



*The citizens of Bitché crowded the streets to welcome the Yanks.*

hospitals and the civilian doctors in the care of the sick and wounded. After five long years Bitché had become French again.

The division pivoted and attacked to the north on 17 March, the third day of the attack. The enemy was no longer fighting even a delaying action. Resistance consisted of sniper fire. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 397th, on the division left, slashed forward from the vicinity of Schorbach and took Briedenbach to the north; the 3rd Battalion taking the town itself and the 1st Battalion the ground to the southeast. The 1st Battalion then turned east and captured Waldhausen while the 3rd Battalion moved north to clear a few snipers out of Dorst. In moving toward Walschbronn just east of Waldhausen the 1st Battalion ran into some sniper and machine gun fire. In all the towns the Germans had destroyed or tried to destroy the bridges. The 2nd Battalion moved into billets in Waldhausen for the night.

The 399th Inf. also attacked to the north on the division's east flank. The 3rd Battalion, relieved during the night by the 1st Battalion of the 14th Inf., struck north with Cos. K and L in the lead, quickly took Hanviller and Bousseviller, and turning east occupied Liederschiedt and Schweix. Schweix was the first town in Germany to be entered by any element of the division.

Co. K of the 399th crossed the border into Germany at 1431 on 17 March on the road between Liederschiedt and Schweix. With the area around the Camp de Bitché taken over by the 398th Inf., the 1st Battalion of the 399th also attacked north. The battalion moved by truck to Haspelschiedt to the northeast and then took Neudoerfel and Roppeviller. Cos. A and B



*We acknowledged the cheers of the Frenchmen and pressed on.*

went on to dig in on the high ground west of Hilst so that they were astride the border.

In its holding positions near Bitché, the 398th cleared out a few Germans around Hohekirkel.

The 398th and 399th Inf. went into assembly areas around Bousseviller, Briedenbach, and other towns to the north of Bitché. The two regiments occupied these assembly areas from 18 to 22 March. For two days the 397th Inf. held the division left flank and conducted patrols until the 106th Cavalry Group relieved them on the night of 19 March.

In the next two days the division made a motor march to the Rhine River at Ludwigshafen, a distance of 92 miles. The almost unbelievable fact about this motor march is that it was made by the division in its own vehicles or, as the army says, "employing only organic transportation and that of attached units." This move was made under the direction of the XXI Corps, which took over control of the 100th Division and of the 71st Div. on our right. The plan was for these two divisions to advance northeast. The 100th, with the 399th on the northwest, the 397th, next to the 71st, on the southeast, and the 398th in reserve, was to capture Neustadt and then Ludwigshafen. At Ludwigshafen we were to seize all available means of crossing the Rhine River. Because the Third Army had been driving south along the Rhine towards Mainz and Worms, the enemy resistance had disintegrated, and the division's advance by truck was slowed only by occasional blown bridges and roadblocks.

Great numbers of freed Russian, Greek, French and Polish slave laborers appeared along the highway. Most of the DPs seemed bewildered by their sudden liberation from bondage by the onrushing Americans.



Dressed in nondescript, tattered clothing arranged in a pitiful effort to maintain some vestige of their colorful nationalities, they trudged along the weary miles of road westward, away from the battlefronts and the horror that was Nazi Germany. A stocky Russian girl with a bright red bandana covering her head and carrying an infant in her arms, paused to rest against an embankment. Four Greeks in slave uniforms with the letters GK stamped on their backs, pushed an overloaded cart crammed to collapsing with bedding and the precious junk of the destitute.

From around a bend in the road came the sound of a horn blowing a clarion call of victory and a confiscated German truck loaded with French men and women and with the Tricolor dancing on a rough, wooden staff lashed to the bumper, careened down the road toward France and freedom.

Freedom! You could see it shining in the eyes of the impassive Tartar from Siberia. It was in the step of the burly Russian in the cassock and worn, fur hat. It beamed from the prematurely hardened faces of the three pretty Polish girls, the weak V-signs of the old couple with backs bent through years of toil, the elated waves of the cosmopolitan group bathing their tired feet in the mountain brook. It didn't seem possible that these people could ever jeopardize their liberty again. Watching them, made the cold and the blood and the death and the inhuman hardships we had suffered seem worthwhile.

There were other signs of war in the mass of abandoned and wrecked equipment left by the trapped Wehrmacht. Uniforms, discarded by the Jerries attempting to avoid capture by donning civilian cloth-

*Ceremonies celebrating the liberation of Bitche. Left, Maj. Gen. Burress and Brig. Gen. Murphy listen to 100th Div. band following Gen. Burress' designation as an honorary citizen. The mayor of Bitche stands at the general's right.*

ing, littered the roadside for miles. An occasional German corpse sprawled grotesquely in a ditch. Cut off from their units by our rapid drive, hundreds of Krauts we didn't even stop for, attempted to surrender.

Strategy called for the 398th to follow the 399th to Appenthal and then swing slightly north to approach Ludwigshafen from that direction while the 397th continued to a point southwest of Neustadt before becoming the regiment in reserve. But this plan had to be changed because, when the 399th Inf. reached the outskirts of Ludwigshafen, it met elements of the 94th Inf. Div. of the Third Army which had driven down from the north. Since in its opening assault on the city the 94th Div. had encountered only stragglers and a few snipers, it requested the 100th to stay out of Ludwigshafen to avoid confusion among friendly troops. Later the 399th was asked to aid in the mop-up.

On 24 March, because of this change in plan, the 397th and 398th became a division reserve, and the 399th was given the mission of seizing the west bank of the Rhine south of Ludwigshafen. The 3rd Battalion of the 399th was the first unit of the division to reach the Rhine. The battalion entered Altrip, south of Ludwigshafen, during the morning. The rest of the 399th, with one battalion of the 397th attached, took over the city from the 94th and continued the task of mopping up resistance within the city. The balance of the 397th later relieved the elements of the 94th Div. south of the Isenach River within Ludwigshafen and patrolled the Rhine to the south.



The following day the division came under the control of VI Corps and spent the day making a house-to-house search for snipers and stragglers in its zone. On 27 March the 71st Div. took over the area, and the 100th Div. went into Corps reserve with orders to be ready to move on 24-hour notice. The move came on the last day of March.

### *Heilbronn*

*Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win  
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.  
Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin  
They think of firelit homes, clean beds, and wives.*

—SIGFRIED SASSOON, *Dreamers*

Refreshed by a four-day period in VI Corps reserve, our weapons oiled, our equipment cleaned, well-oriented on the overall situation and still confident from our dash to the Rhine, we found ourselves once more thrown into the pursuit of the Jerries. Before six o'clock on the morning of 31 March, elements of the division had moved out of their areas to cross the symbolic river and go on into Hitler's secondary defenses.

The day we crossed the Rhine was overcast and cool. The great river was a cloudy green flood, flowing between the rubble of two great cities, Ludwigshafen on the west and Mannheim on the east. The power of the stream was brought to us as it washed through the pontoons of the bridge, right beneath the wheels of the trucks, whose weight caused the individual floats to sink slightly and then bob up again as each vehicle passed on. None of the "Castles on the

Rhine" were visible. All was a mass of traffic, with the MPs doing their best to control the long lines waiting to cross. That day it seemed that the entire American Army was gathered at this point, each unit waiting its turn to pour into inner Germany and continue the chase.

Passing through battered Mannheim, we fanned out to the south, relieving elements of the 63rd Div., who took positions on our left. With the 100th Rcn. Troop out in front acting in conjunction with the 63rd, we pressed on with combat teams in line echeloned to the right rear, the 399th on the right, next to the river, encountering small arms fire. The 397th reached its objective with no opposition, meeting the Germans only when coming to the woods along the Hardt Creek, some nine kilometers to the southeast.

The 398th, in division reserve, was motorized and moved into the vicinity of Schwetzingen. The 375th F A, grouped with the 925th F A in support of the 399th, also maintained its CP at Schwetzingen.

At Schwetzingen, as well as in many other towns throughout the area, we found wounded German soldiers abandoned by their comrades. Stragglers surrendered to us wholesale.

Easter Sunday, 1 April, was just another day to us. As much as possible was done by our chaplains, but our sudden movement nullified detailed plans for religious services. In some cases, however, ceremonies were conducted in the woods where apple blossoms and early spring flowers were laid out as altars. Others were permitted a few moments to worship in bombed churches where patches of sky were visible through torn roofs.



On the fighting front, with the Rhine bridgehead well established, relief of the 63rd Div. was completed. Then, with the 63rd Div. on our left and the Rhine on the right, we attacked southeast across the plain in the direction of Hockenheim-Walldorf behind the spearheads of the 10th Armored Div.

Moving with all possible speed in order to prevent the reorganization of the defeated German forces, we drove forward, the 399th, on the right, seeking to establish contact with the II French Corps advancing down the left bank of the Rhine. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 399th jumped off with the 2nd Battalion, on the right, heading for Hockenheim and the 1st Battalion, next to the 397th, on the left. Attached to each of these battalions was one platoon from Co. A 781st Tank Battalion. Plans were for the 1st and 2nd Battalions to pass through the 3rd Battalion, holding front line positions at the time. The 3rd Battalion was then to retire for special VI Corps duty.

Roadblocks and blown bridges formed the only appreciable defense made by the Germans in this sector, but they used these to fullest advantage. Despite the obstacles, the two battalions pushed ahead and by 1042 hours the 2nd Battalion, with F Co. on the right, G on the left, and E in reserve had pushed on into Hockenheim. By 1530 the town was cleared and the objective secured.

The 1st Battalion, to the left of the 2nd Battalion, occupied the town of Reilingen the same day. Having progressed through flat wooded lowlands across the Hardt Creek with B and C Cos. out in front, the battalion entered the town, and while A Co. mopped-up, B and C Cos. cleared the surrounding woods.

During the afternoon, the 399th made contact with the II Corps, First French Army, on the right. The

liaison was established about three kilometers south of Walldorf, where an Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon jeep met the French expanding from their beachhead in the vicinity of Speyer. This was the first junction made by American and French forces on the east side of the Rhine.

Paralleling the Easter Day attack of the 399th, the 397th moved southeast with the 1st and 2nd Battalions passing through the lines held by the 3rd Battalion in the vicinity of Oftersheim-Bruchausen. The 2nd Battalion 397th was subjected to a terrific artillery barrage before advancing to take the towns of Sandhausen, Nussloch, St. Ilgen and Weisloch. The 1st Battalion, its attack spearheaded by a platoon of tanks from Co. C of the 781st Tank Battalion, advanced 15 kilometers through scattered small-arms fire to reach Walldorf at 1135. The rapid advance made possible the capture of 337 prisoners, two well-equipped hospitals, a battery of 105s, three buildings full of weapons and ammunition, a complete searchlight and radar unit with power plant, and a Gestapo Headquarters. Altogether, on 1 April, we made an advance of some 16 kilometers on a wide front, and were still going strong at the end of the period.

On 2 April, the pursuit continued toward the important railroad and communications center of Heilbronn, a city of 100,000 prewar population. The 399th relieved elements of the 397th in the vicinity of Walldorf during the morning, and the 397th shifted to the east. Elements of the 1st Battalion accomplished the relief with Co. G of the 399th reinforcing the 1st Battalion troops still in Reilingen.

The 397th continued in the attack, the 1st Battalion jumping off in the afternoon to take the towns of Rotenberg, Tairnbach, Muhlhausen, Eschelbach and



*The industrial city of Mannheim on the east bank of the Rhine had been badly battered by constant air bombardment.*

Eichtersheim, an advance of about 16 kilometers, against minor enemy opposition such as roadblocks, mines, and sniper fire. The 2nd Battalion, crossing the line of departure at the same time, cleared Horrenberg, Hoffenheim, and Sinsheim, after a 30-minute artillery preparation. Some opposition was encountered along the roads in this sector in the form of light artillery fire and sniper action. The 3rd Battalion, in reserve, followed the lead of the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The extraordinary number of 1,080 prisoners were taken during the day's action by the regiment; almost as many as in the previous six months of combat.

The 399th, guarding our division's right flank and rear, made no contact with the enemy, but liaison was maintained with the 397th and the French. The usual mopping-up operations were carried out, with a few PWs being taken. The regimental CP opened at Walldorf at 2000 hours.

The 398th remained in division reserve, maintaining its CP in Schwetzingen. The 375th F A Battalion returned to control of the 398th after being attached to the 399th for one day.

A radio net was put into operation by the 100th Signal Co. to maintain contact with the 10th Armored, out in front of the Century Division, and the French, who were coming up on our right.

The rat-race continued on 3 April, with road blocks, mines and blown bridges hampering our advance through the hilly country leading to Heilbronn. The 397th, shuttling its troops into position, moved 32 kilometers in some cases. The 1st Battalion slashed from Michelfeld to Ittlingen, where they billeted for the night. The 2nd Battalion, with the support of tanks, mopped up the towns of Weiler, Hillsbach, Reihen,

Bockshaft, Kirchart, and spent the night in Furfeld. The 3rd Battalion reeled off 33 kilometers from Muhlhausen to Kirchart, an advance slowed more by poor roads than enemy resistance.

Also against negligible enemy opposition, the 399th Inf. pushed forward through the rain of 3 April. The 1st Battalion, motorized, proceeded to Steinsfurth during the afternoon. The 2nd Battalion, having left its CP back in Rauensberg, followed. At the end of day, the 2nd Battalion had reached Sinsheim, just north-east of Steinsfurth, while the enemy continued withdrawing southward.

The 398th moved from its CP at Schwetzingen to the vicinity of Bad Rappenau, closing in during the early evening. Meanwhile, the Krauts had relinquished the town of Neckargartach, on the west bank of the Neckar river and north of Heilbronn, to the front-running 10th Armored Div. After fighting a stiff rear-guard action for this important town, the enemy withdrew across the river into the factory district to the north of Heilbronn, blowing the bridge across the river at that point.

Because the French, on our right, were lagging behind, leaving our right flank entirely exposed to possible counter-thrusts by the Jerries, the 399th continued to guard our division against possible counter-thrusts from the right flank and rear. While the rest of the 100th pushed ahead, the 399th was assigned the mission of clearing the area around Gemmingen and Schwaigern, some 16 kilometers east of Heilbronn.

Accordingly, the 1st Battalion 399th, supported by a platoon of tanks, a platoon of TDs and a platoon from Co. C 325th Engr. Battalion, moved by motor from Steinsfurth to Gemmingen. Until reaching the town, no opposition was encountered, but on the out-



*Left, an aerial view of Mannheim showing complete devastation. Above, wrecked Rhine bridge connecting Mannheim with Ludwigshafen. Army ponton span is in the foreground.*

skirts of Gemmingen the Germans made a stand on the rough, hilly ground east of the little village. With the Krauts in command of all the roads leading to towns along the route, as well as the large woods to the south, heavy mortar and artillery fire began dropping among the 1st Battalion troops.

Unable to proceed further by motor over roads which came under perfect enemy observation, the 1st Battalion detrucked and with Co. A leading and Cos. C and B following in a column of companies, advanced on foot, supported by the tanks. The attack moved slowly over the open, rolling terrain while the Krauts poured unremitting fire upon our troops from the high, wooded ground to the south, and fought stubbornly to protect the highway which passed through the woods and continued to Heilbronn only 15 kilometers to the east.

Our coordinated tank-infantry attack proved too much for the enemy, however, and by early afternoon our spearheads had penetrated to the eastern edge of the forest barrier. Co. A now continued toward Schwaigern while Co. C remained behind to clear the woods which were infested with Jerry mortar, artillery, and small arms positions. By late afternoon, Co. A had captured Schwaigern, against only spotty small arms resistance at the eastern edge of the town. Co. C joined them there, after having cleared the woods in less than an hour.

Co. B was ordered to return to Gemmingen to protect our right flank and rear. The French still not having come up from their positions around Eppingen, this dangerous gap had to be plugged.

The 2nd Battalion 399th, following the lead of the 1st Battalion, began clearing the woods north of Gemmingen. By afternoon, Co. F had completed the task

and was on the way to Schluctern and Grossgartach, between Schwaigern and Heilbronn.

Trouble was encountered by the 2nd Battalion when they tried to take Schluctern, an important rail and communications town. Exposed to heavy artillery and mortar fire along the road from Schwaigern, the battalion shifted to the north, attacking Schluctern southeast from the direction of Massenbach. By late afternoon, Schluctern was in the hands of the 2nd Battalion, and Co. F was on the road to Grossgartach, only a kilometer away.

Capturing this important little rail town was more of a job than we had figured. For four hours the doughs of Co. F battled it out with the enemy with small arms. Finally, about midnight, the Germans withdrew, leaving us in possession of the town.

The vital city of Heilbronn on the east bank of the Neckar river, now lay before us. Our major objective since crossing the Rhine, some enemy resistance had been expected at this important rail and communications center. But indications were that no determined stand was planned by the Germans. Repeated reconnaissance of the city by our observation planes reported little enemy activity. The Krauts seemed far busier in the vicinity of Neckarsulm, some few miles to the north.

For the enemy, however, Heilbronn was an ideal spot for a last ditch stand. The deep, swift-flowing Neckar made a formidable defense barrier. With the three road bridges and one railroad bridge leading into the city blown, crossing the Neckar would be a major operation. Forming a semi-circle behind the city



*Above, allied PWs of several nationalities pound the long road back to home and loved ones following liberation. Right, German civilians return to their battered "castles".*

were a group of easily defended hills, bare almost to their summits, with thick woods at the crests which afforded excellent concealment for German artillery and gave the enemy unbroken observation of every inch of the river from Neckarsulm, on the north, to Sontheim on the south.

Despite several previous air-raids, Heilbronn was relatively intact at the beginning of our assault. The thick, stone walls of the numerous factory buildings were miniature fortresses in themselves. Beneath the buildings, a labyrinth of tunnels connected the various parts of the city. These tunnels enabled the Krauts to infiltrate behind our lines into buildings already overrun by our troops. During our assault upon Heilbronn, an intricate plan for defending the city block by block in a series of zones, was found on a captured German.

Another factor in the decision of the enemy to defend Heilbronn was the number of troops available at the time. To many battered Wehrmacht units and individual stragglers in retreat from the Rhine, Heilbronn was a natural center for regrouping. When we reached the city, there were several thousand enemy troops in Heilbronn in addition to numerous local Volksturm organizations.

Here, then, at the head of the great Neckar valley and the roads leading south toward Stuttgart and east toward Ulm and the vaunted German "National Redoubt," the enemy made one of his most desperate stands of the war.

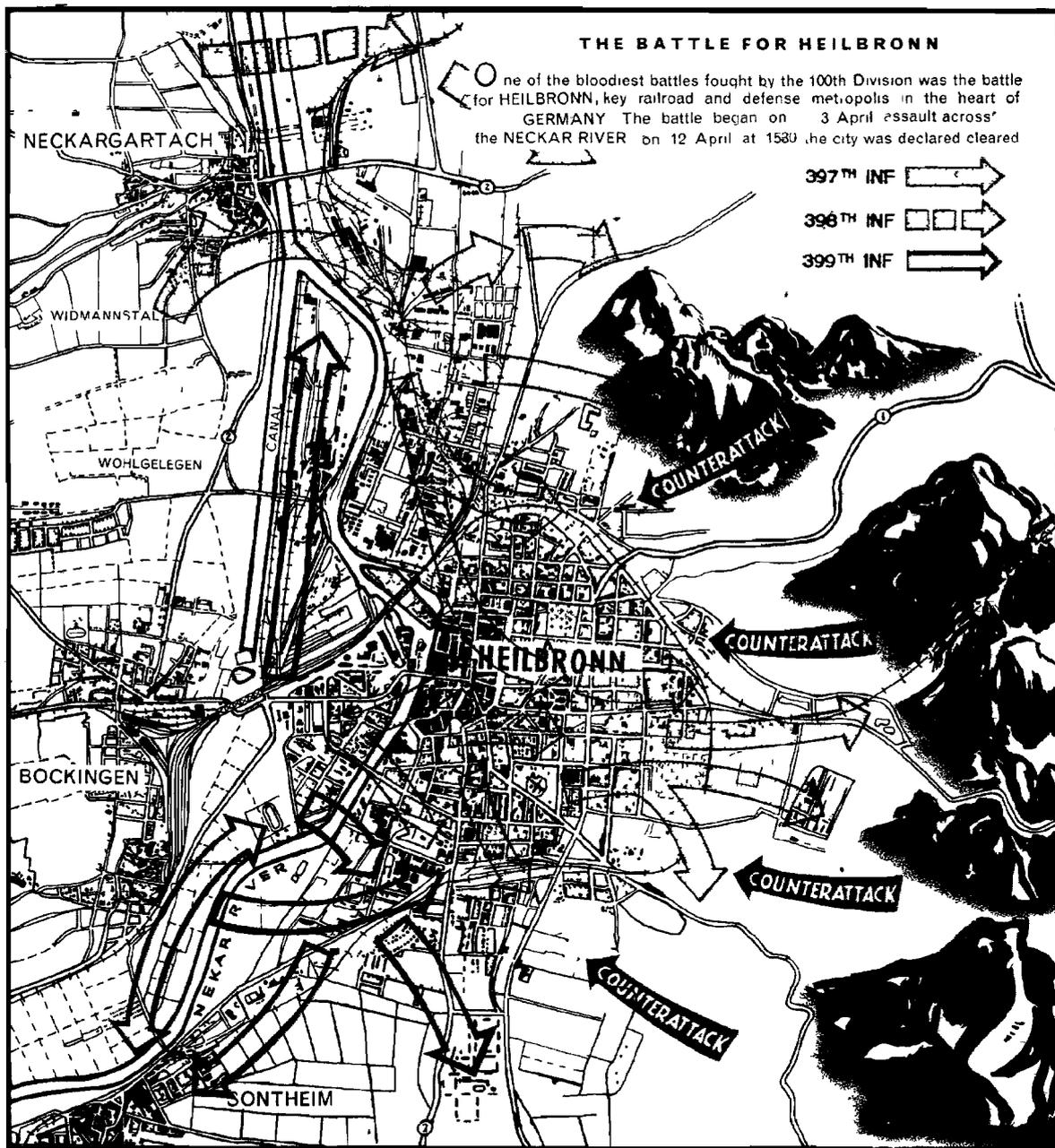
As we advanced toward Heilbronn, Gen. Burress planned his tactics carefully. A study of the ground

and general enemy situation, convinced him that the Neckar and Kocher Rivers, at their confluence on the northern outskirts of Heilbronn, was pivotal ground for the enemy and a most favorable point to stop our onrush towards the so-called strongholds in the mountains of South Germany.

Our right flank being seriously exposed because of the lagging French, and our mission being to protect the right flank of the Seventh Army, Gen. Burress decided against maneuvering for an opportunity to encircle the Heilbronn area from the north and south. Instead, the General chose to throw the main strength of the 100th in on the north beside the 63rd Div., cross the Neckar near Bad Wimpfen, swing south across the Kocher, and come at Heilbronn from the rear with CT-397 and CT-398. CT-399 was to move straight towards Heilbronn to hold the enemy in place and create a diversion for the main assault on the left while protecting the division and army against attacks from the south.

But, as is too often the case, subsequent developments prohibited Gen. Burress from carrying out this masterful strategy. At 1700 hours of 3 April, while our division was still about 24 kilometers from the Neckar River, Gen. Burress was ordered by the VI Corps CG to detach one battalion of infantry and rush it forward with all possible speed to join the 10th Armored Div. in the vicinity of Heilbronn. The 10th Armored had reached the Neckar ahead of us by circling from the north, and the battalion of Centurymen was to assist the 10th in establishing a bridgehead to cover the crossing of the 100th and other troops to follow.

Accordingly, during the late hours of 3 April, the



3rd Battalion 398th Inf., under command of the 10th Armored CG, advanced into Neckargartach and took up positions along the bank of the river some 300 yards north of a blown bridge. Tensely, the infantrymen peered through the cold drizzle for some sign of the enemy on the invisible far bank, or huddled in blacked-out houses awaiting the order to board the assault boats.

So as not to alert the enemy, the crossing was to be made without artillery preparation. At 0300 of 4 April, Co. K crawled into 14 assault boats, each manned by three engineers from the 55th Engr. Battalion of the 10th Armored Div., and made the first crossing of the dark, swift flowing Neckar. The wet earth beneath their boots felt friendly and reassuring

as the Co. K men scrambled from the sturdy boats and, led by nine men from the Raider Platoon, deployed along the river. The crossing had been negotiated without firing a shot.

Swiftly, the 3rd Battalionites got their bearings and began moving inland. Before them loomed the silhouette of an enormous power plant. As the leading Raiders approached the steep bank which points to the factory district, they drew one sniper shot. Taking cover on the bank, they returned the fire and waited for Co. K to come up to them. Then the entire force advanced into the deserted power plant.

Despite the fact that the enemy was now fully alerted, Co. L made the crossing, followed by Co. I. The last boats to cross drew fire from an enemy burp



*Above, doughfeet trudge deeper into Germany toward Heilbronn. Right, a column of Centurymen slashes through a segment of the vaunted Ziegfried Line.*

gun, but a Co. K machine gun, set up in the power plant, quickly silenced that opposition. Within one hour, the entire 3rd Battalion had navigated the river and assembled in and around the power plant.

At the first streak of dawn, Cos. K and L, each with a platoon of heavy machine guns from Co. M attached, moved toward their objectives. The plan was for Co. L to branch out to the north as far as a group of lumberyards situated along the railroad line from Heilbronn to Neckarsulm. Co. K was to advance south about 300 yards to the edge of the factory district, and then turn east along the Neckargartach Bridge road and into the hills southeast of the town. The 1st Platoon of Co. K was assigned the mission of taking Tower Hill, a height whose steep, barren slope, devoid of cover or concealment, was topped by the skeleton of an old tower. The 3rd Platoon was to take Cloverleaf Hill, directly south of Tower Hill, while the 2nd Platoon was to clean out the glassworks just south of the landing site. Co. I, meanwhile, dug in on a line parallel to the river about 300 yards to the front of the power plant.

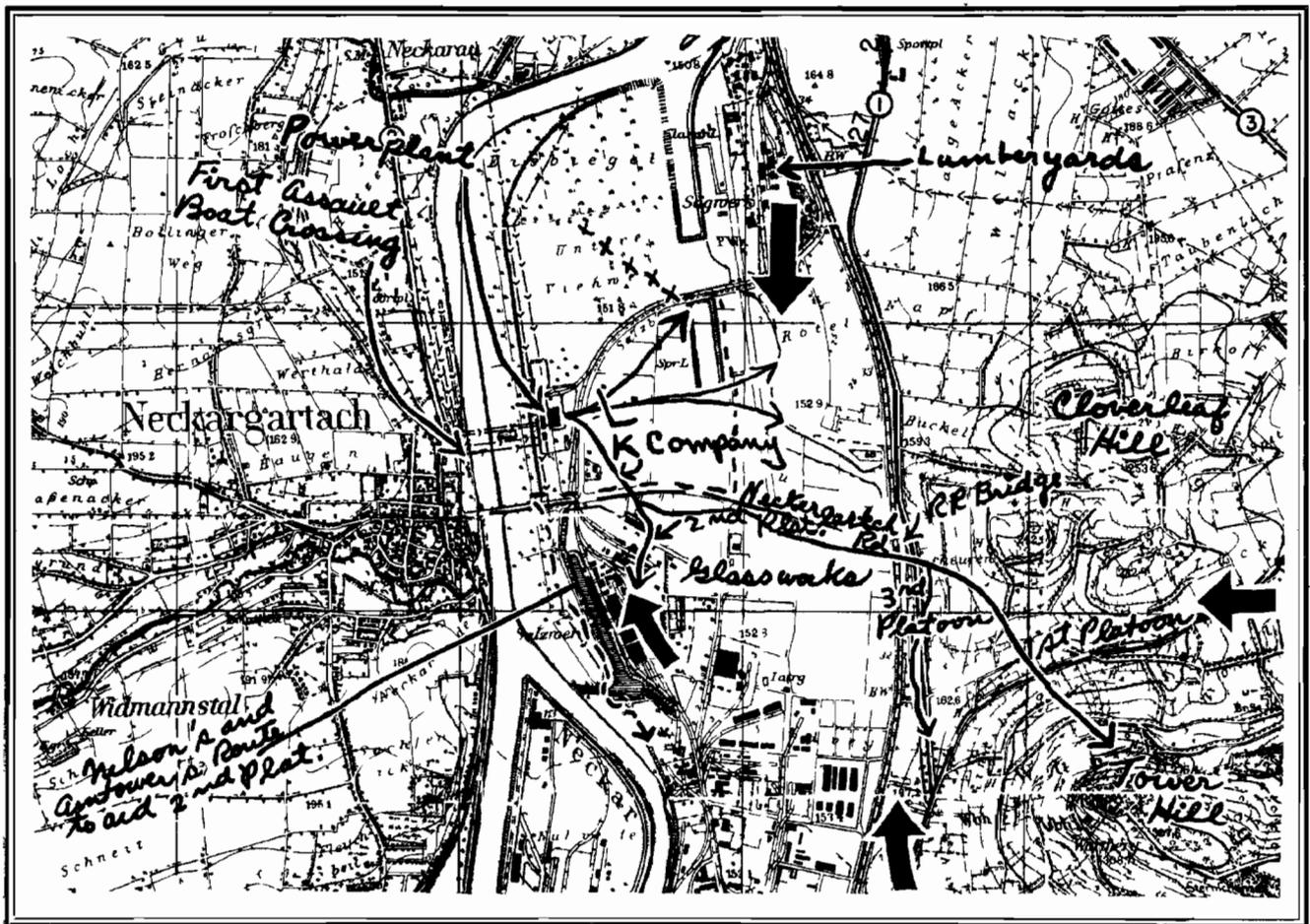
By 0900 of 4 April, the advance was well under way. Co. L had progressed some 500 yards to the northeast, was skirting a large, water-filled ditch about half-way to the lumberyards, and had reached the railroad and the highway which ran alongside it at the junction with the Neckargartach road. On Co. L's right, the 1st Platoon of Co. K had begun to climb Tower Hill; the 2nd Platoon had entered the factory district to the south; and the 3rd Platoon was advancing southward along the road running parallel to the river on

the far side of the factory district against only sporadic sniper fire.

Suddenly, the Jerries launched a counterattack along the entire battalion front with a force estimated at between 500 and 1,000 men. The Germans, probably having infiltrated our lines through underground passageways, first appeared in a building on the northern edge of the factory district behind the southward-moving 2nd Platoon of Co. K and cut off the platoon. Another enemy force turned up east of the highway and cut off the platoon struggling up Tower Hill. A third group of Germans attacked the men of Co. L and the 3rd Platoon of Co. K along the highway itself. From the lumberyards to the north, a fourth enemy attack caught the men in the center of the 3rd Battalion front in a cross-fire with the German force in the factory buildings to the south.

Lt. Almon Brunkow, commanding a section of heavy MGs attached to the 3rd Platoon of Co. K, was hit when he walked out onto the road to reconnoiter a new position for his guns. As he lay helpless in the open field beyond the road, Pfc. Leland L. Zeiter and other members of his machine gun squad made an effort to reach him. But the enemy fire was too intense and the squad was forced to give up the attempt and withdraw northward with the remainder of the platoon to the railroad bridge at the junction of the east-west Neckargartach road.

Here, together with the elements from Co. L, they made a gallant attempt to hold against the enemy who were attacking from three sides. Faced with the possibility of being surrounded, however, and armed only with rifles and the section of machine guns against an enemy liberally supplied with panzerfaust and 88s, the outnumbered and outgunned defenders of the



Positions of 3rd Battalion 398th Inf. on 4 April 1945 after the first day of the battle for Heilbronn

bridge were forced to withdraw in small groups to the previously prepared defenses of Co. I in front of the power plant. The 1st Platoon of Co. K on Tower Hill and the 2nd Platoon in the factory district were now completely isolated.

Our mortars and artillery, which up to this time had been unable to fire due to the proximity of our forces to the enemy, now began to send rounds into the Jerry lines from the west side of the river. The 81mm mortars of Co. M had originally been emplaced on the east bank of the Neckar, but had been forced to move back to high ground on the western side after Jerry artillery had knocked out one of the tubes.

With the support of these guns, the battalion regrouped and succeeded in regaining some lost ground. Led by Co. I, the 3rd Battalion again advanced across the open field to its front with Co. L on the left rear of Co. I, and Co. K, now numbering about 20 men, off to the right as protection for that flank. Intense enemy fire continued to blanket the field across which the battalion was advancing, but with the accurate support of our own artillery and mortars the battalion managed to push forward against heartbreaking opposition.

Seven men from Co. I were killed in the attack, as

well as two company aid-men who were shot down by the enemy despite prominently displayed Medical Corps arm-bands. Tec. 5 Joseph P. Nebesney, one of the aid-men killed by the Krauts, was wounded while advancing with the infantrymen of his platoon. Disregarding his own injury, he continued to treat the riflemen of the platoon, unhesitatingly exposing himself to enemy fire while moving from victim to victim. Hit twice again while performing his duties, he still refused to be evacuated and was bandaging a wounded comrade when a fourth bullet mortally wounded him.

As a result of our determined attack, the 3rd Battalion found itself on a line along the far edge of the big, water-filled ditch which Co. L had passed earlier in the morning. There the battalion prepared for a stand.

By now, it was evident that the enemy was far stronger than had been anticipated. The piecemeal enemy units we had encountered were fanatical in their resistance. From the lumberyards to the north and the factories to the south, enemy reinforcements were constantly pouring into the front lines. German artillery, emplaced on the two great hills to the east, had perfect observation of the entire site of our bridge-



*Crayon sketch of railroad spur passing through Heilbronn factory district. Right, summit of Tower Hill.*

head, and continued to pour devastating fire on our troops. To make matters worse, the 10th Armored had failed to construct the promised ponton bridge behind the 3rd Battalion, and the accurate enemy artillery fire made any immediate completion of such a project most unlikely.

Piling worry upon worry, efforts to reestablish contact with the isolated 1st and 2nd Platoons of Co. K confirmed the fear that these two gallant platoons had been overrun by the enemy. A runner from the 2nd Platoon ran the gauntlet of enemy fire to report to Capt. William E. Nelson, Co. K commander, that the platoon's handy-talkie had failed and that they were desperately short of ammunition. When the runner had left the platoon, they were barricaded in a house about 1,000 yards to the south and fighting off repeated enemy attacks. The runner led Capt. Nelson and several Co. K men toward the house, but before they could reach the building they were immobilized in a ditch by enemy fire and forced to return. Later, Sgt. Leslie Amtower and two men succeeded in entering the house. They found only the useless handy-talkie and 25 American gas masks pulled from their cases. While they were searching the building, they noticed a group of eight or ten Jerries outside. The three men opened fire and the enemy immediately stormed the house. Sgt. Amtower and the two men in his patrol retreated across the moat-bridge to the rear of the structure and returned to the company CP.

The 1st Platoon of Co. K had advanced up Tower Hill before daybreak, surprising and capturing 14 Germans on the edge of the woods at the top of the hill. In the fierce fire-fight with the counterattacking Jerries which followed, the outnumbered platoon was cut off. Despite a shortage of ammunition, Lt. Alfred

J. Rizzo radioed that he was confident they would be able to hold out and work back to the rest of the battalion after nightfall. The last heard from the platoon was a handy-talkie request for fire on an enemy gun to the east which was giving them trouble. A group of Raiders tried to reach the platoon after dark, but were immobilized upon attempting to cross the highway. A patrol from Co. K was also forced to turn back without making contact.

Several days later the German officer who had commanded the force which had surrounded the Co. K platoon, was captured and told the story of the gallant platoon's stand. Even though outnumbered, surrounded, and burdened with their prisoners, the enemy officer testified, "they fired every weapon they had, and threw hand grenades until we were within four or five yards of them. It finally took all of the 90 men in my company to subdue them." When we finally had fought to the top of Tower Hill, the graves of three of the 1st Platoon riflemen were found by our men. They had been buried by German civilians.

It was at this dark moment, that Gen. Burress received word the 10th Armored had been relieved of its mission to support the capture of Heilbronn and was being shifted to the north flank of VI Corps, presumably to take advantage of a break there and encircle the Germans by driving back west, in the rear of Heilbronn.

This changed the situation completely and left Gen. Burress weighted by a staggering tactical problem. By action of higher authority, the General had become committed in an unplanned maneuver with a battalion of Centurymen on the east side of the Neckar and being violently attacked by vastly superior forces of enemy. To attempt to withdraw the 3rd Battalion 398th Inf. back across the river, Gen. Burress estimated, would not only be disastrous for it but such



*Centurymen rush for available cover as enemy artillery "comes in".*



*The Jerries fire Heilbronn oil reserves in the path of our advance.*

an enemy success at the time would increase his will to resist and would eventually prove more costly. Another important consideration was the effect upon division personnel of not going to the aid of brother Centurymen in distress. Gen. Burress, therefore, abandoned his original scheme of maneuver and began rushing the 397th Inf. across the Neckar to reinforce the 3rd Battalion 398th. What would have happened had Gen. Burress been permitted to carry out his original plan of maneuver, can never be known. But that he did the best he could with a situation which was neither to his liking nor choosing, is self-evident.

At 1400 of 4 April, the 2nd Battalion 397th Inf. began to cross the Neckar. Responsibility for getting the two battalions across was given to the 100th's 325th Engrs. At first there was some disorganization because of the inexperience of the infantry troops with assault boat crossings. The boats also had been scattered along the west bank by the 10th Armored Div's. 55th Engrs. following the crossing by the 3rd Battalion 398th and some were in damaged condition from enemy artillery fire.

By 1740, however, the 2nd Battalion 397th was on the right bank, having negotiated the crossing without casualties. Attached to each company of the 2nd Battalion was a section of heavy machine guns from Co. H. The battalion's heavy mortars were set up on the west side of the river next to those of the 3rd Battalion 398th.

Smoke laid over the crossing site by Negro troops of the 163rd Chemical Smoke Generator Co., did much to make our crossing possible. While the smoke screen hid our troops from the enemy, however, it also enabled the German artillery to zero in on the general

crossing site and any bridge or raft-making activities of our engineers. This observed enemy fire was so accurate as to force abandonment of an attempt to build a treadway bridge by Co. A of the 31st Engr. Battalion under command of Capt. Kenneth R. Franklin. The enemy knew that it was of paramount importance to prevent our armor from crossing to the east bank, and on 4 April the German efforts were successful.

Immediately after landing at 1425 hours, Co. E of the 397th pushed toward the factory district. With the 2nd Platoon in the lead, Co. E advanced through a breach in the concrete wall which surrounds the factory district on the north, and headed for the first factory, a red brick building 200 yards across an open loading yard. The assault was made in the face of heavy crossfire from their objective and another factory building off to the left. Once at the factory doors, the Co. E men had little difficulty convincing the few Germans who had remained in the structure after our artillery preparation, to surrender. The factory building to the left, a former glassworks, where a considerable force of Krauts was holed up, was more troublesome.

Hugging the wall, the 3rd Platoon of Co. E crawled toward this sturdy, red-brick building. Despite heavy machine gun fire, one squad battled its way into the structure, but the other two squads of the platoon were immobilized and unable to move beyond the protecting wall. The squad which entered the factory slowly fought its way through the building until just before nightfall when they were joined in this difficult operation by Co. F.

Having cleared out these first two factory buildings,



*A wounded infantryman is carried from the bridgehead battleground.*



*Loading into an assault boat for the hazardous Neckar crossing.*

the Centurymen turned their attention to two shell-pocked houses off to the right and slightly behind the first factory building. Unable to approach the nearest house directly because of intense enemy fire, the 3rd Platoon of Co. E crawled along a catwalk to the rear of the house. From there, with the help of men of the 1st Platoon who had remained behind the concrete wall, they cleared the structure.

At this point, darkness called a halt to further operations. Co. F remained in the factory next to the wall in the northeast corner of the district and Co. E bedded down in the battered house they had just captured. Their situation, however, was very precarious since the enemy was still in the second house across a narrow courtyard and all through the night kept throwing hand grenades and sniping at the E Co. men. One sniper's bullet hit Lt. Peter Petracco, 1st Platoon leader, while he was planning the attack with another E Co. officer.

Precious little rest was gained by the weary Easy Co. men that night. Shortly after midnight, a number of Jerries, who had sneaked into the loading yard in the darkness, opened fire on the Co. E troops with machine guns, burp guns and panzerfaust. At the same time, they were attacked by Krauts on the south side of the house. Cut off from the Neckargartach road and the Co. F men in the factory building to the left, Co. E managed to fight off the first German assault. But many of the Co. E men were badly hit or deafened by the percussion grenades used by the enemy.

Caught in an untenable position, Co. E was forced to attempt a withdrawal. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons managed to get back over the catwalk to the factory they had captured earlier in the battle. From this

building they found they could join forces with Co. F where the attack was less intense. The 1st Platoon, together with the mortarmen of the Weapons Platoon who had joined the company earlier, were in a less fortunate situation. T. Sgt. Thomas Convery, in command following the death of Lt. Petracco, 1st Platoon leader, wounded himself, ordered his men to withdraw to the Co. E CP across the loading yard the best way they could. Most of the Co. E men were wounded. But somehow they managed to fight their way across the Neckargartach road and to the company CP and comparative safety. Every one of the returning men was wounded. Ten men were missing. In all, Co. E suffered 54 casualties that night.

Meanwhile, the major enemy force which had counterattacked the 2nd Battalion elements holding the glassworks, were making it hot for the Centurymen. Armed with a considerable number of panzerfaust which they used to telling advantage against the brick building, the Krauts took a heavy toll of our troops. Despite the fact that the opposing forces were so close together that use of artillery was almost as dangerous to our own men as to the enemy, Lt. Carl Bradshaw, Co. F commander, decided to call on the big guns for help. Waiting until all elements with the exception of Co. F had withdrawn, Lt. Bradshaw called for artillery support. This request was granted, and he directed the fire of an 8-inch gun so effectively that the enemy was thrown into confusion and broke off their assault for the remainder of the night.

To the north, the 3rd Battalion 398th was having its own difficulties. Attacked by a determined enemy force along the 500-yard line they had established from north of the Co. F glassworks to the big, water-



*Site of our initial Neckar bridgehead. Arrow points to tower on Tower Hill. The troublesome glassworks is in the left foreground.*

filled ditch, the 3rd Battalion was engaged in driving off repeated fierce assaults against their positions. Several of these enemy counterattacks were led by tanks. But with the support of two TDs and two tanks which fired at the Germans from the left bank of the Neckar, the 3rd Battalion beat off every enemy effort to drive them from their positions.

The 3rd Battalion maintained this line for the remainder of the battle for Heilbronn, resisting the gradually weakening German attacks with the help of accurate fire of the 374th and 242nd F A Battalions whose batteries were emplaced near Frankenbach. Outstanding in the 3rd Battalion's successful defense of this sector, was the work of the Raider Platoon, nine men armed with machine guns who held the segment of the battalion front north and east from the big, water-filled ditch.

After dark on 4 April, Co. A of the 31st Engrs. again attempted to complete a treadway bridge or raft capable of carrying tanks and TDs to the east bank of the Neckar. Enemy artillery concentrations upon the bridge site were so accurate even in the darkness that the project was once more abandoned. Inspired by the necessity for getting armor across the river to the hard-pressed Centurymen, the 31st Engrs. grimly continued their efforts although silhouetted by fires caused by enemy artillery in Neckargartach and the factory district on the east bank of the river. Fourteen engineers were hit by shell-fire during the first hour of work. Each attempt to launch ponton floats was met with an uncannily accurate artillery concentration which punctured the floats and caused several additional casualties among the engineers. The site of the bridge



*One of the sturdy steel and concrete bridges across the Neckar which was destroyed by the enemy. Demolition was efficient.*

was changed, but here, too, the German fire was so intense that the engineers finally gave up for the night. Capt. Franklin, engineer CO and every man who worked with him, was positive that civilians were directing the fire of the enemy guns.

Because of the continued enemy shelling of the river bank, no attempt at building the bridge was made on 5 April. Fog oil was brought a great distance from supply depots by trucks of both VI Corps QM and the 100th QM Co. The Negro 163rd Chemical Smoke Generator Co. was of great service in maintaining the smoke screen over the river under cover of which the trickle of supplies we could ferry across succeeded in reaching our troops.

On the more active side of the river, Cos. F and G of the 397th jumped off into the attack again before dawn, moving southward. Co. F, surging out of the factory building in which it had spent the night, took over the factory between it and the building that Co. E had taken the previous day. While reconnoitering for a suitable way out of the first factory building, Lt. Bradshaw, Co. F commander, was killed by a sniper. The company, having found an easier way, left the building, moving to the in-between factory and later to Co. E's factory where they waited for Co. G to move up from their positions beyond the concrete wall and join the concerted drive.

Throughout the morning, Co. F had been continuously engaged in a fire fight with the Jerries in the loading yard north of the buildings they were in. The shacks and loading platforms were excellent cover for the enemy in the yard, and it was difficult to fire on them, because their comrades covered them from the



*With the enemy knocking out bridges as soon as we put them in, supplies had to be ferried across by boat or any other means.*



*Even amphibious tanks were utilized to keep vital supplies floating across the Neckar to the hard-pressed bridgehead.*

two neighboring houses from which Co. E had been forced to retreat the night before.

Co. G advancing with the 2nd Platoon, commanded by Lt. John H. Slade, in the lead, did not know that there were Jerries in the loading yard. As they ran across the field in front of the concrete wall, a burst of machine gun fire, sounding as if it came from one of the houses, wounded one man. Gaining the protection of the wall, the platoon lay behind the bank on which the wall is built, and formed a skirmish line, preparing to attack through the railroad gate that is at the northern end of the loading yard.

Suddenly, Sgt. Dalton Yates was surprised to see a German stick a gun through a hole in the wall. That was their first indication that there were Jerries on the other side in the yard. The platoon began to toss grenades over the wall into the laps of the Jerries on the other side. The Jerries returned the compliment with *potato mashers*, a concussion grenade so called because of its shape. For a few minutes a lively game of catch ensued over the 6-foot-high wall. Some of the George Co. men climbed the embankment to get behind the wall and fire at the Jerries through holes. One man opened a gap in the wall with a grenade, and another helped enlarge it with his rifle butt. Looking through this hole, they saw some 40 Jerries well dug in in the loading yard, some of them not more than 15 yards from the wall.

By this time, six men of the 2nd Platoon lay dead, and Lt. Slade, seeing that something drastic had to be done, called for mortar fire on the Jerries in the yard, despite their proximity to his own troops. At his message, the 60mm mortars behind the Neckargartach road, and the heavy 81mm mortars on the other side

of the river opened fire, while the men of the 2nd Platoon hugged the earth in a shallow depression just behind the wall over which the shells were landing.

After several minutes of this firing, the Jerries lost interest in continuing the fight. Leaving their holes, they ran toward Lt. Slade's men with their hands in the air and the cry *Kamarade* on their lips. At the first break, six of the Germans were shot by their own officers as they attempted to give themselves up. Thirty-seven young Germans poured through the railroad gate into the hands of the 2nd Platoon, weeping, bleeding and screaming hysterically. "They wasn't nuthin' but kids," said Lt. Slade after the battle. "Before the mortars had hit them, they had fought like demons, but now, they were only a disorganized mass of 14 to 17-year-olds."

The loading yard cleared, the 2nd Platoon prepared to attack its original objectives, the two houses just to the right of the factory where F Company was waiting for them. But as one squad went through the breach in the wall and began moving toward the houses, four men were killed by intense fire from the enemy position. As Lt. Slade called for smoke to be fired on the houses, S. Sgt. Henry S. Hohn, leader of the squad, himself badly wounded led his men from the yard, and the 2nd Platoon withdrew out of danger.

Meanwhile, efforts were being made to bring reinforcements over to the bridgehead. The artillery fire all along the river was still too intense for the building of a bridge, or even for the construction of a larger raft or a ferry. The only transportation across the river was by assault boat and small rafts operated by Co. A 325th Engrs. On these, supplies and rations were brought across to the beleaguered attackers, and pris-



*The engineers attempt to salvage the remains of a ponton bridge.*

oners and casualties were evacuated. But the vital tanks and TD's still could not join the fight.

Direct communication was established between the Division CP and the bridgehead when the 100th Signal Company laid a wire from the bridgehead to the CP at Bonfeld. Despite continuous artillery fire during the laying of this line, the wiremen took the time to overhead it, so it would stay in longer under constant fire of the enemy's guns.

In the absence of tanks, Lt. Col. Gordon Singles, commanding the forces on the bridgehead, called for artillery fire. Particularly bothersome to the men crossing the loading yard were two long warehouses that ran north and south along the lagoon on the western edge of the factory area. Accordingly, the 155s of the 373rd F A Battalion were adjusted on these buildings, and with traversing fire at 50-yd. intervals, the entire length of the warehouses was blasted. In addition, selected targets were given to the 374th and 242nd F A Battalions. This medium artillery drove the Germans from their positions, out into the open where they were cut down by light artillery and mortar fire. The two houses which had caused so much trouble to the men of Lt. Slade's platoon were reduced to shambles. The two huge warehouses were set afire. The Germans who somehow remained alive in the cellars of these buildings and among the battered ruins of the glassworks after an hour of pounding by our artillery, were glad to surrender when the infantry moved in.

Although the German artillery still commanded the city and both banks of the Neckar, the artillery of the 100th and attached units effectively offset this advan-



*Dense smoke screen covers movements of our troops from observation.*

tage with excellent observation from the ridge that runs from Neckargartach to Bockingen along the western bank of the river. Observation posts were established in an old watch tower behind Bockingen, commanding the southern approach to Heilbronn; at a crossroads directly west of the center of the city; on a hill southwest of Neckargartach; and on the highest point of Neckargartach itself. Although these positions were inferior to those of the enemy in the hills east of Heilbronn, they were supplemented by Cub plane observation, which the enemy did not have, and were comparatively free of enemy counterfire. Enemy artillery concentrated almost entirely upon the banks of the river where the engineers still were struggling to build bridges and rafts as a prerequisite to getting armor, supplies and reinforcements across.

By the time the battle was in full flood, we had amassed a preponderance of artillery on the site. In addition to the 374th, 375th, 925th, and 373rd F A Battalions, organic division units, there was the Seventh Army's 242nd F A Battalion of 105mm howitzers. To the north, directly supporting our troops in their attack, were the 967th (155mm rifles), the 938th (155mm howitzers), and the 194th (8-inch howitzers) F A Battalions. Cos. B and C of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, also attached, did Trojan work in smothering enemy observation with smoke shells and fired many rounds of high-explosive ammunition from their positions in Neckargartach.

Accurate counterbattery fire on the enemy guns was difficult due to their skillful concealment. Only by occasional flashes or the sound of one of their guns could the German positions be located. Most of our



*An engineer probes for wreckage of short-lived treadway bridge.*

firing, however, was concentrated on buildings in the city, just ahead of the infantrymen, and on enemy tanks, supply columns and troop assembly points ferreted out by our air observers.

The 12th Tactical Air Corps lent its valuable support, bombing and strafing Heilbronn on 5 April and harassing the Krauts entrenched in the hills surrounding the city. The 12th TAC attacked the enemy repeatedly during the course of the battle.

At 1100 of 5 April, Cos. I and L of the 397th Inf. finally crossed the river without casualties and prepared to join the attack. An effort the night before was unsuccessful due to enemy artillery fire. Following an artillery and mortar preparation on the loading yards which blasted out the die-hard Jerries entrenched there, the assault was resumed at 1445. Co. F moved through the factories which the 2nd Battalion had reduced in the previous day's action, and made contact with Co. G and the remaining men of Co. E in the buildings where Easy Co. had met disaster the night of 4 April. Moving cautiously ahead from that point, Co. G pressed on to the two warehouses still burning from our severe artillery shelling. In the warehouses, George Co. found 100 Krauts still dazed from our artillery fire. They surrendered without much of a fight, and the struggle for the glassworks was over.

George Co. waited in this position until Cos. I and L of the 397th, now actively engaged, caught up with them, after which the attack continued. Co. F mopped up the few remaining buildings in the glassworks and advanced to a small grove of trees at the southern tip of the glassworks area. Co. I, on the left of Co. F, pushed to the Fiat automobile factory along the road



*Hitler "Jugend," too young to shave, captured at Heilbronn.*

which skirts the eastern edge of the glassworks, and cleared the building against intense machine gun and panzerfaust fire. Co. L guarded the left rear of the advance, extending the line of the 3rd Battalion 398th southward from the Neckargartach road to the Fiat factory. Co. K of the 397th, having crossed the river in the meantime, followed the four companies, F, G, I, and L, as a reserve in preparation for the struggle for the center of Heilbronn.

Blocking further advance to the south, was a large open space giving the enemy clear fields of fire. In the center of this area, approximately 200 yards south of the grove of trees held by Co. F, was a sprawling, grey concrete house, situated at the junction of the railroad spur connecting the glassworks to the city of Heilbronn and the road leading from the east side of that factory into the city. A key spot, the junction was a natural point of defense and attack. But to get to the house, the Centurymen first had to cross the open field.

Waiting until dark, four riflemen and a medic from Co. F crept out from the shelter of the grove of trees and wormed their way along the railroad track toward the somber, grey stone walls of the house. After the first group had advanced some 20 yards into the open, a second squad of F Co. men followed. Suddenly, a machine gun opened up from a window of the house, killing all five men in the leading squad. Realizing the building was too strongly defended for a frontal assault across open ground, the second group of F Co. men withdrew to the tree grove. It was then decided to put off the advance southward until the next day.

From the time of the original crossing of the Neckar by the 3rd Battalion 398th up to the night of 5 April,

200 prisoners had been taken by the Centurymen on the bridgehead.

During the night of the 5th, the engineers, working in the shelter of houses in Neckargartach, built a four-float ponton ferry and carried it to the river upstream from the original crossing site. Early in the morning of 6 April, the first medium tank was ferried across the swift flowing Neckar. The precarious crossing was successfully accomplished. But on the east bank it was discovered that the ferry could not push the ramps upon which the tank was to roll up the bank firmly enough into the soft earth. Although cognizant of the hazard, the tank tried to climb the bank, faltered in the soft ground, and slid back. The ferry, unbalanced, listed and gave way, plunging the tank into the river.

The engineers began pulling the ferry back to the western side of the Neckar to add another float. But by the time they had reached midstream the enemy had zeroed in and the ferry was sunk by a direct hit. Now the Krauts began pounding this new crossing site, and continued their heavy shelling for the remainder of the day, making further efforts impossible.

While the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 397th were battling the enemy on the east side of the Neckar, Co. B of that regiment was clearing isolated enemy snipers from railroad yards on the west side preparatory to a 1st Battalion crossing. Patrols from the regimental Anti-Tank Co. went to the deserted peninsula between the river and the long loading canal which reaches southward from Neckargartach. One Anti-Tank patrol attempted to move out onto the tottering railroad bridge which led into the heart of the city. Enemy machine gun fire, however, forced them to dig in on the west side of the bridge with their own two light machine guns. They held this position for the remainder of the battle.

Organic vehicles and Co. G of the 398th were now dispatched north to cross the Neckar at Neckarelz, a

town in the 63rd Div. sector where a bridge had been thrown across the river. They were ordered to join forces with the 2nd Battalion on the other side of the Neckar.

Late in the afternoon of 5 April, the west bank opposite Heilbronn being secured, the 1st Battalion 397th made ready to cross the Neckar and establish a second bridgehead in the center of the city itself. With the 2nd Platoon of Co. B of the 325th Engrs. reinforced by a squad from Co. A manning the assault boats, Co. C of the 397th was put across at 1830. During the time of crossing, German artillery was hitting the west bank. German snipers fired from the buildings north and south of the crossing site, wounding two of the riflemen in the boats. On the east bank, close to the river, however, enemy opposition was negligible, probably due to the fact that the boats swung north along the river bank to the first large factory, a brewery, from which they had received sniper fire. Advancing toward the brewery upon landing, the 2nd and 3rd Platoons drew more fire from the brewery, but found little difficulty in taking the building and the 40 young Jerries defending it. The defenders were jittery and had no officer to steady them.

At dusk, Co. A made the crossing, and went up to join Co. C in the brewery where both companies spent the night. Once during the night, the outposts were attacked by a small group of Jerries armed with a machine gun and a couple of panzerfausts, but the raid was broken up easily. At about 0430 hours in the morning Co. B crossed, and by daylight the battalion was ready to fan out and establish a bridgehead.

Co. A was given the mission of moving north to try to relieve the original bridgehead, struggling to gain ground southward toward the center of the city. Cos. B and C were to fan out and protect the right and rear of Co. A, at the same time widening the bridgehead sufficiently for the engineers to throw a span across the



Neckar at this point. Co. B was to move south, and Co. C east, perpendicular to the river.

Co. A advanced through two dense city blocks to Kaiser Strasse, the street that leads to the center bridge of the three over the Neckar blown by the Germans. At this point, they were in the heart of the city and were running into the core of German resistance. Co. A was held by the enemy along this line, running east and west from the dynamite-twisted bridge to Kilianskirche, two blocks east of the river, for two bitter, bloodstained days.

The strategy involved in expanding this second bridgehead was the development of a pincer movement in which the center of Heilbronn would be caught in a steel vice between the northern and southern bridgeheads and squeezed until the two arms locked around the heart of the city.

Co. C, guarding Co. A's right and rear, pushed two blocks east of the Flein road which runs south from the center of Heilbronn. Co. B, on the right of Co. C, also crunched eastward to this road, taking the sugar refinery near the river, south of the brewery, and a few apartment houses against scattered sniper opposition. But the right flank of Co. B, along the line of the sugar refinery and the Knorr works, southeast of the refinery, was dangerously exposed. In the afternoon, a patrol from Co. B was forced to re-enter the sugar refinery and clear it of infiltrating Krauts again, while the rest of the company prepared to clean out the Knorr works.

Before they could launch their assault, however, the Germans counterattacked. Swarming through narrow alleys between the houses, the enemy infantry, closely supported by four tanks, charged the Centurymen. The 1st Platoon of Co. A, which had been trying to extend its right flank up the road from the river beyond Kilianskirche, was forced back to its original positions. Co. C, fighting along the north-south Flein road,

was attacked savagely, but managed to hold its original positions. Two tanks slashed at the right flank of the company's line.

T. Sgt. Pittman Hall was on the second floor of an apartment house located on the corner where the enemy tanks hit the Charlie Co. positions. Firing one bazooka round through the wall of the apartment to clear a field of fire, he blasted the first tank with a second round, disabling its turret gun. By this time, the artillery FO with Co. C had zeroed in his 8-inch guns on the tanks, and both tanks, showing exceptionally rapid maneuverability, spun on their tracks and beat a hasty retreat.

Farther south, Co. B had been receiving an annoying amount of panzerfaust fire from one of the houses across the Flein road. Lt. William S. Kumpfel, the artillery FO, adjusted 155s on this target. Nine Jerries were cut down by the accurate machine guns attached to Co. B as the Krauts hurriedly left the building to escape the fire of the big guns. Seventeen more dead Germans were found in the house when we entered later. The German infantrymen, by this time, had lost their eagerness for close-in combat and withdrew.

Co. B, being the most exposed, and closest to the German barracks near the southeast corner of the bridgehead, was the hardest hit by the enemy counter-attack. The Baker men had set up a strong-point in an apartment house on the west side of the Flein road, across the street from the Knorr works. Two more tanks, together with about two platoons of infantrymen came up this road from the south. Pfc. B. R. Smith fired on this enemy force with a light machine gun and some 20 to 30 of the infantrymen were killed or wounded. The tanks kept coming, but by the time they had reached within 150 yards of the Co. B position, 8-inchers were falling around them also. The B Co. line, however, was not strong enough to withstand the fire of the tanks, and Lt. Owen Kirkland, B Co.

