

NARRATIVE HISTORY
OF
THE SEVENTIETH DIVISION
FEBRUARY

As February opened, Task Force Herrea was immediately concerned with consolidating and improving its defensive positions on the hills and ridges extending generally along the line Emmersweiler-Le Weisberg, then north of Gaubiving-Bousbach-Le Kasberg-Le Lochberg-Le Shafberg-Bois de Grosbliederstroff-to Welferding on the Saar River.

The high ground in this region, unlike the dense forests of the Vosges Mountains, is unevenly wooded, dominating wide, uncovered draws. A network of roads follows the valley floor, connecting the many towns and villages, along its route, with the industrial and mining centers of Forbach, Stiring-Wendel, and Saarbrucken, southern gateway to the vital Saar Basin.

Despite the enemy's strong protective positions, he

remained on the defensive. This lack of activity gave the two regiments in defensive positions--the 275th and 276th--an opportunity for reorganization and further training. Shortcomings noted during the Philippsbourg-Wingen action were discussed and measures taken for their correction. Numerous patrols were sent out, for the purpose of probing enemy positions and capturing prisoners.

Friendly units on the flanks continued unchanged. The 106th Cavalry Group was on the left; the 44th Division (with elements of the 63rd Division attached) were in position on our right flank. The 274th Regiment, meanwhile, was relieved of its attachment to the 45th Division and ordered into 100th Division reserve.

When the 70th Division's commander, Major General Allison J. Barnett, arrived with his staff at St. Jean Rohrbach on 3 February, Task Force Herren was dissolved by Seventh Army letter and absorbed in the Trailblazer Division. Within the next few following days the remaining component parts of the division closed in to their respective assembly areas.

Division Artillery, under Brigadier General Peter P. Rhodes, completed occupation of its area by 7 February. 725th FA Battalion, under Lt. Col. Norman A. Anderson, closed into

position by 6 February near Henriville. OPs were occupied by morning of the next day and "A" Battery of the 725th fired the first round of 70th Division artillery at 1140, 7 February, 1945. Lt. Col. John S. Zimmerman ordered the 884th FA Battalion into its positions in the vicinity of Thedingen, France on 7 February, reinforcing the 93rd Armored FA Battalion and relieving it the next day. Throughout the remainder of the month, the 884th FA Battalion supported the 276th Infantry. The 883rd FA Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas H. Vaden, closed into Metzling also on 7 February and for the rest of the month supported the 275th Infantry. Lt. Col. E. F. Arnbrecht ordered the 882nd FA Battalion into Diebling, France 7 February, where it supported the 274th Infantry.

By 7 February 1945 the 370th Medical Battalion, under command of Lt. Col. Andrew J. Balke, closed in Morhange, France, relieving medical units which had been in support of Task Force Herren and, more recently, the division. By mid-month, the Clearing Company and Headquarters moved into a new site at St. Avoird, accompanied by the 3d Platoon of the 10th Field Hospital. On 28 February, Major James H. Campbell relieved Lt. Col. Balke as Medical Battalion commander.

The 270th Engineer Combat Battalion, commanded by

Major David M. Matheson, closed on 6 February at Lixing Lee St. Avold. Two days later it had relieved the 2755 Engineer Battalion. Its duties included maintaining barrier guards, road maintenance and giving routine support to the infantry regiments. Company "A" supported the 274th Infantry; Company "B", the 275th Infantry; Company "C", the 276th Infantry. Roads were rechecked, mine fields were cleared, AT ditches bridged, and bulldozers filled craters and removed abatis.

The 70th Reconnaissance Troop, commanded by Captain John D. Beaver, closed in Freyming, 7 February, 1945. It started patrolling two days later.

The 570th Signal Company, commanded by Captain Myron M. Leszynski, closed in St. Jean Rohrbach 6 February, a day later than the 70th Division MP Platoon, commanded by Major Calvin S. Wisman, Provost Marshal. The MPs took over traffic control, organized a straggler line and established a PW Cage at St. Jean de Rohrbach.

The division was not fully assembled since the 274th Infantry had not been relieved of attachment to the 100th Division. Relief was effected on 9 February, and the following day

the 274th, Colonel Samuel G. Conley, commanding, took over the middle zone in the division sector.

Changes were made in adjacent units. The 101st Cavalry Group had relieved the 106th Cavalry Group on the left. The entire 63rd Infantry Division took charge of the sector on the right, only one of its regiments having been in position prior to this time.

Patrolling had been continued in the regiments and a series of well planned combat raids in company strength on enemy held towns and positions began on 6 February. The missions were to capture prisoners and to kill as many of the enemy as possible. The 93rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion, platoons of 4.2 Chemical mortars from the 99th Chemical Battalion, and regimental Cannon Companies were in direct support of these operations.

The objective of the raiding companies from the 2nd Battalion, 276th Infantry was Oeting and its surrounding high ground, roughly in the shape of a horseshoe. The companies advanced at intervals in the early morning. Company "E" and Company "F" seized their objectives south and east against gradually increasing enemy opposition. Stronger resistance from small arms, automatic weapons and artillery fire was met from the hills to the west and northwest but they were finally

occupied by Company "G" and Company "H." By 1100 the "horseshoe" was cleared despite intensified enemy concentrations of artillery and mortar fire.

The reinforced strength of the enemy in Oeting made a frontal assault unfeasible until the enemy artillery was neutralized. For the rest of the day positions were held while our artillery attempted to reduce the enemy artillery with counterbattery fire. The terrain made contact difficult to maintain between companies on the horseshoe. Efforts to establish lateral contact were hazardous as the enemy fired a steady concentration of artillery and mortars in these gaps. Throughout the night enemy patrols were aggressive on the flanks and next morning enemy infantry attacked. This attack and subsequent attacks supported by German tanks were beaten off. At nightfall, after successfully covering their withdrawal, our units returned to their OPLR.

At the same time, independent raids on Lixing, Brandenbusch Woods and Grossbliederstroff were carried out by elements of the 275th Infantry. Company "I" entered Lixing against firm opposition as strong points on the high ground adjacent to the village were reduced by platoons from Company "A" and Company "B". The raid in Brandenbusch Woods by Company "K" brought on

heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire. Enemy infantry attacked from all sides in an attempt to encircle and isolate this unit, but well directed artillery fire thwarted the enemy's efforts. Grossbliederstroff was penetrated by Company "G." Enemy cross fire from Kleinsblittersdorf, on the other side of the Saar, prevented complete occupation of the town. Under cover of darkness all raiding companies of the 275th withdrew to original positions.

The company strength raids of 6 and 7 February had inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy, "K" Company, 275th, alone accounting for forty-six. Fifty-three prisoners were taken. Our casualties were 11 killed, 78 wounded and 9 missing in action.

The problem of training reinforcements was given more attention at this time. Prior to the publication of Training Memorandum # 1, new men were assigned and at once worked with those who had been in the line since the closing week of December. An influx of approximately 2000 reinforcements with but a minimum of infantry experience, namely men from artillery, anti-aircraft, quartermaster, ordnance and other service units created an urgency for further training. Training Memorandum # 2 issued on 11 February, elaborated the previous memorandum, and made provisions for further training of the new men.

The intensive four day schedule included basic weapons, map reading and use of compass, minor tactics and field work. The objectives were to correct observed combat deficiencies and to develop aggressive combat attitudes. To insure team-work in battle, SOPs were developed for squad and platoon in any combat situation. Each day's program worked toward furthering the integration of the reinforcement in his squad and platoon. In the last two days tanks were used in the field problems.

During this time, division headquarters, on XV Corps directive, had prepared plans for an attack to the west and north in its zone, which were submitted and approved. On 15 February Field Order # 1, and Operations Instruction # 2 and # 3 were published and distribution made to the units. The 63rd and 100th Divisions on our right jumped off on Corps D day.

D plus 2 was the time set for the 70th's attack, at which time the division would advance in conjunction with the 63rd on its right and 101st Cavalry Group on the left. Its mission was to seize the high ground on a general line Babingen, west of Shoenbach, Stiring-Wendel, Schoeneck, Clarenthal inclusive, and initially, west to Wehrden, inclusive, until relieved on line Wehrden-Clarenthal by 101st Cavalry Group.

The mission, in general, called for the capture of the heights along the south bank of the Saar River opposite Saar-

brucken and extending above and below that city.

In compliance with warning orders, the infantry regiments prepared attack plans and quickly moved component units into place. The 276th Infantry CP moved to Diebling, 274th Infantry CP to Bousbach, and 275th Infantry CP to Nousewiler. Supporting artillery battalions reinforced by corps artillery displaced nearer to the front lines, and fired forty-one missions. Elements of the 749th Tank Battalion (- Company "A") were attached to each regiment. Platoons from the 99th Chemical Battalion dug positions for their 4.2 mortars. The 648th TD Battalion (towed) was in readiness at St. Avoild.

The regimental plans conformed with division orders. The 276th directed its attack initially toward Le Fahrberg-Hills and Oeting, then Le Kleinwald and Forbach Forest, then through Forbach and on to its portion of division objective.

The plan of the 274th Infantry, the central regiment, was to seize and occupy Wingertsknopf and Le Kreutzberg Ridge, then to continue to Stiring-Wendel and Le Forbachberg Ridge, and finally to the high ground south of the Saar River.

The 275th Infantry, by virtue of the terrain in its zone, was ordered to assist the movement of the 274th Infantry

by flanking fire and to advance on its own objectives which were Lixing, Grossbliederstroff, the woods and the high ground Le Hardtwald-Le Brandenbusch, Bois Emerich. It was to continue its advance through the towns Hesseling, Alsting, Etsling, Spicheren, and finally Bois de St. Arnual, Le Pfaffenwald, to Le Gifertwald and Spicheren Heights. The 63rd Division, across the Saar River, was coordinated to move on line in order to maintain flank protection for the 275th.

Originally, the direction of advance of the 275th Infantry was northward, and then, following the terrain, it veered to the northwest and, finally, northward again. Generally, the 276th and 274th were to move northward until the final objective was achieved, and the line straightened, before the Saar.

The continuous patrolling on the breadth of the sector materially assisted in the discovery and identification of enemy units and positions, and the experience gained was reflected in the action which followed. The enemy had constructed multiple belts of entrenchments and bunkers, wide anti-tank ditches, and obstacles extending along the southern and southeastern slopes of the ridge system from Le Kleinwald, south of Forbach, to Le Pfaffenwald, north of Alsting. Secondary lines of entrenchments extended from Kerbach to Lixing, and along the Saar River from Rouhling through Kleinsblittersdorf to Saarbrücken. These

permanent fortifications were a formidable barrier serving as outposts for the Siegfried defenses.

Elements of the enemy 880th Infantry, 347th Division, the 59th VGR, Battalion "Klein" and miscellaneous units were located in the sector. The 74th VGR, 19th VGD, 47th Engineer Battalion were in immediate reserve. During this period considerable vehicular movement was heard in the vicinity of Forbach, Kerbach, Behren, and Petite Rosselle.

Early on 17 February the 276th Infantry jumped off with two Battalions abreast, the 3rd Battalion on the left and 1st Battalion right --the 2nd Battalion in division reserve. Without undue trouble, the 3rd Battalion overran the enemy on Kelsberg Hill, as the 1st Battalion moved on Fahrberg Hill after a sharp fire fight. Company "B" was ordered into Oeting, but had scarcely entered the town when it was held down by intense fire. Company "C", on the east of Oeting, progressed slowly as the enemy, firing from an anti-tank ditch, resisted stubbornly.

Within Oeting, four self propelled 88 mm guns opened fire upon Company "B" and forced its withdrawal southward. By nightfall, however, the 276th was digging in on its initial objective. Contact between units was excellent. Casualties thus far resulted from anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. It was the latter which had prevented tanks and AT guns from providing the necessary support to clear the town, and forced a delay. Patrols were active

during the night.

The 274th Infantry crossed the LD at 0430, 2nd and 3rd Battalions on assault position east of the Etzling-Behren Road; 1st Battalion in reserve. The initial attack was upon Kerbach and Le Wingertaknopf, and advanced rapidly despite small arms resistance and mines. Kerbach was entered safely but further movement slowed down as the enemy counterattacked with tanks from Etzling and Behren. Enemy attacks were broken up by our artillery which scored direct hits upon enemy personnel and tanks. By 1620 Kerbach was cleared but it was shelled intermittently by the enemy during the night. Night patrols reported concentrations of tanks and reinforcements in Etzling and Spicheren. Among the one hundred prisoners captured was a Battalion Commander and a company grade officer.

The 275th Infantry, three Battalions abreast--1st, 3rd, 2nd from left to right--crossed the LD at 0125. The initial objectives were seized after several strongpoints had been reduced. The 1st Battalion cleared the high ground before Lixing and entered Le Hardtwald; the 3rd Battalion forced its way into Brandenbusch Woods against strong small arms and automatic weapons fire; the 2nd Battalion, on the Division right flank over-ran Oberst-Ohligmuhl, turned sharply to the right and advanced to the southeastern corner of Brandenbusch Woods, from which place it planned to attack Grossbliederstroff. In the

afternoon enemy artillery began firing into this sector and concentrated upon the high ground before Lixing. During the night the road into Grossbliederstroff was swept of mines.

Fog and rain hampered the operations. Visibility was poor. The muddy roads and fields limited communications. The greasy, plastic mud in the open ground proved a hazard to supporting tanks, and several were bogged down and abandoned when an attempt was made to move cross-country.

The concentration of enemy strength before the 274th Infantry was quickly recognized. OI # 4 directed the adjacent units to coordinate and support the 274th in its movement toward Kreuzberg Ridge. It was apparent that the enemy's main defense efforts were to be centered before Forbach, Spicheren, and Stiring-Wendel.

The enemy's disposition became increasingly evident as the attack by the 276th Infantry was resumed on 18 February. After Company "B" and Company "L" had reduced a strong bunker before Oeting, the town was easily cleared. Pivoting toward the northwest, the 3rd Battalion moved on the first hill in the Kleinwald as the 1st Battalion, in contact with 274th, followed. By nightfall two of the three hills of Kleinwald forest had been occupied.

While "I" and "L" Companies were fighting their way up the southeast hill at dusk, Company "A" and Company "C", digging in on the northeastern prominence overlooking Forbach, received heavy concentrations of artillery, particularly 88s. The 276th had unhinged the enemy's right flank of the Le Kleinwald-Le Kreutzberg Ridge line.

The attacking battalions of the 274th Infantry moved out from Le Wingertsknopf in the early morning and were very quickly engaged by small enemy groups as they crossed the Etzling-Behren Road. After a sharp fire fight had scattered the enemy, the battalions moved into the heavy forest of Le Kreutzberg Ridge. The 2nd Battalion, on the regimental right flank, and particularly Company "E" was hit hard by tanks and artillery. The pressure was maintained throughout the day, and Company "C" was dispatched to aid Company "E."

Enemy tanks from Etzling and north of Kerbach repeatedly worked along the road and threatened this flank during the day. The threat was lifted somewhat when the 3rd Battalion, 275th broke through Emerich Woods and placed Etzling under direct fire.

The rugged terrain, covered by stretches of underbrush, was ideal territory for ambush. Time and again enemy patrols, armed with automatic weapons, were encountered and driven back.

The attack of 274th was halted in the late afternoon to re-establish contact between units, which had been separated during the skirmishes. Seized entrenchments were occupied only a short distance from those still held by the enemy. Throughout the night sporadic fire fights between patrols kept the men vigilant.

Although the weight of the enemy centered upon the 274th, enough of it remained in various areas of the 275th sector to prevent an even over-all progress until late in the day.

In the haze of morning Company "A", with tanks attached, penetrated Lixing and systematically worked the town, house by house, until it was cleared. The rest of the 1st Battalion advanced cautiously against sniper fire through Schu mines and "bouncing Bettys" in the Harätwald Woods. Resistance soon developed and intensified, however, when contact was made with a strong enemy force. A counterattack with tanks on the road toward Lixing was repulsed and, shortly thereafter, the enemy gave way. Harätwald Woods were "mopped up" at noon by Companies "B" and "C."

The 3rd Battalion, previously mentioned, had reached the Emerich Woods on the hill, east of Etsling at 1240. Patrols were sent forward to reconnoiter from the northwest and east of

the town. A Company "L" patrol ran into automatic weapons but avoided combat and turned several hundred yards west from which point they observed the enemy. A Company "I" patrol followed the right side of the road into Etzlin and surprised an enemy OP directing artillery fire upon the 274th. The patrol promptly killed three and wounded one before returning. At 1430, the 3rd Battalion - Company "L" on the left, Company "I" on the right - attacked and cleaned up the town within an hour, capturing the entire enemy force in Etzling. Outposts were hurriedly dispatched to dig in on the rising ground of Le Pfaffenberg Hill.

Spearheaded by Company "G", the 2nd Battalion made a strong thrust into Grossbliederstroff from Brandenbusch Woods. By mid-morning two-thirds of the town was under our control. Enemy artillery and mortar fire from across the river hindered but did not halt the assault on a stubbornly held strong point in the northern end of the town. After a sharp fire fight this point was reduced.

In the evening the 275th had consolidated its defenses for the night. The area north and northeast of captured objectives was aggressively patrolled and contact with the enemy was maintained throughout the night.

The stubborn situation in the middle zone of the attack did not escape the attention of the higher command. Enemy reinforcements of men and supporting weapons near Spicheren, Forbach, and Stiring-Wendel, and his increasing aggressiveness were noted in OI # 5 which alerted the command for possible counterattacks in strength between the 274th Infantry and the 275th Infantry. The 276th Infantry and 274th Infantry were directed to exploit fully their gains and to continue the attack. The 275th Infantry was ordered to consolidate its gains and send patrols forward. Division artillery was to furnish direct support to the 274th Infantry and 275th Infantry.

In the morning of 19 February, 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry moved north with Company "C" protecting the right flank of the regiment. The 3rd Battalion, with Company "F", remained in position on Le Kreuzberg Ridge to assist the attacking companies by fire; elements of the 1st Battalion occupied positions in the rear to provide defense in depth.

Delaying tactics of the enemy continually harassed and slowed down the advancing 2nd Battalion until these groups, armed with automatic weapons, were driven off.

Upon reaching the fire break, which intersected the woods along the slope of the hill up to the ridge, two patrols were dispatched ahead to reconnoiter. One was engaged by heavy

fire and immobilized; the other having swung south, proceeded several hundred yards safely, and returned. Immediately two companies advanced across the fire break to effect relief for the hard pressed platoon. The position of our troops, devoid of concealment, became untenable as the enemy on the high ground of Le Pfaffenberg Hill, looking down upon our right flank, covered the area with concentrations of mortar fire. A withdrawal to terrain affording protection was necessitated. A perimeter defense, on both sides of the fire break, roughly in a wide arc, was established on the more wooded southern nose of the Ridge. During the afternoon German mortar and artillery fire fell throughout the area.

In the 276th sector, meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion-- Company "L" on the right, Company "I" on the left, Company "K" on left rear to protect the regimental flank--developed its attack at 0830 upon the final obstacle of its initial objective: Schlossberg, the highest hill immediately south of Forbach.

The attack, gaining momentum, over-ran small enemy pockets of resistance in the woods up to the approaches of the old German Barracks. A heavy volume of fire from behind the stone wall around the barracks and from within the buildings forced Company "L" to halt. As the company hastily deployed, Company "I", following, by-passed the area and moved toward the

stone castle atop the hill. At early noon Company "I" had encircled the Castle and tested defensive positions at its base. Mortar fire fell upon our troops, but they pressed closer for the assault. At 1510 the Castle was finally taken and cleared.

Some minutes before, elements of Company "L" had thrust into the only door of the wall around the Barracks and quickly took it under control, as the remainder of the unit reorganized to clear the steep forward slope of the hill into Forbach. Company "I" re-established contact and covered the downhill movement with fire. The movement was halted abruptly as the enemy opened up a withering fire from buildings in the town. Company "L" was forced to withdraw to the security of the high ground and organized a defensive line. The entire area was subjected to heavy enemy artillery fire until dusk.

The situation became alive with possibilities as a number of facts emerged that afternoon. The line of attacking units had successfully been established on the hills and ridge over-looking Forbach; aerial reconnaissance revealed much traffic out of Forbach; our patrols reported that they had pushed forward without encountering the enemy. All the facts gave impetus to the belief that greater exertion by our troops could exploit the situation. Accordingly verbal attack orders by General Barnett were issued to the units to press forward. Specifically, the

town of Forbach was to be taken by the combined action of the 276th assisted by the 3rd Battalion, 274th while the 3rd Battalion, 275th, attached to 274th was to advance upon Le Pfaffenberg (a continual threat to the operations of the 274th) seize this hill, by-pass Spicheren, and thrust into Le Gifertwald. Supporting aircraft was assigned the mission of bombing and strafing the road into Saarbrucken.

Late in the afternoon the attack upon Forbach began. The 1st Battalion, 276th Infantry with Companies "A" and "C" leading, entered the southeast section of the town in conjunction with elements of the 3rd Battalion, 274th. Two blocks were taken before flanking enemy machine gun fire opened up, followed by a heavy volume of small arms and artillery fire. The 3rd Battalion, 276th (- Company "I") advanced from Schlossberg, and began to work on designated blocks, joining the 1st Battalion in this difficult house to house operation. The attack continued into the night but the intense enemy automatic weapons fire, heavy mortars and artillery, and the inability of our tanks to maneuver effectively in the dark forced our troops to halt.

The 3rd Battalion, 275th was committed as ordered and slowly advanced upon Le Pfaffenberg Hill in the evening. The entrenched enemy did not yield and it was decided to hold the ground gained as it became dark. Immediately the enemy counterattacked Company "I" on the left flank, but the attack was repulsed.

Patrols were directed to reconnoiter Spicheren that night as the remainder of the 275th was alerted in preparation for a morning attack upon Alsting, Hesselung, and Einzing.

Counterattacks by small groups, infiltrating through the gaps between units, harrassed our flanks all night. Three definite efforts were reported and though these actions flared up violently and created some confusion in the darkness, they were repelled as quickly as they occurred. The strongest attempt was made at the Castle, where Company "I", 276th had dug in. There, the enemy had infiltrated in force.

Yelling wildly as the assault began on the hill, the Germans broke through to within yards of the castle. This counterattack was beaten back after Lt. Henry J. Kwiatkowski, forward observer from the 884th FA Battalion, had called for artillery upon his own position. Between twenty and thirty dead Germans were found upon the hillside the next morning.

CI # 6, issued that night, specified that "the 70th Division continues the attack immediately to harass, delay, and destroy the enemy forces immediately confronting it. All units will pursue vigorously by direct pressure, and by inflicting maximum losses when the enemy desires to assume counter-offensive measures."

A fine drizzle and a thick fog persisted the next day, 20 February. The displacement of our artillery was an arduous task in the mire. Tanks were road-bound and the engineers were taxed to the utmost to clear mined routes, fill craters, repair roads and bridge the wide anti-tank ditch. The 70th Recon Troop patrolled the division flanks, particularly on the right as the 63rd Division had been unable to develop its attack sufficiently to bring it abreast of our right flank.

Before the 3rd Battalion, 275th could launch its attack, the enemy counterattacked but good work by our artillery scattered the attempt. Sharp fire fights slowed the advance across the open ground. Sniper fire from the series of enemy entrenchments, in addition to mine fields and barbed wire, harrassed the troops and frustrated the development of a strong drive.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions, however, pushing against light resistance, captured the towns of Alsting, Zinzing, and Hesseling, and fanned out in the woodland north and northeast. This action stretched out the 275th right flank along the Saarbrucken-Strassbourg Road, as the salient expanded. The 70th Recon Troop was ordered to relieve Company "G" at Grossbiederstroff to permit this company to close in the battalion sector. Intermittent artillery fire from across the Saar fell into the 275th zone.

The slow, systematic reduction of Forbach was resumed after a few hours pause. The assaulting troops of the 3rd and 1st Battalions, 276th worked laterally through the town toward the railroad. Meanwhile, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 274th worked their way along Le Kreuzberg Ridge to within a short distance of the Forbach-Saarbrücken road. The regiment had planned to build up its line from northeast of Forbach, where its 3rd Battalion was established, up to and beyond Stiring-Wendel. The right flank, consisting of Company "E" and Company "C", with the remainder of the 1st Battalion in the rear, would deploy, advance up the lower slope of the Ridge and occupy le Sangenwald.

The enemy, with the Stiring-Wendel - Spicheren road still open, hit the 274th Infantry's right flank before the attack was resumed. The first of several counterattacks started at 0645 but was repulsed, as the troops under direct command of Colonel Conley held firm. The flank was quickly reorganized and the battalion pushed ahead until a line of enemy trenches and bunkers was reached. The gap on the right flank, however, exposed as it was during the whole time to tanks and infiltrating enemy patrols, had to be closed before further movement could be made.

After General Barnett and General Herren had conferred with Colonel Conley and Colonel McAleer, 274th and 275th regi-

mental commanders respectively, and the 3rd Battalion, 275th commander, Major Clifford E. Dykes, the middle zone was reorganized and consolidated defensively. Elements of the 3rd Battalion, 274th were shifted on the Ridge. Company "F", 274th blocked the Stiring-Wendel - Spicheren road. Companies "I" and "M", 275th were held in position on Le Pfaffenberg Hill while the remainder of the 3rd Battalion, 275th moved to the high ground east and north of Spicheren. Patrols were directed to reconnoiter Stiring-Wendel, Le Sangenwald, Spicheren, and Le Stitswald.

The operations of 19 and 20 February had netted 151 prisoners.

Although the resistance at Forbach was strong, the enemy was forced back house by house, block by block. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was particularly heavy upon the area yielded. However, it became increasingly apparent that the Germans were determined to hold the high ground from Spicheren Heights to Le Pfaffenwald at all costs. New units, subsequently identified as Alarm Companies, II Battalion, 559th VGD and miscellaneous organizations, were committed on this sector.

Not merely of tactical value to the enemy, Spicheren Heights, it was ascertained, had historic and sentimental significance for the Germans. Upon this ground, hallowed by previous conflicts--1870 and 1940--a small military cemetery was dedicated as a memorial. In keeping with its military symbolism the hill

had been named Soldaten Graber (Soldier's Cemetery) and its defenders had been exhorted to hold it at all costs. Until 27 February the Heights was the scene of bitter fighting.

On the morning of the 21st, the first of several good days of clear, fair weather, the battalions of the 274th and 275th Infantry were moved up. In the presence of the Division Commander and Assistant Division Commander, the attack was renewed. While the 2nd Battalion, 274th advanced against the first line of bunkers, methodically neutralizing many of them, the 1st Battalion, 274th fought its way north and northwest of Spicheren. Simultaneously, 3rd Battalion, 275th Infantry (-Company "I") swung east and north. Farther to the right, the 1st Battalion, 275th pushed forward into Bois de St. Arnual.

The pressure on Spicheren forced the enemy out of the town and it was quickly occupied after a patrol led by 1st Lt. Joseph Donahue, Company "I", 275th had volunteered to test its strength and found it undefended.

The fighting throughout the day was heavy. The Germans struck back aggressively in two tank-paced counterattacks against the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 275th. Company "A" was cut into by the attacking tanks. The company gave some ground to better reorganize. Company "C" closed in promptly and reinforced the 1st Bat-

talion line with the right half of Company "A"; the left half joined the 3rd Battalion, where the second enemy counterattack was in progress. Despite the efforts of the enemy to disorganize our troops, the fine team work of infantry, supporting artillery, tanks and tank destroyers was effective in breaking up these counterattacks.

Concurrently, Company "I", 275th was making headway against the entrenched enemy above Spicheren, as the town itself was being occupied by elements of 1st Battalion, 274th. Though the progress of the company was slow and fell short of its goal at dusk, its efforts gained the praise of the Commanding General, who had personally supervised the operation at one point during the day.

By nightfall, the 275th had regrouped its forces and strengthened its positions in Bois de St. Arnual. The 274th had settled on Le Kreutzberg Ridge and Le Forbachberg, and had established two road blocks, strongly manned, on the Forbach-Saarbrücken highway. The 276th had cleared one third of Forbach in the face of stiffening resistance of the enemy.

Enemy artillery, mortars and nebelwerfers hammered Forbach incessantly during the night, and scattered concentrations along the middle zone. On 21 February, the Division had captured 249 prisoners.

The next day the 275th continued its attack success-

fully, and seized its final objective, Le Pfaffenwald and Bois de St. Arnual. In accordance with instructions in CI # 8, strong defensive positions were prepared along the MLR. Engineer equipment facilitated this preparation. Hasty minefields, concertina and barbed wire entanglements were installed, and overhead protection for the foxholes provided. It was not too soon; in the evening the enemy counterattacked with tanks. A penetration was made by a tank through the 1st Battalion but the enemy was routed when the tank was destroyed by bazooka and anti-tank grenade fire.

The defensive line was restored quickly and patrols were sent laterally to re-establish communications with the 274th on the left.

The counterattacks were repeated daily in an effort to prevent the closing of the gap which existed between the 275th and 274th. However, when the 275th had successfully occupied Le Gifertwald on 23 February, the division right flank was secured. Several days later, the 275th had stabilized its sector, now on German soil, on a line from Le Gifertwald to Bois de St. Arnual.

After the enemy main defense line of pill boxes and bunkers on Le Sangenwald had been taken on 22 February, the 274th met the full fury of the enemy on Spicheren Heights. The grim determination of the Germans not to yield this military shrine forced the 274th to commit its entire forces. A Company "J" was hurriedly organized of headquarters personnel and new reinforcements, and placed on line.

On 26 February the enemy aggressively counterattacked with all the force it could mobilize. A penetration was effected, but the enemy's success was short-lived. The following day the Heights was regained and held as resistance waned. At the month's end, the regiment was in position over-looking Stiring-Wendel. A lateral shifting of companies finally secured the troublesome gap.

The climax of the struggle for Forbach occurred on the night of 21 February and carried on through the following day. During this period the city was subjected to the heaviest shelling of the offensive: over a thousand rounds of many calibers had fallen from 2000 to 2330. A counterattack was made on that day but repulsed and resistance was light thereafter. However, artillery harrassed the troops for the remainder of the month.

At the end of February the 70th Division had successfully concluded the first phase of its attack upon Saarbrucken and the Saar Basin. In the eleven days of its first offensive action as a division, the 70th had penetrated the primary defenses of the enemy before its vaunted Siegfried Line and had established a foothold on German soil proper. The total of prisoners captured was 1824, including twenty officers. Our casualties totaled 1662, among which 207 officers and men were killed and 231 officers and men were missing.

On 28 February the 70th Division came under command of XXI Corps.