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Lou Gomori  
Historian (retired), 83rd Infantry Division Association

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# **9TH ARMY**

## **OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN OPERATION**

### **MAY 1944 - MAY 1945**

**Report 24120/370**

Edited By  
Thomas Pike



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S E C R E T

ACTIVATION AND MOVEMENT OVERSEAS

I.

The Ninth United States Army under the command of Lieutenant General William Hood Simpson was newly created on 22 May 1944, but its staff was composed of experienced men and its

BACKGROUND

background was deep-rooted in the Fourth United States Army which had been functioning since early in 1932. The army patch displays this antecedence by preserving the four leaf clover in its nonagonal shield, and the white letter A is contained in the heart of the symbol. The old Fourth Army had an enviable reputation on the Pacific coast as it had planned and established coast defenses there, had supervised training of local divisions and several corps, and had controlled large scale maneuvers in the area. Through this experience, the headquarters had developed a well balanced staff with sound operating procedures. Thus when the transfer to the European Theatre of Operations occurred, the Ninth Army brought the benefits of years of work and training to assist the Allied Commander in his mission of clearing Europe of the German Nazi Power.

SEPARATION OF  
WDC & 4th ARMY

On 15 September, 1943, the Fourth Army was separated from the Western Defense Command and was given the mission of training Army Ground Force troops on the west coast area for eventual combat duty overseas. After several changes of station, the headquarters was transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where it replaced Headquarters, Third U.S. Army on 25 January 1944. Coincident with this change was the assumption of a larger mission to include training of AGF troops in the southwest including the operation of the Louisiana Maneuver Area. The Fourth Army became one of the two training armies remaining in the United States.

ACTIVATION OF  
A NEW ARMY

In early March, 1944, Brigadier General Clyde Hyssong, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1 for AGF, discussed plans for the activation of a new army with General Simpson. On 26 March, 1944 orders were received to train one half of a cadre for a new army headquarters; the other half was to train with Headquarters, Second Army in Memphis, Tennessee. An over-strength of officers and enlisted men was assigned the army for this purpose, and personnel was trained by the various staff sections for the task confronting the new headquarters. AGF on 11 April 1944 authorized the Fourth Army to activate the Eighth U.S. Army and General Simpson ordered this activation on 14 April 1944. Colonel Howard Eager, FA, senior tactical officer present assumed command.

In the midst of the establishment and guidance of the new

army, orders were received from AGF alerting the Headquarters for overseas duty. A readiness date for the completion of training was set at 1 June while all sections were directed by the General to be prepared to hand over normal operations to the new staff by 5 May 1944. This double responsibility was efficiently performed and training of the newly activated headquarters was intensified. After General Simpson assumed command of both armies, a mass transfer of personnel between the two staffs was effected so that the experienced staff could be alerted for movement as Headquarters, Eighth Army, while the newly organized unit could continue operations without a break as Headquarters, Fourth Army. This coordination between staffs increased security and prevented a break in the continuity of training by troops in the field.

OVERSEAS  
ALERT

The first movement orders for the headquarters came when an advance detachment, headed by the Commanding General, nineteen other officers and warrant officers and seven enlisted men, were directed to proceed to the destination by air. This group flew to Washington on 7 and 8 of May where they received final instructions concerning the overseas mission, and were then flown to London on 12 and 13 of May where headquarters were established with the First United States Army. Shortly after the arrival of the advance group the War Department redesignated the Eighth as the Ninth United States Army, 22 May 1944. This change eliminated any confusion with the Eighth British Army which might have arisen.

ORDERS FOR  
OVERSEAS AND  
REDESIGNATION

Official War Department orders directing the movement of the headquarters were received on 7 May 1944 and as shipment number 1656-A&B, the Army awaited the call of the Port Commander. The main body departed from Fort Sam Houston in two separate trains and by two separate routes on 10 June 1944 and arrived at Camp Shanks, New York two days later. For the next eight days the command cleared port requirements for personnel, administration, supplies and equipment, security, health and sanitation, training and discipline.

This was the first test of the intricate planning for overseas movement which had been set up even when the headquarters was stationed on the west coast. G-3 had instituted and supervised a training program for officers and enlisted men based on POM requirements. After arrival at Fort Sam Houston the program was enlarged and, upon notice of the overseas alert, enlisted men participated in a one week bivouac at Camp Bullis, Texas. This field experience was a compromise measure due to insufficient time; the ideal desired by the command had been at least a two month bivouac under field conditions.

P.O.M.  
TRAINING

G-2 had been actively concerned with maintaining security,

both about the new army and the overseas movement. General Simpson opened the security campaign by announcing that any breach of confidence would meet with vigorous action. Security training was extended to the families of the headquarters personnel. The interchange of officers and enlisted men between the new and old headquarters and the redesignation further complicated the security issue. A CIC detachment was formed and assisted in the G-2 program.

• Headquarters Special Troops performed a variety of important jobs in connection with the movement of the headquarters. They acted as liaison to the permanent garrison of Fort Sam Houston and coordinated transportation and packing. The normal officer personnel of the headquarters was augmented by direction of the Chief of Staff, and each staff section detailed one officer for duty with Headquarters Company. The Quartermaster section supplied personnel for train commanders and liaison officers.

That the headquarters had prepared for overseas movement well was attested by the high recommendation given the Army by the Port Authorities. Personnel records were in excellent shape and the handling of supply was particularly praised. All phases of staging were completed and on 19 June, 1944, Shipments 6156A and B were officially alerted by the port authorities. The headquarters main body loaded on the Queen Elizabeth, known only as NY842, and sailed from the Port of New York 21 June 1944. Colonel John G. Murphy acted as Senior Unit Commander for the voyage.

The voyage across the Atlantic was uneventful. Normal administration was handled by a skeleton crew of AG officers while field grade officers performed the usual duty officer functions. The only discordant note was the shortage in messing facilities for enlisted men, which caused difficulty for personnel to receive even the authorized two meals a day. Late on the evening of 27 June, the Queen Elizabeth docked at Greenock, Scotland. Debarkation was accomplished the following morning and the headquarters was transported by train to Bristol, England, its new station. After five months as a training army in the United States, and a journey of approximately three weeks, the headquarters was ready to embark on its new mission.



CHAPTER II

NINTH ARMY PREPARES FOR ITS MISSION

Upon arrival in the European Theater of Operations the advance detachment reported to the Commanding General, European Theater, and was established for orientation with Headquarters First United States Army Group. The General Staffs of both the Theater and the Army Group oriented the detachment in theater policies as well as the forthcoming military invasion of the continent. Upon the completion of this, the entire staff divided into small groups and visited corps and divisions of the First and Third United States Armies and other military installations to gather statistics, plans, procedures, and general information which would aid the new headquarters in its operations.

ADVANCE  
DETACHMENT

The Army Commander learned that the headquarters occupied by the First Army was to be available for his army as soon as practical after D Day, and on 12 June 1944 a detachment of Ninth Army representatives traveled to Bristol to arrange for the reception, billeting and orientation of the main body of the headquarters. When it arrived on 29 June, offices and billets were ready for occupancy. The advance detachment ceased to exist and on that date Headquarters Ninth United States Army opened its first command post on foreign shores at historic Clifton College, Bristol, England.

CP AT  
BRISTOL

The initial mission of the headquarters was to receive, equip, and train for combat the troops which the Ninth Army was to lead in battle but subsequent events greatly enlarged this mission. Two airborne divisions, the 82d and 101st, were received for equipping and training. The XIII Corps during the month of July was assigned to Ninth Army control. During the succeeding weeks, all ground troops that arrived in the United Kingdom from the United States were processed by the Army.

MISSION

The close proximity of Bristol to the operations on the continent provided excellent opportunity for observation of headquarters procedures under combat conditions. Several trips to the continent were made by the Commanding General and his Chief of Staff. On one occasion the Engineer, Quartermaster, G-1, and AG visited the CPs of the First and Third Armies for the purpose of examining procedures, comparing them with those of the Ninth Army, and making adjustments on the basis of the actual combat conditions encountered by these two armies.

COMBAT  
OBSERVATION

The headquarters which arrived in Bristol was ready for combat. Its personnel was well schooled in staff procedures and had undergone intense and varied training, but certain additional sections were needed for complete operation of the army headquarters.

NEW STAFF SECTIONS

It was in the Bristol period that the G-5 section was added, which was to become one of the largest sections in the headquarters. It faced much hard work and training before it was prepared for combat duty. Other groups added to the headquarters during this period were the Armored Section, Publicity and Psychological Warfare Section, 4th Information and Historical Service, and military intelligence teams. The Adjutant General Section was allotted additional enlisted personnel to staff a Battle Casualty sub-section and an Awards and Decoration sub-section which were to be needed in combat operations.

During this period members of the headquarters took advantage of the opportunity to meet and better understand their British allies. On the required one hour hikes, held daily by all sections, personnel observed many aspects of British life. They saw for themselves the effect of war on the British people and became intimately acquainted with queue lines; severe food and clothes rationing, transportation shortage, blackout, and other conditions brought on by five years of active warfare.

ENGLISH CUSTOMS

The headquarters was alerted by ETOUSA to prepare to move to the continent at the end of August. Last minute preparations were intensified and new sections hastened to fill vacancies with qualified personnel. The orders directing the move were issued; in order to facilitate movement the headquarters was

MOVEMENT TO FRANCE

divided into a Forward and a Rear echelon with moving dates separated by two days. Supplies and equipment were run to Southampton by motor convoy and personnel were brought to the embarkation point by train. On 27 August, Forward started its move across the English Channel, landed across Utah Beach, and moved into Normandy to establish its CP at St. Sauveur Lendelin on 29 August 1944. Rear echelon moved on the 29th, followed the same itinerary and opened its temporary command post at Perriers, near the Forward position.

By now the Army had received its first mission in the active theater of hostilities, to direct the forces operating on the Brittany Peninsula and a suitable new Command Post was necessary for proper control. A forest preserve to the north of Rennes, France was selected, and movement was made into the area of Mi Foret, Brittany. The new command post was opened on 3 September. Forward and Rear were both operating under field conditions in tents, but the efficiency of the headquarters soon adjusted itself to its new surroundings. From this headquarters the Ninth United States Army began its first combat mission.

CP AT MI FORET

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### CHAPTER III

## OPERATIONS ON THE BRITTANY AND CROZON PENINSULAS

### Preliminaries

On 5 September 1944 the Twelfth Army Group, under which the Ninth United States Army was to operate, issued a letter of instructions to outline the mission for the army. It was to take command of the VIII Corps, composed of the 2d, 8th, 29th, and 83d Infantry Divisions and the 6th Armored Division. This corps had previously been under the Third United States Army, but the latter's eastward drive had separated VIII Corps from army headquarters by some 400 miles.

Ninth Army  
assumes command  
of VIII Corps

The mission of VIII Corps had been to reduce the fortress of Brest, contain the enemy at Lorient and St. Nazaire, and protect the south flank of the Third United States Army. The 2d, 8th, and 29th Divisions engaged the hostile forces around Brest; the 6th Armored Division contained Lorient, and patrolled the Loire River, and east to Redon; and the 83d Division contained St. Nazaire and patrolled the north bank of the Loire River, including a line from Redon to Orleans and then east to Montargis.

In addition to the VIII Corps, the Ninth United States Army had been assigned other troops in transit or scheduled to move to the ETO - the III, XIII, and XVI Corps, the 26th, 44th, 95th, 102d, and 104th Infantry Divisions, and the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions, and a large number of corps and army supporting troops. The III Corps had begun to assemble in

Other  
units

Normandy.

The Ninth United States Army was given two missions. The first was operational and called for an attack against Brest, a containing action against the ports of St. Nazaire and Lorient, and a patrolling mission along the Loire to Orleans. The second mission was administrative: to receive the newly assigned troops and prepare them for operational missions. Later in the month a third mission was assigned. This was to use certain of its combat troops as trucking companies to help solve the problem of supplying the fast-driving forces of the First and Third United States Armies.

Initial  
missions

Under the new army, the VIII Corps was to continue the Brest campaign. The 6th Armored Division and the 83d Infantry Divisions were detached from the VIII Corps on 9 September, and were used directly as Army troops in the mission at St. Nazaire, Lorient, and along the Loire. The newly arrived III Corps was

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charged with training all troops arriving on the Normandy beaches from the United Kingdom and the United States, and elements of the 26th, 95th, 102d, and 104th Infantry Divisions assumed the role of provisional trucking companies. The companies were attached to the Communication Zone for the operation of Red Ball supply routes supporting the drives by the First and Third United States Armies.

#### OPERATIONS

• The fifth of September found the VIII Corps troops in the twelfth day of a concerted attempt to reduce the fortress and seaport of Brest. This city, on the extremity of the Brittany Peninsula, had been the largest French naval base in Northern France and was used as a U-boat base during the German's four year occupation. The excellent deep-water roadstead which made it the largest land-locked harbor in Europe, was vitally needed by the Allies. The winter storms were approaching, and landing beaches already held were thought to be inadequate for the forthcoming large supply job.

#### Reduction of Fortress Brest

The VIII Corps had found that the reduction of Brest was no mere side affair but a major drive against an under-rated force. Intelligence sources had indicated a possible strength of 20,000 men in the Brest area. The campaign was expected to reduce hostile resistance in ten days. Both of these calculations proved wrong, and the southern drive of three infantry divisions in an arc around the city had slowed down almost to a standstill. The strongly prepared positions and hedgerow terrain proved difficult, but the lack of ammunition, especially of the larger calibre, and the strength of the enemy forces, which actually reached to approximately 44,000, were the primary factors in the prolongation of the campaign.

#### A major task

To alleviate the supply of artillery ammunition, Communications Zone ordered a diversion of ammunition to Morlaix and St. Michel en Greve on LSTs. This ammunition supply began to arrive on 6 September. By 7 September, sufficient ammunition was on hand to permit a resumption of the attack on Brest. Plans were consequently laid for "H" hour at 1000B on 8 September.

By 10 September the 8th Infantry Division in the center of the arc around Brest had inched down to the old city wall, and the 2d Infantry Division in the left of the arc had forced its way in street-to-street fighting through the outskirts of the town and up to the wall. On the right flank, the 29th Infantry Division had cleared Le Coquet Peninsula and was assaulting the main forts which protected Recouvrance, the companion city of Brest.

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Major General Troy H. Middleton, Commanding General of the VIII Corps, sent his G-2 as parlementaire to the commanding general of the Brest Defenses, Major General Hermann B. Ramcke, and asked for the surrender of the city on 13 September. He outlined the position of the enemy as being hopeless, and as a professional soldier he urged General Ramcke to consider his proposal. General Ramcke tersely replied, "I must decline your proposal." Whereupon General Middleton gave a directive to his forces to make Ramcke "sorry for his refusal" and to "enter the fray with renewed vigor".

In accordance with this directive, air missions by units of the XIX Tactical Air Command and a terrific artillery barrage of continuous 24 hour harassing fire reduced the city to ruins, paving the way for the final assault and conquest of Brest on 18 September. The formal surrender took place at 181500A September 1944.

While the 2d, 8th, and 29th Infantry Divisions were engaged in the reduction of Brest, Task Force A was setting up a counter reconnaissance screen to hold enemy forces on the Crozon Peninsula. Composed only of cavalry, tank destroyer, and engineer units and confronted with rugged terrain crossed by few roads, this task force was unable to mount an attack without infantry reinforcements. Consequently, six days prior to the capitulation of Brest, the 8th Infantry Division, squeezed out of the Brest operation, was made available for clearing the Crozon Peninsula.

The reduction of Crozon A number of years had been available for the construction of permanent defenses on the peninsula, and they had been fully used to build the natural advantages of Crozon into a formidable section of the Atlantic Wall. On 15 September the 8th Infantry Division, with TFA maintaining contact between the 28th and 121st Infantry Regiments, began its drive on the enemy. Although the Germans initially put up stiff resistance, by the third day of the offensive their defense crumbled, and on 19 September, General Ramcke, who had escaped from Brest to Crozon, surrendered to Brigadier General Charles W. Graham, assistant division commander.

The capitulation of the forces in Brest and on Crozon resulted in the capture of some 38,000 prisoners of war, of which more than 20,000 were combat troops. Three first-rate units of the Germany Army were destroyed: the 2d Paratroop Division, the 343d Infantry, and the 266th Infantry Division. The destruction of Brest was complete; what had been started by the Germans was finished by the siege operations. American Air and artillery, plus the use of white phosphorous and jelled gasoline, had burned and gutted the downtown section of Brest and the naval base at Recouvrance.

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American casualties totaled 9,831 for the campaign. Medical personnel did an outstanding job of evacuation of the American and German wounded. The 66th Medical Clearing Company evacuated 6,114 patients in the period from 28 August to 28 September. Also in that period, the 29th Field Hospital evacuated by air and LST a total of 3,747. The air evacuees flew from the Morlaix Air Strip and the LST patients were loaded at St. Michel en Greve. Two hundred and eighty patients were evacuated by train on 19 September from the Army Evacuation Hospital. The final capitulation caused a terrific pressure on evacuation plans. The VIII Corps Surgeon reported a total of 5,500 prisoner of war casualties in Brest.

American casualties

Outside the Brest and Crozon areas, scattered pockets of enemy resistance existed along the Atlantic coast to St. Nazaire. These groups were composed of static coastal garrisons reinforced by remnants of German field forces which had escaped to the south and west after the break-through in Normandy. South of our line of patrols along the Loire River was an undetermined number of German forces.

Enemy pockets

In the early morning of 9 September, Generalmajor Botho Elster, commanding one of these forces, was reported by the 83d Division to desire the surrender of his command, estimated to contain about 19,000 troops. This force was disposed in the area Chateaurou, Chateauneuf sur Cher, and Saneoin and had found itself cut off from all possible escape routes. Although fear of the FFI and the Maquis was apparent as one motive for the General's decision, our overwhelming air superiority in the area, which threatened ceaseless bombing and strafing of his troops, was the main reason. The desired surrender meeting was arranged and plans were coordinated among the Ninth United States Army, Twelfth Army Group, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, and the 83d Division. The German troops--called March Group South by their commander--were marched under arms as far as the cities of Beaugency and Orleans with air support hovering close at all times to keep them steadfast in purpose. On the south bank of the Loire River, they were relieved of their arms at a formal surrender and entered the prisoner of war enclosure near Beaugency.

Surrender of March Group South

The two Atlantic seaports of Lorient and St. Nazaire were roughly estimated to contain troops numbering from 20,000 to 25,000 men. Of this number, there were 10,000 infantrymen on line, 5,500 in the artillery, perhaps 3,000 in a rear area infantry reserve, and approximately 4,000 in administrative and supply.

St. Nazaire and Lorient

units. These troops were composed of a heterogeneous group of army, navy and marine elements of German, Russian, and Polish nationality. The defenses of the two towns were set up around heavily armed strong points with extensive use of barbed wire and all types of obstacles, and heavy, concrete-enplaced, dual-purpose artillery.

The 6th Armored Division had contained the enemy in Lorient and patrolled to Redon. The 83d Infantry Division had contained the area around St. Nazaire, and had extended patrols along the Loire to Orleans. In the middle of September, the 94th Infantry Division became operational and was sent to relieve the 6th Armored Division. On 16 September the relief was completed and the 6th Armored Division was released to the control of the Third United States Army. Later in the month the 94th extended its patrol lines into the 83d Division's sector and on 23 September, the latter organization returned to the Third United States Army.

Higher headquarters prescribed that no assault would be made on Lorient or St. Nazaire. The zone of patrolling was extended to include the entire southern boundary of the Twelfth Army Group, and the protective mission on the south flank extended to Auxerre on the Yonne River. The 15th Cavalry Group was attached to the 94th Division to patrol from Nantes to Auxerre, but without the active support of the FFI troops, such an extensive area could not have been adequately protected. FFI groups were used both at St. Nazaire and Lorient in the line alongside the American troops, and their numbers released other American units for the fight to the east.

After the successful conclusion of the Brest Operation, the 29th Infantry Division was released to the First United States Army on 24 September. The VIII Corps, with 2d and 8th Infantry Divisions, was ordered east to the Third United States Army zone for contemplated operations in that area by the Ninth United States Army. Twelfth Army Group had indicated by their Letter of Instructions, Number 9, 25 September, that the Ninth United States Army was to carry out a mission in a zone of action on the eastern front between the First and Third United States Armies. The forward command post was opened at Arlon 29 September and Signal Service had to maintain a daily 500 mile motor messenger service between the forward and rear echelons.

Further release  
of units

At the close of the period, the VIII Corps with the 2d and 8th Infantry Divisions was engaged in operations in the assigned zone and the 94th Division held the ports of Lorient and St. Nazaire and secured the southern boundary of Twelfth Army Group. The non-operational units assigned to the army included at the close of the period, III Corps, XIII Corps, XVI Corps, XXI Corps, 44th, 84th, 95th, 102d, and 104th Infantry Divisions, and the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Armored Divisions.

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## Reinforcements and Supply

A shortage of infantry personnel was a problem faced by many of the combat units during the early days of the campaign. They had a divisional overstrength as a whole, but they were short infantry combat troops. This situation had arisen from the fact that the divisions had come to the continent overstrength on D Day. Their casualties had been mostly in rifle troops, and, even when wounded men had been returned to duty, they were not fit for line service. Permission was granted for organizations which had been overstrength on D Day to requisition infantry personnel up to authorized infantry table of organization strength regardless of overall overstrength. Army consolidated the requisitions submitted from lower units and drew men from the 48th Replacement Battalion. The flow took approximately six days.

### Need for combat troops

The Ninth United States Army used the facilities of the Brittany Base Section, Communications Zone, for the processing of prisoners of war. The enclosures at Rennes and Orleans handled the normal flow, but the Loire Base Section was used to process the 20,000 prisoners taken in that area. During the month of September a total of 50,866 prisoners of war was processed.

### Prisoners of war

The Army's location within the Communications Zone placed it in an unorthodox position as to normal supply procedures and logistics. It was confined within the limits of the Communications Zone but the mission of its operational units to protect the Twelfth Army Group's southern flank along the Loire River caused Army's communications to fan outward in every direction in a 400 mile radius. At the start of the period the Signal Service did not have access to adequate fixed facilities, nor was it on an axis of communications. Repair of 70 miles of eight pair German cable and 100 miles of six pair French cable brought alleviation of this problem. The supply installations already operated by Communications Zone rendered invaluable assistance. However, the job of hauling supplies from the beaches to the using units caused an intermingling of responsibility. Communications Zone, Army, and VIII Corps all found themselves handling supplies in the same area.

### Supply installations

The chief problems during the month were the supply of artillery ammunition and the transportation of replacements and units. The Ninth United States Army's Movement and Traffic Section operated in coordination with the Traffic Section of the Base Section to solve these problems. Few of the newly arrived units could be equipped because the trucking demands for Red Ball and the priority supply of battle losses on

### Transportation problems

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the eastern front precluded any attempt at a schedule. Detailed advance planning for movement of units was limited by lack of information as to the future area of operations, mission, or assignment of troops to the Ninth United States Army.

After 7 September, when ammunition shortages were relieved by the diversion of ammunition to Morlaix and St. Michael en Greve on LSTs, ammunition rolled in at such a rate that there was more than was needed to complete the Brest-Crozon campaign. Shipments were cancelled and diverted as the campaign drew to a close, but 11,000 tons in the ammunition depot and 12,000 tons on the beach were available to the Ninth United States Army at the time of the surrender of General Ramcke. Ammunition companies subsequently moved to the east with as much surplus ammunition as could be carried by five provisional truck companies formed from field artillery units.

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## CHAPTER IV

### FIVE NATION FRONT

#### October Preparations

The month of September had dispersed the army's combat troops through Brittany and the heart of France, while non-operational troops were called upon to provide provisional truck companies. By the close of September and during the month of October, a new sphere of activity for the Ninth United States Army was opened against the German Siegfried Line. This placed the forces of the Army across five countries of Western Europe: France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, and Germany.

By 1 October the Army's operational troops, VIII Corps with the 2d and 8th Infantry Divisions attached, were en route to the new area between the First and Third United States Army zones. The Army continued to employ the 94th Infantry Division reinforced, on the assigned mission of containing the enemy forces in St. Nazaire and Lorient and protecting the south flank of the Twelfth Army Group until 9 October when the division's control passed to the Twelfth Army Group.

#### Operational units

Non-operational units of the Ninth United States Army included the III Corps, XIII Corps, and XVI Corps headquarters, all located in Normandy. A total of six infantry and four armored divisions were assigned but were not operational, and two of each type were still in the United Kingdom at the beginning of October. The other four infantry divisions were called upon at various times to operate provisional truck organizations.

#### Non-operational units

At the beginning of this period the forward command post for the Ninth United States Army was established at Arlon, Belgium. The rear echelon continued to operate at Mi Foret in Brittany. However, a change in mission was directed in the middle of October for the Army, and Maastricht, Holland, was selected as the new command post. The rear echelon was therefore diverted on its move from France to Belgium and closed directly into the new area on 15 October. The entire headquarters was consolidated here at 1200A on 22 October.

This new mission was outline in Letter of Instructions, Number 10, Headquarters, Twelfth Army Group, dated 21 October, 1944. In conjunction with the First United States Army, which was to make the main effort, Ninth Army was to attack to the Rhine in its zone on the left of First Army. The British 30 Corps was to enter the Ninth Army Zone temporarily

#### A new mission

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to reduce Gellenkirchen. After the attack of the First Army had reached the Rhine, Ninth Army was to advance northward between the Rhine and the Meuse Rivers and gain contact with the British Second Army. It was then to take over the area west of the Rhine to Rees, inclusive. D Day was to be 11 November, or as soon thereafter as weather would permit close air support, but in no event later than 16 November.

To implement the move, Twelfth Army Group direct the release of the VIII Corps to the First United States Army. In exchange, on 22 October the Ninth Army was to assume control of the XIX Corps, consisting of the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions, the 2d Armored Division, and the 113th Cavalry Group. This corps was then in contact with the enemy on the northern flank of the Twelfth Army Group and had penetrated the Siegfried

Troop assignment Line on an 11 mile front to a depth of six miles. Also assigned at this time were the 102d, 104th, and 84th Infantry Divisions and the 7th Armored Division. However, to support the British 30 Corps attack, the 84th Infantry Division (less one combat team) was placed under British operational control. The 104th Division was attached to the Twenty-First Army Group, British, with missions in Holland; and the 7th Armored Division remained in the British area where it had already been attached.

Ninth Army boundary with First Army crossed the Maas at Vivegnis, seven kilometers north of Liege, and ran northeastward, roughly through Aachen, Wurselen, Helrath, and Altdorf.

Army boundaries At Altdorf it crossed the Inde River. At O60545 it crossed the Roer and went through Hambach to the Rhine. The northern boundary began at Hasselt, crossed the Maas at Stockheim, and then pursued a course parallel to the lower boundary.

Ninth Army plan was to make an armored thrust to the Roer, seize a crossing site, and, if possible, establish a bridgehead on the east bank of the river. The infantry, driving north and south, was to clear the area west of the river of all enemy troops: Army plans If the armor was unable to cross the Roer, it was to consolidate its positions and await the advance of the infantry.

The 2d Armored was selected for the drive to the river. On its right flank was the 29th Infantry Division, and on its left, under British 30 Corps control, was the 84th Infantry Division. The 84th Division was to drive north and, in a pincers movement, join forces with the British above Gellenkirchen. When this maneuver was completed, the area was to be taken over by XIII Corps. In the southern sector, the 30th Division was to drive

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south to the army boundary near Kinsweiler and then be pinched out by the 29th Division.

### Operations in October

Operations during this period of preparation consisted mainly of moving units into line, feeling out enemy positions, and receiving, training, and equipping troops.

On 1 October the 2d and 8th Infantry Division were en route from France to their assembly areas in Luxembourg, and during the period 2 to 6 October, these two divisions of the VIII Corps began to relieve elements of the V Corps along the Our River. The mission of the corps was to establish defensive positions within its sector and actively to patrol the zone.

●  
Defensive positions

The 94th Infantry Division, with the 15th Cavalry Group attached, continued to contain the enemy garrisons at Lorient and St. Nazaire and to patrol the south flank of the Twelfth Army Group along the Loire River. The Ninth Army maintained control over this force until its rear echelon cleared from the Brittany Peninsula. At 0001 on 9 October, the Division passed to the control of the Twelfth Army Group.

The mission for the XIX Corps under Ninth Army control remained the same and it continued to defend its zone and rotate its troops on the line. Limited attacks were made by the 30th Infantry Division on 22 and 23 October, and shifting of reserves to the north flank was made from 25 to 31 October to offset any possible enemy armored thrusts. But no major enemy activity developed in this sector as the month closed.

On 23 October the 104th Infantry Division, under British 1 Corps went into line in Holland along the western wall of the corridor resulting from the previous month's airborne operation against Arnhem. The division faced approximately nine infantry battalions with an average strength of 200 to 300 men each.

Action north of Antwerp

Supporting the foot troops appeared to be two brigades of self-propelled guns, believed to consist of 40 guns each. The terrain was flat and boggy, limiting the maneuverability of vehicles and armor. Utilizing artillery to the utmost, the division drove to the River Maas within two weeks, taking 658 prisoners and suffering 1,300 casualties. According to the German prisoners, the division's artillery fire had given them their worst experience, and the tactics employed by the American artillery were far more effective than anything they had encountered in Russia. On 7 November the 104th Division passed to the control of the First United States Army and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Aachen.

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### The Advance to the Roer River

The static conditions of our lines that existed through the latter part of October continued until the start of our offensive on 16 November. The enemy was passive, and hostile activity consisted only of minor patrolling and sporadic light artillery fire. However, stiff enemy resistance was felt by the 2d Armored in its patrol activity on 5 November, and a strong attack was repulsed, by the 113th Cavalry Group in the early hours of 9 November. Some air activity, especially over the rear areas was noted, in the early part of the month; strafing, bombing, and reconnaissance missions were flown by the enemy aircraft over the forward areas.

G-2 studied the possibility that the enemy might mount an airborne attack and considered that concentrations in the wooded areas south and east of Venlo presented a threat to our northern flank. Attempts were made to put agents

#### Intelligence

through the enemy lines, but they were all fruitless. Since the area in front of our lines was denuded of all civilians except a few critical war workers who were operating the rich mines in that region, there were no safe places for our agents to operate and little information was obtained. Some use of Dutch and Belgian official intelligence as a source of information was contemplated and coordination was effected. British counter-intelligence sources were also utilized.

The terrain over which the Ninth United States Army planned operation was flat, open ground stretching forward to the Roer River. Level, cultivated fields of beets and cabbages, ditched and hedged, surround numerous compact villages one to two miles apart. Coal mines with immense slag piles, factories, and dense areas of company houses for workman and miners, form distinct features of the landscape. These built up areas were used by the Germans for strong defensive positions; many of the towns were mutually supporting in their defenses. The open countryside offered good fields of fire, very good observation, but little concealment.

#### Terrain

Secondary roads supplemented the principal highways, but under the stress of military traffic and harsh climatic conditions came close to breaking down. Maintaining them during the operation called forth strenuous efforts by the engineers, while the prevention of crippling congestion required much juggling by army and corps staff. A well developed railway net covered the area, but had been severely damaged by Allied bombing, ground warfare and demolitions.

In the First Army's sector three dams impound the waters of

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the Roer, and these dams counted high in the calculations of the American commanders and the employment of their strength. The Army Engineers warned that demolition and the resulting flood would make a crossing impracticable and leave cross country movement difficult for a considerable period.)

Roer  
dams

During the period of preparation, the Germans organized community digging under the direction of Wehrmacht engineers. Interrogators reported complaints from Prisoners of War that some of the trenches were too narrow, too shallow, and caved in under bombardment. Our tankmen found gaps in some antitank ditches, but this feverish haste produced a series of formidable barriers.

Entrenchments

Civilians were evacuated by order of Nazi Party representatives, sometimes by force. Their villages were turned into strong-points. Buildings with a field of fire were reinforced and machine guns and light field pieces sited in them. Occasionally a tank was so housed. Numerous houses had fortress-like cellars, with 12 inches of concrete for a roof.

Strong  
points

Fire trenches, fox holes, communication trenches and anti-tank ditches surrounded the towns, and fields, roads, and direct avenues of approach were sowed with mines. The ever dominant slag piles, as high as 150 feet, were fortified and used as observation posts.

Bad weather conditions delayed the jump-off until 1245 hours on 16 November. Preceding the attack, three heavy air missions were flown over the Ninth and First United States Army zones. A 1,500 plane raid was followed by a wave of 500, and shortly before noon the RAF sent 1,100 bombers over the area to soften resistance. Results of the air support were reported as excellent by ground and air observers. Thereafter, the XXIX TAC provided flights of fighter bombers as column cover for elements of the 2d Armored Division and squadrons on call for other elements of the XIX Corps.

Air  
support

During the first day's attack the 2d Armored Division advanced 1300 to 2500 yards. The 29th Division advanced up to 3,000 yards to the east while the 30th Division gained 600 to 1,600 yards in its southeasterly drive. The initial advance was not preceded by artillery, and this failure to shell the enemy positions, according to PW reports, contributed to the actual surprise achieved. Many enemy front line units had men out on pass.

The  
attack

However, reaction from the Germans was immediate and force-

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Enemy  
Reaction

ful. Between 16 and 25 November, four infantry and six Panzer divisions were rushed to the threatened area west of the Rhine River. Four of the six Panzer divisions the 1st SS, 2d SS, 9th SS, and 12th SS comprised the formidable Sixth Panzer Army. Only four divisions were committed, but the remainder served as a menacing force.

At 1000 on 17 November, the enemy, utilizing the heavy frontal armor of his Mark VI tanks to full advantage, mounted a strong counterattack against the 2d Armored Division from the vicinity of Gereonsweiler. The enemy's tactics in this engagement are characteristic of those he employed throughout the entire offensive and explain in part our slow advance after the initial gains. He maneuvered his Tigers into position between 3000 and 3500 yards from our tank destroyers and tanks and opened fire. At this range even the 90mm projectile of the M-36 would ricochet off the front of the Mark VI. The enemy's high velocity gun would penetrate Shermans and TD's. The enemy realized his superiority in armor and firepower. TD gun commanders reported that Mark VI's would continue firing even when receiving direct hits from our guns.

Tiger versus  
Shermans

Approximately 45 Mark V and Mark VI tanks, supported by a battalion from the 9th Panzer Division, took part in the counter-attack. Two distinct endeavors were made to regain the town of Immendorf, which the 2d Armored had cleared, but the division held its ground. At least 11 enemy tanks were knocked out by artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers, and the attacks were repulsed, but with severe losses to our armor.

Slowly and steadily, using the sheer weight of numbers and constant pounding by air and artillery, the Ninth United States Army pushed forward toward its objective. On 20 November another fierce, day-long tank struggle developed between the 2d Armored and the 9th Panzer Division. Between 60 and 80 tanks were engaged and from 8 to 10 were knocked out. Although the enemy resisted our advance stubbornly, his armor was this time handicapped by lack of sufficient space in which to maneuver, and his tanks were pressed into an area small enough to make them vulnerable to artillery and air attack.

Another factor slowing up Ninth Army's advance was the stubborn resistance met in all the villages and small towns which were strong points in the German system of defenses. They were particularly troublesome to the infantry. Typical of these works were those encountered by the 29th Infantry Division before Setternich, Siersdorf and towns to the east. The Germans were in a series of narrow communication trenches extend-

Strongpoints  
slow advance

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ing in a network some 100 yards west of the towns. The trenches were irregular, zigzagged and interwoven. Scattered among them were fox holes, V shaped slit trenches and dugouts. The dugouts had log tops covered with earth and had L shaped pits in the ends where a man could stand and fire at approaching troops. All installations were connected. There was a ditch about four feet deep and five feet wide running north and south about 400 yards west of Siersdorf, and an antitank ditch east of the town running north and south. The trenches had been dug recently and hurriedly; the earth was fresh and muddy. These positions were supported by artillery, mortars and machine guns. It took time and men to reduce position such as these. The infantry had to clean out every strongpoint with bayonets and grenades.

The enemy's tenacity was apparent in the way he threw numerous desperate and fanatical counterattacks against our forces. After defending each area bitterly, he would retreat to the next defensive line under cover of darkness. German radio broadcasts called it "the most terrible and ferocious battle in the history of all wars". The stubborn manner in which he clung to footholds on the west bank of the Roer once our divisions reached the river, gave further evidence of his determination to delay our advance as long as possible.

The 29th Infantry Division was on the Roer River west bank by the end of November, but the Germans held tenaciously to three small bridgeheads on the American side of the river. The bridgeheads were in the Sportz Platz, Hasenfeld Gut, and in a patch of woods near the bridge on the Aldenhoven road. The Sportz Platz, with its entrance on the east side, was surrounded by a wall and a moat full of muddy water. Hasenfeld Gut was a group of stone buildings about a small courtyard some 1200 yards north of the Koslar-Julich road. Julich, across the river, was dominated by an ancient citadel where the Germans had established their CP.

During the course of the battle, our artillery and air beat Julich, the Sportz Platz, and Hasenfeld Gut into rubble, but the CP in the citadel held out and each night enemy troops were reinforced in their bridgehead from across the river.

The bridgeheads were protected by extensive antipersonnel mine fields. Time and time again, elements of the 29th Division advancing on the enemy positions at night, got caught in the fields. The mines were connected to trip wires. When they exploded, the Germans placed accurate machine gun fire upon the area. At the same time red flares went up and German mortar and artillery fire came down on our troops.

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These strong points resisted elements of the 29th Division for eight costly days. But by nightfall of 8 December, after a week of attacking with infantry and tanks and supported by air and artillery, the division was in possession of this sector.

Two other factors, the north and south flanks, slowed the Ninth Army's approach to the Roer. After an initial success

Slow progress  
on flanks

against Geilenkirchen, the British forces on the northern flank could not advance. They were thrown out of Hoven on 23 November by strong elements of the 9th Panzer Division in what the British called "sticky enemy action", and were put on the defensive for the rest of the campaign. The XIII Corps reverted to the Ninth Army and after extensive regrouping, pushed gingerly forward in the Lindern-Beeck area with the 102d and 84th Infantry Divisions. Operations were limited after Linlich was secured; strong enemy concentrations which the British had found impregnable were a constant source of danger to our exposed northern flank.

To the south, the First Army, making the main effort of the two American armies, had found the going tough. Its 104th Infantry Division, driving north, engaged in a house-to-house fight for the key city of Eschweiler. In addition, the First Army had to cross a smaller stream, the Inde, before it could come up to the Roer. The crossing of the Inde was bitterly contested. This slowed progress to the east and held up any rapid advance by the 30th Division.

The advance to the Roer River had been a slow, costly affair, but by the close of the month, both the XIII and XIX Corps were on the west bank of the river. Ninth Army units spent the first 15 days of December in resting, refitting, retraining, and preparing for a renewal of the assault across the Roer. Patrols across the river felt out the enemy, who was extremely sensitive to such probing, and much artillery was expended on both sides.

The XXIX TAC, almost undisputed in the air, continued to harry the enemy between the Roer and the Rhine, bombing his installations, strafing his barracks and columns, and even trying to set fire to the woods in which he hid his men and materiel.

The Germans Strike Back

The level of supplies was being built up, and engineers were schooled in river crossings. A target date was set for the new attack. But the German counteroffensive 16 December in Luxembourg and Belgium altered these plans, and the Ninth United States Army assumed a

Ardennes  
Offensive  
16 December

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defensive role to aid the First United States Army on the south.

Immediate support to the First Army required many changes in the Ninth Army. Ninth Army's reserves, the 7th Armored and 30th Infantry Divisions moved south on 17 December and became First Army troops.

On 20 December, Ninth Army passed to the operational control of the Twenty-First Army Group. This same day the 84th Infantry Division passed to the First Army, followed the next day by the 2d Armored Division.

XIX Corps took over the lines formerly held by VII Corps of the First Army, giving the Ninth Army a sector running from Wurm to a point just north of Monschau. XIX Corps assumed control over the 8th, 78th and 104th Infantry Divisions. XIII Corps added the former XIX Corps sector to its front, which was defended by the 29th and 102d Infantry Divisions.

As the German offensive mounted and surged towards the Maas River endangering the entire Allied western front, the Ninth Army stood ready to defend its position. Offensive operations were set aside and the northern front became a static winter line. The Ardennes bulge had upset the time schedule, and the line would have to be straightened before the new drive to the Rhine could begin.

### Logistics

One of the difficulties the Ninth United States Army encountered during the Roer offensive was the flooding of the Maas, which formed a barrier between the Ninth Army units and their sources of supply. The rain fall of November 1944, exceeding the normal by 1.50 inches, caused flood conditions on all the rivers of northern France, Belgium, and Holland. The rise of the Maas began during the week of 19-25 November and reached its height on 26 November, when the water level at Maastricht was about 13.5 feet above normal. The flood did not recede until after the middle of December, and during much of this period the current at Maastricht was in excess of 10 feet per second.

#### Transportation

The practical consequences of these flood conditions were important for Ninth Army operations. The two Second British Army bridges north of Maastricht were put out of service, and the two-way pile bridge in Maastricht was reduced to a one-way Class 40 bridge before it was finally closed on 22 November. At the height of the flood the deck level of this bridge was under water, but, by ballasting and sandbagging, the structure was not washed away. The 25-ton ponton bridge in Maastricht remained in operation for light vehicles, but it had to be length-

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ened during the period of high water, and two 500-pound barge anchors were used to hold it in place.

The closing of the pile bridge and the restriction on the use of the pontoon bridge reduced the river crossings for heavy traffic to one: the one-way fixed Bailey bridge in Maastricht, a Class 40 structure. This bridge carried not only Ninth Army traffic, but Second British Army movements as well. When British traffic appeared to be excessive, military police from British 30 Corps were put on duty to divert non-essential vehicles.

Prior to the launching of the attack toward the Roer on 16 November, strenuous efforts had been made to build up reserves of supplies sufficient to see the army through a prolonged offensive. Despite these efforts, however, numerous items were in short supply.

Supply

The most critical of all shortages was in ammunition, and the pinch was felt especially in certain heavy artillery calibers. A strict system of rationing was set up, and the army commander himself supervised the allocation of ammunition. According to General Simpson, greater success and more rapid progress in the advance to the Roer would have been attained had more ammunition been available. The number of artillery battalions was adequate, but ammunition had to be conserved. The successful attainment of objectives would have been expedited and accomplished with fewer losses if it had been possible to put artillery support to its maximum use.

Ammunition

The problem of keeping a reserve of armor to compensate for battle losses was also serious. An initial shortage of 111 medium tanks, based on T/E authorizations, was aggravated by combat losses of 53 tanks between 16 and 30 November. One hundred replacements received during the period left a shortage at the end of the month of 84 medium tanks, and there was no army reserve on hand. A disquieting factor was the increasingly apparent superiority of the German Mark V and VI tanks over our M-4 mediums in armor and armament.

Armor

The Ninth Army had to bear its share in the shortages that afflicted all units of the American Army on the Continent at the end of the 1944 campaign. Almost every one of the arms and services could have compiled a list of critical items, and in many instances lack of these items exerted a retarding influence on operations. For example, quantities of diesel oil and grease on hand amounted to only a fraction of a day's reserve, engineer Class II and IV supplies were low, bridge

Other shortages

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timbers and piles were on the critical list, treadway and Bailey bridges were delayed in delivery, and Signal Corps equipment was badly needed. Large stocks of some of these items were captured in the course of the Ninth Army's November advance, but lack of personnel to sort and transport this material made it less useful than it should have been. Delays in equipping units for winter warfare had a direct bearing on combat efficiency, and even when winter equipment was supplied, it was not always of a type that would keep the combat troops dry and warm in the rigorous winter climate of western Germany.

To speed up the process of requisitioning replacements by combat elements, the Ninth United States Army secured authority

Reinforcements

from Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, to let combat units requisition for anticipated losses 48 hours in advance. Units submitted close estimates of actual losses sustained. This system worked well until it was temporarily discontinued 22 November due to the lack of replacement personnel throughout the Ground Force Replacement System.

Coupled with increasing battle casualty losses after the jump-off on 16 November, the steady rise in non-battle casualties brought a severe strain to all front line units. Trench-

Non-battle  
casualties

foot accounted for a high percentage of these losses. No immediate solution was forthcoming. Large numbers of replacements were being diverted to the Sixth Army Group to assist its drive, and only a small number was available to Ninth Army. Even this limited supply was shut off by the end of the month, with no alleviation in sight until early in January 1945. The static line conditions during the last of December and January helped the army to build back its troop strength.

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## CHAPTER V

### STATIC WINTER LINE

Ninth United States Army reached the Roer River early in December, 1944, after almost a month of fighting during which the enemy had fallen back slowly, contesting possession of every village and ridge.

The battle for the river, which began 16 November, came to an end in the Army's sector on 8 December when the 29th Division cleared out the last resistance in and around

The Watch  
on the Roer the Sportz Platz in that portion of Julich lying on the west bank. The Army's front line now was the river with the exception of the left flank where it angled sharply back above Linnich to make juncture with the British, who had not yet come abreast.

Even while plans for the attack across the river were being formulated, von Rundstedt dealt First Army the opening blow of what was to develop into the Battle of the Bulge. From the outset it was apparent that the enemy was making a supreme effort to break out in the south, and it was likewise apparent that another effort might be made in the north, with disastrous results for the Allies if it succeeded. Increased German air and artillery activity, plus one or two small counterattacks pointed up these possibilities.

On the other hand the fast-spreading German counter-offensive in the south was a fact; the threat in the north was still only a threat. To stem the avalanche pouring west through the Ardennes, most of Ninth Army's strength was diverted to the south and on 20 December, First and Ninth Armies passed to operational control of 21 Army Group. By 30 December, Ninth Army had only five divisions, the 8th, 78th, 104th, 29th and 102d. All thought of an offensive was abandoned and the Army dug in behind wire and mine fields to resist a counterattack if one should come, and until the middle of February carried out a well-planned and thorough defensive operation.

Preparations  
for defense This defense was largely passive. Towns were fortified as strong points and communication trenches and field fortifications were set up, interlocking the towns in a scheme similar to the strategy used by the Germans in their defense of the same area, with barbed wire, antitank ditches and mine fields.

However, certain aggressive measures were taken. After the fortification of the towns and the field works had been completed, elements of Ninth Army began a har-

Harassing  
activities assing program designed to keep the enemy off balance, deceive him as to the army's disposition and intentions, interdict his movements, deprive him of rest, and at the same time conserve

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our strength. All available weapons, including artillery and mortars, tank destroyer and tank guns, AA weapons, and long range 30 and 50 caliber machine guns, were concentrated on sensitive points at abrupt intervals. Scarcity of ammunition prevented the full use of artillery in this program.

Reconnaissance and combat patrols were sent out frequently; in addition to their normal activities, these patrols placed booby traps in enemy installations. Occasionally dummy tank concentrations were prepared to deceive enemy aircraft, and tanks were driven at night to give the enemy the impression that armor was being massed on the front. Night raids of up to company strength were planned and executed. Emphasis was placed upon psychological warfare, use being made of propaganda shells and loudspeakers.

The weather was consistently bad. There was rain and intermittent light snow until the first of January, when there was a four inch snow which held and was increased. The snow and cold weather added to the difficulties of forward elements, particularly to the hardships encountered by patrols. It made discovery of enemy activity easier, however, because tracks indicated occupied positions and installations.

Weather conditions

Experiments were made with snow suits for outposts and patrols, and unsuspected difficulties were encountered. A loose cape seemed desirable because it showed no straight lines or angles. Experience proved that it became damp, froze, and rattled. It was also awkward; when a man had to crawl upon the ground, it got under his knees and tripped him if he tried to rise. Snow suits proved dangerous in wooded areas, as the trunks of trees remained dark and a white figure was etched sharply against this background.

The Germans, while not aggressive, were very alert and reacted promptly with mortar and artillery fire to attempts by patrols or raiding parties to operate east of the Roer. The Germans also sent out patrols to secure prisoners and information, but their main activity was consistent harassing artillery fire.

Ninth Army became more aggressive toward the end of January.

Troops dispositions

At this time, the XIX Corps protected the south flank of the Army with the 78th, 8th, and 104th Infantry Divisions. XIII Corps held the northern sector with the 29th Infantry Division on the right and the 102d Infantry Division on the left. XVI Corps was assigned but not operational. The Army was under operational control of Twenty-First Army Group.

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On 26 January the 102d Division launched a limited objective attack in support of the British 12 Corps. Against light resistance the division advanced up to 2000 yards, clearing the enemy from all but a few pockets on the west bank of the Roer River. Four days later the 78th Division, with Combat Command A of the 5th Armored Division, attacked, making gains up to 2500 yards. On 31 January the advance was continued, and at Widdau a junction was effected with elements of V Corps of the First Army.

Limited attacks

At the beginning of the static period in December, the possibility of the enemy mounting a two-pronged attack, moving northwest and southwest to recapture Aachen, was weighed. By the middle of January this seemed unlikely. The enemy apparently was having trouble in specifically identifying and locating Allied formations. If he suspected a build-up in this area, he might try a limited attack from across the Roer, supplemented by V-weapons, saboteurs and paratroopers.

Enemy capabilities

Three enemy infantry divisions, as well as drafts from others, left the Army zone early in the month to take part in the fighting elsewhere, but late in the month elements of the Fifth Panzer Army moved out of the bulge into the Cologne area for resting and refitting. This army constituted a reserve for defense of the Ruhr-Cologne region.

Logistics

A sudden turn in the weather during the first few days of February brought an early thaw to the frozen countryside. Heavy troop movements into the area damaged the main supply routes, but engineer crews, with some aid from the Belgian Highway Department, Dutch civilians, infantry units, and prisoners of war maintained the army road net in condition to carry necessary traffic. Some highways were completely closed and traffic had to be rerouted over secondary roads; other routes were limited to one-way traffic. But no serious delay was occasioned by the unseasonable weather.

Transportation

The warm weather with its accompanying rain also caused the rivers to rise. High water in the Maas River made the Berg and Maeseyck Bailey Pontoon bridges unserviceable. The pile bridge at Maastricht was closed on 12 February, and after damage caused by a loose raft, the heavy pontoon bridge there was removed by engineers. All northern traffic in the army area had to cross the Maas River over the Wilhelmina Bridge in Maastricht until the waters subsided.

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The morale and welfare of the troops were given special consideration during this period. Many of the outfits in the Ninth Army had been in almost continuous fighting since their initial landings, and the long winter period had further heightened the need for relief for all troops. Consequently, a comprehensive program of leaves, furloughs, and passes was implemented. The allocation of thirty day temporary duty quotas in the United States was worked out to give consideration to officers and enlisted men with long overseas service. The army set up a new quota for officers and enlisted men to visit Great Britain, and the program of passes to Paris and Brussels was extended to include more comfort and convenience in arrangements.

### Morale

Corps and divisions, as they advanced further into Germany, found that the operation of their respective rest centers was becoming increasingly difficult. Therefore, this headquarters in conjunction with the American Red Cross, made plans to establish Army Rest Centers in the larger towns in Holland. These centers when established would service all troops of the Army on a pass quota basis.

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## CHAPTER VI

### FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE

During the first part of February, the army staff made plans for its greatest offensive to date--to cross the Roer River and clear the Cologne plain to the Rhine. Supreme Headquarters had directed that a combined British-American operation be staged, with the British striking south and Ninth United States Army moving north to meet them. Target date for the British operation, Operation Veritable, had been set as 8 February, but it was first necessary for Ninth United States Army to take over from 12 British Corps in the Roermond sector in order to free the latter for the attack in the north. No date was set for the start of Ninth Army's operation, Operation Grenade, but it was planned to follow the British attack by not more than two or three weeks.

#### Offensive plans

Meanwhile, in the closing days of January, the British staged a limited offensive in 12 Corps sector with the objective of straightening their lines and closing nearer the Roer. Ninth Army's only active part in this minor operation came 26 January when the 102d Division attacked northeast from Lindern and the ground running from there to Linnich to seize the river town of Brachelen and maintain contact with the British 52 Division on the left as it moved forward in its zone. The 102d's advance was virtually unopposed, for the Germans had fallen back across the river, leaving Brachelen lightly outposted.

The build-up of troops in Ninth Army's sector had begun, and detailed efforts were being made to keep the enemy ignorant of the shifts. Troops coming up were moved as much as possible at night and bumper marks and divisional shoulder patches were kept covered. Personnel were kept in assembly areas and large towns were off limits. A strict radio silence was maintained while the units were on the move. As a barrier to line crossers and agents, all civilians in the area 10 kilometers west of the river were evacuated and all civilian travel in that zone was prohibited.

#### The Army Prepares

Numerous town checks, consisting of house-to-house raids, identification scrutiny, and screening of all civilians in conjunction with military government registration, revealed that approximately one of every 200 civilians was a member of the Wehrmacht.

Supply provisions for the pending operation were carefully prepared and were based on total strength of three armored and seven infantry divisions. Additional service troops were re-

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requested from Twelfth Army Group to support the combat units. They assisted in the unloading, classification and distribution of supplies, performed maintenance, and augmented the evacuation system.

Supply

Adequate stocks of Class I and III supplies were on hand and the other classes were considered satisfactory. The stringent restriction on ammunition expenditure had resulted in an adequate reserve of approximately 46,000 tons by 23 February, and a five day allocation amounting to an average of 6 units of fire for two corps and 3½ units for the other corps was made. The materiel situation improved and normal requisitions were being filled promptly. Greater tonnages of supplies were moved into the army area and distributed than at any other period. Emergency supply by air was in readiness for any eventuality that might arise after the jump off: CATOR (combined air transport operations room) had 500 C-47's spotted and so loaded as to support a division for one day.

Based on the November-December Roer River offensive figures, personnel loss estimates were made for 1,000 battle casualties and 500 non-battle casualties per day for a ten-day period. Sub-

Personnel

sequent operations were to show that actual personnel losses were much lower than expected, averaging 749 battle and 292 non-battle casualties. Engineer losses at the Roer River were only about one third of those contemplated. The non-battle rates remained constant before and during the operation. The spring-like weather apparently kept the latter figures down, and the light resistance on the part of the enemy cut battle losses considerably.

On 7 February, Letter of Instructions Number 15, Headquarters, Twelfth Army Group, signaled the go-ahead: "While 21 Army Group carries out Operation Veritable, Ninth United States Army will execute Operation Grenade under operational control of 21 Army Group."

Plans for Veritable and Grenade

This letter of instructions was followed a day later by Letter of Instructions Number 13, Headquarters, Ninth United States Army, in which the broad plan for the attack was outlined for the corps and target date was set for 10 February.

In its outline of the enemy dispositions and capabilities, the letter began with the assumption that the enemy was known to expect an attack from the west in the Aachen area but that he was not aware of its exact locale or direction and that he might not expect the Americans to be capable of an attack so soon after the Ardennes operation.

The enemy's tactical doctrine, it was said, was to hold his

front lines with infantry, keeping his armor in reserve, and it was pointed out that the German lines along the east bank of the Roer were known to be thinly held. "It is considered," was the conclusion, "that a quick breakthrough of the enemy's Roer River line defenses, followed by the unhesitating exploitation of every enemy weakness, could enable the Ninth United States Army to accomplish its mission with rapidity."

XXIX TAC was ordered to isolate the battlefield with rear area bombing, conducted at sufficiently long range to preserve secrecy of the location of the attack. No "carpet" bombing of the enemy's lines were ordered.

Ninth United States Army, the letter ordered, "will attack northeast at H-Hour 10 February, crossing the Roer River between Krauthausen and Hilfarth, advancing to destroy the enemy in its zone and to seize the west bank of the Rhine River between Neuss and Mors." In other words, the Army, after smashing across the Roer, was to execute a vast wheeling movement to the north until it reached a point opposite its objectives, when it was to wheel once more to the east, completing a crooked figure S, to come abreast on its objective.

The bulk of the work was delegated by the letter to XIII Corps in the center, holding the line from Flossdorf to Hilfarth. XIII Corps, composed of the 84th and 102d Infantry Divisions and the 5th Armored Division, was given eight specific missions. They were: (1) to reduce Erkelenz; (2) to operate west of the zone immediately north of the Roer to secure an initial bridgehead for XVI Corps on the left; (3) to assist XIX Corps (on the right) in reducing the Munchen-Gladbach area; (4) to assist XVI Corps in reducing the Siegfried Line defenses in its zone; (5) to reduce the Dulken-Viersen area; (6) to protect the left flank of Ninth Army beyond the Munchen-Gladbach area; (7) to take Krefeld, and (8) to seize the west bank of the Rhine in its zone.

XIX Corps, on the right, composed of the 29, 30th and 83d Infantry Divisions, backed by the 2d Armored Division, was instructed to: (1) protect the right flank of Ninth Army; (2) reduce the Munchen-Gladbach area; (3) take Neuss, and (4) seize the west bank of the Rhine in its zone.

XVI Corps, participating in its first offensive, was ordered to: (1) make a feint in the Heinzberg area during the crossing by the other two corps; (2) exploit in its zone the bridgehead over the Roer River seized by the XIII and XIX Corps; (3) outflank and reduce the Siegfried Line defenses from the south and east; (4) eliminate enemy resistance in zone, and (5) be prepared for further operations to the east. The Corps was composed initially of the 35th Infantry and 8th Armored Divisions,

plus the British 7th Armored, attached for operational control.

The 95th Infantry Division, Ninth Army's reserve force, was held ready for use if needed.

The letter took cognizance of the possibility that the Roer might be flooded after the start of the operation. "The probability that the Roer River dams may be in enemy hands at the time of the crossing of the Roer River," it stated, "requires a strong initial build-up to insure the self-sufficiency of the bridgehead during the possible flood period. The flooding would inundate the Roer Valley and would interrupt traffic for five or six days."

The Roer Dams

Such was the situation on 8 February, the day the British and Canadians of 21 Army Group jumped off in the north to begin their Operation Veritable. In Letter of Instructions Number 10, Planning Directive, Headquarters Ninth United States Army, 28 January, the broad plan for Operation Veritable had been outlined as follows:

"First Canadian Army is preparing to attack southeast from Nijmegen, with the objective of clearing the areas between the Rhine and the Maas as far south as the general line Xanten-Geldern. Target date 8 February." In the same directive, Ninth United States Army's broad part in the operation was outlined by providing for the relief on the left of a part of the 2d British Army in order to free the British to move north and take position for their attack.

The Canadians

It was originally planned for the Canadians to attack earlier than Ninth United States Army because Field Marshall Montgomery was said to anticipate heavier resistance in the north, and the general marshiness of the terrain in that area was expected to slow progress. It was his anticipation that, when the juncture between the two armies was effected and the west bank of the Rhine was seized, that a crossing, Marshall Montgomery hoped to press east with the object of rendering the Ruhr industrial region useless to the Germans and perhaps crushing the Wehrmacht if it chose to make a stand on the flat plain before the Weser.

Some hint as to the planned scope of these operations is contained in Letter of Instruction Number 14, Headquarters, Ninth Army, 19 February 1945, to the commanding general of XVI Corps. The letter said that First Army, on the left flank of Twelfth Army Group, would eliminate enemy resistance west of the Rhine south of Neuss to at least Cologne and would then contain the enemy east of the Rhine and be prepared to

Scope of the operations

force a crossing later. (The Ludendorf Bridge at Remagen at that time had not achieved its notoriety.) Meanwhile, First Canadian Army was to complete Operation Veritable, clearing the area between the Maas and the Rhine as far south as the general line Xanten-Geldern, and was then to dispose its forces for a possible Rhine crossing in the Emmerich area and was to cross if ground reconnaissance determined it feasible. The target date was 31 March. Second British Army was to take over the portion of the area cleared by First Canadian and was to extend its zone southward with the object of forcing a Rhine crossing in the Rees and Xanten area.

Upon completion of Operation Grenade, Ninth Army was to contain the enemy from Neuss north to a junction with the Second British Army, and was also to force a crossing in the Rheinberg area. The bulk of this work was to be done by XVI Corps, which was to assist in the securing of a bridgehead in the Wessel area in conjunction with three airborne divisions to be dropped there.

The planning directive of Letter of Instructions Number 10 also outlined two broad plans for Ninth United States Army's Operation Grenade, one for a rapid advance and one to be employed if resistance was heavier. The plans in their initial stages were identical, both calling for a crossing of the Roer and expansion of the bridgehead until it reached a general line Harff-Garzweiler-Otzenrath-Keyenberg-Kuckum-Erkelenz-Golkkrath-Ratheim-Oberbruck. If resistance became heavy, XIII Corps would then be called upon to drive deep across its left flank to help XVI Corps deal with the Siegfried Line defenses. In the event, however, that the violence of Ninth Army's initial attack disrupted the enemy, all phase lines were to be dropped and the attack would be turned into a pursuit.

Ninth Army's 10 February attack, however, was never to come off. During the planning it was assumed that the Roer dams would be overrun by the First Army and that the chances of the enemy's destroying them were not great. But by clever use of the key ground features, the Germans had made the dams almost impregnable. All roads to them came from the east. The western approach was over rugged terrain. In repeated attempts the air arm had proved useless in cracking the dam structures. The First Army set powerful forces against this area in an attempt to

The Roer  
Valley flood

take this key to all northern operations. V Corps led the attack, and by 9 February elements had reached the major dams. This threat forced the enemy to destroy portions of the discharge valves of the Schwammanuel Dam, releasing volumes of uncontrollable water, causing the Roer River to reach its maximum flood stage and overflow its banks along the entire Ninth Army front. The water level rose 5 feet 2 inches between 0800 9 February and 0800 11 February, the velocity increased to 6-7 miles an hour, and the

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width averaged 400 yards, reaching 2000 yards at one point near Linnich. Engineers contemplated at least six days of flood and perhaps considerably more.

A hurried decision was reached to postpone the attack and the field commanders were notified verbally. Ninth Army, poised for its blow across the Roer, turned back to its training schedules, and the engineer units on hand to bridge the river picked up their equipment and moved back from the front. Meanwhile, the British and Canadian attack in the north ground ahead, diverting enemy troops which otherwise would have been arrayed against Ninth Army. The Roer, more than ever the Army's implacable foe, continued to rise until by the morning of 11 February its width averaged 400 yards, reaching 2000 yards near Linnich, and its current raced along at a speed in excess of six miles per hour. The thaw continued, and troops moving up to or shifting on the front now had to contend with deep mud and roads rutted and torn by heavy traffic.

The delay, however, could be no more than temporary. The Army Engineer, on 21 February, determined that the river, though still swollen, could be crossed and bridged successfully on 23 February. With this knowledge, the Commanding General announced 23 February as D Day. H-Hour was set at 0330 and it was announced that the artillery preparation for the river crossing would last 45 minutes.

D Day  
H Hour

Annex Number 1 repeated the warning that the enemy expected an attack in the Aachen area, but this time added that he knew its general locale but not its direction. It also stated that the enemy was "fairly well aware" of Ninth Army's general strength and disposition, and that evidence pointed to the enemy having recently augmented his forces with limited troops. "An attack by Ninth Army," the annex concluded, "can expect to meet initially and in addition to troops in the line two weak infantry divisions and one or two panzer divisions."

Actually, just prior to D-Day, G-2 estimated that the enemy order of battle included elements of the 8th Parachute Division with combat strength of 1,000 men; two Volksgrenadier divisions totalling 6,500 men; elements of another Volksgrenadier division containing approximately 4,500 men; an infantry division, strength 5,000; and various miscellaneous units some 1,000 strong. This gave the enemy a total strength of about 18,000 men with 19,000 immediate reserves, including two panzer divisions and 1 Panzer Grenadier Division. Before the campaign was concluded, all three latter division had been met, but no unexpected units were identified.

Annex Number 1 to Letter of Instruction Number 13 also list-

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XVI Corps' composition as having changed to include the 35th and 79th Infantry Divisions and the 8th Armored Division with the 7th British Armored Division no longer attached for operational control.

As the flow from the blasted floodgates of the Schwammanuel Dam lessened, the Roer began to recede within its banks, until on the eve of D-Day it was almost back to normal. The banks, however, had been left marshy on both sides, and the

The River  
Recedes

current still flowed swiftly, which would hinder not only the initial crossing by assault boats but the engineers' bridging operations as well.

The weather continued mild for February, and occasional rains helped keep the ground in the same muddy state it had been left by the early February thaw. East of the Roer the country stretched level and open with relatively little to hinder the operations of tanks, but, in view of the condition of the ground, it seemed unlikely that the armor would steal the show from the infantry once the crossing was achieved.

By D-Day, Ninth Army was deployed along the Roer from a point just south of Inde on the right to Roermond in the north. On the right was XIX Corps, in the center XIII Corps and to the left XVI Corps, which had replaced the British XII Corps in that sector on 6 February.

In XIX Corps and XIII Corps, the four divisions which were to make the assault crossings were in line. To the extreme right in XIX Corps' zone was the 30th Infantry Division, and to its left was the 29th, the boundary between the two divisions lying just south of Aldenhoven. Just below Flossdorf the 29th tied in with the 102d Division of XIII Corps. The 84th Division occupied a sector to the left of the 102d running from Linnich on the right to Randerath on the left.

At Brachelen, in the 84th's sector, the line left the river and ran along the high ground to its east a distance varying up to several thousand yards. At Randerath, boundary line between XIII and XVI Corps, the 35th Division made contact with the 84th and occupied a sector running north to a point just south of Heinsberg. The 314th Regiment of the 79th Division held the center of XVI Corps' sector and the 8th Armored Division held the left, making the latter the left flank unit of Ninth Army.

To the north of Ninth Army lay the 2d British Army, to the south the First United States Army.

The four divisions assaulting the Roer line had attached special engineer units to aid the actual crossing and to erect

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bridges. The engineer groups and the divisions to which they were attached follow:

1115th Engineer Combat Group to 30th Infantry  
1104th Engineer Combat Group to 29th Infantry  
1141st Engineer Combat Group to 102d Infantry  
1149th Engineer Combat Group to 84th Infantry

#### THE RIVER CROSSING

At 0245 23 February, Ninth United States Army's artillery opened one of the heaviest artillery preparations of the war. All available weapons took part, including the infantry's mortars, anti-tank and cannon companies, attached tank and tank destroyer battalions, parts of the armored divisions, division artillery and the heavier guns of corps artillery.

D Day  
H Hour

Simultaneously, at some places along the river, smoke screens were laid by chemical troops to screen troops moving down to the bank, or to divert the enemy's attention to places where no crossings were to be made.

The night was dark and overcast, although there was no rain.

At some points, small raiding parties went across the river prior to H-Hour to establish preliminary bridgheads or to wipe out machine gun nests covering the river, but the first assault waves crossed at 0330 as the artillery preparation died away and the remaining fire shifted to points further inland. The tactics of crossing varied with the divisions, according to the nature of the river and the objectives, but the initial waves all crossed in assault boats paddled by attached engineers. Other waves which crossed within a short time after H-Hour also were paddled across while the divisional and attached engineers began work on the foot and infantry support bridges.

The comparatively light small arms fire during the crossing in most sectors attested to the effectiveness of the artillery. But from positions further back, enemy mortars fired on final protective areas along the banks and in the river. This fire, plus the mine fields on the east bank, caused most of the casualties in the crossing.

The river itself, still slightly higher than normal and with a correspondingly swift current, helped contribute to the natural confusion of the attack. Many boats got out of control and were swept downstream, while others overturned after near-misses from mortars and dumped their occupants into the water. Nearly all the soldiers, however, wore life belts, and there were few drowned, although those carried downstream were of no use to the initial attack.

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Within a few minutes the assault waves had reached the east bank and were proceeding inland to reorganization points. Because of darkness and the nature of the operation there could be no attempt at a general coordination; after

Crossing completed

they reorganized, the various battalions moved out against previously-assigned objectives.

As the troops moved inland, enemy small arms fire stiffened, although it never became heavy enough at any point to hold up the attack for long. Many Germans in the emplacements along the river line had died under the shelling while others gave themselves up with hardly a fight. Most of the prisoners taken in the first stages of the attack had been stupefied by the artillery, and some were openly crying.

On the Army's right, both the 30th and 29th Divisions attacked with two regiments abreast. In the 30th's sector, the advance moved rapidly inland, and by noon had overrun several small villages, including Selgersdorf, Altenberg and Dauberrath on the right and Selhausen and Krauthausen on the left. Resistance generally was light.

The 29th's principal objective was Julich, where the remaining enemy troops made a determined stand. By nightfall street-fighting was lessening but some Germans still remained in the city's ancient Citadel. One regiment and part of another was occupied there all day, but the third, on the left, took Broich and consolidated the ground to its east and north.

At the close of day, XIX Corps actually held two bridgeheads, one for each division, since the 29th and 30th were not in contact in the center.

XIII Corps' crossings met with equal success. The 102d attacked with two regiments at Linnich and Rurdorf, ignoring Flossdorf where the marshy banks made a crossing impractical. Tetz, Gevenich and Glimbach, the principal villages along the river in the sector, fell quickly, and in the afternoon a battalion took Boslar in the face of

Tetz, Gevenich, and Glimbach fall

the heaviest opposition encountered by the division during the day. The 84th attacking from just north of Linnich to a point just north of the blasted railway bridge at Brachelen, also achieved initial surprise and by night fall had made one of the deepest penetrations with the capture of Baal, to the east of Lovenich.

While the other two corps were crossing the river, XVI Corps attacked to secure the last villages west of the Roer in enemy hands. Following a preparatory bombardment of the same duration as those for the other two corps, XVI jumped-off at H-Hour. The 35th Division, reinforced by the 15th Cavalry Group, moved against light opposition to take several small

villages on the right. Only the 314 RCT of the 79th Division was employed because of Army's desire to retain as much of the division as possible for use as a reserve if needed, but the 314th advanced to take three other villages on the left.

As the troops moved inland from the bridgeheads, enemy mortar fire along the river lifted to some extent, enabling the engineers to begin work on the heavier bridges. Foot bridges were in place at some points before dawn, but work on the infantry support bridges took longer and the treadway bridges were to come still later. The current, which at some points exceeded the theoretical maximum a support bridge could stand; marshy bank, drifting overturned boats, and debris all combined with enemy fire to slow the engineers' work. Wheeled traffic, however, was crossing on the support bridges by about noon at some places, although several bridges were knocked out by fire or broke almost as soon as they were completed. One of the first of the treadway bridges, at Linnich, was hit and destroyed by a bomb just as the first vehicles were about to cross.

By the close of the day, twenty-eight infantry battalions were across the river and the bridgehead extended from one to four miles inland. Casualties had been much lighter than had been expected. During the night, the enemy mounted counterattacks at several points, but there was no concerted effort to destroy the bridgehead, and the American lines held firm. Ninth Army spent the night consolidating its positions and bringing attached tanks and tank destroyers across, and in XIX Corps' sector the 30th Division launched a night attack with two regiments that caught the enemy completely off guard and resulted in the capture of Hambach and Niederzier.

Close of  
first day

On 24 February the attack continued in XIII and XIX Corps' zones. XVI Corps spent 24 and 25 February cleaning out pockets of resistance west of the Roer and preparing for a crossing on 26 February. Hilfarth, north of Brachelen, was the principal place taken by XVI Corps on the 25th. Generally, the attack on 24 February consisted of advances inland and consolidating the flanks preparatory to the start of the wheeling movement to the north. Resistance in Julich collapsed during the day, and the 29th was able to strengthen its positions around Broich and push on to Stetternich, Neuhaus and Konigskamp. The 330th Infantry of the 83d Division, which had been attached to the 29th but which had not been employed previously, was committed on the night of the 25 to relieve one of the 29th's regiments.

Also on 24 February, the 29th and 30th joined forces when the 30th pushed to then northwest through the marshalling yards which had separated the divisions after the crossing. The 30th also began to move against Steinstrass and deployed on its right in the edge of the Hambach Forest, where it encountered some enemy armor, identified later by prisoners as a part of the 9th Panzer Division.

XIII Corps during the fighting on 24 February pushed more to the north than XIX Corps, resulting in an exposed right flank with which the corps had to contend until the Munchen-Gladbach area was reached. The 102d moved north against light opposition to seize Hottorf and Kofferen, while the 84th, which had an exposed left flank, broadened its sector and pushed slightly to the north. The division captured Dobern and cut the Baal-Rathem road.

The first of the armored divisions began crossing the river on 25 February when one combat command of the 5th Armored Division started across Linnich. One task force, the initial element of the combat command, immediately was put into the line to protect the right flank of the 102d, which was being steadily lengthened as the infantry division swept north that day to take Lovenich and Katzem.

The first combat command of the 2d Armored Division did not start across until 26 February, when a combat command moved to Julich and was put in the line to hold the right flank of the 30th Division.

By nightfall 25 February, the four infantry divisions in XIII and XIX Corps had firmly established their bridgeheads and had carried their wheel to the north to a point where Ninth Army's

Direction of  
attack  
shifted

attacking forces lay squarely athwart the enemy's defenses, which were obviously designed to protect the Rhineland against an attack due east. After 25 February, it is doubtful if any enemy line existed in the usual sense of the term, and what resistance was encountered was from scattered units attempting to slow Ninth Army's advance until the bulk of German troops could retreat across the river.

German defenses in the area consisted of individual foxholes and fire trenches at key points and along the roads, which generally were paved with cobblestones and lined with trees. The trenches, except when they were part of a perimeter defense system, faced west, and the artillery pits in the fields also were designed to protect the guns against fire from the west. Nearly every town and city was protected by anti-tank ditches which circled all but the eastern edges.

After the initial attack had broken their defenses, the Germans fought in small groups, sometimes supported by tanks or self-propelled guns. They made good use of the "guts" - farm buildings with outhouses - which dotted the area, as well as the patches of woods and the edges of towns. Except for isolated instances, they made little attempt to fight in the towns, but delayed the Americans as long as they could before they gave up a town and withdrew to the north or east.

Infantry advances on 25 February resulted in the capture of

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several towns and villages, the largest of which was Lovenich, in the 102d's zone. The 29th Division took Welldorf and Gusten and cleared the Lindenberger Wald, while the 330th RCT, still attached to the 29th, cleared Mersch and Pattern. The 30th Division advanced rapidly on its left flank to take Steinstrass, Rodingen and Hollen, but held up on its right, still open to attack from the forest area.

The 84th Division, guarding XIII Corps' left flank until XVI Corps could cross, made only limited advances northeast during the day. Two villages, Hoverath and Hetzerath, in the division zone were taken.

#### XVI CORPS CROSSES

While the armor continued to cross in XIX and XIII Corps' sectors and the infantry attack started to move in high gear, XVI Corps on 26 February moved across the Roer to begin its task of clearing the area between the Roer and XIII Corps' left flank. While one regiment of the 35th Division crossed the river at Hilfarth, making

#### XVI Corps strikes

an assault there with the purpose of securing intact a stone bridge which had been only damaged, another regiment crossed the river at Linnich and moved north through the 84th Division's zone to attack directly north. The attack was successful although Doveren, the line of departure for the regiment attacking north, was still in enemy hands at 0600, H-Hour, and was the scene of a sharp engagement before the regiment could use it as a jump-off point. Caught between forces attacking north and east, the Germans in the area retreated, and the division secured the bridge intact and pushed inland to secure Klein Gladbach and Golkrath. To the north, the 314th aided the crossing with fire and a diversionary smoke screen.

#### THE PURSUIT BEGINS

Beginning 26 February, all elements of XIII and XIX Corps began to move forward at the maximum speed the troops were physically able to stand, and while these two corps swung wide on the Army's right, attacking northeast toward the Rhine, XVI Corps' push north in the zone east of the Roer gained speed after an initial build-up. Poor soil conditions prevented the armored divisions from playing a major part in the advance, although the road net, except in XVI Corps' sector, was good.

Erkelenz, one of XIII Corps' assigned objectives, fell to the 102d Division on 26 February. The city was only lightly defended. The same day XVI Corps extended its front to the north about halfway to Roermond, and gains averaging 2000 yards were made by the other divisions. Numerous small towns fell with hardly a shot fired.

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The 84th Division drove far to the north on 27 February when it advanced from positions along a line west of Erkelenz to cut the Roermond-Hardt road. This put the 84th the furthest north of any of Ninth Army's units and gave it a lengthy exposed left flank and a front line facing almost due east running from the furthest point north to the contact point with the 120d, which had attacked over a broad front during the day to take Rheindahlen on its

Rheindahlen  
and Wickrath  
Fall

left and Wickrath on its right. XIX Corps' divisions, which had a total front almost twice as broad as XIII Corps, still had not driven as far north as the latter, but during the day pushed forward all along the line to seize Keyenberg, Holzweiler, Immerath and Jackerath in the 29th's zone and Niederembt, Kirchherten, Hohenholz, and Konigshoven in the 30th's. This represented almost the last offensive operation of the campaign for the 30th, because on 28 February the 2d Armored Division passed through, leaving the 30th pinched out on the right with its furthest advance just east of Grevenbroich, in First Army's zone. The 30th after 27 February guarded Ninth Army's right flank until First Army advanced sufficiently to the east.

XIX and XIII Corps' armor was employed in force for the first time on 26 February and from that time on was used increasingly, despite the mud which slowed the tanks. On 26 February a combat command of the 5th Armored Division assisted the 102d Division in the capture of Erkelenz and seized several small towns to its east. On 27 February, the tanks were to pass through the infantry against Rheindahlen, but mud and stronger-than-usual opposition made it necessary to call for infantry support before the day was through. Hardt was taken the next day by the infantry while the 5th Armored remained in corps reserve.

The 2d Armored Division, with the 331st RCT of the 83d Division attached to CCB, attacked with two combat commands on 28 February, passing through the left of the 30th Division's zone.

2d Armored  
enters the  
race

The attack moved rapidly northeast against moderate opposition, and by night one combat command, split into two task forces, had cut the Rheydt-Gelsenkirchen-Glehn-Neuss highway at Glehn and the main highway to Neuss. The attack had gone so swiftly during the day that the supporting artillery found it necessary to leap-frog batteries and at times to clean out pockets of Germans before occupying firing positions. Two of the division's field artillery battalions displaced four times during the day.

The infantry advances on 28 February in XIII and XIX Corps' sectors were almost as rapid. The 29th Division took Rheydt Odenkirchen and by dark was threatening Rheydt, last barrier before the industrial center of Munchen-Gladbach. The 84th Division's advance brought it to within striking distance of Dulken, while the 102d took Hardt, last sizeable community before the city of Viersen.

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XVI Corps' gains through 23 February were comparatively slight as the corps continued to bring troops across the bridgehead it had won on the 26th. The corps, however, pushed slightly to the north and maintained contact with the 84th Division on its right.

By 1 March, after only six days of fighting, Ninth Army was more than halfway to its final objectives and opposition was lessening as the enemy became more and more disorganized. Casualties had been far lighter than had been expected, and the morale of the troops, who realized their success, was high.

When the attack started 1 March, Neuss was endangered by the advances of the 2d Armored Division the previous day. The 29th Division was poised before Munchen-Gladbach and the 84th and 102d Divisions were ready to start their attack against the twin objectives of Dulken and Viersen, respectively. XVI Corps, its bridgehead consolidated, prepared for its attack north to Venlo to link with the 2d British Army coming in behind the First Canadian Army as it drove south between the Maas and the Rhine.

Enemy resistance in Ninth Army's zone virtually collapsed to nothing on 1 March. The 30th Division, still guarding the right flank of XIX Corps, occupied the towns of Morken and Harff without opposition. The 83d Division, minus the regiment which remained attached to the 2d Armored Division, attacked with its remaining two regiments against Neuss and by nightfall had reached and crossed the Nord Canal. Opposition stiffened as the regiments neared the city, but the attack was continued after dark and elements of the division were in the western edge of Neuss by midnight. Meanwhile, to the left, the 2d Armored Division resumed its advance at the same speed of the day before. By midafternoon, elements were establishing a bridgehead across the Nord Canal in the vicinity of Holzbutgen, while other elements were clearing the area between Neuss and the Erft River. Other task forces of the division struck north, capturing Schiefbahn, Willich and Osterath, across the canal, and by night the furthest advance to the north had cut the Krefeld-Neuss road and rail line and threatened Krefeld from the south.

Resistance  
collapses

The 29th Division completed its work 1 March when it sent one regiment through Munchen-Gladbach while another cleared the suburbs to the south and east of the city. The division, which suffered almost no casualties in taking Munchen-Gladbach, first large industrial center to fall to Ninth Army, was pinched out after 1 March and remained in an assembly area near Munchen-Gladbach.

XIII Corps on 1 March seized the remaining sizeable towns

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before Krefeld, which guarded the west bank of the Rhine in the corps sector. The 102d took Viersen, which had been left virtually undefended, and moved to the north of the city to deploy two regiments along the Niers Canal. The 84th took Dulken and advanced north from there to take Suchteln and also deploy along the canal.

XVI Corps attacked north on 1 March, employing a motorized task force of the 35th Division. The task force, composed of infantry, artillery, tanks and tank destroyers and attached engineers and medical troops, passed through the remaining regiments of the division at Dalheim and Rodgen, and by late afternoon had reached Venlo. Only light opposition was encountered, for the enemy had withdrawn the bulk of his troops from the area. The same day, elements of the 8th Armored Division, only one combat command (CCB) of which was committed in the campaign because of the poor road net, conducted reconnaissance missions to the north and east and cleared Waldneil. Road blocks, mine fields and blown bridges hindered the tanks. Elements of the 15th Cavalry Group entered Roermond and found it deserted.

The drive to the north by the 35th's task force had closed the last portion of the Roer's banks in Ninth Army's zone, which made it unnecessary for the 314th RCT of the 73d Division to remain in position along the west bank on the left of the XVI Corps' sector. As a result, the regiment was returned to control of the division on 1 March and saw no more action during the campaign.

Resistance stiffened considerably in some sections of XIX and XIII Corps' sectors on 2 March as the German fought to hold open their escape routes across the Rhine. Two regiments of the 83d Division cleared Neuss and had reached the Rhine by mid-afternoon. All bridges in the area had been blown before the arrival of the American troops. The 83d spent the remainder of the day mopping up in the town and surrounding territory.

Part of the 331st RCT of the 83d, still attached to the 2d Armored Division, spent all 2 March battling against a strong enemy counterattack which developed at Kapellen, which had been the scene of a sharp battle the day before. One battalion of the 331st was one of the first elements in Ninth Army to reach the Rhine when it advanced from Holzheim in the early morning hours and crossed the Erft Canal. By 0500 the battalion was on the river's bank and was mopping up the area.

The Rhine  
is reached

Further to the north, four divisions converged on Krefeld and its suburbs on 2 March. The boundary between XIX and XIII Corps ran to the east of the city so that the 2d Armored Division, attacking on the left of XIX Corps' sector, passed just to the south and east of the city to advance on the Rhine. The 2d Armored started its attack early and by 0830 had cleared Fischeln, immediately to the south of Krefeld and was attacking

northeast to clean out the built-up area of Krefeld-Oppum. Other portions of the division secured the town of Bover and were on the outskirts of Strump. 2d Armored's artillery during the day reached positions from which it could shell the Adolph Hitler Bridge at Uerdingen, and placed it under fire so as to deny its use as an escape route.

The 102d Division, on the right of XIII Corps, attacked toward the southern and western edges of Krefeld on 2 March. Little opposition was encountered in the towns between the Niers Canal and the city, but the approaches to Krefeld were heavily defended. By nightfall, however, the division had elements of two regiments in the edge of Krefeld, and there were indications that the enemy was withdrawing. This proved true early 3 March when the regiments, in the 102d's final part in the operation, pushed to the center of the town without opposition.

The 5th Armored Division, which had aided the 102d in the attack on Viersen on 1 March, had sent elements across the Niers Canal late that day, going as far as Anrath. On 2 March the one combat command in action moved east until it made contact with the 2d Armored Division and later helped clean out the area around Fischeln.

The 84th Division on 3 March sent two regiments against the northwest edge of Krefeld and the populous area to its west. One regiment passed through St. Tonis and entered the city, while the remaining regiment passed north to cut the Kempen-Krefeld rail line and threaten Kempen itself.

XVI Corps, spearheaded by its motorized combat team from the 35th Division on the left, continued its rapid advance on 2 March. The division took Sevelen, Straelen and Nieukirk, although resistance in the towns was not cleared out until the following day. The division, nearing Geldern, still had not made actual contact with the British advancing from the northwest. On the right of XVI Corps, the combat command of the 8th Armored passed through Kaldenkirchen, Herongen, Wankum and Aldekirk with little more difficulty than if it had been on a road march. There were few casualties and the half-a-hundred prisoners taken had been eager to surrender.

#### CLEARING THE WEST BANK OF THE RHINE

After 2 March, the work of XIX and XIII Corps was nearly finished except for the task of clearing the remaining towns along the river and consolidating positions along the bank. XVI Corps, however, had still to make contact with the British, and stiffening enemy resistance in the corps' zone starting March 3 was an indication of the Germans' determination to defend their Wesel bridgehead until they had salvaged all the men and equipment they could.



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This situation was pointed out in Letter of Instructions Number 15, Headquarters, Ninth United States Army, 2 March 1945, confirming the verbal instructions of the Commanding General. The letter pointed out that forces opposing Ninth Army were weak and displayed signs of disintegration, and, further, that the Germans had no major reinforcements in sight.

The letter also pointed out that the Dusseldorf bridgehead position had been penetrated by Ninth Army troops, and that the bridgeheads to the north obviously centered about Duisberg and Wesel, and were composed of standing garrisons, replacements, and flak units. There were virtually no field works south of the Ruhr, west of the Rhine, except possibly in the waterfront towns, docks and houses, but, the letter said, the enemy would probably "vigorously defend the entrance to the Ruhr. However, if Ninth United States Army continues its vigorous advance, it will prevent the enemy's orderly withdrawal of field forces into the bridgehead positions."

While the First Canadian Army continued to push to the south and the 2d British Army defended along the west bank of the Maas, Ninth United States Army was instructed to: (1) continue its attack north and northeast to eliminate the enemy in the Rhine and Maas area from Neuss to Rheinberg, (2) seize intact bridges over the Rhine wherever possible, (3) be prepared to assist the Canadians, and (4) be prepared to establish bridgeheads across the Rhine if bridges were seized. While XIX Corps was taking Neuss and Uerdingen, and XIII Corps, Kempen, Krefeld, Rheinhausen and Homberg, wiping out the enemy and seizing bridges wherever possible, XVI Corps was ordered to protect the Army's left flank, help XIII Corps seize the railroad bridge at Mors if necessary, take Lintfort, Rheinberg and Orsoy, and assist the Canadians to seize Wesel and cross the Rhine, if possible.

One combat command of the 2d Armored Division attacked at 0200 3 March through Uerdingen in an effort to clear the approaches to and seize the Adolph Hitler Bridge intact. The ensuing fight lasted all day as the tankers and their armored infantry

Attempts to  
seize the  
Adolph Hitler  
Bridge

battled through the outskirts of Krefeld and its suburbs toward the bridge. By nightfall, elements had reached the north and south approaches to the bridge, which appeared undamaged, but at 2020 hours a loud explosion was heard in the vicinity of the span. A little later a group of engineers climbed up on the bridge, which was burning at its eastern end, and cut all the wires they could find, but the enemy managed to destroy the bridge on the morning of 4 March.

While one combat command battled for the bridge, another from the 2d Armored on 3 March advanced to the north against heavy opposition to seize Viertelshiede. The reserve combat

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command attempted to take Kaldenhausen on the main highway north of Uerdingen, but was halted by heavy fire and did not secure the town until the next day, when it was entered without a fight.

The 2d Armored was relieved in Krefeld and along the river in Uerdingen on 5 March by the 102d Division, which remained in defensive positions there.

Further to the south, the 83d Division completed its mission on 3 March when it finished clearing Neuss and the area just north of the city and between it and the Rhine. One battalion attempted to seize the bridge across the river on the peninsula above the city, but found that it had been blown sometime prior to the arrival of the force.

On the extreme left of XIII Corps the 84th Division on 3 March encountered heavy resistance as it neared its objectives of Mors and Homberg and was forced to stop short of the two towns. Other elements of the 84th helped the 102d clear what little resistance remained in Krefeld.

The 84th, however, reached and cleared Mors early on 4 March and entered Homberg, where street-fighting continued the remainder of the day. Part of the division pushed north from Mors to reach the approaches to the Duisberg Bridge, which like all the others in Ninth Army's zone, had been destroyed.

The 5th Armored Division on 4 March also encountered a good deal of resistance but succeeded in clearing Repelen and in outting the Rheinberg-Mors Road. Meanwhile, the 95th Division, brought up from Army reserve and attached to XIX Corps, passed through the 2d Armored north of Krefeld and started the final work of clearing Uerdingen. The 2d Armored, in its final day of the campaign, cleared the zone just south of Uerdingen and advanced to the north as far as the Arbrucks Canal. Resistance was sporadic at all points, but heavy enough to slow the advance.

XIX Corps completed its mission on 5 March when the 95th Division cleared the last enemy soldiers from Uerdingen and the areas along the Rhine north of the town.

XIX Corps  
mission  
completed

XIII Corps remaining troops in action also finished their work when the 84th Division cleaned out Homberg and Baerl and the 5th Armored Division moved into Orsoy, thus un-

expectedly relieving XVI Corps of one of its objectives. XIX Corps now held the river line from Neuss as far north as Uerdingen, pending relief there of the 2d Armored Division by the 102d, while XIII Corps had closed up to the river from Uerdingen to a point just north of Homberg.

XVI CORPS CLOSES THE GAP

While XIX and XIII Corps were closing up on the river line

and stamping out the last resistance in the towns along the west bank, XVI was moving ahead in its zone in the face of steadily increasing opposition. After the initial dash north to Venlo, XVI Corps' front lay, like the others, in a northeast direction.

XVI Corps, operating principally with the 35th Division and one combat command of the 8th Armored, attacked, starting on 3 March, with the object of making contact with the British on the left and of capturing Rheinberg and any bridges still intact across the river in the Wesel area. Contact with the British was effected on 3 March at a road junction just north of Geldern, although the town itself was still heavily defended by the Germans.

CCB of the 8th Armored was attached to the 35th the following day and given the mission of moving northeast on the right flank to clean out pockets of resistance east of Rheinberg. Meanwhile, on 4 March, the 35th pressed northeast toward Rheinberg, but some of the heaviest German fire of the campaign held up the advance, and, although Kamperbruch was taken during the day, night found the division far short of its objective, with its left flank anchored on Issum.

The attack 5 March was more successful. While the 15th Cavalry Group to the corps' left screened the advance and maintained contact with the Canadians to the north, the 8th Armored's combat command moved into Lintfort and continued the advance to Rheinberg, which was taken only after a hard fight and at the expense of heavy casualties. Elements of the 35th followed the combat command, mopping up in its wake, while others took Kamperbruch, Kamp and Hogenhof. Enemy resistance was still determined.

The attack to clear the area before the Wesel bridges continued 6 March, although the 8th Armored's combat command failed to take part. The 35th and the combat command had been organized into a single task force for the attack, but the bridge across the canal north of Rheinberg had been blown and the tanks were delayed for 18 hours while a new one was being constructed.

Nevertheless, the 35th gained ground on 6 March, although progress was delayed by the wooded terrain, being exploited to its fullest advantage by the enemy. Several towns, among them Saalhof, Alspray, Schmitshof and Ruhlsdorf, were taken and the Heidecker Ley River reached.

By 7 March, enemy resistance had lessened until it consisted of scattered pockets of riflemen and anti-tank guns. This, however, was sufficient to keep XVI Corps from sweeping to the river line. The infantry of the 35th attacked in the morning, but were able to advance on a narrow front only a comparatively short distance and by night

Resistance  
from scattered  
pockets

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had reached Ossenburg. The tanks of the 8th Armored helped in the attack on the town, crossing the canal over the new bridge late in the afternoon. Ossenburg was heavily defended both on its approaches and within the town, and it was only partly secured by the XVI Corps troops on 7 March.

The next day elements of the 35th cleared Huck and reached Millingen after an all-day fight. Some Germans continued to hold out in Ossenburg. That night, a bitter fight in which tanks and infantry took part took place for the factory and mine area on the north of the town, and the enemy, after he was driven out, staged a strong counterattack which was beaten off. The attack continued during the night of 8 March and the 8th Armored's tanks succeeded in reaching Little Borth.

Resistance after 9 March was from isolated groups only, and on the morning of 10 March, 35th Division observers reported that both the bridges in the corps' zone had been blown. By noon 10 March the principal task force of the 35th and 8th Armored had reached its principal objective, Wallach, and by nightfall, the area northeast of Wallach to the Rhine was firmly held. The next day, the final fire-fight of Operation Grenade took place when a combat patrol from the 35th occupied Fort Blucher after overcoming the small garrison remaining there.

On 12 and 13 March, the 35th and 8th Armored Divisions were relieved in XVI Corps zone by the 75th Division, ending the operations.

The final Letter of Instruction, Number 16, published by Ninth Army in connection with Operation Grenade, came out 8 March 1945. The letter, which directed the units to contain the enemy east of the Rhine in Army's zone, and set the target date for 24 March, was the first formal order directing that fire be placed across the Rhine. In it, the 34th Field Artillery Brigade was instructed to place "interdictory, harassing, counterbattery and destructive" fires on the Ruhr-Valley.

#### SUMMARY

In a 16 day campaign, Ninth United States Army had cleared the enemy from the Rhineland in its sector and at the close of the operation stood along the Rhine from Neuss to Wesel, within shelling distance of the Ruhr industrial region. The enemy's fighting capacity had been weakened by the loss of 29,008 prisoners, plus uncounted dead and wounded, as well as large stocks of material destroyed or abandoned.

The operation had been carried through with American casualties of less than 50 per cent of the estimated total. G-1 had

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based its replacement needs on expected battle losses of 1,000 per day. In the campaign, Ninth Army had only 1,241 killed, 5,709 wounded in action, 415 missing in action and 41 thought to be captured, for a total of 7,406. Non-battle casualties were equally low, totalling 3,948.

Munchen-Gladbach became the first of the Ruhr industrial centers to fall to the Americans. Here, as well as in other cities along the west bank of the Rhine, the Americans for the first time saw for themselves the effectiveness of the Allies' heavy bombing raids. Hardly a building in Munchen-Gladbach or in Krefeld had escaped heavy damage.

Civilians for the most part were docile and easily controlled after they had got over their initial fright. Some even appeared glad that the Americans had arrived. Large numbers of impressed war-workers from other countries also were found, and these, after being interrogated, were sent back to displacement centers for eventual repatriation. Other civilian problems were immediately taken over by military government detachments. The CIC began work of uncovering any subversive activities, particularly in uncovering any party officials who may have remained behind. One of the CIC's initial tasks was to screen all male civilians of military age in order to weed out the soldiers who had thrown away their uniforms when they realized defeat was near.

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE RHINE IS CROSSED

#### Operation Flashpoint

In an appraisal of the American forces alligned against Germany, Life Magazine had said: "The American Ninth Army is a bright, new shiny model of an army. How good it is nobody yet knows for certain. It is like a new automobile. It comes off an assembly line that has produced good cars in the past; all its parts are sound, but the test comes when it hits the road."

Ninth Army's road test was over; the campaign from the Roer to the Rhine had demonstrated that the "model" was as good as any the United States' military assembly line had rolled off in the past. Now, thoroughly battle-wise, the Army waited on the Rhine for the final blow against the remnants of the Wehrmacht. The previous Ninth Army operations had had definite goals. The impending one had as its object the final reduction of Hilter's fighting strength. No one could foresee with certainty how long that campaign would endure, nor how hard it would be.

The crossing of the Rhine and the immediate campaign to follow were named Operation Flashpoint. Ninth Army's attack was to be launched in coordination with assault crossings by the Second British Army and air drops by the First Allied Airborne Army. The date for the assault was finally selected as 24 March, and the mission of establishing and exploiting the bridgehead was assigned to XVI Corps, operational only a month. The attack was to be launched by the 30th Division in the Orsoy sector and by the 79th Division in the Rheinberg sector. After the crossing had been made and the bridgehead firmly established, XIX Corps was to pass through to widen the zone and press the attack, and, finally, the Army's entire weight was to be thrown against the enemy with the addition of XIII Corps.

The weather in mid-March was warm and clear, which facilitated the movement of supplies across the Rhineland in preparation for the attack. The speed with which Grenade had been conducted, plus the fact that an early attack across the Rhine was contemplated, made necessary the rapid shifting of stockpiles from dumps in Holland to points closer to the lines. In particular, the Engineers were faced with the task of shifting huge quantities of bridging equipment and ferry craft from the Maastricht area to the vicinity of the Rhine, and Ordnance had to build up sufficient ammunition to supply the Army's guns for the crossing and for a campaign of incalculable length and intensity.

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In the period between 10 March and the new D-Day, preparations were extensive and conducted with all possible speed. More than 1500 trucks, augmented by truck companies from ADSEC, undertook the task of transporting an estimated 117,487 long tons of Army depot stocks from rear areas to the immediate vicinity of the Rhine. On the Maas River, the 30th and 79th Infantry Divisions practiced assault crossings while the engineers trained in bridging tactics and learned the use of LCVPs and LCMs to be operated during the assault by specially assigned Naval parties.

Meanwhile, G-2 continued to gather and digest all possible information as to the strength and composition of German forces arrayed on the east bank of the river. The width of the Rhine and the 50 mile stretch of front made normal ground contact with the enemy impossible; therefore, radio intelligence was used extensively.

Enemy Forces

By D-Day, intelligence sources had identified three infantry divisions, totalling some 7,000 men, holding the east bank of the Rhine. In addition, there were identified three Volksgrenadier divisions of 7,250 men, a parachute division of 4,500 and Division Hamburg, 2,500 men. Other miscellaneous elements brought the estimated total of enemy forces to 23,750, and some 21,500 reserves were considered likely to appear. The 190th Volksgrenadier Division and the 116th Panzer Division, totalling 6,500 men were later identified, but the intelligence forecasts had been so accurate that no unexpected enemy units were discovered on the Army front until five days after the crossing.

Any complete defense by the Germans of the entire river line was obviously impossible. It was equally obvious that the Ruhr industrial area was the richest prize in Ninth Army's sector, and it was anticipated that the front protecting it, bounded on the north by Duisburg and on the south by Dusseldorf, would be held in force. Since an attack in that sector was not contemplated, an elaborate series of deceptive measures were undertaken to deceive the enemy as to the actual site of the crossing and thus to immobilize large portions of his forces.

To carry out this deception, dummy stockpiles were constructed in XIII Corps' zone at the same time and at the same speed as the real stockpiles in XVI Corps' zone were growing. The latter were carefully concealed, but the dummy piles were left somewhat exposed and were bombed several times. Strong patrols were run across the river by XIII and XIX Corps, both as feints and to test out the enemy's strength, and at night Engineers simulated sounds of unloading and building bridge equipment.

Tactically, Operation Grenade had constituted a rehearsal for the impending Operation Flashpoint, but from a physical standpoint there were more contrasts than comparisons between

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the two. The Roer in February had been flood-swollen and angry but was nowhere as wide as the Rhine which was relatively placid. In February the weather had been cold and the ground extremely muddy; now spring had arrived and the banks of the Rhine were dry and firm. There was, too, an operational dissimilarity; Ninth Army had crossed the Roer two corps abreast and later had crossed a third corps in still another sector, while the plans for Flashpoint called for the initial crossing of only one corps and the establishment of only one major bridgehead. Nevertheless, Army and the troops had profited from the experience gained in the fighting across the Rhineland.

### The Crossing

At 0100 hours, 24 March 1945, Ninth Army's artillery opened an hour long preparation in XVI Corps' sector. At 0200 hours, troops of the 30th Infantry Division began the assault crossing of the Rhine, an operation that had been the objective of the Allied Armies since the landing on the coast of Normandy almost a year earlier.

The artillery concentration, like everything else connected with Flashpoint, was on a grand scale. A total of 1,025 artillery pieces and heavy mortars took part, firing over 65,000 rounds, an average of over 1,000 rounds per minute. Personnel involved in the artillery phase alone numbered close to 40,000 men.

The effect of this blanket of fire cannot be minimized. Enemy communication lines were severed and positions were blasted and destroyed. The German infantry was stunned and shaken, but, by contrast, the American soldiers who listened to the barrage were encouraged and grimly confident in the effectiveness of this artillery preparation.

At 0200 hours, the 30th Division attacked in its zone two regiments abreast. The first waves were carried across in powered assault boats manned by soldiers of the 1153d Assault Crossings Combat Engineer Group, while simultaneously, other engineers started construction of bridges and still others labored to get the Navy's heavy ferry craft into the water.

In the 79th Division's zone, two regiments crossed initially, ferried by the 1148th Combat Engineers.

Both divisions were lightly opposed in the first few hours. Enemy fire on the river was ineffectual, and there were few casualties in the initial crossing. When the troops reached the east bank they moved out to take prearranged objectives, and in the early hours the first line of German defenses was completely overrun.



While the troops in the leading elements were moving on their objectives, the work of getting across more men, armor and vehicles was proceeding even easier than had been foreseen. The ferry system was soon in operation and bore the traffic until the completion of several of the first bridges later in the day. Only a few minor problems developed, and there were never any interruptions serious enough to threaten the success of the attack or slow its progress.

On the first day, all objectives were reached and more than 2,000 prisoners were taken. The German defense, hit by Ninth Army, The British further north and by a heavy parachute drop northeast of Wesel, displayed little signs of organized resistance.

Enemy Resistance The next day, however, as the two divisions continued to press the attack the enemy began to be increasingly stubborn, but resistance offered was by troops far different from those against which Ninth Army had fought in November. Several regular divisions were encountered, but there were also odd artillery, flak, searchlight and service units, and naval, Luftwaffe and limited service personnel with a sprinkling of hapless members of the Volkssturm. The latter were of almost no value to the German defense, for though some of them were willing enough to fight, they were handicapped by a lack of training and their obsolete arms.

Gains on the first day had extended up to six miles east of the river in the 30th's zone, and the division also had crossed the Lippe Canal and had joined with British Commando units to the north. The 79th Division's initial gains were from two to three miles. On the 25th, the 30th Infantry Division, keeping the Lippe Canal on its left flank, moved against the town of Hunxe but did not succeed in clearing it until the 26th. The 79th Infantry Division, probing into the sensitive Ruhr industrial region, was able to make only slow progress against the heaviest resistance thus far encountered.

#### The Bridgehead is Secured

Meanwhile, the build-up of men and materials on the east bank was increasing. In less than 36 hours after the jump-off the Engineers had five bridges of various types open or nearing completion, and this number was gradually increased. Berge balloons floated above the bridges and booms upstream protected them from an attack by water, but only one was ever seriously damaged by enemy action and that by artillery. Enemy air activity was at a minimum.

Even without the bridges, both the 30th and 79th Infantry Division succeeded in crossing all nine of their infantry battalions, plus some supporting elements, by the end of the first day, and in the succeeding days the flow of men and essential supplies mounted steadily. On 26 March both the 8th Armored and the 35th In-

Men and Material

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Infantry Divisions moved across to assembly areas on the east bank. The 75th Infantry Division, with the exception of its 290th Regimental Combat Team which was attached to the 30th Infantry on the 26th, remained for the moment on the west bank of the river. The 79th Infantry had the support of the 134th Regimental Combat Team of the 35th before the latter division was committed to action.

A recapitulation of units across by midnight, 26 March, demonstrates the efficiency with which the bridgehead was built-up. In the three days since the attack started, XVI Corps had completed four bridges across the Rhine and had on the east bank of the river all of the 30th, 35th, and 79th Infantry Divisions, the 8th Armored Division, a regiment of the 75th, one cavalry squadron, 27 field artillery battalions, 6 AAA battalions, 4 tank battalions, 3 tank destroyer battalions and a large number of supporting and service units.

As the 79th Division turned south into the Ruhr against more and more tenacious resistance, the 35th Infantry was committed to action on 27 March between the 30th and 79th and struck to the southeast, making gains of from one to three miles through wooded terrain. Gains by the 30th and 79th that day were local but the latter succeeded in clearing Wehofen, which had resisted for two days.

Slow  
Advance

On 28 March, the 8th Armored Division passed through the 30th in an attempt at a breakthrough and gained three miles to clear Kichellen, while the 35th gained from one to four miles, capturing Rentfort as the principal prize. The 79th on 28 March continued to move forward and by the 29th was able, despite continued enemy pressure, to close along the Rhine-Herne Canal.

The 8th Armored Division managed to reduce Dorsten and Feldhausen on 29 March, but it was now apparent that the combination of heavy mine fields and enemy fire in the division's zone made any immediate breakthrough impossible.

In the meantime, XIX Corps had crossed the Rhine and passed north of the Lippe Canal, where, on 30 March, the 2d Armored Division, followed by an almost entirely motorized 83d Division, attempted to break out of the bridgehead area. The tanks, moving in four columns, pushed out to the Dortmund-Ems Canal and succeeded in bridging and crossing it. The breakthrough began the next day when the armor raced 35 miles eastward through scattered resistance to reach Beckum.

XIX Corps  
Breaks Out

XIII Corps, which had also crossed earlier, leaving behind temporarily some of its divisions, took control of the 17th Airborne Division on 31 March and opened its attack in the direction of Munster. Its zone lay on Army's north flank.

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Operation Flashpoint came to an end for XVI Corps on 31 March when all final objectives, principally along the Rhine-Herne Canal, were reached. The 8th Armored

Resume Division moved east for four miles but the 75th Infantry passed through the armored elements and pushed an additional four or five miles. Resistance was only moderate. The 35th Infantry came up against the Rhine-Herne Canal while the 79th, still meeting resistance from the north face of the Ruhr, maintained pressure along the canal.

As the month ended, there were clear indications that the moment was at hand in which to strike a blow that could bring the war to a quick finish. One breakthrough had been achieved; elsewhere along the line the crust of defenses guarding the heart of the Reich had been breached. The enemy was fighting gamely but erratically, and it seemed evident that his forces were becoming daily more disorganized. Such units as the 116th Panzer and the 180th and 190th Volksgrenadier Divisions, plus the 2d Parachute Division, defending the Ruhr, were still conducting professional, clever defenses, but these units, in most cases understrength, were insufficient to stem for long the tremendous weight being thrown against them. The tactical situation elsewhere on the fronts made it impossible for the German High Command to help the units opposing Ninth Army, or, in all probability, even to replace their losses which by the month's end totalled approximately 1,557 killed and 9,445 taken prisoner.

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## CHAPTER VIII

THE FINAL CAMPAIGNS OF NINTH ARMYThe Plans Are Laid

The crossing of the Rhine and subsequent initial breakthrough by the 2d Armored Division sealed off the north face of the Ruhr, and laid bare to attack the entire north German plain stretching to Berlin. By the end of March the only question remaining was how effectively the Germans would be able to use the few natural defenses afforded by the two regions.

The plain country, low and for the most part only moderately hilly, encompassed the Munster Bay, the Teutobergerwald, the Weser Hill country and the hills of Hesse. In addition to several canals, six main rivers running in a general north-south direction presented potential obstacles to the eastward advance. These were the Weser, Leine, Innerste, Oker, Aller and Elbe Rivers. The Germans could resist from the larger cities of Munster, Hannover, Brunswick, and Magdeburg, and the snow capped Harz Mountains, to the south, offered possibilities for a prolonged defense.

The North  
German  
Plain

Ninth Army made plans to utilize the XIX Corps in the southern part and XIII Corps to make a parallel drive in the northern part of the plainsland. The mission was primarily envisioned as a fast armored drive to be assisted by motorized infantry elements. The armor was to sweep ahead as rapidly as possible in a general eastern direction towards the capital city of the Reich. The infantry would follow, assist in forcing river crossings, reduce strong points and clear all rear areas. Enemy resistance was not expected in enough force to withstand this powerful two-pronged attack. The greatest difficulties to overcome were the natural barriers obstructing eastward movement, and the problem of stretching supply lines across such great distances.

Pressing against the north face of the Ruhr, the XVI Corps was already in position for its next operation. Its attempted eastern breakthrough paralleling the Lippe River had not been effected, but the rapid advance by the 2d Armored Division to the east had eliminated the necessity for any further eastward drive by the Corps. Now, it prepared to slice its way south into the rich industrial area. The Corps had three infantry divisions with which to accomplish its mission. The job was one for the infantry since the field of battle was variously composed of rural and industrial areas which would have to be thoroughly reduced and minutely combed for suicide strong points and desperate bands of saboteurs.

The Ruhr

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As if to set the stage properly one of the most dramatic and fortuitous events of the war took place 1 April when the 2d Armored Division, exploiting its initial breakthrough into the Munster Bay area, cracked resistance of the German LXXXVI Corps along the Munster-Hamm line to make a juncture with the 3d Armored Division of First U.S. Army. This sealed the Ruhr pocket between the Seig and Lippe Rivers and cut off German Army Group B, composed of the Fifth Panzer and Fifteenth Armies and the southern wing of the First Parachute Army. There could be no doubt that the loss of so many troops materially reduced the Germans' ability to resist in the east and thus helped shorten the war. The Germans in the pocket, totalling over 300,000 made desperate efforts to break out to the east but were not successful.

The plans were carefully laid and the traps were rapidly closing. As the mild spring month of April opened in the Prussian homeland, Ninth Army troops eagerly prepared to engage in their final European battles.

Reduction of the Ruhr Pocket

The campaign against the Ruhr Industrial area was expected to be a grueling drive, costly in personnel, and marked by house to house fighting with fanatical resistance. Actually the fifteen day campaign was much less severe than it could have been. Although the Germans defended bitterly at many points in the densely built-up and populated valley, they fought sporadically and never made a unified stand of division strength.

XVI Corp's dragnet around the northern Ruhr extended from the juncture of the Rhine River and the Rhine-  
Pressure from Herne Canal as far as the Zweig Canal, thence  
the North on the eastern flank to the Dortmund-Ems Canal. Along this line the Corps had halted to regroup and prepare for the knife-like slashes it was to cut southward into the heart of the Pittsburgh of Germany.

At the northeastern corner of the Ruhr, XIX Corps had built-  
pressure from up its forces near the juncture point with First  
the East U.S. Army by 3 April. It was now ready to drive south and west into the pocket engaging its 8th Armored Division in an attempt at a breakthrough and also to serve as a bulwark against any efforts the Germans might make to break out. The division's advance, at first rapid, slowed as it approached the built-up areas, and the 95th Division was brought in to assist.

On 4 April, the pocket was squeezed tighter when the 75th Infantry Division bridged the Dortmund-Ems Canal and advanced up to five miles to clear Waltrop and Ickern. Meanwhile, the 95th Division jumped across the Lippe River and advanced west from two to four miles, while the 8th Armored, opposed by

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tanks and infantry, drove south and west for four miles and made a further link-up with First U.S. Army at Ruthen.

As the Americans neared the industrial city of Hamm it seemed likely that the Germans would defend it in force, but the resistance encountered was far lighter than had been expected. On 5 April, while the attack gathered momentum, both corps attacking the pocket were strengthened by the addition of the 17th Airborne Division, which had completed the reduction of Munster. The division was assigned to XVI Corps, and its 194th Glider Infantry was attached to the XIX Corps, where it was to operate on the south flank of the 8th Armored Division. The airborne division took over the west flank of XVI Corps and relieved part of the 79th Infantry Division.

17th A/B  
Division  
Forces

As part of XIX Corps sliced southwest into the Ruhr, other elements were driving eastward across Germany, and by 7 April the Corps was fighting on two fronts approximately 180 miles apart. To overcome the communications problems, it was decided by the Corps Commander to form a task force under the Commanding General of the 95th Division. Task Force Twaddle, named for General Twaddle, consisted of that portion of the Corps engaged in compressing the Ruhr pocket and was instructed to work in conjunction with XVI Corps in the operation. It was also to establish contact with III Corps of First U.S. Army, coming from the south.

Hamm and Soest had fallen to the 95th Infantry Division by 6 April, while the 194th Glider Infantry, organized into a subordinate task force, Faith, advanced into the wooded country on the south flank between the Mohne and Ruhr Rivers. By 9 April, two days after the formation of Task Force Twaddle, it was apparent that the Germans were no longer capable of breaking out of the pocket. XIX Corps was maintaining two fronts so Ninth Army ordered the transfer of all forces fighting in the Ruhr pocket to XVI Corps. This unified the command and permitted closer coordination in the operation. With this added power, the Corps slashed out bitterly to defeat the enemy forces and complete its mission.

Unification  
Under  
XVI Corps

The attack on 9 April was the heaviest yet thrown against the pocket. The 17th Airborne, which had entered the attack the day before, continued to press forward, the 75th Infantry advanced with three regiments abreast, and the 79th Infantry maintained a slow but steady advance. Resistance was heavy on the east but negligible in the west, with the result that the important centers of Essen and Bochum fell 10 April to the 17th Airborne and 79th Infantry, respectively. Near Unna, the Germans employed a battalion of infantry and six heavy tanks in a sharp counterattack, but they were not successful. The 8th Armored Division cleared Unna and was withdrawn the fol-

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lowing day, while Task Force Faith cleared the wooded area in its zone and reached the Ruhr on 10 April and completed its mission.

The fall of Bochum, Unna and Essen left only Dortmund as a key objective in the area. On 11 April the 75th Infantry reached the outskirts of the city on the west and on 12 April the 95th Infantry neared it from the east. The Germans fought furiously at Dortmund in an attempt to maintain a bridgehead over the Ruhr, but they were overpowered by the 9th Infantry, which cleared the town on the 13th. The same day, the 75th Infantry advanced to the Ruhr, leaving only two minor pockets of resistance, which were cleared on 14 April.

Dortmund  
Falls

With all its forces up to the Ruhr River, Ninth Army's mission in clearing the pocket was complete. On 18 April, First Army eliminated the last resistance south of the Ruhr River and the pocket became a thing of the past. It was XVI Corps' final combat operation in Europe, for until the end of the war the corps was engaged in occupying the territory and bringing some order out of the chaos which ground fighting and air bombardment had created in the industrial region.

The Drive to the East

While the grinding fight in the industrial area had been in progress, a spectacular advance to the east, into the heart of the Reich, had been made by Ninth Army's other elements. The breakthrough was markedly similar to that of the Americans across France in the summer of 1944; it was, in fact, a model, with added improvements, of the blitzkrieg fashioned by the Germans against the Allies in 1940. The Wehrmacht, now thoroughly broken, could stage no more than a piecemeal defense, and Army's advance was never held up for long.

The breakthrough into the Munster Bay area by the 2d Armored Division on 31 March had set the stage for another dash. On 1 April, both spearhead armored divisions, the 2d under XIX Corps and the 5th under XIII Corps broke through for advances of up to 30 miles, and by day's end the 2d Armored, in addition to contacting First Army, was feeling out the approaches to the wooded and mountainous Teutoberger-Wald. There the division encountered small groups of infantry, armed with anti-tank weapons and supported by 88mm guns and a small amount of armor. To clean them out, the 30th Infantry Division, which, with the 83d Infantry, had been mopping up in rear areas, advanced into the Wald. By 3 April, the infantrymen had cleared three passes to permit passage of the armor.

The 5th Armored, on the other hand, encountered no resistance in its drive through the northeastern portion of the Wald, and by the close of 2 April had reached a point north-

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east of Bielefeld. The next day, however, it was halted on the banks of the Weser, all bridges across which had been destroyed.

While the armor raced eastward and during the pause that took place while the 5th Armored reconnoitered for crossing sites, scattered strongpoints to the rear fell one by one to the 84th and 102d Infantry Divisions, mopping up in the wake of XIII Corps. 5th Armored at Weser River Munster, largest of these spots, was cleared out on 2 and 3 April by the 17th Airborne Division.

After routes through Teutoberger-Wald had been cleared out by the infantry, the 2d Armored drove 32 miles on 4 April to reach the Weser, and the following day crossed at three points near Hameln and established a bridgehead four miles long and three miles deep. From there the tanks continued east against lessening resistance and by nightfall of 6 April were on the west bank of the Leine River. There the Germans had not had time to complete their demolition; the 2d Armored seized intact four bridges across the Leine, which enabled the division to sweep on the next day to the Innerste River. Sarstedt fell the same evening, and the 2d Armored, which likewise captured several bridges over the Innerste, moved on to capture Hildesheim on 8 April. Here the division, on Army order, paused to catch its breath, regroup its forces, and wait for the infantry to catch up. Hildesheim Falls

The 83d Infantry Division, after a steady two-day road march during which only scattered resistance was encountered, reached the Weser all along its front by 7 April. It crossed the Weser on the 8th and moved on to the Leine, where several bridges were seized intact. The division halted on the Leine to regroup.

The 5th Armored Division encountered some unexpected resistance on the Weser on 4 and 5 April, and it was necessary for the 84th to cross the river and establish a bridgehead. Fire on the bridges was heavy at first but slackened after the infantry had driven forward two miles. On 8 April the 84th Division past the thin line of Germans guarding the river bank, drove east for 27 miles and established a bridgehead over the Leine River. The same day the 5th Armored crossed the Weser by way of the XIX Corps bridgehead at Hameln. Ninth Army Halts on Leine River Once across, it turned northeast again and drove into XIII Corps' zone, meeting little resistance. On 9 April, the 5th Armored reached the Leine and secured crossings, but, as was the case with the 84th in its sector, the Germans turned and fought for the moment, and the crossings were opposed by air, flak and artillery concentrations. All leading units of Ninth Army were now halted along the Leine River.

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The next day, on order of Twelfth Army Group, Ninth Army drove forward again with the mission of crossing the Elbe and securing a bridgehead.

Up to the time of the crossing of the Weser, fighter-bomber support had been furnished in quantity by aircraft of XXIX TAC, but after crossing, support dwindled sharply. The advance had been so rapid that fighter bases to the rear could not be moved to the east fast enough to keep pace with the advance, and by the time the armor had neared the Elbe, fighters were forced to carry belly tanks in place of bombs in order to reach the leading elements. On occasion, aircraft were forced to turn back because of lack of fuel before they were able to render any support. Fortunately, enemy air activity was at a minimum and there was slight need of fighter-bomber strikes against ground targets.

Air  
Support

The attack on 10 April quickly assumed once more its aspect of a race rather than a hard campaign. While the 84th Division assaulted Hannover and the 102d mopped up in rear areas, the 5th Armored brook loose on the 10th against light resistance to cross the Oker. The 84th Division wheeled into Hannover from its eastern side on the 10th and reduced it in one day with little trouble. On the 11th, the 5th Armored resumed its dash to gain over twenty miles, with the 84th Division following, while, to the rear, the 102d Division mopped up an isolated pocket in Forst Braushof. On 12 April, the 5th Armored drove 50 miles east to reach the Elbe River at Tangermund where it cleared the west bank, began to lay plans for the crossing, and waited for the slower infantry.

The story of XIX Corps in those final days is much the same. The 2d Armored on 10 April advanced through the center of the corps zone for ten to twenty miles and seized crossings of the Oker. The 30th Division to the north made a similar gain but was halted on the river by blown bridges and heavy mortar and small arms fire. On the south, the 83d Division encountered only scattered resistance and advanced twenty-two miles.

On 11 April, the 2d Armored made one of the longest single-day drives of the campaign when it advanced fifty-two airline miles to reach the Elbe River at Schonebeck. Other armored elements probed at Magdeburg, on the Elbe, while the 83d Infantry advanced twenty-one miles and cleared Halberstadt. The 30th Infantry entered Braunschweig on the 11th and succeeded in clearing it by 12 April, after which it continued east for thirty-three miles and seized crossings over the Weser-Elbe Canal.

Ninth Army's only crossings of the Elbe were made on 12 April when the 83d Infantry Division put across two battalions near Barby in the face of bitter resistance and

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The Elbe River is Crossed the 2d Armored crossed near Schonebeck late the night of 12 April. From the start, both divisions' bridgeheads were bitterly assailed by the Germans, who, using the last natural barrier before Berlin, had at last bestirred themselves to protect their capital.

The 83d Division's bridgehead, however, held firm and was gradually expanded until the end of the war; the 2d Armored's suffered an unhappier fate. The division had been instructed by XIX Corps to seize a bridgehead and then assist passage through it by the 30th and 83d Infantry Divisions. By daylight 13 April the division had three battalions across and construction of a bridge had begun, but heavy artillery on the site made it impossible to complete the structure. Later the same day, elements of the 2d Armored on the east side of the Elbe began to work to the south to a new position where construction of another bridge was contemplated.

On the morning of 14 April, the Germans began a heavy counterattack on the bridgehead, and, to meet the threat, a combat command of the 2d Armored was crossed on One Bridge-head lost order of the Corps Commander. However, the enemy attacks were in such force that it was decided to withdraw the troops in the bridgehead and by mid-afternoon the 2d Armored, protected by a small number of aircraft, had succeeded in reaching the west bank of the Elbe. The withdrawal was orderly and losses were light.

Tactically speaking, the loss of the northern bridgehead was not important, for the 83d Division's remained firm despite persistent attacks by the Germans. The enemy's air activity during the period reached an intensity greater than any ever before thrown against Ninth Army, both from a standpoint of the number and the variety of types of aircraft. The effectiveness of the attacks was reduced, however, by the excellent work of Ninth Army's anti-aircraft artillery. From still another standpoint, loss of the northern bridgehead was unimportant; after the Russians reached Berlin there was never any intention on the part of Ninth Army to progress further. The end of the war was in sight.

With the Army on the Elbe River, there remained only the task of clearing the last cities and pockets of resistance remaining to the Germans west of the river. Clearing the rear areas Before this could be done, however, the enemy forces attempted one last offensive, a pathetic effort when compared to the great Ardennes offensive, but one which, nevertheless, penetrated the Army's lines and caused considerable confusion in the rear areas. Scattered German elements, including some armor, filtered down from the north in an apparent effort to join embattled German forces cut off in the Harz Mountain area. On 16 April, the 5th Armored Division was withdrawn from its positions along

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the west bank of the Elbe and given the mission of sealing off the penetration. The infiltrating bands were split up but held out for four days before they were finally wiped out. Other pockets were finally cleaned up by the 102d Division and the corps cavalry group, but not before they had caused some damage and had at one time threatened to cut off XIII Corps headquarters.

Magdeburg, large German city on the west bank of the Elbe, was defended in force. On 17 April, XIX Corps sent the 2d Armored and 30th Infantry Divisions against the city after a heavy preliminary attack by medium bombers. Fierce resistance including fire of almost every description was encountered, but the German garrison collapsed on 18 April and the city fell to the armor and infantry assault.

Elsewhere in XIX Corps area, the 320th Infantry of the 35th Infantry Division was attached to the 83d Infantry Division to clear the area between the Elbe and the Salle River. This mission was completed on 18 April when the regiment made juncture with First U.S. Army troops on the boundary between the two armies.

Another regiment of the 35th, the 330th, was placed under Corps control and given the mission of clearing the Harz Forst area. It soon became evident, however, that the task was too great for one regiment, for the juncture of First and Ninth U.S. Armies further to the east had cut off the Eleventh Germany Army, a force of some 50,000 men composing five hastily improvised corps. As a result, XIX Corps sent the 8th Armored Division into the area on 20 April, and nearly all resistance ended the following day. The Germans, cut off and bewildered, were in no position to take advantage of the almost limitless possibilities the area offered for defense.

On 17 April, XIII Corps secured the 29th Infantry Division for an attack in conjunction with the 5th Armored to clear the area on the Army's left flank. Plans were completed to sweep the west bank of the Elbe as far as Neuderchau. The 39th gained five miles against sporadic resistance the first day of action, and on 22 April the 5th Armored swept north for distances up to eighteen miles and established contact with the 2d British Army. The infantry then swung behind the armored elements, cleared the rear areas, and on 24 April relieved the 5 Armored. The mission was completed 25 April, which brought to a close large-scale offensive operations by Ninth Army in Europe.

Although the attack was at an end, small scale actions continued until the end of the war. Patrols probed forward out of XIX Corps' bridgehead to test enemy defenses and to make attempts to contact Russian troops. On 30 April, Troop C, 125th Cavalry Squadron of the 113th Cavalry Group, met a Russian force from

Contact  
with  
Russians

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Curtis

the 121st Russian Division at 1330 hours.

German troops continued to make their way across the Elbe River and attempted to reach American lines. The pressure from the Russians gradually nipped the corridor in front of Ninth U. S. Army until this sector in the heart of Prussia was firmly sealed with American and Russian forces. While the Ninth Army, its mission finished, waited on the banks of the river, the other Allied Armies pursued the disintegrating German Wehrmacht. The forces in Italy were the first to capitulate and American Seventh Army and Fifth Army troops made firm link ups near Innsbruck in the Austrian Tyrol. This juncture exploded the myth of the Austrian Redoubt area which ostensibly could have been the last ditch defense of the Nazi power. As events moved rapidly to a termination, there were two large areas still remaining in German hands. To the north, the British were forcing the Baltic Sea area and Denmark; to the southeast, German forces held out in Czechoslovakia and parts of Austria. Both positions were untenable. Cut off from central command, supplies, and replacements, the German Army was no longer a unified military power and its position was hopeless.

In the early morning hours of 7 May, 1945, at Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces in Reims, France, envoys of the German High Command negotiated a ?  
The a complete and unconditional surrender of all  
European German forces. After this surrender was signed  
War Ends in Berlin by the Fuehrer, it was announced concurrently by all three Allied powers, United States, Russia, and Great Britain. The war in Europe officially ceased at 0001 hours, 10 May 1945.

#### Problems of War and Peace

Almost immediately after V-E Day, Ninth Army took over most of First Army's divisions and functions after the latter headquarters was stripped preparatory to its re-deployment to the Pacific. While Ninth Army waited and speculated, itself, as to its ultimate disposition, it was faced with the multitude of tasks involved in organizing the vast areas of Germany now under its control. Many other problems were posed by the sudden end of the war and the spectacular nature of the campaign.

For instance, in the first fifteen days of April, 158,456 prisoners of war were processed through the Ninth Army cage, and in the latter half of the month 100,364 were handled. These continued to be a problem even after the surrender, since, naturally, they could not be released at once. Intelligence sources were taxed to the limit, and CI agents had their hands full screening Wehrmacht members who had cast aside their uniforms and posed as civilians or displaced persons in order to escape confinement. Other large groups, beside the civilians

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themselves, who had to be taken care of were the many Allied prisoners of war uncovered during and after the advance, and the displaced persons, all of whom made an effort to start for their homes in other countries as soon as the Army's advance released them from their enforced labor.

The Army's medical personnel were confronted with immediate and trying work, not so much because of American casualties, which had been relatively small, but because of a large number of sick, undernourished, or, in many cases, deliberately starved and maltreated prisoners of war and displaced persons encountered throughout the area. Saving their lives and nursing them back to health became a matter of immediate concern.

Supply was a constant problem during the campaign and even for some time after the end of the war. The Army's rapid advance, plus the strain to which the Rhine bridges were constantly being subjected, made it necessary for truckmen to work night and day in order to bring necessary supplies of all types to the forward elements. So well did they work that at no time was there even any minor deficiency.

As for the civilians themselves, once the war ended they seemed for the most part cowed and obedient. There was some trouble from youthful fanatics, but the widely-advertised "werewolf" underground terrorism campaign failed to make its appearance. G-5, its personnel bolstered by officers and men withdrawn from the divisions, soon had effected a working organization to serve as a basis for the effective supervision of the area. The task was made easier by the fact that the speed and nature of the campaign had caused comparatively little damage to the portion of Germany occupied by Ninth Army, and the people did not seem in great need of food or other necessities.

Military Government

At no time during the eight months of operation by the Ninth Army did the benefits of the long period of staff training reflect to such excellent advantage as during its last campaign from the Rhine to the Elbe. Unexpected problems developed hourly, entire subsections had to be created to handle new situations, and utmost cooperation was needed between all staff sections to keep the offensive moving. Ninth Army Headquarters met these conditions efficiently and smoothly. Problems were quickly solved which in the halcyon days of Fort Sam Houston would have seemed insurmountable. All the months of intricate planning, training, and operation reached their culmination during this crushing drive across Germany. Ninth Army's combat operations were ended in the European Theater of Operations and as a battle-hardened unit it looked forward to playing other major roles to effect the defeat of the nation's last remaining enemy, Japan.

Ninth Army Headquarters

*Conceded*