

HEADQUARTERS 80TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO #80, U. S. Army

G-2 After Action Report

1 - 31 March 1945

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ATTACK TO KYLL RIVER LINE - I

(1 - 6 March 1945)

During the period 1 - 6 March, the 80th Division continued the attack, clearing the enemy West of the Kyll River from Usch to Endorf. Opposing our advance were elements of three Volksgrenadier division -- 167, 276 and 340, were in addition, stragglers from the 9, 79, and 246 VG Divisions.

In an effort to cover the withdrawal of the bulk of his forces to the East bank of the Nyll River, the enemy defended in scattered localities from favorable terrain features between the Nims and Kyll Rivers and in towns controlling road nets where defended road blocks were encountered. Considerable use was made of demolitions and minefields to delay our advance eastward. Artillery and mortar fire was light.

THE BATTLE OF THE SAAR VALLEY - II

(7 - 24 March 1945)

7 - 12 March, 80th Infantry Division went into position in the sector along the SAAR River via ZERF, which is six miles East of SAARBURG. Here the Division was attached to XX Corps and was flanked on the left (North) by 994th US Infantry Division and on the right (South) by 26th US Infantry Division.

On 13 March the 80th Division attacked to the East. Opposing our positions were 2d Mountain Division and the 416th Infantry Division supported by the 7th Nebelwerfer Brigade. Enemy resistance to our attack consisted of heavy small arms, automatic weapons and nebelwerfer and mortar fire throughout the Division zone; artillery concentrations were received in towns and key terrain features. Considerable mine fields and obstacles were encountered. One counterattack of enemy infantry was repulsed without loss of ground from the vicinity of NE of GELMERATH.

14 - 16 March our attacking forces met heavy fire from assault guns and moderate small arms and automatic weapons fire. Artillery and nebelwerfer concentrations were received in towns throughout division zone. Considerable minefields, booby traps and defensive works were encountered. The enemy counterattacked fiercely to regain lost ground; all counterattacks were repulsed without loss of ground and with considerable losses to the enemy. Late on 16 March enemy resistance became disorganized except for the stubborn defense in and North of Weiskirchen. During this period elements of the 6th SS Mountain Division were identified in the vicinity of Weiskirchen.

17 - 21 March our rapid advances met a fleeing enemy. Our forces entered and cleared Kaiserslautern. Only token resistance was encountered as the 80th pushed on to the Rhine. Elements of the 715 Div, 17 SS Pz Gren Div, 9 AA Div, 47 VG Division were captured.

22 - 24 March enemy air activity was considerable day and night as columns were strafed and bombed. Numerous deserters and stragglers were captured.

In 4 day's time, the enemy's defenses along the Saar River had been broken after dogged, hard fighting and with the breakthrough came the pursuit of the enemy's fleeing remnants through the Saar Valley to the RHINE. 7,412 prisoners of war were processed through 80th Division PWE from 13 - 24 March and many towns were cleared of enemy.

The period following the breakthrough on 17 March is characterized by the lightning advances made by our pursuing forces; the scattered and meager resistance, the haphazard efforts made by the enemy in defending roadblocks, cratering, placing minefields and blowing bridges. Untold quantities of enemy material were captured and destroyed. Of particular note is the fact that the great majority of enemy forces captured after the breakthrough were artillery, service and headquarters personnel, all committed as infantry, in a desperate attempt to starve off the Allied blows to the Nazi lifeline.

THE ASSAULT OF THE RHINE AND MAIN RIVERS - THE CAPTURE OF WIESBADEN

PART III

(25 - 31) March 1945)

25 - 27 March the 80th Division went into positions along the West bank of the RHINE River Vic ELINTZ and South bank of MAIN River Vic RUSSELSHEIM preparatory to assault crossings of both rivers and the capture of WIESBADEN. The enemy continued to occupy alertly the ground on the opposite banks of these rivers including some of the islands in the RHINE River in the division zone. Enemy artillery fire was sporadic during this period.

28 March the 80th attacked. Enemy resistance to our assault of the RHINE River was stubborn initially, consisting of small arms, automatic weapons and 20mm anti-aircraft fire. Three counterattacks were repulsed during the early morning hours without loss of ground.

As the attack continued, resistance became disorganized and ineffectual as large numbers of enemy surrendered in groups to our forward elements. Resistance to our crossing of the MAIN River was light throughout the day. WIESBADEN was cleared of enemy before dark after scattered opposition from small arms and automatic weapons fire had ceased and many other towns were cleared during the day.

Only 7 divisional combat troops were captured during the day although 1145 enemy were processed through the division prisoner of war enclosure. Miscellaneous anti-aircraft units, convalescents, home-guard, custom and police officials were comprising the defenders of WIESBADEN and vicinity.

29 - 31 March disorganized resistance met our attacking forces in towns and woods. The enemy attempted to infiltrate through our lines in an effort to escape to the east. Local pockets of resistance were encountered in north portion division zone particularly vicinity USINGEN where a large number of enemy were trapped. In the woods Vic KORNERN, 1 Plat of 80 Cav Ren Troop captured 1,500 prisoners in one engagement.

SPECIAL SECTIONS IV

IPW Teams Nos 75 & 76

O/C IPW Team 75 - Captain Paul Loeser, Jr.
O/C IPW Team 76 - Lt. Theodore E. Gutman

17,665 prisoners were processed through the 80th Division PWE during the month. More than half of the total PWS processed since last August, was taken during March 1945. The caliber of PWS varied only slightly during the month, and it was most noticeable that for the first time the interrogators could get their best information from officers, especially battalion commanders up to the rank of Lt Colonel. There were few, if any prisoners who could still be called security conscious. It is further notable that whereas previously the percentage of officers captured was approximately 1%, it was 4 1/2% during this period. This, beyond doubt, is partially due to the fact, that a great many rear area installations were overrun, and that some units such as the 64th AA Repl Battalion and 635th AA Battalion were taken complete. On the other hand, the officers themselves admitted having lost interest in further fighting and had more or less voluntary surrendered or deserted.

Among the unending number of deserters and stragglers processed during this month, it was interesting to note, that a great many outright deserters had their homes in areas overrun by Allied Forces. These men were quite free to admit that they had been held in bond for the well-being of their families, and that their people in turn were held as hostages for their continued "good behavior" in the armed forces. Since that threat no longer existed, once their home town were overrun, the men felt free to desert at the first convenient occasion.

Another interesting sidelight of interrogation during March were reports of increasing hostility of German civilians against their own Army. Time and again, it was reported that the civilians had begged and threatened the soldiers to leave their town for fear that resistance would cause the Allied juggernaut to destroy their last earthly belongings which had withstood six years of war. Civilians were said to be only too eager to hoist white flags, and according to reports, considered that only the most rabid and insane Nazis would continue resistance in view of recent developments.

Order of Battle Team #34

O/C Team - 1st Lt Armand V. Paolino

In addition to routine tasks, of particular interest was the participation of the Order of Battle team in the arrest of former Vice-President of the County of WEISALEN and the discovery of a plot to blow up the Autobahn bridge at VOELGERHAIN.

Members of the team went on a special mission to ADLERNORST, underground CP of HITLER and later C-in-C WEST headquarters, vicinity LANGENHAIN. Being the first Allied personnel to visit this spot, the team made a thorough search for documents. Special investigations of the former XII German Wehrkreis headquarters and several ammunition stores at WIESBADEN were also conducted.

Evaluation of documents enabled the team to prepare a list of code and passwords for the month of March as used by the 2d German Mountain Division, then opposing 80th Division advance. Aside from the usual reports the following subjects were written up by this team:

- 2 Mar -- Estimate of disposition and capabilities of German divisions on all fronts.
- 11 Mar - Special OB Review of enemy units on IX Corps front.
- 11 Mar - OB Annex to 80th Div Field Order #33 (Review of enemy units in 80th Div sector)
- 14 Mar - Review of 506th SS Pz Grenadier Battalion
- 15 Mar - Review of 519th GHQ AT Battalion

MII Team No 444-G

O/C Team - 1st Lt Erich Denzer

During the first half of March the team was charged with obtaining all possible information on roads, rivers, bridges and fords in line of the division advance. A lot of this information was obtained from civilians of many nationalities, who came through our lines in the hope of getting away from the war as quickly as possible. During the course of this work a destroyed railroad gun was located and important data pertaining to its use was collected. Also found what had once been a large V-2 launching site and interesting facts were collected from civilians who had observed the launching of the rockets. By the second half of March our advance had become so swift that most information gathered from civilians was outdated. It was decided to split the team, using one part of it as additional CIC personnel and the other part to augment the division IPV personnel. Whenever necessary, part of the team has returned to its original purpose and obtained information as needed.

Public Relations Section

O/C Section - 1st Lt Bernard Didinsky

In addition to routine releases the Division Public Relations Office prepared 1 news story, 1 special feature: "Messengers to Mars" (80th Signal Company). Routine duties included the release of 54 human interest stories, 1811 decorations, 245 citations and 574 promotions submitted to appropriate agencies.

PI Team #69

O/C Team - Captain Michael E. Derbin

The first three days of March were spent making ground checks in the vicinity of BITEURG verifying previous photo intelligence. On the 4th of March, basic cover of the division zone was received. These sets were annotated and distributed, every photo having the name of a town or a coordinate on it. Mosaics were made for the artillery.

Town plans of the area vicinity SAARBURG were made and photos received of this area were interpreted and distributed. A mosaic was made for artillery. An engineer road study to ST VENDEL was made. A sortie dated 16 March covering the area vicinity ST VENDEL was also interpreted but very little in the way of organized and set defenses were found. From the 19th of March to the end of the month, the division was on constant move so that the mobile situation made photo intelligence of little value. A few mosaics of the RHINE river vicinity of MAINZ were prepared.

CIC Detachment

O/C Detachment - Captain Thomas R. McMillen

During the month of March 1945, the 80th CIC Detachment covered more than 185 towns and cities in GERMANY. Among these were ST VENDEL, KAISERSLAUTERN, BAD DERKHEIM, MAINZ, WIESBADEN and HOMBERG. A total of 1106 arrests were made. among them four general officers including the chief of police of WIESBADEN, the former chief of police of HAMBERG, and a former member of the Luftwaffe general staff. Also arrested was party member #325 (whose patience had been rewarded by becoming mayor of THIONVILLE, FRANCE) and a leading Abwehr personality in WIESBADEN. A breakdown is as follows:

Agents and suspects	5	Security arrests	218
War criminals	6	Wehrmacht members in civilian clothes	847
Political internees	30		

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