

NARRATIVE HISTORY
OF
THE SEVENTIETH DIVISION
March 1945

On the first day of March the 70th Infantry Division occupied positions south of the Saar River and south of Saarbrücken.

The 276th Infantry held positions south of the railroad in Forbach. The 274th Infantry was disposed on the high ground of Le Kreutzberg, Le Sangenwald and Spicheren Heights overlooking Stiring-Wendel. The 275th Infantry occupied the right sector extending from the German Military Cemetery on Spicheren Heights to the Saar River.

The division improved defensive positions while regrouping and reorganizing in preparation for continuing the attack begun on 17 February. Constant aggressive patrolling was maintained.

Enemy units in contact were composed of elements 860 VGR, I and II Battalions, 880 VGR, 861 VGR, 347th VGD; II Battalion, 723d Regt, 719th Infantry Division; II Battalion, 1126 VGR, I and II Battalions, 1127 VGR, 559th VGD; 67 Mountain Reconnaissance Battalion, 2d Mountain Division; 2 Company Assault Gun

Battalion, 17 SSPGD and miscellaneous units.

On 2 March the division continued regrouping and reorganizing. The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry was relieved by the 275th Infantry at 2245. Company E, 276th Infantry was detached from 274th Infantry and relieved by Company A, 274th Infantry. Earlier, Company E, 276th Infantry was attacked by strong enemy patrols but these were dispersed. Sporadic enemy small arms, bazooka, mortar and artillery fire harassed the troops throughout the day.

Operations Instructions # 13 was issued to the units. The instructions "orders the 70th Infantry Division to resume the offensive, to seize and secure that part of its assigned objective to the NE of Forbach-Saarbrücken Road."

Specifically the 274th was to "over-run Stiring-Wendel, detaching elements from regimental reserve to clear the enemy from the city. Special attention was to be given to hostile positions covering the Forbach-Stiring-Wendel Road. The order further stated, "Continue the advance and seize that part of Division objective in regimental zone of action. Organize and defend final objective. Mop-up enemy by-passed. Relieve armored units blocking NE approaches of Stiring-Wendel. Have force of not less than one company on Le Kreutzberg Ridge."

The 275th Infantry was ordered "to defend present positions at all costs, paying particular attention to Spicheren Heights.

To assist 274th Infantry and 63d Division by fire upon targets of opportunity or upon other targets as requested by these units."

The 276th Infantry was to "continue the attack within its regimental zone of action. To seize and defend that part of Division final objective within its zone. Initially, to assist the attack of the 274th Infantry by impressive demonstrations in the direction of Stiring-Wendel. To be prepared to turn over to 101st Cavalry Group that portion of its objective W of Clarenthal."

Division artillery was "to support attack. To be prepared to mass its fires on Clarenthal, Krughutte, Schoeneck area." In the Division Artillery Field Order # 6, issued 1800, 2 March the artillery battalions were given their specific missions: "The 882nd was assigned direct support of the 274th Infantry, the 883rd FA Battalion direct support of 275th Infantry, and the 884th FA Battalion direct support of the 276th Infantry. The 725th FA Battalion was given the mission of general support and the additional role of reinforcing the fires of the 882nd FA Battalion. In the attack, the Division Artillery was to have its fire power augmented by the reinforcing fires of the 493rd, 494th and 495th AFA Battalions."

The units attached to the division at this time consisted of the 648th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed), the 433rd AAA AW Battalion (Mobile), the 749th Tank Battalion (less Company A) and the 99th Chemical Battalion (4.2 mortar) (less Com-

pany A).

During the morning of 3 March, the attack was renewed by the 276th and 274th Infantry in conjunction with the 63d Division. The 275th Infantry assisted both the 274th Infantry and 253d Infantry, 63d Division, by fire. The day was cloudy with occasional snow flurries. Visibility was poor. This inclement weather persisted through the following week.

The 276th Infantry, 1st Battalion on right, 3d Battalion on left, 2nd Battalion in reserve at Oeting, attacked and reached to the railroad track northwest of Forbach at 0817.

The assault elements consisted of Companies I, K, A, C, and an attached French Company from the Lorraine Division. The attack progressed generally along the roads leading out of Forbach to the west, northwest and north. An underpass in the railroad on the Imbruch-Forbach road was to be utilized as an avenue of approach for our troops and supporting tanks. Beyond the railroad, houses lined the highway for a short distance. The terrain in the immediate area was open and exposed to the high ground held by the enemy.

The enemy offered little resistance until the attack reached the railroad and the underpass. The leading elements of Company K successfully breached the mine field in the underpass but were immediately immobilized by automatic weapons fire from

the houses along the road. Enemy artillery simultaneously fired interdicting fire on the road. Company A, in the immediate rear of Company K, was forced to halt and take cover. Tanks were unable to give direct fire support until the minefield was cleared. The attack of the two companies was momentarily halted while an anti-tank mine platoon, working under fire, cleared the underpass.

Meanwhile Company I, on the left, moved laterally along the railroad track, crossed it, and engaged the enemy on the Marienau road. Company C and the French Company occupied several buildings shortly after jumping off, but were engaged in a sharp fire fight with the enemy who was defending stubbornly from cellars and the Nord Caserne. Enemy artillery and mortar fire increased markedly throughout the 276th area, particularly in Forbach.

Supporting artillery augmented by fire from tanks and tank destroyers, although unable to silence the enemy batteries, reduced the enemy resistance in the buildings holding up the troops. Several tanks were lost to mines as they emerged from the underpass. They were effective, however, in supporting the assault upon the enemy strong points.

At dusk the attack had carried beyond the tracks. The 1st Battalion was located in the open area, short of the Nord Caserne. Elements of the 3rd Battalion were near Marienau, along the Marienau road.

The 2nd Battalion, 276th had entered Forbach in the interim and taken positions in the town. Elements of the 12th Armored Division, blocking on the Forbach-Stiring-Wendel road, were heavily shelled, and late that night were attacked by infiltrating enemy patrols. Company B, in 1st Battalion, 276th reserve, cleared the enemy patrols from the area.

The 274th Infantry, three battalions abreast--3rd Battalion, 2nd Battalion, 1st Battalion, left to right--initiated its attack at 0825 from Le Kreuzberg and Le Sangenwald. A ten minute artillery preparation preceded the advance. The regiment moved forward against moderate resistance, except in the 2nd Battalion zone into which the enemy fired heavy concentrations of mortars and artillery. The woods on the approaches into Stiring-Wendel were cleared after bunkers and entrenchments had been taken. In open areas, on roads and trails, however, the enemy defended stubbornly with automatic weapons. Well-placed minefields generally slowed the advance.

In the late afternoon elements of the 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry were fighting in the streets of Stiring-Wendel; the 3rd Battalion had captured Souphia, a portion of Neu Glashutte, and a block of buildings in Stiring-Wendel; and the 1st Battalion was astride the Metz Highway in the vicinity of Habsterdick.

The attacks of the 274th Infantry on its left and the 253rd Infantry on its right were supported by the organic weapons of the 275th Infantry. Additional 50 caliber machine guns had been emplaced for this operation.

During the night the attacking regiments reorganized for a continuation of the attack the next morning. The 276th Infantry moved the 2nd Battalion into position on the regimental right flank for the morning operation against Forêt de Forbach. Elements of the 3rd Battalion secured their line along the road and high ground east of Marienau. The 1st Battalion (-) was 100 yards beyond the railroad track, on the open ground. The 274th Infantry was generally disposed south of the Metz Highway.

At 0900 the attack was resumed by the 276th Infantry. Enemy resistance was heavy, particularly in the sector confronting Companies K and A. The attack of the 2nd Battalion carried into the forest, although harassed by fire from the Simon Mine on its right flank. A counter-attack upon Company F was repulsed. Strong points in reinforced cellars held up the center until corps artillery (240 mms) reduced them. This action permitted Company K and A with attached tanks to press forward short of the Nord Caserne. On the left the elements of the 3rd Battalion occupied Marienau.

The three battalions of the 274th Infantry jumped off at 0630. The 1st Battalion encountered mine belts and pillboxes

as they joined in the house to house fighting on the eastern outskirts of Stiring-Wendel. The 2nd Battalion, pushing into the center of the town, progressed against continuous heavy fire of small arms, mortars, and artillery. The 3d Battalion, occupied Neu Glashutte and moved on the western sections of Stiring-Wendel.

Rotating and elevating pillboxes, and bunkers, surrounded by belts of mines, were centers of heavy fighting in the 274th Infantry zone. Enemy artillery and mortars from the direction of the Simon Mine and Schoeneck harassed the operation during the period. Counterbattery fire by friendly artillery did not effectively silence the enemy artillery. Air missions were requested but the persistent low ceiling limited the use of planes.

The following morning the 1st Battalion, 276th Infantry led the attack of the regiment. The objective was the Nord Caserne. Resistance was light and, after clearing the buildings, the battalion continued into the Forêt de Forbach. Several hundred civilians were found in bunkers north of the Caserne where they had taken refuge from artillery and bombing. With the capture of this German barracks, Forbach was completely occupied.

The 3rd Battalion made its way along the Forbach-Petite Rosselle road into Imbruch against scattered small arms

fire and, turning sharply westward, thrust deeply into the woods of the Bois de la Reserve. By 1800 this area was mopped up.

The 2nd Battalion made steady progress in the southeast section of forest de Forbach but was stopped by heavy fire from the enemy defending from a railroad track. The single track, a spur from the Simon Mine, ran on an embankment 20 feet high, in front of which a wide, deep ditch had been dug. Strong points were located in and along this embankment. Friendly tanks were restricted in their maneuvering by mines and an anti-tank ditch covered by fire. Company B was attached to the 2nd Battalion to provide more fire power but was of little avail. Frontal attack was considered too costly. The battalion withdrew to more advantageous positions and established defenses for the night.

Bitter house to house fighting continued in Stiring-Wendel. During the day the enemy fired repeated heavy mortar and artillery concentrations. Nebelwerfers and bazookas were also used against the troops of the 274th Infantry.

The 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry mopped up pockets of resistance in the city, south of the railroad. At 0800 several hundred Allied prisoners of war made their way into the city after breaking out of the PW hospital, north of the city. An enemy machine gun opened fire on these men, wounding several, as they came down the Metz highway. The 2nd Battalion returned this fire,

and later captured the PW hospital. A total of 951 Allied prisoners of war, predominately Russian, but including Poles, French, Czechs and Yugoslavs were liberated. Most of the men were crippled or diseased; all were suffering from malnutrition. For most of the day the 2nd Battalion was busy feeding and evacuating the Allied soldiers, among the first Allied troops to be liberated by the Seventh Army troops south of the German border.

The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry, meanwhile, stood fast and sent out reconnaissance patrols from its positions along the Metz Highway. The 3rd Battalion cleared its area of Neu Glashutte to the railroad against stiff opposition. The Simon mine across the railroad was a formidable obstacle in the path of the 3rd Battalion.

During the night reorganization on the line was effected. The 3d Battalion, 276th was to be relieved by the 165th Engs (C) Battalion (attached to the 101st Cavalry Group) in Bois de la Reserve, and was to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of the Caserne. Elements of the 70th Rec Troop relieved a platoon of Company G, 276th Infantry on position and patrolled between Emmersweiler and Le Weisberg. Elements of the 270th Engineer Battalion cleared roads and minefields.

Early on 6 March the enemy became active against the 276th Infantry flanks. Infiltrating patrols engaged troops of the 2nd Battalion. At 0520 Company F was attacked and cut off.

Immediately Companies B and G were ordered to attack and effect relief. Several enemy automatic weapons were put out of action before contact was restored with Company F. The fighting was intense. Two enemy tanks, supported by machine gun fire from bunkers and artillery, maintained a steady fire against our troops. By 1230, however, the original line had been regained.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion had moved from its assembly area in the Caserne area and advanced northward. By 1400 it was on line with the 2nd Battalion, south of the strong entrenchments in and on the railroad track.

The 1st Battalion pushed west into Forêt de Forbach against light resistance. A reconnaissance patrol entered Petite Rosselle and was immediately engaged by fire.

At 1700 a counter-attack was made against Company E and another, an hour later, against Company G. Friendly tanks and artillery dispersed these attacks.

That evening the 276th Infantry withdrew several hundred yards. Hasty defenses were prepared and lateral contact was established. Patrols were maintained through the night.

At 0630, the 3rd Battalion launched an attack against Simon Mine. The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry, held its position and the 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry continued mopping up resistance in a small area south of the railroad tracks in Stiring-Wendel.

The Simon Mine and factory consisted of several buildings of thick concrete construction, surrounded by a brick-concrete wall seven feet high and fourteen inches thick, on top of which iron spokes were interwoven with strands of barbed wire. Bunkers were built into the wall of the factory. An underground chamber connected the factory and mine. Several iron gates, to the rear and front, closed off the openings. An anti-tank ditch and scattered mine fields augmented the defenses around and inside the mine.

In column of companies, led by Company L, the 3rd Battalion maneuvered into the 276th zone to envelop the strong point. The minefield was breached in the woods and Company L advanced against heavy fire to the south side of the factory. Friendly tanks effected penetrations in the walls by direct fire, but these openings were immediately covered by enemy fire.

The strength of the enemy defense made frontal assault undesirable. The 3rd Battalion was withdrawn to more protective positions and contact was established with the right flank unit of the 276th Infantry.

The strong defenses of the enemy, apparently the CPL of the Siegfried Line, precluded further assault until they were reduced. OM # 14 issued late that night provided that upon order the 274th and 276th Infantry would withdraw troops in contact as

the enemy line was bombed and shelled. The following special instructions were issued as part of the plan. "At H hour bombing ceases, artillery preparation starts. Infantry moves forward. H plus 5 artillery ceases, infantry starts demonstration, shouting and firing weapons. H plus 10 artillery preparation resumed. H plus 15 artillery preparation ceases, infantry assault enemy positions."

The persistent low ceiling throughout the day prevented aerial bombardment. Corps and Division artillery concentrations fired in the afternoon were below expectations. The assault by the infantry as planned in CI # 14 was postponed. After Major General Milburn, XXI Corps Commander and Major General Barnett had conferred upon the scene with Colonel Conley, commanding 274th Infantry, it was decided to hold in the present positions pending results of intensive reconnaissance.

A reconnaissance patrol moving into Petite Bosselle, to locate the west flank of the MLR, came under direct fire. Accordingly CI # 15 of 7 March ordered the construction of deliberate defenses, with only minor shifts from the present locations to more advantageous defensive positions. Aggressive patrolling was to be continuous.

Upon Corps Order the 70th Infantry Division reverted to the defensive in its sector. In CI # 16 of 9 March the 494th and 495th FA Battalions were relieved of attachment to the division. Similarly the 749th Tank Battalion and Company B, 99th Chem-

ical Battalion (4.2 mortar) were relieved. The 70th Recon Troop effected relief of elements of 101st Cavalry Group and established contact with the 12th Armored Division, now shifted to the 70th Division left flank. Each regiment was ordered to hold its present position with two battalions, withdrawing one battalion for rehabilitation and training.

During the same period Lt. Col. J. L. Richardson resumed duties as A C of S, G-3, relieving Lt. Col. E. C. Townsend who in turn resumed duties as A C of S, G-2.

The offensive operation of 17 February to 7 March of the 70th Division had liberated eighteen towns and had taken 2034 prisoners, including fourteen officers. The division had received and repulsed twenty-nine counterattacks.

For several days the situation was stable. The 883rd FA Battalion experimented with flame thrower fluid as filler for the 105 mm shell which proved unsatisfactory. Numerous successful missions by Division Artillery, however, were fired and a Mark VI tank was destroyed after the 6th round by 725th FA howitzers. The 648th TD Battalion and the 99th Chemical Battalion (4.2 mortar) (less Companies A and B) supplemented our artillery. The 270th Engineers were busy clearing mine fields, constructing defenses, rebuilding roads, and searching buildings for unexploded enemy bombs. An intensive search was made after a time bomb had been discovered in the Caserne where elements of the 276th Infantry were stationed.

During the morning of 11 March Division CP closed at St. Jean Rohrbach and opened at Freyming.

The penetration of the 3rd Army to the north into the Palatinate increased the threat to the enemy troops occupying the Siegfried Line in the Saar Basin. Patrolling in the division sector was continued daily for signs of withdrawal, particularly in the 276th and 274th Infantry sectors. The 275th Infantry, meanwhile, had carried on a continuous schedule of patrolling, testing and probing the Siegfried defenses.

During the early morning of 13 March patrols were still in contact with the enemy. A sharp decrease in enemy activity during the morning was apparent. Patrols were pushed forward in the afternoon and advanced without resistance into Petite Rosselle, across the railroad tracks and the Simon Mine. Immediately General Barnett ordered the regiments to pursue the enemy. Verbal orders were issued to push forward to the Saar River and establish a bridgehead across the river. The 70th Recon Troop was directed to reconnoiter the road to the south of Petite Rosselle, north to Weislautern and on to the bridge over the Saar in the vicinity of Volkingen. The battalions in training were alerted and moved into position.

In compliance with orders, the 276th Infantry and 274th Infantry began to advance toward the Saar River. Small

delaying forces were entrenched at road blocks but were quickly captured or routed. Mine fields caused considerable trouble. A mine destroyed a vehicle of the 70th Recon Troop and injured members of the crew. The reconnaissance continued on foot, and a twenty foot wide, twenty foot deep anti-tank ditch was encountered beyond Petite Rosselle. Engineers set to work to bridge this obstacle.

The pursuit was maintained through the night and the following morning. Mine fields, anti-tank ditches, road blocks and wire hindered but did not halt the advance. Resistance was light and only sporadic fire was met. By noon the attacking units of the 274th and 276th Infantry had cleared Stiring-Wendel, Schoeneck, Krughutte, Petite Rosselle, Simon Mine, Clarenthal, Furstenhausen, and Hersweiler. Patrols operated to the south bank of the Saar, but came under direct S/A, automatic weapons and mortar fire.

At dusk of 14 March the situation in the 274th Infantry was as follows: 1st Battalion echeloned to the right, was disposed in the northeast section of Bois de Saarbrucken, west of the railroad track; the 3rd Battalion occupied the high ground and the towns of Hersweiler, Krughutte, and Schoeneck; the 2nd Battalion moved into Alt-Stiring.

In the 276th Infantry the 1st Battalion was at Furstenhausen; elements of the 2nd Battalion were on the high ground

south of Furstenhausen and in Clarenthal; and the 3rd Battalion was in Petite Rosselle.

The 275th Infantry made minor adjustments in the positions held by Company A, 274th and continued patrolling vigorously to the front. Sixty prisoners were captured in this phase of the advance.

Field Order # 2 was published and issued to the units on 14 March. The 70th Infantry Division was to resume the offensive. The 70th Division would "advance rapidly, clear zone to S bank Saar River, reducing Saarbrucken, south of the river. Cross Saar river in zone not earlier than D plus 1, establish bridgehead, prepare to continue advance to NE or assist 63rd Inf Div in reducing Saarbrucken."

The 275th Infantry was ordered to "make an offensive demonstration at daylight in direction shown in Annex 1. To be prepared to follow demonstration with attack in St. Arnaud upon division order. To maintain contact with 63rd Inf Div on right and 274th Inf on left."

The 274th Infantry, with Company C, 714th Tank Battalion (med) attached, was to "attack, capture objective and be prepared to continue attack to SE reducing Saarbrucken, south of Saar. (Annex 1)"

The 276th Infantry was to continue "active patrolling to Saar River within its zone. To be prepared to cross river on

D plus one vicinity Wehrden and establish bridgehead. To maintain contact with 101st Cavalry Group on left and 274th Infantry on right. 3rd Battalion, 276th Infantry not to be committed without approval of Division Commander."

Division artillery "reinforced by elements of XXI Corps and 12th Armored Division artillery will support the attack." The 99th Chemical Battalion (less Company A and B) was to support the attack, with priority to attack of 274th Infantry.

The 70th Recon Troop was to assemble at Marienau as Division Reserve. The 270th Engr (C) Battalion was assigned normal support missions, but ordered to "be prepared to assemble on three hours notice vicinity Behren as Division Reserve."

During the early morning of 15 March, Company F, 275th Infantry successfully raided enemy positions, south of St. Arnual, capturing seven prisoners and killing the remainder. Friendly artillery fired upon the area as the raiders returned. Fires were started in St. Arnual by our artillery.

The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry, in readiness for the planned attack upon fortifications on the south bank of the Saar, was counter-attacked by a strong enemy force at 0400. The enemy had infiltrated to the left and rear of Company B's positions. A determined fire fight developed which continued into the light of morning when the enemy was driven off and the area cleared. As a

result of this action the time of attack was delayed until 1600. Five battalions of artillery began firing a twenty minute preparation at 1510. The fire was lifted for ten minutes and another twenty minute preparation fired. Smoke signals shifted the fire 600 yards north after which a ten minute preparation was again fired.

The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry, supported by two platoons of tanks and one platoon of TDs, started the advance at 1610 towards the lake and the fortifications in the area. The terrain offered very little cover and concealment and all the approaches were covered by interlocking bands of fire from enemy pillboxes and bunkers. Enemy artillery and mortars previously fired concentrations upon our troops in the open area. The advance was halted after several hundred yards had been won. At nightfall the 1st Battalion withdrew to dig in for the night in more favorable terrain.

The 276th Infantry, in the meantime, mopped up scattered remnants of the enemy delaying force and aggressively patrolled the south bank of the Saar. Contact was established with the 101st Cavalry Group on the division left flank. The enemy reacted quickly to our patrols and engaged them with fire from the fortifications on the north bank of the river. Enemy mortar and artillery fire fell throughout the 276th zone of action.

Lt. General Patch, commanding General, 7th Army, conferred with Major General Barnett, and toured the 70th Division sector.

For the next few days, the infantry regiments vigorously patrolled the south bank of the Saar River as division artillery and 648th TD Battalion fired hundreds of missions and expended approximately five thousand rounds. Several enemy gun batteries and vehicles were neutralized. Enemy bunkers and pillboxes were subjected to intense HE and AP shell fire.

On 16 March the 276th Infantry relieved elements of the 101st Cavalry Group. Contact was made with the 65th Infantry Division. The 70th Infantry Division was now in position on the left flank of the XXI Corps and the 7th Army. Regrouping and reorganization was carried out simultaneously with the program of day and night patrolling.

The regimental CPs of the 276th and 274th Infantrys were moved to Petite Rosselle and Forbach respectively.

A river crossing was attempted by several patrols of the 276th Infantry but they came under heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire. A patrol from the 275th Infantry advanced through the dragon's teeth, and found two pill boxes unmanned. Anti-personnel mine fields were located among and in front of the dragon's teeth.

During the morning of 18 March word was received from

XXI Corps that friendly troops from the 3rd Army had penetrated far into the rear of the Saar region and were in St. Wendel. The regiments were notified to be especially on alert for enemy withdrawal.

Field Order # 3 was issued during the early morning of 19 March. The division was to force a crossing " of the Saar River at H Hour 19 March, 1945, attack, seize objectives, establish a bridgehead, and be prepared to exploit to the north or to move east and reduce Saarbrucken." The 276th Infantry was to initiate the crossing with one battalion and follow with the remaining two battalions. The 274th Infantry would assist the 276th Infantry by fire, and would follow the 276th Infantry. The 275th Infantry was ordered "to contain Saarbrucken from the south and southwest by fire. To be prepared to reduce Saarbrucken south of Saar River upon order and cross Saar River vicinity of Saarbrucken."

The Division Artillery reinforced with medium battalions from 17th FA Group and elements of Group Kastner was to provide direct and general support for the river crossing. The 648th TD Battalion was to provide direct support for the regiments. The 433d AAA AB Battalion was to furnish AAA protection for crossing sites and to place twelve multiple 50 cal machine guns in ground role to support the crossing. The 70th Recon Troop, in Division Reserve at Marienau, was to prepare to cross the Saar River at the bridgehead on order and maintain contact with the enemy.

While the 276th Infantry regrouped its forces in preparation for the planned crossing, reconnaissance by fire was carried by elements of the 274th and 275th Infantry. The enemy response was immediate. Machine guns fired from apertures in the pillboxes, and enemy mortars and artillery covered the approaches. Patrols were fired upon.

During the course of the day, aerial observation reported withdrawal of civilians and enemy troops. Bridges were being demolished. Large motor convoys moving eastward were observed deep in the Saar Basin. The enemy withdrawal had begun.

At 2330 a patrol from C Company, 276th Infantry successfully crossed the Saar River without opposition in the vicinity of Hostenbach. Extensive minefields were encountered, however, and an anti-mine platoon was sent to clear a path for the troops. Pillboxes in the area were empty. At 0300 Company C was ferried across the river, followed by Company B. At the same time engineers were at work constructing a foot bridge and a vehicular bridge.

By 0700 the foot bridge was completed and used by the 3rd Battalion and the 2nd Battalion, 276th Infantry. The 1st Battalion pushed ahead to secure the high ground north and northwest of Volkingen; the 2nd Battalion moved through the town and on Altenkessel; and the 3rd Battalion advanced toward Futtlingen.

The 3rd Battalion, 274th began crossing by boat in the

vicinity of Ottenhausen at 0500. By 1000 the 2nd Battalion had cleared the river and advanced northward. The 1st Battalion remained on the south side of the Saar River and joined with elements of the 275th Infantry to clear the high ground in the vicinity of the Metz Highway.

The 275th Infantry began its advance upon Saarbrücken at noon. While the 2nd Battalion moved through St. Arnual, the 1st and 3rd Battalions moved along the highway into Saarbrücken.

The 70th Recon Troop was ordered to cross the Saar River and reconnoiter northeast toward Fischbach-Queirscheid and Dudweiler-Bulzbach areas, and then northward toward Holz and Merchweiler. The crossing was effected at 1030. The Recon platoons advanced rapidly toward their objectives.

Anti-tank ditches, road blocks and demolitions were encountered en route. Enemy resistance was promptly dispersed. At 1300 Holz was captured together with several hundred prisoners. Two 88 mm guns were captured intact with gun crews. Contact was established with the 26th Infantry Division near Puttlingen, the XX Corps at St. Wendel, and with the 65th Infantry Division at Holz. To accomplish its mission the 70th Recon Troop had covered all main and secondary roads and villages as far as St. Wendel in a zone forty miles long and six to ten miles wide.

By nightfall the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 276th Infantry occupied Puttlingen as the 2nd Battalion, 276th Infantry moved

into Altenkessel. The 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry was located in Saarbrücken. Elements of the 2nd were in Dudweiler, Hirschbach, Friedrichshtal, and Bildstock. The 3rd Battalion, 274th occupied Fischbach. The 275th Infantry, after clearing St. Arnual, mopped up Saarbrücken, a city with a pre-war (1939) population of 133,382.

The offensive operation of the 70th Infantry Division in the Saar region was concluded on 22 March. On this day the division had completed 86 days in continuous contact with the enemy. The day before, on 21 March, the division was relieved of attachment to XXI Corps and reverted to control of Seventh Army in the Saarbrücken area. In this change of administrative command the 802nd FA Battalion, Company C, 99 Cml (4.2 mortar) Battalion, and 772nd Tank Battalion were relieved of attachment to the division.

During the period 20 March - 23 March the 70th Infantry Division had taken 668 prisoners and liberated 58 towns, including Saarbrücken. Several hundred impressed Russian soldiers and laborers were freed at Holz. A considerable amount of enemy equipment was also captured.

A training and rehabilitation program was instituted by Operation Instructions # 25. All units worked on maintenance and repair of equipment. Visits were made to the Siegfried defenses and instruction carried on during these tours. On 25

March, the Division began moving to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Landstuhl, approximately forty-five miles eastward into Germany. The Division CP opened at Otterberg at 1600 A on the following day.

The division was ordered to mop up and occupy the general area Landstuhl-Kaiserlautern-Otterberg-Reichenbach. In order to accomplish this mission, small units were billeted throughout the area to enforce discipline and maintain law and order. Bridges, municipal structures, factories and mines, and other important utilities were guarded. Patrols operated continuously throughout the area.

The 276th Infantry CP was located in Reichenbach while its 1st Battalion was in Erzenhausen; the 2nd Battalion in Kottweiler; and the 3rd Battalion in Juttenbach. The 274th CP was in Kaiserlautern, the 1st Battalion CP in Otterbach, the 2nd Battalion CP in Heilszenmoschel, and the 3rd Battalion in Mehlbach. The 275th Infantry CP was in Queidersbach, with the 1st Battalion in Bann, the 2nd Battalion in Hermersberg, and the 3rd Battalion in Zeselberg.

The 70th Division Artillery established its CP at Bruchmühlbach. The 725th FA Battalion CP was in Hutschenhausen; the 882nd FA Battalion CP in Mackenbach; the 883rd FA Battalion CP in Mittelbrunn; and the 884th FA Battalion CP in Ramstein.

At the same time the 270th Engineer (C) Battalion moved to Siegelbach, while the 370th Medical Battalion occupied

Landstuhl.

It was increasingly evident that deep Allied penetrations east of the Rhine River had disorganized the enemy to such an extent that only localized resistance and hurried, unprepared last-ditch stands were possible. Following in the wake of rapidly advancing forces, the 70th Infantry Division carried on the tasks of mopping up, patrolling, guarding vital communications, administering military and civil government, assisting in maintaining PW enclosures, and establishing facilities to care for thousands of Allied displaced civilians.

Unit commanders became town commanders and cooperated with CIC and AMG representatives in screening and apprehending suspected Nazis and members of the Wehrmacht in civilian clothing. A rigid policy of non-fraternization was maintained.

The occupation of this new area was of short duration, however. Warning orders to move into the Third Army were received. At the close of the month the 70th Division was again on the move. Quartering parties were dispatched forward to new assembly areas. The 648th TD Battalion (towed) was detached from the division and reverted to 7th Army control.

On 31 March Division Artillery and 70th Recon Troop were moving to their new locations.

In the month of March the 70th Infantry Division captured 1724 prisoners, including 24 officers. The division sustained 862 casualties: 149 killed, 692 wounded, and 21 missing. Returning to units from hospitalization were 18 officers and 529 enlisted men.

The division was further strengthened by 49 officers and 1467 enlisted men, received as reinforcements.