvered against the enemy resistance it met and by 1630 was attacking the town of KEHMEN (780459). The 3d Bn had meanwhile pressed an attack on TADLER (750472). It met heavy small arms fire but by 1935 had taken the town; by the same time the 1st Bn had captured KEHMEN. The 3d Bn sent Co I to HEIDERSCHIEDERSTADT (736463) to hold the bridge in the town. The battalions held their positions during the night. The 3d Bn in TADLER could not prevent a strong enemy force from blowing the bridge just northeast of the town.

The advance north of the 1st and 3d Bns, scheduled for 0730 and 0800 respectively on the morning of 24 Dec was disrupted by enemy counterattacks on the 1st and 2d Bns. The 1st Bn had initiated movement from KIESEN west in order to follow the road net in zone as the axis of advance, leaving D Co in town as a rear guard. The 2d Bn received a counterattack when B Co pulled out of KIESEN. G Co had been sent to relieve Co I in HEIDERSCHEIDERGRUND. Both companies were cut off by the enemy but they were able to maintain their own security. Meanwhile the 3d Bn, less a reinforced platoon from K Co which had been left to secure TADLER, moved south and took up position on the high ground northeast of HEIDERSCHEIDERGRUND to assist the battalions being counterattacked. The regiment held against the counterattack and by 1500 the situation was cleared. 3d Bn, 104th Inf Regt, 86th Div, relieved Cos G and I in HEIDERSCHEIDERGRUND and the companies returned to their respective battalions. The battalions consolidated their positions for the night. In the counterattack 54 PWs were taken and considerable damage inflicted on enemy personnel and vehicles.

At 0800 on the morning of 25 Dec the advance north continued. The 3d Bn re-occupied TADLER. From here enemy infantry were observed in the town of RINGEL (763477). Artillery (905th FA in direct support) was placed upon it. At 0900 the 319th Regt received orders from division stating the regiment would clear the enemy in the area south of the SURE in zone and not attempt to cross the river, and this information was passed to all battalions and supporting units.

When 3d Bn had closed in TADLER, the 2d Bn moved toward RINGEL. The battalion received heavy MG fire as it approached the town but had taken it and advanced to high ground north and northeast of the town by 1400. The 3d Bn had meanwhile outposted the south bank of the SURE River. 1st Bn, in reserve, was alerted to send a company through the lower half of the woods (710460). This was necessary because the unit on the right, 317th Inf, was making slow progress. B Co got started on

the mission but was called back when it got into fire from friendly elements on the right.

During the afternoon the 2d Bn was counterattacked but held. The enemy dug in south of the SURE in front of the 2d Bn. The assault battalions (2d and 3d) held these positions for the night while the 1st Bn moved to HEIDERSCHEID. The division regimental CP which had been in HEIDERSCHEID returned to CHARLIER. During the 26th the 2d Bn cleared the enemy from the woods in its zone and advanced to the south river bank exclusive of DURASCH (730432). This battalion was completely relieved by the 1st by 2045 and the 2d moved to HEIDERSCHEID. During the night E Co outposted RINGEL, C Co the high ground south of town and A Co held a position near bridge HEIDERSCHEID-KEIMEN road and established contact with the 27th. The 3d Bn remained in the positions originally held.

On the morning of the 27th the Germans sent a large patrol into the 1st Bn area and in the afternoon counterattacked. They had, in the meantime, been placing heavy artillery fire on the 1st Bn. 2d Bn was alerted to be ready to assist the 1st Bn and the 3d Bn was instructed to send a company to fill the gap between A and C Co. The 1st Bn held against the counterattack and the elements alerted were not committed. 1st Bn held their positions for the night as did the 2d. 3d Bn remained in the vicinity of HEIDERSCHEID in reserve.

At 1440 on the 28th the 1st Bn was counterattacked again by about 150 or 200 infantrymen but stopped it. They counterattacked the Jerries, got 27 PWs and inflicted heavy losses.

The regiment remained in the HEIDERSCHEID-TADLER-HEIDERSCHEIDGRUND-RINGEL area during the remainder of the month (Dec) in defensive positions. Front line elements were rotated from time to time. The enemy counterattacked E Co on the 30th with about 160 men but was repulsed with heavy losses.

Defensive positions south of the SURE River were held 1-5 January. While

there considerable artillery was placed on enemy installations across the river.

On 5 January the 319th received division FO #25 giving the regiment the mission of attacking across the SURE River at 0400 on the 6th, seizing GOESDORF, DAHL and NOCHER, and setting up a defensive of the ground gained. For the operation the regiment had attached to it, besides its regular supporting units, Co D, 702d Tk Bn, Co A, 610th TD Bn, and 166th Engr Bn. The latter unit was to build a bridge in the vicinity of HEIDERSCHIEDERGRUND (722466) for the crossing. Upon receipt of the division order, the regiment distributed FO #40. During the night of 5-6 Jan the bridging operation was hampered by hostile artillery fire. Because of the artillery fire it was decided to build a treadway instead of a Bailey. One platoon from Co F outposted the bridge site.

The bridge, except for one section of treadway, was completed by 0400 on the 6th and was passable for foot troops. The 3d Bn (reinf Mine Plat 319th) crossed the SURE River via the bridge at 0400 and advanced on road to EUDERSCHIED (712428) and cut cross country to be in position to attack DAHL. By 0430 the bridge was completed. At 0530 the foot elements of 1st Bn crossed on the bridge. Co C, 702d Tk Bn, Co A 610th TD Bn (SP) crossed behind the 1st Bn. At 0630 the battalion prepared to enter GOESDORF (730483) without artillery preparation. The town was attacked and had been occupied by 1000. The battalion was joined in the town by C/702 Tk Bn. The 3d Bn received heavy enemy artillery fire and fire from small arms when they reached a point about 1000 yards west of DAHL. This fire temporarily split the 3d Bn forces. They were reunited, however, by Lt Col Cheston for an attack on the town. Meanwhile the tanks and TDs had not fared so well at the bridge. The crossing site was heavily shelled. A TD of the 610th was hit by the artillery. It burned and set off its ammunition blocking the road. North of the crossing the tanks were again stopped by a knocked out German tank across the road. Co C/305th Engr Bn removed the enemy tank and the burned TD, then sanded the road. This enabled the tanks and TDs to

proceed to their respective infantry battalions.

An artillery concentration was placed on DAHL and the 3d Bn jumped off to attack the town at 1230. I Co swung northeast of the town to block any threat from that direction while L and K Cos entered the town and began mopping up. By 1400 the town had been taken, and the battalion was regrouping to move on NOCHER (738512) by 1530. At this time regiment ordered the attack to cease and the 1st and 3d Bns to defend DAHL, with 1st on the east, and prepare for possible counterattacks. Soon time, the 2d Bn had moved up and replaced the 1st in GOESDORF. The latter battalion then moved to DAHL and took up defensive positions to the north and northeast of the town, tying in with the 3d Bn on the left. The 2d Bn outposted GOESDORF and the bridges adjacent thereto. To assist the battalion the Regt AF Flt was attached. Positions were held during the night of the 6th and the following day. I Co supported by Co D/702 Tk Bn attempted to enter BOCKHOLZ (732485) but was forced to resume its original position because of small arms and tank fire. During the night of the 7th the 2d Bn formed a perimeter defense around GOESDORF; the other two battalions outposted DAHL.

After a heavy enemy barrage on the morning of the 8th, all battalions of the regiment were counterattacked. The 3d and 1st Bn reinforced by the fires of Co A/610 TD Bn, Co C/702 Tk Bn, and the 905th FA Bn (reinforced) placed deadly fire on enemy infantry and tanks. Eight enemy tanks were known to have been knocked out and unnumbered enemy dead littered the field. The 2d Bn reinforced by fires of Co D/702 Tk Bn and the 905th FA (reinforced) stopped the enemy and inflicted heavy personnel casualties. By 1200 enemy counterattacks had been thwarted--only artillery fire was coming in. Maj Gen Horace L McBride, CG of the 30th Inf Div, commended the 319th Inf (Reinf) for its determination and skill in the defense of GOESDORF and DAHL.

The 9th and 10th were relatively quiet. On the 11th K Co occupied the high

ground northwest of BUCHHOLE while E Co moved into the town from the southwest. In BUCHHOLE 74 enlisted prisoners and one officer were taken. The town was heavily mined and booby-trapped. Co E, assisted by the 519th Mine Plt, removed these barriers and then outposted the town--with the aid of some TDs and tanks. F Co had a reinforced platoon in the town while two Platoons were on the high ground to the southwest.

During the period 12th to 16th the regiment maintained and improved its position and kept in contact with adjacent units and the enemy with patrols. Enemy action came in the form of artillery on GOESDORF, DANL and BUCHHOLE. On the 14th Co D/702 Tk Bn reverted to the control of its battalion.

On the 16th the 319th made preparations to comply with Div FC #36 which gave the regiment the mission to attack and seize NOCHER and the high ground in the vicinity of MASSELER (781483). In order to surprise the enemy the attack on NOCHER jumped off at 0700 on 18 January without preliminary artillery fire. The initial effort was made by the 3d Bn reinforced with Co G, a platoon Co C/702 Tk Bn, a Plat Co A/610 TD Bn (SP), and a Plat Co C 305th Engr Bn. This force advanced toward NOCHER in two columns. K Co approached the town from the southwest with the mission of blocking from the west and northwest at point (730512). I and L Cos, with G Co in reserve, approached the town from the southeast with the mission of seizing and occupying NOCHER. At 0820 the 3d Bn, less K Co, occupied NOCHER and cleaned the town out with bazookas and grenades. The battalion came under heavy enemy shelling. K Co was held up by enemy in dug in positions at PT30510. Artillery was directed on the enemy positions and eventually K occupied them. Movement of TDs and tanks was hampered by enemy direct fire weapons, minefields, and large snowdrifts, but by 0915 a platoon of TDs had reached NOCHER.

After the 3d Bn (reinf) had secured NOCHER, the 1st Bn reinforced with a platoon Co A/610 TD Bn (SP), a platoon Co C/702 Tk Bn and the Regt Mine Plat, attacked



east toward MASSALER. A and C were the assault companies and B was in reserve. Progress was slow due to deep snow and poor visibility. When the 1st Bn (Reinf) moved out of DAHL, the 2d Bn (-G Co) reinforced by a platoon Co A/610 TD Bn (SE) and a platoon Co C/702 Tr Bn moved up and outposted the town. Because of the rough terrain and the strategic position occupied by the enemy around MASSALER, the 1st Bn was ordered back and by 1930 had returned to DAHL. A Co defended from the east, B Co from the north and C Co from the south. The 2d Bn defended DAHL from the west. The 2d Bn met stiff opposition about NOCHER during the day and was forced to shift positions from time to time. Ammunition had to be hand-carried to E Co. During the action contact was maintained with the 317th and 104th. Enemy shelled NOCHER and DAHL throughout the period; this interfered considerably with radio and wire communications. Positions were maintained and improved during 19th and 20th and patrols sent out. Trip flares were installed around NOCHER. On the 21st the 319th received Div FO #27 which ordered the regiment to continue the attack north. Patrols were sent out to the north and east. On the 22d, after a patrol reported no enemy in the town, B Co moved into MASSALER and was subsequently followed by the rest of the battalion. The high ground west of the town was outposted. The other battalions pushed out to occupy the high ground 765500-748482.

On the 22d Div FO #28 directed the 319th to patrol its area and clear out enemy personnel and installations therein.

On the 23d F Co reinforced with one reinforced platoon of G Co attacked KAULENBACH (767518) and L Co reinforced moved against MERKOLS (741582). By 1900 the latter town had been secured but F Co had trouble in KAULENBACH. They got the lower part of the town, but the enemy held the upper, high, part and placed heavy automatic and rifle fire on the company. L Co consolidated its positions; F Co was ordered to hold and continue the attack on the 24th.

On the 24th the 2d Bn attacked ALSCHIED (760530). During the night the 166th

Engr Bn constructed a C1 3 bridge and by 0630 it was usable by Jap. E Co moved in ALSCHIED at 1030 and began mopping up the town; it was reported clear at 1730. In the evening F Co reported KAUTENBACH clear of the enemy. During the night of the 24th, the tanks and TDs remained south of the MILT River. Meanwhile the engineers were converting the bridge at MERKOLS to a C1 40.

On the 25th the 2d Bn 318th was attached to the 319th and occupied the positions held by the regiment by 0130 on the 26th. The 3d Bn moved its troops into NOCHLER and MERKOLS. 1st Bn moved to DAHL. The regiment received orders from the 80th Div to move by motor to vicinity of LAROCHE (Fels - 9152) and became attached to the 4th Inf Div. Regt FO #23, covering the mission to relieve 8th Inf Regt and 1st Bn 12th was delivered to all attached and supporting units.

At 1200 on the 26th the 2d Bn 318th was relieved from attachment to the 319th and in the afternoon the regiment moved to its new area. At 1430 the CP closed at KEWELBACH (920390) and by 2200 the CT had relieved the 8th Inf Regt and the 1st Bn 12th.

On the 27th the regiment held a line running from FOUHREN (890470) exclusive southeast to REISDORF (940410) inclusive, with the 3d Bn on the left and the 1st Bn on the right. The 2d Bn was in reserve at BETTENDORF (910420). During the day Co A/91 Cml Bn was attached to the CT -- also a platoon of Co B/633 AAA AW Bn. The Regtl CP moved from KEWELBACH to GILSDORF (880418).

Regiment maintained and improved positions on the 28th of Jan, and the 318th Regt relieved the 22d Inf on the right of the 319th. Contact was established between the two regiments; the same had been accomplished on the left the previous day with Co C/2d Inf Regt, 5th Inf Div.

On the 29th the regiment was relieved by CCB of the 4th Armad Div and moved into a rest area northeast of LUXEMBOURG. The Regtl CP was established in LINTGEN.

The battalions moved into areas as follows: 1st Bn, KEMLEN (770200); 2d Bn, ROLLINGEN (830280); and 3d Bn at STEINSEL (830210) and HEISDORF SUR ALBERTS (830200). The 319th was attached to the 4th Armad Div for operational purposes while in the rest area.