

HEADQUARTERS 80TH INFANTRY DIVISION
AI-O #80, U. S. Army

G-2 AFTER ACTION REPORT

1 February - 28 February 1945

<u>INDEX</u>	<u>PART</u>
INTRODUCTION	I
THE ATTACK OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE	II
THE PURSUIT TO THE PRUEM RIVER	III
SPECIAL SECTIONS	IV

INTRODUCTION - I

Prior to the attack of the Siegfried Line by the 80th Division in the sector along the Oer and Sauer Rivers from Bettel to Bollendorf, the enemy was believed to have the following capabilities:

- a. To defend along the high ground of the Siegfried defenses with elements of the 352 and 212 Volksgrenadier Divisions.
- b. To delay in successive positions utilizing the Siegfried Line, the high ground East of the Gay River, and towns, crossroads and other critical terrain features.
- c. To counterattack our penetration with a Panzer Division or hastily constructed battle groups from the 9 or 79 Volksgrenadier Divisions.

During the month the enemy made use of all three capabilities. Stubborn resistance from heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire, supported by large caliber artillery and mortar fire, in the Siegfried Line defenses, resulted in fierce pillbox to pillbox fighting. Frequent counterattacks were launched by the enemy in vain efforts to recapture lost positions.

As the breakthrough materialized, the enemy switched his strategy to one of delay in successive positions. Finally when the extent of our breakthrough had been realized the 2d Panzer Division was committed against the 80th Division, only to be badly mauled and beaten.

The vaunted Siegfried Line was completely overrun in the 80th Division zone during a two week period and 4095 prisoners of war were processed during the month.

II - THE ATTACK OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE

(1 - 20 February 1945)

On 1 February 1945, the 80th Infantry Division was holding the central portion of the XII US Corps zone. The enemy front lines ran generally along

the East bank of the OUR and SAUER rivers from BETTEL to BOLINDORF, which was the German border and SIEGFRIED LINE. Enemy pockets existed West of the rivers in the vicinity of BETTEL, AMMLDINGEN and HOESDORF.

Facing the 80th Division were elements of two Volksgrenadier Divisions - 352 and 212. These two were the first of several divisions to be encountered during the month. The enemy was manning the pillboxes on the high ground overlooking our positions, and remained alert in his outposts of the SIEGFRIED LINE. The situation remained generally quiet with light artillery and mortar fire being received in the division zone on 1-2 February.

On 3 February a limited objective attack before daylight resulted in the seizure of HORS DORF and drove the enemy to the East bank of the OUR River. Enemy artillery fire increased considerably during this attack.

4-6 February the enemy resisted our patrolling of the river line along the entire front. Heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire was received in the division zone.

"D" Day "H" Hour for the 80th Division and the SIEGFRIED LINE came at 0300 hours 7 February. Our initial assault waves took the enemy completely by surprise, met only light small arms and machine gun fire, except at HOESDORF, which received heavy concentrations of artillery all through the night and day. As the enemy became aware of our crossing sites in the vicinity of WALLENDORF and DILLINGER, concentrations of mortar, nebelwerfer and artillery increased in intensity and continued throughout the day. Resistance on our troops attacking the SIEGFRIED LINE was intense, consisting of small arms, machine gun, mortar and artillery fire. The enemy attempted several counterattacks on our bridgeheads, all of which were repulsed. Little resistance was met in clearing BETTEL in the North portion of the 80th Division zone West of OUR River but the town was found heavily mined and booby trapped.

8 February, heavy concentrations of artillery fire were received on our bridge sites throughout the day. Our attacking forces East of the OUR met fierce small arms and machine gun fire.

9 February we received indications of the enemy's reinforcement of his SIEGFRIED LINE positions by the identification of the 316 Volksgrenadier Regt of the 212 VG Division opposing our DILLINGEN bridgehead. Machine gun fire on this bridgehead slackened during the day but continued on the WALLENDORF crossing site.

10 February, strong resistance continued to oppose our driving forces. Heavy artillery and nebelwerfer fire was received on both the 80th Division bridgeheads. Prisoners captured during the day identified the 36 BGR of the 9 VG Division and from interrogation, it was learned that still another division, the 560 VG Div was in position on the right (South) flank of the division.

11 February, our bridgeheads, expanding deeper into the Siegfried Line defenses, met severe small arms and machine gun fire from pillboxes and dug-in positions. Hiesdorf was cleared of enemy. Approximately 200 prisoners were captured during the day from the 1126 and 1129 VG Regts of the 560 VG Division, and from the 57 and 116 VG Regts of the 9 VG Division. Confronting the

80th Division now were elements of four Volksgrenadier divisions, the 9, 212, 352, and 560, fighting desperately against the penetrating advances of 80th division infantry and tanks.

During the period from 12 - 15 February, our two bridgeheads merged into one while bitter fighting continued from pillbox to pillbox. Amreldingen was cleared of enemy. Numerous counterattacks were launched against our forward elements. Many pillboxes were seized as the enemy was forced to withdraw to another strong defensive position on the East to West ridge South of Cruchten. Heavy resistance continued from Southwest Niederscegen. At night the enemy remained alert to our patrols and brought down machine gun, artillery and mortar fire on any movement observed. Heavy artillery concentrations continued on all sectors of our bridgehead.

On 16 February the first of a long line of combat teams bearing the names of the commanding officer was encountered in the person of CT Koenig. This Kampfgruppe was composed of remnants of the 1st Bn, 915 VG Regt, 352 Repl Bn, 915 Engr Plat, as well as remnants of the 1st Bn, 316 VG Regt and stragglers from the 1130 VG Regt. The entire force's strength was estimated at between 200 and 220 men, and armor consisting of 7-8 assault guns.

Rohrbach, Cruchten and Stockigt were cleared of enemy 17-18 February against stiff resistance. The enemy made extensive use of the new Hetzer (reversible tread) self-propelled anti-tank guns. Artillery and mortar fire were heavy on forward and rear areas.

19-20 February, heavy resistance was met in Nusbaum and Freilingen, both of which were cleared of enemy by the end of the day. The enemy continued heavy fire from the high ground vicinity Freilingen with small arms, mortars and anti-tank guns. Fierce resistance was met in Niederscegen and surrounding pillboxes but the town was cleared by nightfall.

Resistance in towns resulted in house to house fighting with small arms and automatic weapons. Enemy tank activity was observed in the draw SE of Mettenborf, in Huttingen and in Lahr. Enzen, Seinerich and Obenscegen were cleared and by nightfall our troops were mopping up in Korperich and attacking West towards Roth.

III - THE PURSUIT TO THE PRUEM RIVER

(20-28 February 1945)

With the breakthrough of the Siegfried Line, the pursuit of the German forces to the East had commenced. During the period 20-28 February large quantities of enemy material were captured including 31 tanks, 6 88mm guns, 11 assault guns, 10 75mm guns, 4 120mm mortars and 1 150mm gun. The enemy fought a stubborn delaying action, resisting vainly in towns and at key terrain features but his badly mauled forces were unable to halt the 80th Div. Desperately the enemy threw the 2d Pz Division, recently arrived in the XII Corps zone from commitment in the Pruem area, against our advancing forces.

A counterattack, launched Northwest of Mettendorf with armor and infantry was repulsed. Fierce fighting continued with small arms and automatic weapons, supported by tanks and assault guns, used both as a moving defense

and as dug-in strong points. Enemy rear guard elements attempted to defend road blocks and strategic high ground until forced to surrender or abandon positions.

The enemy appeared disorganized by our attack and made efforts to withdraw to the East of the Kyll River to establish a defensive line. Resistance during the last 3 days of February deteriorated to small arms and sniper fire isolated towns and woods, with light harassing mortar and artillery fire on forward elements.

At the close of the month, the enemy had been forced to the East bank of the Prum River from Mael to Hamm, thence to the North of a line running through Hamm - Niederweiler - Liessem.

IV - SPECIAL SECTIONS

IPW Teams Nos 75 & 76

O/C IPW Team 75 - Captain Paul Loeser

O/C IPW Team 76 - Lt Theodore E. Gutman

During this month a most conspicuous change has taken place in the type as well as the caliber of prisoners taken by the division. While they were still sitting in the fortified positions of the Westwall, the situation was that of a do-or-die last stand; no enemy was to penetrate upon the "holy soil" of Germany. There were stragglers and deserters but their number was small.

The speed with which the Westwall was breached in spite of the frantic efforts to hold the positions, and the consistently dwindling strength of the units, in spite of the arrival of replacements, seems to have convinced the majority of the rank and file, and even many of the officers, that the High Command was no longer capable of stemming the inevitable disaster. It is for that reason that hundreds of men have deliberately stayed behind to be captured rather than to continue staking their lives for a hopeless cause. To quote a German Officer: "It is better to have an end to this horror, than horror without end."

Order of Battle Team #34

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

Aside from the usual reports, the following subjects were written up by this Team and used as Annexes for the Division G-2 Periodic Reports during February:

- a. Volkswrfer Brigades.
- b. The German Administrative Division.
- c. The German Infantry Division "1945".

Of particular interest was the proper evaluation of a captured map which gave the exact location, number and pattern of an enemy minefield in the vicinity of Rommersburg and Anneldingen. A captured map also led to the discovery of quarries which were used by the Engineers for road construction.

Special services were furnished to the Division Signal Officer in regard to operation radios on captured German tanks and assault guns.

XII TEAM #444-G

O/C Team - 1st Lt Enrich Denzer

The primary mission given to this team during the month consisted of obtaining from civilian sources all possible enemy information much as unit identifications, strength, artillery positions, supply lines and other installations.

In addition, the team had the mission of securing detailed information on roads and rivers in the zone of advance of the division. This information was to include physical condition, width and possible road blocks. A river study was to be made determining construction, condition of bridges, depth of water, fordable places for military traffic, condition of river beds and other important factors.

Team succeeded in obtaining most of this information from various government departments and also from civilians remaining in the division area during our advance.

Located were approximately 150-175 pillboxes in the SIEGFRIED LINE which had not been overprinted on the latest maps. In many cases detailed information was gathered on these fortifications such as construction, camouflage and armament. Also located were numerous tank traps and road blocks of all sorts. A detailed study was made in the area ECHTERNACH, VLAEDEN, NEUERBERG, KYLLBURG and BITBURG.

The following rivers were studied and much information gathered about them: OUR, SURE, ENZ, PRUM, GAY, GEICHLINGEN, MIMS, NUTZEN and KYLL. Overlays and sketches were submitted to facilitate evaluation of the information given.

From civilians strategical and tactical information was obtained regarding the enemy's strength, positions, ammunition dumps and V-2 launching sites.

Public Relations Section

O/C Section - 1st Lt Bernard Didinsky

In addition to routine releases the Division Public Relations Office prepared 8 radio programs.

Routine duties included the release of 45 human interest stories, 1298 decorations and 78 citations submitted to appropriate agencies.

PI Team #69

O/C Team - Capt Michael E. Derbin

During the month the PI Team made available much information concerning the SIEGFRIED LINE in the division sector.

Mosaics were made covering the entire front. This made it possible for each infantry battalion to have a complete picture of the division front. However, the photos initially distributed were taken when there was snow

on the ground and as soon as the snow melted 14 more sets of pictures were procured and distributed.

Town plans and a consolidated report of PI and MII information were made by the team. Every photo going to lower units was annotated with either coordinates or the names of the towns on the photo. The annotation of each photo made them more easily oriented with a map or terrain itself.

For the Engineers, river studies were made of the SAUER, OUR, NINE and KYLL Rivers and Gay Brook. On these studies, crossing sites, roads and approaches were indicated.

A visit to the 317th Infantry Regiment to aid the reconnaissance unit in making the most use of photos.

During this period several new sorties were interpreted, reported and annotated on the maps.

After the cracking of the SIEGFRIED LINE overlays of the PRUM and KYLL River defenses were made.

CIC Detachment

O/C Det - Capt Thomas R. McMillen

The month of February was comparatively quiet from a counterintelligence viewpoint. In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which had previously been combed by several CIC Detachments, only one suspected enemy agent and a few security threats were evacuated. No new complaints appeared as the result of the December breakthrough, indicating that pre-Germans had been effectively eliminated before the Wehrmacht's return. Upon entering Germany during this period, the Detachment initiated a second mission which will assume increasing importance: The destruction of the National Socialist Party and the apprehension of those responsible for the activities.

RICHARD R. FLEISHER
Lt. Colonel, G.S.C.
AC of S, G-2.